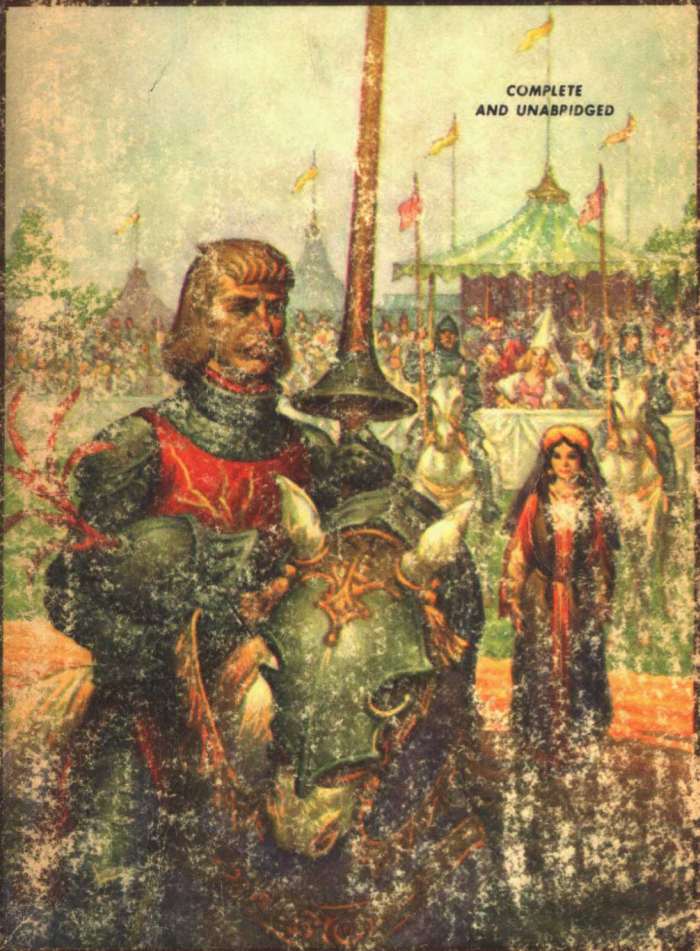
SIGNET $1.25 CLASSICS SERIES CL34

Ivanhoe

SIR WALTER SCOTT



with an introduction by FRED COGSWELL

Ivanhoe

SIR WALTER SCOTT

Introduction

Ivanhoe was first published by Constable in London in December, 1819. Although it was the tenth novel by "the Author of Waverley" to appear in less than six years, its reception was even more popular than that which had greeted its predecessors. This popularity was due as much to Sir Walter Scott's choice of time and setting for the romance itself as to its merits as fiction.

By 1818, Scott had reached two conclusions: that the market in Scottish historical romances had become glutted and that a public which would respond to the past of a neighboring country would respond even more enthusiastically to its own past. He therefore placed *Ivanhoe* in the northern part of the England of the late twelfth century. By so doing, he was able to introduce into his romance Richard Coeur de Lion, the most romantically appealing of English kings, and such ballad heroes as Friar Tuck, Allan-a-Dale, and Robin Hood. By choosing the Yorkshire dales as his setting, Scott could write of men and women who were both interesting to

his audience as Englishmen and at the same time resembled more closely than any other Englishmen the Scotsmen whom he knew.

Even so, Scott ran risks in writing *Ivanhoe*—risks of which he was well aware. Two things have always been requisites of successful romance: first, that it possess exciting, suspenseful narrative; second, that the narrative involve characters and settings within the framework of a convention whose acceptance provides the automatic suspension of critical judgment necessary to sustain illusion. Since Scott had created and made popular the conventions of the historical novel, for him to depart from those conventions might only too readily be construed by his readers as a breach of trust. So aware was Scott of this last that when he abandoned Scotland for England as a setting, he was only with great difficulty dissuaded by his publishers from issuing *Ivanhoe* under a different pseudonym. A change of scenery was as radical a departure from convention as he dared risk. How then was he to treat successfully the English characters which the plot of *Ivanhoe* would seem to demand?

