

KENILWORTH—By Sir Walter Scott

Condensation by Rev. Dr. R. Perry Bush, Chelsea, Mass.

There could be no finer setting for a story of love and tragedy than that afforded by the court of England during the reign of Elizabeth.

It was the heyday of gorgeous costuming and an age saturated with the occult. Everyone patronized the astrologers and the alchemists. The queen coupled with the dignity and strength of the monarch the foibles of the weak. It was her policy to play one favorite against another and thereby secure the working of her own strong will, but she often gave way to furious temper and she was most susceptible to flattery. She was forever undecided between her duty to her subjects and her attachment to Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, whom it was commonly reported that she really intended to marry; for he was a courtier par excellence, and his ambition to share the throne overpowered every other purpose of his life. He had, however, been secretly wedded to Amy Robsart, and so, to further his chances to become, he consorted with one Richard Varney, and plotted the murder of his wife, which was accomplished at Abingdon Manor.

These threads of fact, with many others of fancy, Scott wove into the fabric of "Kenilworth." To him who would listen to those who make fulsome compliment and laudation a fine art—to one who would understand the subtle poisoning of the mind by insinuation—to such as are interested in the machinations of men and women anxious to mingle in high society; to all who would be regaled by the conversations of lords and ladies and have unfolded for their edification a phase of history which never appears in the text books of our schools, at the same time that they are reading a romance of wonderful interest and plot, "Kenilworth" offers rare and wholesome treat.

The story opens at an inn kept by one Gosling, whose nephew, Michael Lambourne, a swaggering drunkard, returns after years of absence and finds that Tony Foster, an old crony, who lighted the fires when Latimer and Ridley were burned, is keeping guard over a beautiful woman at Cummor Minster. Lambourne gains admission there, accompanied by Tressilian, a knight of peerless character, who is in search of her to whom he has been betrothed and who has been lured away from her father's house. Lambourne becomes an accomplice in crime with Foster, and Tressilian meets the mysterious lady, who proves to be none other than Amy Robsart, for it was she who was his promised bride.

He tries to persuade her to return to her father, but in vain, and in attempting to escape from the

Sir Walter Scott's struggle to pay his debts was as heroic as anything in his most heroic novel. He was 55 years old when the printing firm in which he was a secret partner failed and left him responsible for debts of \$650,000.

His wife died a few weeks later; he himself faced a probable mental breakdown, as he had had a slight attack of aphasia, an inability to remember the meanings of words. Yet he refused to go through bankruptcy, although he had had no part in incurring this mountainous debt. All that he asked from his creditors was a time. This secured he buckled sternly to his task.

He wrote doggedly and well, if not with the old fire. In two years he had paid off more than \$200,000. To make money more quickly he turned from novels to a "Life of Napoleon," which brought him nearly \$100,000.

His mind began to fail, but he struggled on. "Count Robert of Paris" and "Cas- tle Dangerous" were written after paralytic shocks. Racked by physical sufferings and with hardly more than half a brain, he so devoted himself to work that within five years more than half of the great debt had been paid.

His last year was made happy by a merciful hallucination. He conceived the idea that he had paid every creditor in full. About \$250,000 actually remained unpaid at his death, but this was reduced by insurance to \$150,000. This, too, was paid from copy-

rights, and 15 years later the last claim was discharged. No one had helped him. He had paid in full by his own unaided labor.

premises he meets Richard Varney, master of horse to Leicester, a shrewd calculating villain, who is a constant spur to the earl's ambition to be king.

Tressilian naturally concludes that Amy is this fellow's mistress and, drawing his sword, overcomes and would have slain him but for the timely arrival of Lambourne, when he was obliged to flee, and, knowing the queen's interest in such affairs, he resolves to obtain her intervention in Amy's behalf.

And here Scott makes use of a superstitious bent of the age! Tressilian's horse loses a shoe and a blacksmith cannot be found until an imp of a boy leads the way to a mysterious lair, named Way and Smith who is thought by those who know him to be an emissary of Satan and who turns out to be an alchemist with a laboratory underground, and who is persuaded to enter the employ of Tressilian and with him visits Sir Hugh Robsart, who signs a warrant of attorney to help to secure Leicester's powerful influence in persuading the queen to free Amy from Varney.

Tressilian and Wayland soon after this make a visit to Lord Sussex, and when he, for a seeming courtesy to the queen's physician, is called to court for explanation, they accompany him.

The depicting of this trip to Green-

wich is fascinating. The obsequience to royalty, the first step in Sir Walter Raleigh's career when he submits his elegant cloak for Elizabeth to walk upon; the boats, the river, the discussion of Shakespeare and a hundred touches of genius—it must be read in full to be appreciated.

Sussex, upon examination, is fully exonerated, and thereupon calls the queen's attention to the fact that Amy Robsart is cruelly held prisoner, and, forthwith, Varney and Leicester are summoned into the royal presence. And before the latter has opportunity to speak, Varney affirms that Amy is his wife; and as everyone is cognizant of Leicester's confusion, Varney assures Elizabeth that it is due to the earl's transcendent love for her gracious self. The case is apparently settled, and Varney is ordered to appear at the coming festivities at Kenilworth, and to bring with him the woman who has been the occasion of so much trouble.

Here is a problem! Amy will never consent to be received as Varney's wife. She must somehow be detained at Cummor.

It resolves into a battle of the alchemists.

Demetrius, in Varney's employ

prepares a drug for Amy, but Way-

land, as Tressilian's servant, enters

her apartments as a peddler and

provides an antidote for the poison.

He also apprises her of the enemies by whom she is surrounded and with him she flees from Cummor.

The time of the great carnival at Kenilworth is near at hand. Multitudes are on their way thither. Every avenue of approach is crowded. Wayland and Amy attach themselves to a group of strolling players, and after many interesting experiences, reach the castle where she is by chance lodged in a room in Mervyn's Tower, which had been assigned to Tressilian.

She fails to her death. When, however, this villain learns how matters have developed, he commits suicide.

The alchemist is found dead in his laboratory, and Tony Foster disappears and his skeleton is found long afterward in a secret chamber where he hid his gold. Leicester retires from court for a season, but later is

again a favorite in waiting upon the queen, and dies at last by taking poison he had designed for another. Copyright 1919, by Post Publishing Co., The Boston Post Publishing Co., special arrangement with the McClure Newspaper Syndicate. All rights reserved.

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