AIRMONT

CLASSICS CL193 75c

SIR WALTER SCOTT

KENILWORTH

Introduction by Dr. Beryl Rowland **Complete and Unabridged**

Kenilworth

SIR WALTER SCOTT

AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
22 EAST 60TH STREET • NEW YORK 10022

An Airmont Classic
specially selected for the Airmont Library
from the immortal literature of the world

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE DOMINION OF CANADA
BY THE RYERSON PRESS, TORONTO

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE COLONIAL PRESS, INC., CLINTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Kenilworth

SIR WALTER SCOTT

INTRODUCTION

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), the son of an Edinburgh lawyer, was not a writer, but a lawyer by profession. He was also the descendant of an ancient lineage of swashbuckling freebooters with such picturesque nicknames as Auld Wat of Harden and Beardie, and he acquired from childhood a love of both the history and the literature of the Scottish Borders. At the age of eighteen months he was stricken with infantile paralysis which damaged his right leg, and his disability probably encouraged his interest in reading. Speaking of his discovery of Percy's *Reliques* at the age of thirteen, Scott recalled: "To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my school fellows, and all who would listen to me, with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy."

Shortly after Scott's marriage to Charlotte Carpenter, the daughter of a French royalist, in 1797, he was appointed sheriff of Selkirkshire and in 1806 he held one of the principal clerkships of the Court of Session. At this time, however, he was already collecting ancient ballads which were to form the nucleus of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3), a compendium of songs and ballads containing many traditional pieces and some of Scott's own compositions.

Scott did not publish his first long poem until he was thirty-three nor his first novel until he was forty-two. Nevertheless, his output was enormous, not only in poetry and

novel writing but in his editing of the works of other writers such as Dryden and Swift—a collection which alone amounted to seventy volumes. Between the years 1815 and 1830, despite professional duties, business ventures and incessant entertaining at Abbotsford, his vast country estate on the Tweed, Scott managed to write some fifty books, some of them comprising several volumes and some requiring considerable background reading.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel, published in 1805, was the first of Scott's popular metrical romances, and it was followed by *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), *Rokeby* (1813), *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813), *The Lord of the Isles* (1815), and *Harold the Dauntless* (1817). These are long rhyming poems which romanticize history and show the genesis of Scott's handling of past events which was to characterize his famous historical novels. In a sense these metered romances are more genuine, for all their spuriousness, than his collection of border ballads: Scott and his collaborator Leyden belonged to that unscholarly band of ballad-fakers, Percy and Child among them, who "improved" on their field collections and retouched the originals to make them into an "art" form.

The first of Scott's novels was *Waverly*, published in 1814, and so began the series of historical novels, set mainly in Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which brought him international fame: *Guy Mannering* (1815), *Old Mortality* and *The Antiquary* (1816), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *Rob Roy* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), and *Redgauntlet* (1824). In *Ivanhoe* (1820) Scott extended his historical perspective and presented England in the age of Richard Coeur-de-Lion; in *The Abbot* (1820) he was concerned with the period of Mary Queen of Scots and in *Kenilworth* (1821) with Elizabethan England. *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822) showed London in the reign of James I; *Quentin Durward* (1823) France in the age of Louis XI; and *The Talisman* (1825) the Holy Land at the times of the Crusades.

In 1825 Scott celebrated at Abbotsford the engagement of his oldest son to a niece of one of the great families of Scotland. He had been made a baronet five years before and appeared to be at the pinnacle of his fame and fortune. Shortly afterwards, however, England plunged into an economic depression, and the publishing firm of Ballantyne, in which Scott had been involved for many years, failed.

The rest of the story has often been recounted. In order to pay off the debts of friends whose lack of business acumen

had destroyed him, Scott toiled unceasingly at writing the *Chronicles of Canongate* and other works, and died exhausted seven years later.

The assumption has been that Scott could, if he wished, have avoided admitting any but minimal involvement in the Ballantyne collapse. But a recent biographer claims that Scott, far from being merely a dabbler in the firm of Ballantyne, actually controlled it in secret and for good reason: when, as law official, he was able to put quantities of State printing in its way or when he asked his friends to make the firm loans, no one knew that he himself would be the chief beneficiary.

The rashness to which Scott's social ambitions drove him thus appears to have been more blameworthy than Lockhart, his first biographer admitted, or Scott himself seemed to have realized. Determined to provide a fitting background for his baronetcy, he took out of the publishing firm vast sums of money to pay for his estate, his generous entertaining, his costly army of servants and retainers, and for his frequent acquisitions of surrounding land. During the whole period of mounting debts James Ballantyne had always assumed that Scott's estate could be counted on as security. He was subsequently to discover that Scott had made over the whole of Abbotsford to his eldest son and legally it could not be touched.