Fortunately for Scott, the core of his characters had always been stereotypes drawn from past epic and romance. What had been fresh was his treatment—his endowing of stock types with the new disguises of Scottish dress, Scottish mannerisms, and Scottish speech—all presented with the intimate detail and loving care of which Scott was an acknowledged master. In *Ivanhoe,* antiquarian research and the similarity which might possibly exist between the inhabitants on both sides of the Border had to take the place of first-hand knowledge. The result was at least a partial success. Andrew Lang wrote of the characters in *Ivanhoe:*

> "DeBracy is but Marischal of Marischal Wells, in chain mail; Cedric is a Baron Bradwardine of the

> twelfth century; Ursula is one of his many weird women, such as Meg Merrilies and Norna of the Fitful Head; Locksley is a frank, English Rob Roy; Wamba is a Davie Gallatley of the far-off feudal past. They are almost as living as if they talked Border Scotch, and wore mauds or tartans."

Lang is correct when he writes "almost as living." In general, the characters in *Ivanhoe* are not so convincing as those in the "Scotch novels." Exceptions must be made, however, in two cases. The Templar, Brian de Bois Gilbert, is a remarkably well-drawn study in paranoia, convincing in all but the circumstances of his death which, although psychologically plausible, will always strike the reader as being artistically contrived. The second intriguing character is the Jewess, Rebecca, who combines the intellectual daring and honesty of the "new" woman with the sweetness and common sense of the old. She is, I suspect, a composite drawn from such women in real life as Mary Wolstonecroft and Susan Ferrier, and from such characters in fiction as the heroines of Robert Bage, a radical novelist whose work Scott admired.

For incident and suspense, few readers will cavil at *Ivanhoe*. Like a Shakespearean play, the novel revolves around five dramatic scenes: the confrontation of Norman and Saxon in the dining hall of Cedric the Saxon; the two-day tournament at Ashby de la Zouch; the capture of Cedric and his party; the siege of Torquilstone; and the judgment of God in the lists at Beaumanoir.

Although these scenes are well organized, modern readers will find the pace and tone of the novel somewhat less than satisfactory. *Ivanhoe*, as a successful romance, has been pillaged and rewritten so many times that readers today not only anticipate the outcome of events which once must have thrilled by their suspense, but they have become bored as

well by such characters as the nice but colorless disinherited hero, the blonde but dull heiress, the outlaw with the heart of gold, the mustached passionate villain, the wily courtier, the faithful servant, and the sensible fool. Modern writers, moreover, have found ways of setting forth and manipulating their pasteboard characters with greater economy of presentation, effectiveness of dialogue, and convincingness of tone. Technically, *Ivanhoe* in comparison with the work of such a popular modern historical novelist as Rafael Sabatini invites the comment one might make of a model-T Ford compared with the latest model motorcar, "A very fine product for the time in which it was produced."

It was not principally, however, for his ability to construct plot and to set forth character that Sir Walter Scott was read in his own time and is still read in our own. Technique can arrange material in the most attractive form, but technique cannot provide material to arrange without the help of something more. That something more depends upon the depth and range of an author's insight into life, upon his judgment of value, and upon the quality and scope of imagination that can find pattern and purpose beneath the surface of history and of contemporary life. In literature, as in life, wisdom is so rare a quality that the works of those who possess it are not readily let die. Sir Walter Scott possessed the distillation of the wisdom of aristocracy—a wisdom that in his own time was beginning to lapse into disuse, but not even the fact that he chose to write in such an unsatisfactory medium for the presentation of universal vision as the historical novel can keep his robust faith in the value and essential freedom and dignity of human life from shining through.

Although a world of great social inequality and of great extremes of kindness and cruelty, the universe of Scott's

vision is a free world, a moral world, and a magnanimous world. Acquaintance with it, even in literature, cannot help but invigorate and ennoble the reader with an appreciation of the merits of a way of living, feeling, and thinking that is gone. With one exception, the characters in *Ivanhoe* from Gurth to King Richard act in the fullest faith that responsibility and freedom lie within the power of their individual wills. Only the villain, Brian de Bois Gilbert, sounds the "modern" note of determinism. Moreover, in Scott's world, the spirit in which a battle is waged is at least as important as its outcome. The best defense of the hierarchy that ruled the world throughout most of recorded history finds its expression in the relationships between Cedric and his two serfs, Gurth and Wamba—a relationship which presents modes of conduct that would baffle a modern trade union leader or his capitalist employer.

