

# Ban and Arriere Ban

Ban and Arrière-Ban by George Meredith is a historical novel that explores themes of loyalty, love, and honor, set against the backdrop of medieval chivalry, where knights and noblemen navigate personal and political conflicts.



## **HOW THEY HELD THE BASS FOR KING JAMES--1691-1693**

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In the chapter "How They Held the Bass for King James" from the tale recounted in 1743, the narrative unfolds a stirring historical saga set during the years 1691-1693, depicting the valorous feat of a small group of cavaliers who daringly defended the Bass Rock against the forces opposed to King James. The Bass, a formidable natural fortress surrounded by the tempestuous seas near North Berwick Law, had previously been a grim prison for those dedicated to the Covenant, where they endured their confinement with a mix of prayer, psalmody, and defiance.

The focus shifts to the exploits of Halyburton, Middleton, Roy, and young Dunbar, who were initially imprisoned within the Bass's stark confines, destined to meet their demise there. Their situation took a dramatic turn when they, comprising merely four souls against a garrison, ingeniously commandeered the fortress, thus declaring it a bastion for King James. This audacious act was not achieved through spiritual means or by the force of faith alone but through a shrewd plan executed when most of the garrison was distracted elsewhere.

They secured their freedom by overpowering the few soldiers remained on the rock, signaling their triumph over the Bass Rock to the enemies below, and effectively

making the formidable fortress a stronghold for their cause. Their success prompted support from King James, who sent reinforcements, thus emboldening the cavaliers to not only defend their position but also to levy tolls on passing ships, further fueling their resistance efforts.

Their dominion over the Bass was challenged when forces sent by Wullie Wanbeard attempted to recapture it through siege and assault. Yet, after two days of fierce confrontation, the attackers withdrew, battered and bested, allowing the cavaliers to continue their relentless, piratical forays for three more years. Alas, the siege inevitably took its toll; cut off and starved, the cavaliers ultimately surrendered under a flag of truce.

The dramatic surrender was met with a peculiar mix of hospitality and strategy; Middleton, in a final act of defiance or perhaps diplomacy, treated the emissaries with unexpected generosity. The narrative, rich with historical references and vivid imagery of the rugged Scottish landscape and its indomitable inhabitants, evokes the fierce loyalty and audacious spirit of those who held the Bass for King James, portraying their saga not just as a mere footnote in history but as a legendary embodiment of courage and resilience.

# THE PROMISE OF HELEN

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The chapter titled "The Promise of Helen" from the book *Ban and Arriere Ban* portrays a romantic and mystical revival of the concept of romance and adventure. Opening with a poetic invocation to a beloved lost and then regained, it sets the stage for a narrative that intertwines love, loss, and the supernatural. The speaker addresses their true love, promising the return of a beloved figure who, despite being wed to another or even dead, is now waking for the speaker. This section encapsulates themes of undying love and the resurrection of deep, personal connections across the barriers of marriage and mortality.

The chapter then shifts to "The Restoration of Romance," dedicated to figures identified only by their initials, suggesting a tribute to friends or influential individuals. It mourns the apparent death of King Romance, a metaphorical representation of the genre of romantic and adventurous tales. King Romance, once vibrant and influential, is depicted as wounded, his knights lost, and his realm asleep. Critics and foes declare the age of romantic tales over, their magic gone, and their stories told.

However, the narrative takes a turning point with the emergence of new champions from diverse locales, from Tugela to the Tweed. These new heroes champion the cause of King Romance, proving his detractors wrong. Marsac's adventures, Micah Clarke's partisan battles, and the undying spirit of individuals facing imprisonment for their causes or loves illustrate the enduring nature of romantic and adventurous spirit. The resurgence of King Romance, wielding a wand of gold and reclaiming his domain, symbolizes the timeless appeal and reinstatement of the romance genre.

With engaging symbols of adventure like Marsac, thematic elements of sacrifice for love or cause, and the magical restoration of King Romance's realm, the chapter blends poetic allure with the enthralling promise of revived stories and adventures. It celebrates the eternal cycle of loss and rediscovery, both in love and in the narrative.

traditions of romance and adventure.



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# THE FAIRY MINISTER

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In the serene and tumultuous era of 1692, the tale of the Reverend Mr. Kirk of Aberfoyle, a peaceful man deeply loved by both his fellow men and the mystical Fairies, unfolds. Amidst the bloodshed of the Battle of Killiecrankie where the red blood of Dundee bled into the Garry, and political turmoil turned the world upside down, Mr. Kirk wandered his valley, untouched and attuned to the ethereal whispers and sightings from the otherworldly inhabitants of fairy knolls and enchanted hills. His profound understanding and the secrets he held of the Fairy folks led to his mysterious disappearance, taken by the very beings he understood so deeply, leaving him to wander between worlds, beyond the reach of heaven, hell, and human comprehension.

