

**SCOTT'S POETICAL WORKS. THE  
LORD OF THE ISLES: WITH  
THE AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTIONS,  
NOTES, AND VARIOUS READINGS**

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Scott's Poetical Works. The Lord of the Isles: With the Author's Introductions, Notes, and Various Readings by Walter Scott

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**WALTER SCOTT**

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STAFFA.



**S** COTT'S  
POETICAL  
WORKS

The  
Lord of the Isles

*WITH THE AUTHOR'S  
INTRODUCTIONS, NOTES, AND  
VARIOUS READINGS*

LONDON  
ADAM & CHARLES BLACK  
1896

## NOTICE.

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THE composition of "The Lord of the Isles," as we now have it in the Author's MS., seems to have been begun at Abbotsford, in the Autumn of 1814, and it ended at Edinburgh, the 16th of December. Some part of Canto I. had probably been committed to writing in a rougher form earlier in the year. The original Quarto appeared on the 2d of January, 1815.

It may be mentioned, that those parts of this poem which were written at Abbotsford, were composed almost all in the presence of Sir Walter Scott's family, and many in that of casual visitors also: the original cottage which he then occupied not affording him any means of retire-

ment. Neither conversation nor music seemed to disturb him.



## INTRODUCTION

TO

### THE LORD OF THE ISLES.

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I COULD hardly have chosen a subject more popular in Scotland, than any thing connected with the Bruce's history, unless I had attempted that of Wallace. But I am decidedly of opinion, that a popular, or what is called a *taking* title, though well qualified to ensure the publishers against loss, and clear their shelves of the original impression, is rather apt to be hazardous than otherwise to the reputation of the author. He who attempts a subject of distinguished popularity, has not the privilege of awakening the enthusiasm of his audience; on the contrary, it is already awakened, and glows, it may be, more ardently than that of the author himself. In this case, the warmth of the author is inferior to that of the party whom he addresses, who has, therefore, little chance of being, in Bayes's phrase, "elevated and surprised" by what he has thought of with more enthusiasm than the writer. The sense of this risk, joined to the consciousness of striving against wind and tide, made the task of composing the proposed Poem somewhat heavy and hopeless; but, like the prize-fighter in "As

You Like it," I was to wrestle for my reputation, and not neglect any advantage. In a most agreeable pleasure-voyage, which I have tried to commemorate in the Introduction to the new edition of the "Pirate," I visited, in social and friendly company,<sup>1</sup> the coasts and islands of Scotland, and made myself acquainted with the localities of which I meant to treat. But this voyage, which was in every other effect so delightful, was in its conclusion saddened by one of those strokes of fate which so often mingle themselves with our pleasures. The accomplished and excellent person who had recommended to me the subject for "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," and to whom I proposed to inscribe what I already suspected might be the close of my poetical labours, was unexpectedly removed from the world, which she seemed only to have visited for purposes of kindness and benevolence. It is needless to say how the author's feelings, or the composition of his trifling work, were affected by a circumstance which occasioned so many tears and so much sorrow.\* True it is, that "The Lord of the Isles" was concluded, unwillingly and in haste, under the painful feeling of one who has a task which must be finished, rather than with the ardour of one who endeavours to perform that task well. Although the Poem cannot be said to have made a favourable impression on the public, the sale of fifteen thousand copies enabled the author to retreat from the field with the honours of war.

<sup>1</sup> [See a note to the lines superscribed "Pharos loquitur," included in this volume; and see also "Fragments of a Tour in the Hebrides," &c., printed in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1812.]

<sup>2</sup> [Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, died 24th August, 1814. Sir Walter Scott received the mournful intelligence while visiting the Giant's Causeway, and immediately returned home.]

In the meantime, what was necessarily to be considered as a failure, was much reconciled to my feelings by the success attending my attempt in another species of composition. "Waverley" had, under strict incognito, taken its flight from the press, just before I set out upon the voyage already mentioned; it had now made its way to popularity, and the success of that work and the volumes which followed, was sufficient to have satisfied a greater appetite for applause than I have at any time possessed.<sup>1</sup>

I may as well add in this place, that, being much urged by my intimate friend, now unhappily no more, William Erskine, (a Scottish judge, by the title of Lord Kinnedder,) I agreed to write the little romantic tale called the "Bridal of Triermain;" but it was on the condition, that he should make no serious effort to disown the composition, if report should lay it at his door. As he was more than suspected of a taste for poetry, and as I took care, in several places, to mix something which might resemble (as far as was in my power) my friend's feeling and manner, the train easily caught, and two large editions were sold. A third being called for, Lord Kinnedder became unwilling to aid any longer a deception which was going farther than he expected or desired, and the real author's name was given. Upon another occasion, I sent up another of these trifles, which, like schoolboy's kites, served to show how the wind of popular taste was setting. The manner was supposed to be that of a rude minstrel, or Scald, in opposition to the "Bridal of Triermain," which was designed to belong rather to the Italian school. This new fugitive piece

<sup>1</sup> [The first edition of *Waverley* appeared in July, 1814.]