Ironically, Scott gambled with fortune in an effort to play Cedric to a growing number of dependent Gurths and Wambas of his own. He lost at a fearful price, but losing could not make him strike his flag. In none of his novels is the conduct of human beings so noble as his own struggle to pay his debts and those of his partners, the Ballantines. The years of toil after his creative impulse had departed from him wrecked his health and broke his mind, but they could not move the inflexible will that turned like a lodestone toward the ancient pole of honor which, although in Scott's own time apparently doomed, had ruled civilization through most of its centuries, not through force alone but through universal acceptance of the value of quality in every act of life.

FRED COGSWELL, M.A., Ph.D.
The University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, N.B.

Ivanhoe

SIR WALTER SCOTT

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

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

IVANHOE

INTRODUCTION

Now fitted the halter, now traversed the cart,
And often took leave, but seem'd loath to depart![1]

PRIOR

THE AUTHOR of the Waverley Novels had hitherto proceeded in an unabated course of popularity, and might, in his peculiar district of literature, have been termed *L'Enfant Gâté* of success. It was plain, however, that frequent publication must finally wear out the public favour, unless some mode could be devised to give an appearance of novelty to subsequent productions. Scottish manners, Scottish dialect, and Scottish characters of note being those with which the author was most intimately and familiarly acquainted, were the groundwork upon which he had hitherto relied for giving effect to his narrative. It was, however, obvious, that this kind of interest must in the end occasion a degree of sameness and repetition, if exclusively resorted to, and that the reader was likely at length to adopt the language of Edwin, in Parnell's Tale:

———"Reverse the spell," he cries,
"And let it fairly now suffice,
The gambol has been shewn."

Nothing can be more dangerous for the fame of a professor of the fine arts than to permit (if he can possibly prevent it) the character of a mannerist to be attached to him, or that he should be supposed capable of success only in a particular and limited style. The public are, in general, very ready to adopt the opinion, that he who has pleased them in one peculiar mode of composition, is, by means of that very talent, rendered incapable of venturing upon other subjects. The effect of this disinclination, on the part of the public, towards the artificers of their pleasures, when they attempt to enlarge their means of amusing, may be seen in the censures usually passed by vulgar criticism upon actors or artists who venture to change the character of their efforts, that, in so doing, they may enlarge the scale of their art.

There is some justice in this opinion, as there always is in such as attain general currency. It may often happen on the stage, that an actor, by possessing in a pre-eminent degree the external qualities necessary to give effect to comedy, may be deprived of the right to aspire to tragic excellence; and in painting or literary

[1] The motto alludes to the Author returning to the stage repeatedly after having taken leave.

composition, an artist or poet may be master exclusively of modes of thought, and powers of expression, which confine him to a single course of subjects. But much more frequently the same capacity which carries a man to popularity in one department will obtain for him success in another, and that must be more particularly the case in literary composition, than either in acting or painting, because the adventurer in that department is not impeded in his exertions by any peculiarity of features, or conformation of person, proper for particular parts, or, by any peculiar mechanical habits of using the pencil, limited to a particular class of subjects.

Whether this reasoning be correct or otherwise, the present author felt, that, in confining himself to subjects purely Scottish, he was not only likely to weary out the indulgence of his readers, but also greatly to limit his own power of affording them pleasure. In a highly polished country, where so much genius is monthly employed in catering for public amusement, a fresh topic, such as he had himself had the happiness to light upon, is the untasted spring of the desert;—

Men bless their stars and call it luxury.

But when men and horses, cattle, camels, and dromedaries, have poached the spring into mud, it becomes loathsome to those who at first drank of it with rapture; and he who had the merit of discovering it, if he would preserve his reputation with the tribe, must display his talents by a fresh discovery of untasted fountains.

If the author, who finds himself limited to a particular class of subjects, endeavours to sustain his reputation by striving to add a novelty of attraction to themes of the same character which have been formerly successful under his management, there are manifest reasons why, after a certain point, he is likely to fail. If the mine be not wrought out, the strength and capacity of the miner become necessarily exhausted. If he closely imitates the narratives which he has before rendered successful, he is doomed to "wonder that they please no more." If he struggles to take a different view of the same class of subjects, he speedily discovers that what is obvious, graceful, and natural, has been exhausted; and, in order to obtain the indispensable charm of novelty, he is forced upon caricature, and, to avoid being trite, must become extravagant.