Kenilworth was published in January 1821, less than three months after Scott had begun it. Perhaps the fact that he adapted historical event to fit his plot and did not revise may partly account for the speed of writing.

He was also assisted by certain general practices which he had already established in his craft. His characterization was, on the whole, uncomplicated: once the leading trait was defined, the character usually remained fixed. His narrative descriptions flowed with ease and induced suspense and excitement. His dialogue, although thought by Coleridge to be undramatic, was one of his strengths—lively, pungent and substantial. Of structure he had little conception in the general sense of the term, but in his most effective works he applied structural motifs which suggested symbolic unity or a sense of pattern while not precluding a lavish use of episode.

Scott himself defined romance as "a fictitious narrative in prose or verse, the interest of which turns upon marvelous and uncommon incidents," and a novel as "a fictitious narrative, differing from the romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society." Under this classification Scott's

fictions are romances rather than novels, and in *Kenilworth* Scott produced a great quasi-historical pageant, a tale of intrigue and violence, and gave it color, perspective and a sense of actuality by associating it with the court of Queen Elizabeth.

Intrigues and subordinate actions are numerous but the central action is clear. The time is 1575, and Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, is a favorite of the Queen. Unknown to Elizabeth, he has married Amy Robsart and established her secretly at Cumnor Place where she is believed to be the wife of Leicester's master of horses, Richard Varney. Leicester's secret is threatened when a Cornish gentleman, Tressilian, a former admirer of Amy's, tries to bring Varney to justice on charges of seduction. But Varney swears before the Queen that Amy is his wife and Leicester reluctantly confirms the lie. Events move inexorably towards tragedy. Amy tries to refute Varney's contention but is deemed insane. Leicester, on the verge of revealing his marriage, loses all compunction when Varney, anxious for his own reasons to keep his master in royal favor, tells him that Tressilian is Amy's lover. Varney subsequently contrives Amy's death. Leicester, too late, learns of her innocence. The drama over, Scott dismisses Leicester, briefly pointing the reward for the wages of sin:

> "The rest of his career is well known. But there was something retributive in his death, if, according to an account very generally received, it took place from his swallowing a draught of poison which was designed by him for another person."

This kind of story demanded, in Scott's hands, the inclusion of numerous episodes, counter episodes, subordinate plots, dramatic scenes largely in dialogue, detailed descriptions and the interplay of many characters. But the novelist achieved unity in several ways and made good use of the single, dominating, suspense factor, the Leicester-Amy secret.

The setting for the protagonists is carefully laid at the beginning and consists of polarities which reflect the psychological tensions in the novel. The faded, crumbling, monastic-fronted mansion of Cumnor contains a luxurious suite of rooms, with a "with-drawing-room," furnished, ominously enough, with a fine tapestry representing the fall of Phaëton.

This place has a secret brilliance always in danger of extinction, and it contains hidden treasure, Amy herself. Her intrinsic merit is pitted against the ostentatious glitter of all the royal display at Kenilworth where the Queen enters

wearing a pseudo-sylvan dress of pale blue silk and silver lace in keeping with the elaborate pastoral pageant in her honor. Even to get near her Amy has to adopt an appropriate disguise or mask. She wears a pale sea-green silk gown and looks like a naiad or a nymph—"such an antique design having been thought the most secure where so many masquers and revellers were assembled." And the result is that the Queen, at first doubting whether Amy is a living form at all, finds what she says unreal. For genuine values have no place in the royal palace. It is a place of theatrical pomp where weaklings such as Leicester live in a kind of reflected light drawn from the splendor of the Great Queen herself.

The controlling element of the work is this master-servant relationship and its effect on character. Scott's characterization of Leicester, though almost too observant of moral values, nevertheless has a certain subtlety which arouses sympathy and understanding for a man torn between ambition and love. With unusual psychological insight Scott vividly portrays his hero's uncertainty and shows why Leicester is no match for the Queen, with her superior wit and power, or for his diabolical servant, Varney.

The tragedy is brought about by Varney's conception of service: Of Leicester, he says: "He has the more need to have those about him who are unscrupulous in his service, and who, because they must know that his fall will overwhelm and crush them, must wager both blood and brain, soul and body, in order to keep him aloft." This philosophy finally enables servant to dominate master. By a series of strategies, Varney, like Iago and Mosca before him, forces his master to dependancy.

