# TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS. THE LADY OF THE LAKE; EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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WALTER SCOTT & JAMES CHALMERS

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Trieste

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS

# THE LADY OF THE LAKE

BY

WALTER SCOTT

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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# PREFACE

THE preparing of this little book by the editor has been a rare delight. He is as familiar with every scene described in the poem as is any householder with his own backyard or flower-garden. There is probably no richer or more beautiful natural scenery in the world than the Loch Katrine country. It is simple, sublime, grandly mysterious, richly diversified. This romantic and picturesque scenery makes a fitting background for Scott's romantic and picturesque story. A more poetic setting for a thrilling tale of love, outlawry, and chivalry could scarcely be found anywhere. There is a freshness and charm to Scottish Highland scenery equalled only by the freshness and charm of Scott's matchless descriptions. So that the best substitute for an actual visit to the Trosachs is a careful reading of *The Lady of the Lake*.

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This book is intended especially for eighth and ninth grade pupils. It has therefore been prepared along simple lines. For such pupils there is no need of an elaborate introduction. What is much better for young students is provided, namely, a brief but clear and attractive outline of the story, with an explanation of the setting, location, and environments—all this for the purpose of making the poem, the country, and the people more real. The main thing after all is to get the pupils to read the poem with relish and real enjoyment.

The notes, which will be found at the end of the book, are few in number, and only such as will illuminate the poem; allusions are explained, difficult words commented on, and hidden meanings revealed. It is taken for granted that pupils will have ready access to the usual books of reference, such as the standard dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories, and biographies. The ability to use such books of reference repeatedly and with the minimum loss of time is one of the chief evidences of scholarly equipment; and pupils should early be trained in this most important part of their education.

JAMES CHALMERS.

# INTRODUCTION

*The Lady of the Lake* was first published in 1810, when Scott was thirty-nine, and it was dedicated to "the most noble John James, Marquis of Abercorn." Eight thousand copies were sold between June 2 and September 22, 1810, and repeated editions were subsequently called for. In 1830, the following "Introduction" was prefixed to the poem by the author:

After the success of *Marmion*, I felt inclined to exclaim with Ulysses in the *Odyssey*:—

> Οὗτος μὲν δὴ ἄεθλος ἀέθλων ἐκτετέλεσται·
> Νῦν αὖτε σκοπὸν ἄλλον.
>
> *Odys.* χ. 5.

"One venturous game my hand has won to-day—
Another, gallants, yet remains to play."

The ancient manners, the habits and customs of the aboriginal race by whom the Highlands of Scotland were inhabited, had always appeared to me peculiarly adapted to poetry. The change in their manners, too, had taken place almost within my own time, or at least I had learned many particulars concerning the ancient state of the Highlands from the old men of the last generation. I had always thought the old Scottish Gael highly adapted for poetical composition. The feuds and political dissensions which, half a century earlier, would have rendered the richer and wealthier part of the kingdom indisposed to countenance a poem, the scene of which was laid in the Highlands, were now sunk in the generous compassion which the English, more than any other nation, feel for the misfortunes of an honorable foe. The Poems of

Ossian had by their popularity sufficiently shown that, if writings on Highland subjects were qualified to interest the reader, mere national prejudices were, in the present day, very unlikely to interfere with their success.

I had also read a great deal, seen much, and heard more, of that romantic country where I was in the habit of spending some time every autumn; and the scenery of Loch Katrine was connected with the recollection of many a dear friend and merry expedition of former days. This poem, the action of which lay among scenes so beautiful and so deeply imprinted on my recollections, was a labor of love, and it was no less so to recall the manners and incidents introduced. The frequent custom of James IV., and particularly of James V., to walk through their kingdom in disguise, afforded me the hint of an incident which never fails to be interesting if managed with the slightest address or dexterity.

I may now confess, however, that the employment, though attended with great pleasure, was not without its doubts and anxieties. A lady, to whom I was nearly related, and with whom I lived, during her whole life, on the most brotherly terms of affection, was residing with me at the time when the work was in progress, and used to ask me, what I could possibly do to rise so early in the morning (that happening to be the most convenient to me for composition). At last I told her the subject of my meditations; and I can never forget the anxiety and affection expressed in her reply. "Do not be so rash," she said, "my dearest cousin.[1] You are already

[1] Lockhart says: "The lady with whom Sir Walter Scott held this conversation was, no doubt, his aunt, Miss Christian Rutherford; there was no other female relation *dead* when this Introduction was written, whom I can suppose him to have consulted on literary questions. Lady Capulet, on seeing the corpse of Tybalt, exclaims,—

'Tybalt, my cousin! O my brother's child!'"

popular,—more so, perhaps, than you yourself will believe, or than even I, or other partial friends, can fairly allow to your merit. You stand high,—do not rashly attempt to climb higher, and incur the risk of a fall; for, depend upon it, a favorite will not be permitted even to stumble with impunity." I replied to this affectionate expostulation in the words of Montrose,—

> " 'He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch
> To gain or lose it all.'

"If I fail," I said, for the dialogue is strong in my recollection, "it is a sign that I ought never to have succeeded, and I will write prose for life: you shall see no change in my temper, nor will I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed,

> 'Up with the bonnie blue bonnet,
> The dirk, and the feather, and a' !'"

Afterward I showed my affectionate and anxious critic the first canto of the poem, which reconciled her to my imprudence. Nevertheless, although I answered thus confidently, with the obstinacy often said to be proper to those who bear my surname, I acknowledge that my confidence was considerably shaken by the warning of her excellent taste and unbiased friendship. Nor was I much comforted by her retractation of the unfavorable judgment, when I recollected how likely a natural partiality was to effect that change of opinion. In such cases, affection rises like a light on the canvas, improves any favorable tints which it formerly exhibited, and throws its defects into the shade.

I remember that about the same time a friend started in to "heeze up my hope," like the "sportsman with his cutty gun," in the old song. He was bred a farmer, but