It is not, perhaps, necessary to enumerate so many reasons why the author of the Scottish novels, as they were then exclusively termed, should be desirous to make an experiment on a subject purely English. It was his purpose, at the same time, to have rendered the experiment as complete as possible, by bringing the intended work before the public as the effort of a new candidate for their favour, in order that no degree of prejudice, whether

favourable or the reverse, might attach to it, as a new production of the Author of *Waverley;* but this intention was afterwards departed from, for reasons to be hereafter mentioned.

The period of the narrative adopted was the reign of Richard I., not only as abounding with characters whose very names were sure to attract general attention, but as affording a striking contrast betwixt the Saxons, by whom the soil was cultivated, and the Normans, who still reigned in it as conquerors, reluctant to mix with the vanquished, or ackowledge themselves of the same stock. The idea of this contrast was taken from the ingenious and unfortunate Logan's tragedy of *Runnamede,* in which, about the same period of history, the author had seen the Saxon and Norman barons opposed to each other on different sides of the stage. He does not recollect that there was any attempt to contrast the two races in their habits and sentiments; and indeed it was obvious, that history was violated by introducing the Saxons still existing as a high-minded and martial race of nobles.

They did, however, survive as a people, and some of the ancient Saxon families possessed wealth and power, although they were exceptions to the humble condition of the race in general. It seemed to the author, that the existence of the two races in the same country, the vanquished distinguished by their plain, homely, blunt manners, and the free spirit infused by their ancient institutions and laws; the victors, by the high spirit of military fame, personal adventure, and whatever could distinguish them as the flower of chivalry, might, intermixed with other characters belonging to the same time and country, interest the reader by the contrast, if the author should not fail on his part.

Scotland, however, had been of late used so exclusively as the scene of what is called historical romance, that the preliminary letter of Mr. Laurence Templeton became in some measure necessary. To this, as to an Introduction, the reader is referred, as expressing the author's purpose and opinions in undertaking this species of composition, under the necessary reservation, that he is far from thinking he has attained the point at which he aimed.

It is scarcely necessary to add, that there was no idea or wish to pass off the supposed Mr. Templeton as a real person. But a kind of continuation of the *Tales of my Landlord* had been recently attempted by a stranger, and it was supposed this "Dedicatory Epistle" might pass for some imitation of the same kind, and thus putting inquirers upon a false scent, induce them to believe they had before them the work of some new candidate for their favour.

After a considerable part of the work had been finished and printed, the Publishers, who pretended to discern in it a germ of popularity, remonstrated strenuously against its appearing as an absolutely anonymous production, and contended that it should have the advantage of being announced as by the Author of

Waverly. The author did not make any obstinate opposition, for he began to be of opinion with Dr. Wheeler, in Miss Edgeworth's excellent tale of *Manœuvring*, that "trick upon trick" might be too much for the patience of an indulgent public, and might be reasonably considered as trifling with their favour.

The book, therefore, appeared as an avowed continuation of the Waverley Novels; and it would be ungrateful not to acknowledge, that it met with the same favourable reception as its predecessors.

Such annotations as may be useful to assist the reader in comprehending the characters of the Jew, the Templar, the Captain of the mercenaries, or Free Companions, as they were called, and others proper to the period, are added, but with a sparing hand, since sufficient information on these subjects is to be found in general history.

An incident in the tale, which had the good fortune to find favour in the eyes of many readers, is more directly borrowed from the stores of old romance. I mean the meeting of the King with Friar Tuck at the cell of that buxom hermit. The general tone of the story belongs to all ranks and all countries, which emulate each other in describing the rambles of a disguised sovereign, who, going in search of information or amusement, into the lower ranks of life, meets with adventures diverting to the reader or hearer, from the contrast betwixt the monarch's outward appearance, and his real character. The Eastern tale-teller has for his theme the disguised expeditions of Haroun Alraschid with his faithful attendants, Mesrour and Giafar, through the midnight streets of Bagdad; and Scottish tradition dwells upon the similar exploits of James V., distinguished during such excursions by the travelling name of the "Goodman of Ballengeigh," as the Commander of the Faithful, when he desired to be incognito, was known by that of *"Il Bondocani."* The French minstrels are not silent on so popular a theme. There must have been a Norman original of the Scottish metrical romance of *Rauf Colsiar*, in which Charlemagne is introduced as the unknown guest of a charcoal-man.[2] It seems to have been the original of other poems of the kind.