The victim of the evil servant is Amy. Historically her marriage to Leicester had not been a secret, but she was, because of her beauty and early death, a well-known and tragic figure in popular ballad and legend. Scott enhanced her pathos and made her the central figure both thematically and symbolically. He showed her as a devoted, proud young woman, delighting in the romance of her marriage, then growing weary of deception and resorting to a desperate act. She was finally held prisoner where Foster concealed his gold and fell to her death, symbolically enough, through a trapdoor designed to protect that treasure.

BERYL ROWLAND, M.A. PH.D.
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO

INTRODUCTION

A certain degree of success, real or supposed, in the delineation of Queen Mary, naturally induced the author to attempt something similar respecting "her sister and her foe," the celebrated Elizabeth. He will not, however, pretend to have approached the task with the same feelings; for the candid Robertson himself confesses having felt the prejudices with which a Scottishman is tempted to regard the subject; and what so liberal a historian avows, a poor romance-writer dares not disown. But he hopes the influence of a prejudice, almost as natural to him as his native air, will not be found to have greatly affected the sketch he has attempted of England's Elizabeth. I have endeavoured to describe her as at once a high-minded sovereign and a female of passionate feelings, hesitating betwixt the sense of her rank and the duty she owed her subjects on the one hand, and on the other her attachment to a nobleman, who, in external qualifications at least, amply merited her favour. The interest of the story is thrown upon that period when the sudden death of the first Countess of Leicester seemed to open to the ambition of her husband the opportunity of sharing the crown of his sovereign.

It is possible that slander, which very seldom favours the memories of persons in exalted stations, may have blackened the character of Leicester with darker shades than really belonged to it. But the almost general voice of the times attached the most foul suspicions to the death of the unfortunate Countess, more especially as it took place so very opportunely for the indulgence of her lover's ambition. If we can trust Ashmole's *Antiquities of Berkshire*, there was but too much ground for the traditions which charge Leicester with the murder of his wife. In the following extract of the passage, the reader will find the authority I had for the story of the romance:

> At the west end of the church are the ruins of a manor, anciently belonging (as a cell, or place of removal, as some report) to the monks of Abington. At the Dissolution, the

said manor, or lordship, was conveyed to one —— Owen, (I believe,) the possessor of Godstow then.

In the hall, over the chimney, I find Abington arms cut in stone, viz. a patonee between four martletts; and also another escutcheon, viz. a lion rampant, and several mitres cut in stone about the house. There is also in the said house, a chamber called Dudley's chamber, where the Earl of Leicester's wife was murdered; of which this is the story following:

Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, a very goodly personage, and singularly well featured, being a great favourite to Queen Elizabeth, it was thought, and commonly reported, that had he been a bachelor or widower, the Queen would have made him her husband; to this end, to free himself of all obstacles, he commands, or perhaps, with fair flattering intreaties, desires his wife to repose herself here at his servant Anthony Foster's house, who then lived in the aforesaid manor-house; and also prescribed to Sir Richard Varney, (a prompter to this design,) at his coming hither, that he should first attempt to poison her, and if that did not take effect, then by any other way whatsoever to dispatch her. This, it seems, was proved by the report of Dr Walter Bayly, sometime fellow of New College, then living in Oxford, and professor of physic in that university; whom, because he would not consent to take away her life by poison, the Earl endeavoured to displace him the court. This man, it seems, reported for most certain, that there was a practice in Cumnor among the conspirators, to have poisoned this poor innocent lady, a little before she was killed, which was attempted after this manner:—They seeing the good lady sad and heavy, (as one that well knew by her other handling, that her death was not far off,) began to persuade her that her present disease was abundance of melancholy and other humours, etc., and therefore would needs counsel her to take some potion, which she absolutely refusing to do, as still suspecting the worst; whereupon they sent a messenger on a day (unawares to her) for Dr Bayly, and entreated him to persuade her to take some little potion by his direction, and they would fetch the same at Oxford; meaning to have added something of their own for her comfort, as the doctor upon just cause and consideration did suspect, seeing their great importunity, and the small need the lady had of physic, and therefore he peremptorily denied their request; misdoubting, (as he afterwards reported,) lest, if they had poisoned her under the name of his potion, he might after have been hanged for a

