



Principle Approach® Education

TALES OF A GRANDFATHER: BEING STORIES TAKEN FROM SCOTTISH HISTORY

by Sir Walter Scott

EDITOR'S NOTE

BY PEARLE HENRIKSEN SCHULTZ

To pick one selection from Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*, the history book written by the famous Scottish writer for his little grandson, is as difficult as to select a single bloom from a field of beautiful flowers. First of all, you, the reader, should read the dedication, and then, of course, you will read the brief preface. After that, if I *must* choose, turn to Chapter 27 and enjoy the story of the Scottish king, James V (1528–1540), who encouraged learning, sponsored poets (and wrote poetry himself), attempted scientific experimentation, was a musician, and brought the violent borders of his kingdom to a semblance of order and peace by a means seldom before attempted by a ruling king—he donned ordinary clothes as a disguise and wandered alone through his kingdom, spending nights by the hearths of simple folk and listening to their complaints and hopes, items that would never reach his ears in his royal role. Once a poor farm laborer saved his life during one of these adventures, and, as a reward, the disguised James invited him to Edinburgh where he promised to show them the castle, and maybe give him a glimpse of the king. “Och, how would a poor man like me even know the king when I see him?” the worker asked. “He’ll be the one with his bonnet on his head,” he was advised. Everyone else will be bareheaded in his presence.” You can guess at what happened, I know. I think Scott greatly enjoyed writing about James V and his adventures. He even used that bonnet scene in his best seller, *The Lady of the Lake*.

JAMES V (1528–1540)

EXCERPT FROM *TALES OF A GRANDFATHER*

James V was handsome in his person, and resembled his father in the fondness for military exercises, and the spirit of chivalrous honour which James IV loved to display. He also inherited his father's love of justice, and his desire to establish and enforce wise and equal laws, which should protect the weak against the oppression of the great.

. . . King James, being alone and in disguise, fell into a quarrel with some gypsies, or other vagrants, and was assaulted by four or five of them. This chanced to be very near the bridge of Cramond; so the



SIR WALTER SCOTT
by Sir Henry Raeburn, 1822
Scottish National Portrait Gallery



King got on the bridge, which, as it was high and narrow, enabled him to defend himself with his sword against the number of persons by whom he was attacked. There was a poor man thrashing corn in a barn near by, who came out on hearing the noise of the scuffle, and seeing one man defending himself against numbers, gallantly took the King's part with his flail, to such good purpose that the gypsies were obliged to fly. The husbandman then took the King into the barn, brought him a towel and water to wash the blood from his face and hands, and finally walked with him a little way towards Edinburgh, in case he should be again attacked. On the way, the King asked his companion what and who he was. The labourer answered, that his name was John Howieson, and that he was bondsman on the farm of Braehead, near Cramond, which belonged to the King of Scotland. James then asked the poor man if there was any wish in the world which he would particularly desire should be gratified; and honest John confessed he should think himself the happiest man in Scotland were he but proprietor of the farm on which he wrought as a labourer. He then asked the King, in turn, who he was; and James replied, as usual, that he was the Goodman of Fallengiech, a poor man who had a small appointment about the palace; but he added, that if John Howieson would come to see him on the next Sunday, he would endeavor to repay his manful assistance, and, at least, give him the pleasure of seeing the royal apartments.

John put on his best clothes, as you may suppose, and appearing at a postern gate of the palace, inquired for the Goodman of Fallengiech. The King had given orders that he should be admitted; and John found his friend, the Goodman, in the same disguise which he had formerly worn. The King, still preserving the character of an inferior officer of the household, conducted John Howieson from one apartment of the palace to another, and was amused with his wonder and his remarks. At length James asked his visitor if he should like to see the King; to which John replied, nothing would delight him so much, if he could do so without giving offence. The Goodman of Fallengiech, of course, undertook that the King would not be angry, "But," said John, "how am I to know his Grace from the nobles who will be all about him:—" "Easily," replied his companion; "all the others will be uncovered—the King alone will wear his hat or bonnet."

So speaking, King James introduced the countryman into a great hall, which was filled by the nobility and officers of the crown. John was a little frightened, and drew close to his attendant; but was still unable to distinguish the King. "I told you that you should know him by his wearing his hat," said the conductor. "Then," said John, after he had again looked round the room, "it must be either you or me, for all but us two are bare-headed."

The King laughed at John's fancy; and that the good yeoman might have occasion for mirth also, he made him a present of the farm of Braehead, which he had wished so much to possess, on condition that John Howieson, or his successors, should be ready to present a ewer and basin for the King to wash his hands, when his Majesty should come to Holyrood Palace, or should pass the bridge of Cramond. Accordingly, in the year 1822, when George IV came to Scotland, the descendent of John Howieson of Braehead, who still possessed the estate which was given to his ancestor, appeared at a solemn festival, and offered his Majesty water from a silver ewer, that he might perform the service by which he held his lands.



THE LADY OF THE LAKE

by Sir Walter Scott

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sir Walter Scott used the James V hat scene in *The Lady of the Lake*.

XXVI Within 't was brilliant all and light,
A thronging scene of figures bright;
It glowed on Ellen's dazzled sight,
As when the setting sun has given
Ten thousand hues to summer even,
And from their tissue fancy frames
Aerial knights and fairy dames.
Still by Fitz-James her footing staid;
A few faint steps she forward made,
Then slow her drooping head she raised,
And fearful round the presence gazed;
For him she sought who owned this state,
The dreaded Prince whose will was fate!—
She gazed on many a princely port
Might well have ruled a royal court;
On many a splendid garb she gazed,—
Then turned bewildered and amazed,
For all stood bare; and in the room
Fitz-James alone wore cap and plume.
To him each lady's look was lent,
On him each courtier's eye was bent;
Midst furs and silks and jewels sheen,
He stood, in simple Lincoln green, . . .