

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

17 *The Reiver's Wedding*

In "The Reiver's Wedding," the Poet had evidently designed to blend together two traditional stories concerning his own forefathers, the Scots of Harden, which are detailed in the first chapters of his *Life*. The biographer adds: "I know not for what reason, Lochwood, the ancient fortress of the Johnstones in Annandale, has been substituted for the real locality of his ancestor's drumhead Wedding Contract." — *Life*, vol. ii., p. 94.

O will ye hear a mirthful bourd?  
Or will ye hear of courtesie?  
Or will hear how a gallant lord  
Was wedded to a gay ladye?

"Ca' out the kye," quo' the village herd, 5  
As he stood on the knowe,  
"Ca' this ane's nine and that ane's ten,  
And bauld Lord William's cow." —

"Ah! by my sooth," quoth William then,  
"And stands it that way now, 10  
When knave and churl have nine and ten,  
That the Lord has but his cow?

"I swear by the light of the Michaelmas moon,  
And the might of Mary high,  
And by the edge of my braidsword brown, 15  
They shall soon say Harden's kye."

He took a bugle frae his side,  
With names carved o'er and o'er —  
Full many a chief of meikle pride  
That Border bugle bore — 20

He blew a note baith sharp and hie,  
Till rock and water rang around —  
Three score of moss-troopers and three  
Have mounted at that bugle sound.

The Michaelmas moon had enter'd then, 25  
And ere she wan the full,  
Ye might see by her light in Harden glen  
A bow o' kye and a bassen'd bull.

And loud and loud in Harden tower  
The quaigh gaed round wi' meikle glee; 30  
For the English beef was brought in bower,  
And the English ale flow'd merrilie.

And mony a guest from Teviotside  
And Yarrow's Braes was there;  
Was never a lord in Scotland wide 35  
That made more dainty fare.

They ate, they laugh'd, they sang and quaff'd,  
Till nought on board was seen,  
When knight and squire were boune to dine,  
But a spur of silver sheen. 40

Lord William has ta'en his berry brown steed —  
A sore shent man was he;  
"Wait ye, my guests, a little speed —  
Weel feasted ye shall be."

He rode him down by Falsehope burn, 45  
His cousin dear to see,  
With him to take a riding turn —  
Wat-draw-the-sword was he.

And when he came to Falsehope glen,  
Beneath the trysting-tree, 50

On the smooth green was carved plain,  
“To Lochwood bound are we.”

“O if they be gane to dark Lochwood  
To drive the Warden’s gear,  
Betwixt our names, I ween, there’s feud; 55  
I’ll go and have my share:

“For little reck I for Johnstone’s feud,  
The Warden though he be.”  
So Lord William is away to dark Lochwood,  
With riders barely three. 60

The Warden’s daughters in Lochwood sate,  
Were all both fair and gay,  
All save the Lady Margaret,  
And she was wan and wae.

The sister, Jean, had a full fair skin, 65  
And Grace was bauld and brow;  
But the leal-fast heart her breast within  
It weel was worth them a’.

Her father’s pranked her sisters twa  
With meikle joy and pride; 70  
But Margaret maun seek Dundrennan’s wa’ —  
She ne’er can be a bride.

On spear and casque by gallants gent  
Her sisters’ scarfs were borne,  
But never at tilt or tournament 75  
Were Margaret’s colours worn.

Her sisters rode to Thirlstane bower,  
But she was left at hame  
To wander round the gloomy tower,  
And sigh young Harden’s name. 80

“Of all the knights, the knight most fair,  
From Yarrow to the Tyne,”  
Soft sigh’d the maid, “is Harden’s heir,  
But ne’er can he be mine;

“Of all the maids, the foulest maid 85  
From Teviot to the Dee,  
Ah!” sighing sad, that lady said,  
“Can ne’er young Harden’s be.” —

She looked up the briery glen,  
And up the mossy brae, 90  
And she saw a score of her father’s men  
Yclad in the Johnstone grey.

O fast and fast they downwards sped  
The moss and briers among,  
And in the midst the troopers led 95  
A shackled knight along.

*1802*

(From *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*. Ed. J. G. Lockhart. Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1841)