colour of their sin, and the doctor remained still well assured, that this way taking no effect, she would not long escape their violence, which afterwards happened thus. For Sir Richard Varney above-said, (the chief projector in this design,) who, by the Earl's order, remained that day of her death alone with her, with one man only and Foster, who had that day forcibly sent away all her servants from her to Abington market, about three miles distant from this place; they (I say, whether first stifling her, or else strangling her) afterwards flung her down a pair of stairs and broke her neck, using much violence upon her; but, however, though it was vulgarly reported that she by chance fell down stairs, (but still without hurting her hood that was upon her head,) yet the inhabitants will tell you there, that she was conveyed from her usual chamber where she lay, to another where the bed's head of the chamber stood close to a privy postern door, where they in the night came and stifled her in her bed, bruised her head very much, broke her neck, and at length flung her down stairs, thereby believing the world would have thought it a mischance, and so have blinded their villainy. But behold the mercy and justice of God in revenging and discovering this lady's murder, for one of the persons that was a coadjutor in this murder, was afterwards taken for a felony in the marches of Wales, and offering to publish the manner of the aforesaid murder, was privately made away in the prison by the Earl's appointment; and Sir Richard Varney the other, dying about the same time in London, cried miserably, and blasphemed God, and said to a person of note, (who hath related the same to others since,) not long before his death, that all the devils in hell did tear him in pieces. Foster, likewise, after this fact, being a man formerly addicted to hospitality, company, mirth, and music, was afterwards observed to forsake all this, and with much melancholy and pensiveness, (some say with madness,) pined and drooped away. The wife also of Bald Butter, kinsman to the Earl, gave out the whole fact a little before her death. Neither are these following passages to be forgotten, that as soon as ever she was murdered, they made great haste to bury her before the coroner had given in his inquest, (which the Earl himself condemned as not done advisedly,) which her father, or Sir John Robertsett, (as I suppose,) hearing of, came with all speed hither, caused her corpse to be taken up, the coroner to sit upon her, and further enquiry to be made concerning this business to the full; but it was generally thought that the Earl stopped his mouth, and

made up the business betwixt them; and the good Earl, to make plain to the world the great love he bare to her while alive, and what a grief the loss of so virtuous a lady was to his tender heart, caused (though the thing, by these and other means, was beaten into the heads of the principal men of the University of Oxford) her body to be re-buried in St Mary's church in Oxford, with great pomp and solemnity. It is remarkable, when Dr Babington, the Earl's chaplain, did preach the funeral sermon, he tript once or twice in his speech, by recommending to their memories that virtuous lady so pitifully *murdered*, instead of saying pitifully slain. This Earl, after all his murders and poisonings, was himself poisoned by that which was prepared for others, (some say by his wife at Cornbury Lodge before mentioned,) though Baker in his Chronicle would have it at Killingworth, *anno* 1588.[1]

The same accusation has been adopted and circulated by the author of *Leicester's Commonwealth*, a satire written directly against the Earl of Leicester, which loaded him with the most horrid crimes, and, among the rest, with the murder of his first wife. It was alluded to in the *Yorkshire Tragedy*, a play erroneously ascribed to Shakspeare, where a baker, who determines to destroy all his family, throws his wife down stairs, with this allusion to the supposed murder of Leicester's lady,—

> The only way to charm a woman's tongue
> Is, break her neck—a politician did it.

The reader will find I have borrowed several incidents as well as names from Ashmole, and the more early authorities; but my first acquaintance with the history was through the more pleasing medium of verse. There is a period in youth when the mere power of numbers has a more strong effect on ear and imagination, than in more advanced life. At this season of immature taste the author was greatly delighted with the poems of Mickle and Langhorne, poets who, though by no

[1] Ashmole's *Antiquities of Berkshire*, vol. i, p. 149. The tradition as to Leicester's death was thus communicated by Ben Jonson to Drummond of Hawthornden: "The Earl of Leicester gave a bottle of liquor to his Lady, which he willed her to use in any faintness, which she, after his returne from court, not knowing it was poison, gave him, and so he died."—*Ben Jonson's information to Drummond of Hawthornden, MS. Sir Robert Sibbald's copy.*

means deficient in the higher branches of their art, were eminent for their powers of verbal melody above most who have practised this department of poetry. One of those pieces of Mickle, which the author was particularly pleased with, is a ballad, or rather a species of elegy, on the subject of Cumnor Hall, which, with others by the same author, were to be found in Evans's *Ancient Ballads*, (volume iv, page 130,) to which work Mickle made liberal contributions. The first stanza especially had a peculiar species of enchantment for the youthful ear of the author, the force of which is not even now entirely spent; some others are sufficiently prosaic.