In merry England there is no end of popular ballads on this theme. The poem of "John the Reeve, or Steward," mentioned by Bishop Percy, in the *Reliques of English Poetry*,[3] is said to have turned on such an incident; and we have besides, "The King and the Tanner of Tamworth," "The King and the Miller of

[2] This very curious poem, long a *desideratum* in Scottish literature, and given up as irrecoverably lost, was lately brought to light by the researches of Dr. Irving of the Advocates' Library, and has been reprinted by Mr. David Laing, Edinburgh.

[3] Vol. ii. p. 167.

Mansfield," and others on the same topic. But the peculiar tale of this nature to which the author of *Ivanhoe* has to acknowledge an obligation, is more ancient by two centuries than any of these last mentioned.

It was first communicated to the public in that curious record of ancient literature, which has been accumulated by the combined exertions of Sir Egerton Brydges and Mr. Hazlewood, in the periodical work entitled *The British Bibliographer*. From thence it has been transferred by the Reverend Charles Henry Hartshorne, M.A., editor of a very curious volume, entitled "*Ancient Metrical Tales*, printed chiefly from original sources, 1829." Mr. Hartshorne gives no other authority for the present fragment, except the article in the *Bibliographer*, where it is entitled, "The Kyng and the Hermite." A short abstract of its contents will show its similarity to the meeting of King Richard and Friar Tuck.

King Edward (we are not told which among the monarchs of that name, but from his temper and habits, we may suppose Edward IV.) sets forth with his court to a gallant hunting-match in Sherwood Forest, in which, as is not unusual for princes in romance, he falls in with a deer of extraordinary size and swiftness, and pursues it closely, till he has outstripped his whole retinue, tired out hounds and horse, and finds himself alone under the gloom of an extensive forest, upon which night is descending. Under the apprehensions natural to a situation so uncomfortable, the King recollects that he had heard how poor men, when apprehensive of a bad night's lodging, pray to Saint Julian, who, in the Romish calendar, stands Quarter-Master-General to all forlorn travelers that render him due homage. Edward puts up his orisons accordingly, and by the guidance, doubtless, of the good Saint, reaches a small path, conducting him to a chapel in the forest, having a hermit's cell in its close vicinity. The King hears the reverend man, with a companion of his solitude, telling his beads within, and meekly requests of him quarters for the night. "I have no accommodation for such a lord as ye be," said the hermit. "I live here in the wilderness upon roots and rinds, and may not receive into my dwelling even the poorest wretch that lives, unless it were to save his life." The King inquires the way to the next town, and, understanding it is by a road which he cannot find without difficulty, even if he had day-light to befriend him, he declared, that with or without the hermit's consent, he was determined to be his guest that night. He is admitted accordingly, not without a hint from the recluse, that were he himself out of his priestly weeds, he would care little for his threats of using violence, and that he gives way to him not out of intimidation, but simply to avoid scandal.

The King is admitted into the cell—two bundles of straw are

shaken down for his accommodation, and he comforts himself that he is now under shelter, and that

A night will soon be gone.

Other wants, however, arise. The guest becomes clamorous for supper, observing,

"For certainly, as I you say,
I ne had never so sorry a day,
That I ne had a merry night."

But this indication of his taste for good cheer, joined to the annunciation of his being a follower of the Court, who had lost himself at the great hunting-match, cannot induce the niggard hermit to produce better fare than bread and cheese, for which his guest shewed little appetite; and "thin drink," which was even less acceptable. At length the King presses his host on a point to which he had more than once alluded, without obtaining a satisfactory reply:

Then said the King, "by Godys grace,
Thou wert in a merry place,
To shoot should thou lere;
When the foresters go to rest,
Sometyme thou might have of the best,
All of the wild deer;
I wold hold it for no scathe,
Though thou hadst bow and arrows baith,
Althoff thou best a Frere."

The hermit, in return, expresses his apprehension that his guest means to drag him into some confession of offence against the forest laws, which, being betrayed to the King, might cost him his life. Edward answers by fresh assurances of secrecy, and again urges on him the necessity of procuring some venison. The hermit replies by once more insisting on the duties incumbent upon him as a churchman, and continues to affirm himself free from all such breaches of order:—

"Many day I have here been,
And flesh meat I eat never,
But milk of the kye;
Warm the well, and go to sleep,
And I will lap thee with my cope,
Softly to lye."

It would seem that the manuscript is here imperfect, for we do not find the reasons which finally induce the curtal friar to amend the King's cheer. But acknowledging his guest to be such a "good