

Walter Scott

The Lay of the Last Minstrel

and

The Lady of the Lake.

Bound volume (328pp) containing the two poems and copiously illustrated with watercolour sketches by "Claribel", many of apparently Scottish mountain scenes. Inscription on fly sheet reads "A. S. Barnard, Dec 16th 1883" [50th birthday of Adelaide Sophia Barnard], with pencil note below reading, "*Sketches etc. by 'Claribel', Charlotte Allington, 1st wife of Charles Cary Barnard, by whom this book was given to his sister, my mother. The inscription is in his writing. PMB*" [Percy Mordaunt Barnard]

The original is held by Ian Morin. The following images show a small selection of pages from the book, taken by John Barnard in Sep 2019.

LAY
OF THE LAST
MINSTREL
AND LADY
OF THE
LAKE.

A. S. Barnard

Feb 16th. 1883

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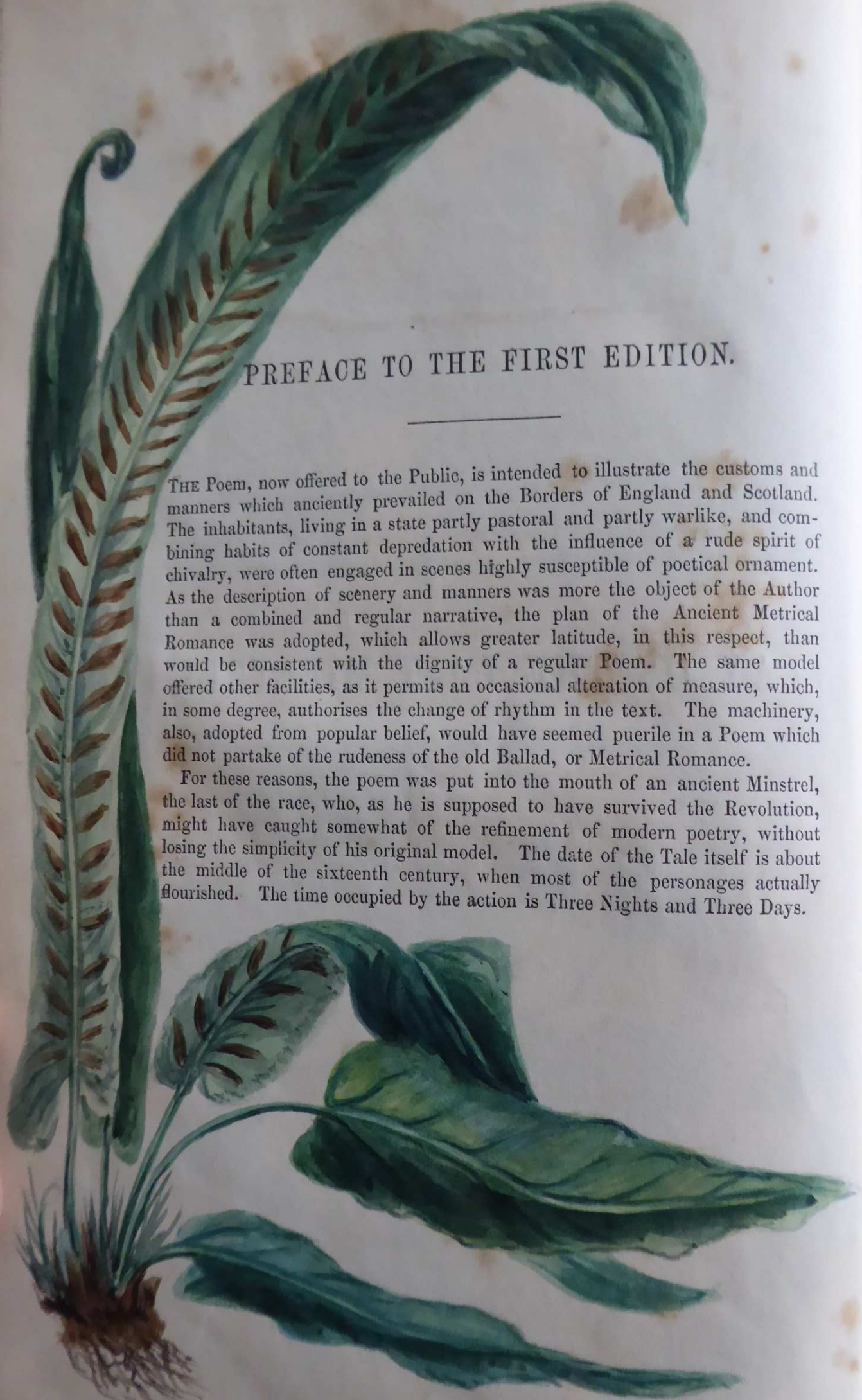
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THE

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LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.



PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE Poem, now offered to the Public, is intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders of England and Scotland. The inhabitants, living in a state partly pastoral and partly warlike, and combining habits of constant depredation with the influence of a rude spirit of chivalry, were often engaged in scenes highly susceptible of poetical ornament. As the description of scenery and manners was more the object of the Author than a combined and regular narrative, the plan of the Ancient Metrical Romance was adopted, which allows greater latitude, in this respect, than would be consistent with the dignity of a regular Poem. The same model offered other facilities, as it permits an occasional alteration of measure, which, in some degree, authorises the change of rhythm in the text. The machinery, also, adopted from popular belief, would have seemed puerile in a Poem which did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance.

For these reasons, the poem was put into the mouth of an ancient Minstrel, the last of the race, who, as he is supposed to have survived the Revolution, might have caught somewhat of the refinement of modern poetry, without losing the simplicity of his original model. The date of the Tale itself is about the middle of the sixteenth century, when most of the personages actually flourished. The time occupied by the action is Three Nights and Three Days.



LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

INTRODUCTION.

THE way was long, the wind was cold,
The Minstrel was infirm and old;
His withered cheek, and tresses gray,
Seemed to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy;
The last of all the bards was he
Who sung of Border chivalry.
For, well-a-day! their date was fled,
His tuneful brethren all were dead;
And he, neglected and oppressed,
Wished to be with them, and at rest.
No more, on prancing palfrey borne,
He carolled, light as lark at morn;
No longer, courted and caressed,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He poured, to lord and lady gay,
The unpremeditated lay:
Old times were changed, old manners gone;
A stranger filled the Stuarts' throne;

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The bigots of the iron time
 Had called his harmless art a crime.
 A wandering Harper, scorned and poor,
 He begged his bread from door to door;
 And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
 The harp a king had loved to hear.

21

He passed where Newark's stately tower
 Looks out from Yarrow's birchen bower:
 The Minstrel gazed with wishful eye—
 No humbler resting-place was nigh.

30

With hesitating step, at last,
 The embattled portal-arch he passed,
 Whose ponderous grate and massy bar
 Had oft rolled back the tide of war,
 But never closed the iron door
 Against the desolate and poor.

The Duchess¹ marked his weary pace,
 His timid mien, and reverend face,
 And bade her page the menials tell,
 That they should tend the old man well:

40

For she had known adversity,
 Though born in such a high degree;
 In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,
 Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb!

When kindness had his wants supplied,
 And the old man was gratified,
 Began to rise his minstrel pride:

And he began to talk anon,
 Of good Earl Francis,² dead and gone,
 And of Earl Walter,³ rest him God!