CUMNOR HALL

The dews of summer night did fall;
The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
Silver'd the walls of Cumnor Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby.

Now nought was heard beneath the skies,
The sounds of busy life were still,
Save an unhappy lady's sighs,
That issued from that lonely pile.

"Leicester," she cried, "is this thy love
That thou so oft has sworn to me,
To leave me in this lonely grove,
Immured in shameful privity?

"No more thou com'st with lover's speed,
Thy once beloved bride to see;
But be she alive, or be she dead,
I fear, stern Earl, 's the same to thee.

"Not so the usage I received
When happy in my father's hall;
No faithless husband then me grieved,
No chilling fears did me appal.

"I rose up with the cheerful morn,
No lark more blithe, no flower more gay;
And like the bird that haunts the thorn,
So merrily sung the livelong day.

"If that my beauty is but small,
Among court ladies all despised,
Why didst thou rend it from that hall,
Where, scornful Earl, it well was prized?

"And when you first to me made suit,
How fair I was you oft would say!
And proud of conquest, pluck'd the fruit,
Then left the blossom to decay.

"Yes! now neglected and despised,
The rose is pale, the lily's dead;
But he that once their charms so prized,
Is sure the cause those charms are fled.

"For know, when sick'ning grief doth prey,
And tender love's repaid with scorn,
The sweetest beauty will decay,—
What floweret can endure the storm?

"At court, I'm told, is beauty's throne,
Where every lady's passing rare,
That Eastern flowers, that shame the sun,
Are not so glowing, not so fair.

"Then, Earl, why didst thou leave the beds
Where roses and where lilies vie,
To seek a primrose, whose pale shades
Must sicken when those gauds are by?

" 'Mong rural beauties I was one,
Among the fields wild flowers are fair;
Some country swain might me have won,
And thought my beauty passing rare.

"But, Leicester, (or I much am wrong,)
Or 'tis not beauty lures thy vows;
Rather ambition's gilded crown
Makes thee forget thy humble spouse.

"Then, Leicester, why, again I plead,
(The injured surely may repine,)—
Why didst thou wed a country maid,
When some fair princess might be thine?

"Why didst thou praise my humble charms,
And, oh! then leave them to decay?
Why didst thou win me to thy arms,
Then leave to mourn the livelong day?

"The village maidens of the plain
Salute me lowly as they go;
Envious they mark my silken train,
Nor think a Countess can have woe.

"The simple nymphs! they little know
How far more happy's their estate;
To smile for joy—than sigh for woe—
To be content—than to be great.

"How far less blest am I than them?
Daily to pine and waste with care!
Like the poor plant, that, from its stem
Divided, feels the chilling air.

"Nor, cruel Earl! can I enjoy
The humble charms of solitude;
Your minions proud my peace destroy,
By sullen frowns or pratings rude.

"Last night, as sad I chanced to stray,
The village death-bell smote my ear;
They wink'd aside, and seemed to say,
'Countess, prepare, thy end is near!'

"And now, while happy peasants sleep,
Here I sit lonely and forlorn;
No one to soothe me as I weep,
Save Philomel on yonder thorn.

"My spirits flag—my hopes decay—
Still that dread death-bell smites my ear;
And many a boding seems to say,
'Countess, prepare, thy end is near!' "

Thus sore and sad that lady grieved,
In Cumnor Hall, so lone and drear;
And many a heartfelt sigh she heaved,
And let fall many a bitter tear.

And ere the dawn of day appear'd
In Cumnor Hall, so lone and drear,
Full many a piercing scream was heard,
And many a cry of mortal fear.

The death-bell thrice was heard to ring,
An aerial voice was heard to call,
And thrice the raven flapp'd its wing
Around the towers of Cumnor Hall.

The mastiff howl'd at village door,
The oaks were shatter'd on the green;
Woe was the hour—for never more
That hapless Countess e'er was seen!

And in that Manor now no more
Is cheerful feast and sprightly ball;
For ever since that dreary hour
Have spirits haunted Cumnor Hall.

The village maids, with feaful glance,
Avoid the ancient moss-grown wall;
Nor ever lead the merry dance
Among the groves of Cumnor Hall.

Full many a traveller oft hath sigh'd,
And pensive wept the Countess' fall,
As wand'ring onwards they've espied
The haunted towers of Cumnor Hall.

ABBOTSFORD
1st March, 1831

No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?
The Critic

No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?
The Critic