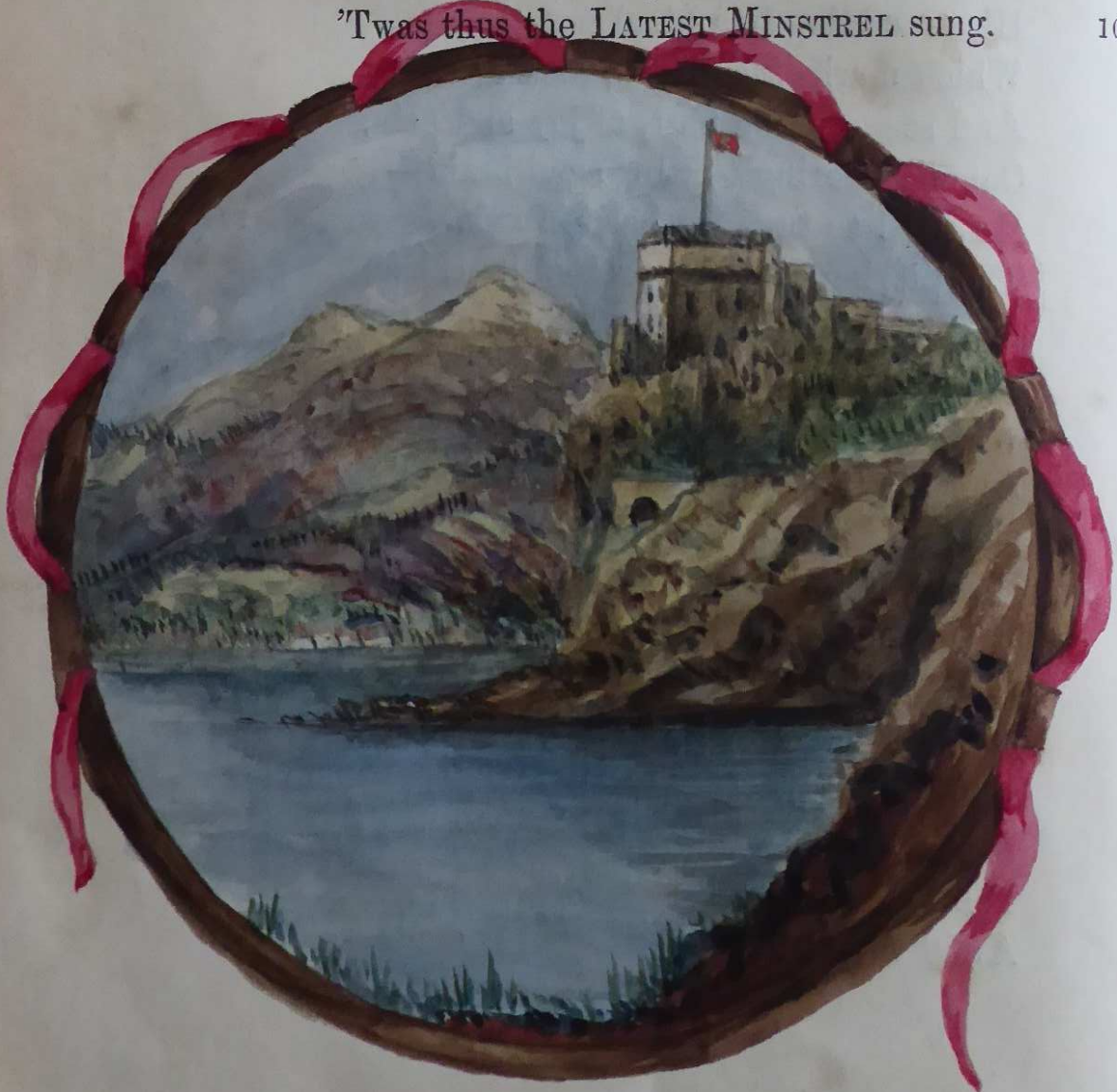
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¹ Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, representative of the ancient Lords of Buccleuch, and widow of the unfortunate James, Duke of Monmouth, who was beheaded in 1685.—² Francis Scott, Earl of Buccleuch, father to the Duchess.—³ Walter, Earl of Buccleuch, grandfather to the Duchess, and a celebrated warrior.

A braver ne'er to battle rode ; 51
And how full many a tale he knew
Of the old warriors of Buccleuch ;
And, would the noble Duchess deign
To listen to an old man's strain,
Though stiff his hand, his voice though weak,
He thought, even yet, the sooth to speak,
That, if she loved the harp to hear,
He could make music to her ear.

The humble boon was soon obtained ; 60
The Aged Minstrel audience gained.
But, when he reached the room of state,
Where she, with all her ladies, sate,
Perchance he wished his boon denied :
For, when to tune his harp he tried,
His trembling hand had lost the ease
Which marks security to please ;
And scenes, long past, of joy and pain,
Came wildering o'er his aged brain—
He tried to tune his harp in vain. 70
The pitying Duchess praised its chime,
And gave him heart, and gave him time,
Till every string's according glee
Was blended into harmony.
And then, he said, he would full fain
He could recall an ancient strain,
He never thought to sing again.
It was not framed for village churls,
But for high dames and mighty earls ;
He had played it to King Charles the Good, 80
When he kept court in Holyrood ;
And much he wished, yet feared, to try
The long-forgotten melody.
Amid the strings his fingers strayed,

And an uncertain warbling made, 85
And oft he shook his hoary head.
But when he caught the measure wild,
The old man raised his face, and smiled;
And lightened up his faded eye,
With all a poet's ecstasy! 90
In varying cadence, soft or strong,
He swept the sounding chords along:
The present scene, the future lot,
His toils, his wants, were all forgot:
Cold diffidence and age's frost,
In the full tide of song were lost;
Each blank, in faithless memory void,
The poet's glowing thought supplied;
And, while his harp responsive rung,
'Twas thus the LATEST MINSTREL sung. 100



No son, to be his father's stay,
And guide him on the rugged way?
'Ay, once he had—but he was dead!'—
Upon the harp he stooped his head,
And busied himself the strings withal,
To hide the tear, that fain would fall.
In solemn measure, soft and slow,
Arose a father's notes of woe.