This enigmatic departure left many yearning for the stories he could tell, for the connection between humans and the Fairies has since dwindled. The taxes on corn and oil, the merry dances upon the heaths, and the laborious Brownies have all but vanished, alongside the enchanting encounters with Fairy maidens and their deadly kisses. There lies a sense of envy for Mr. Kirk, now adorned in the verdant garb of the Fairy Court, serving as the Chaplain to the Fairy Queen by the moonlit lochs and shadowy mountain crests.

The poem then transitions to an ode to Robert Louis Stevenson, linking him with Kirk through their shared fascination with the supernatural, despite Stevenson's physical distance from the lore-laden landscapes of Scotland. It humorously contrasts Stevenson's surroundings with the absence of Scottish heather, peat, trout-filled burns, and the distinct lack of Presbyterian churches, lamenting his separation from the tangible elements of Scottish folklore.

Yet, there is hope that Stevenson, through his writings and influence, might impart upon his new environment a sense of the Scottish Covenanting spirit, albeit in a land

unfamiliar with such historical and spiritual nuances. Through both the metaphorical feeding of "pagan wames" with wholesome Scottish fare and the sharing of Scotland's rich covenanting legacy, Stevenson might bridge the gap between two vastly different cultures, much like Kirk bridging the human and fairy worlds.

This chapter not only honors Mr. Kirk's mysterious legacy but also captures a moment of cultural reflection and the enduring allure of the unseen, suggesting that the fascination with folklore and fairy tales transcends time and place, much like the timeless wonder Stevenson brings to readers around the world.



# THE TOURNAY OF THE HEROES

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In the vividly depicted Tournay of the Heroes, the call to arms echoes through the realm, summoning an assembly of valiant knights ready to joust in a grand tournament that pits the legends of old Romance against characters from modern fiction. The lists are prepared, and the air is charged with anticipation as combatants on both sides are introduced with grandeur and historical reverence.

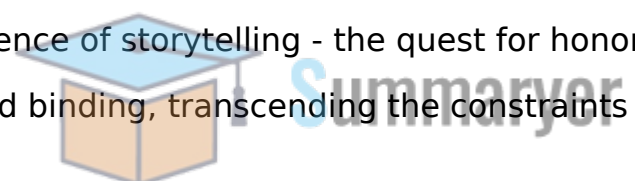
Leading the charge for the champions of Romance, Roland of Roncesvaux and Wilfred of Ivanhoe take their honored places, ready to defend the honor of their age-old tales against the encroaching narratives of contemporary literature. Accompanied by other illustrious figures such as the noble Templar, le brave Bussy, William of Deloraine, Hereward the Wake, the chivalrous Don Quixote from La Mancha, Sir Amyas Leigh, Eric with his golden locks, Alan Breck, Athos, and the fearless Dalgetty alongside the legendary Cid and Gotz the Iron-handed, a formidable lineup of heroes from chivalric times is set to face their modern-day challengers.

On the opposing side, figures from the new age of fiction ready themselves for the contest, among them David Grieve, once a provincial bookseller now a fierce competitor; Robert Elsmere with his beads; Felix Holt, brandishing a modern weapon; Silas Lapham with his six-shooter; the Egoist with a defiant gaze; Zola's ragged regiment; Flaubert's band of country doctors, all representing the evolving facets of literary narratives. They bring with them the complexities and moral ambiguities of modernity, clashing against the straightforward valor and honor of their historical counterparts.

As the tournament unfolds, a chaotic melee ensues, heroes and modern characters clash in a spectacle that binds the glory of the past with the tumultuous spirit of the present. Weapons clash, and many fall; the ground bears witness to the valor of

participants, as ancient chivalry and modern innovation collide. Amongst the whirlwind of conflict, moments of humor and absurdity shine through, as when Friar Tuck takes on Robert Elsmere, showing that even in battle, the human spirit's penchant for irony and wit remains undefeated.

The battle sees heroes such as the sombre Templar scattering the modern foes, while others like the brave Bussy meet their end amidst the fray. The narrative wraps the reader in a tumultuous yet noble endeavor, where despite the clash of eras and ideologies, the essence of storytelling - the quest for honor, justice, and valor - remains eternal and binding, transcending the constraints of time and evolving societal narratives.





# BALLAD OF THE PHILANTHROPIST

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In the esteemed Pomona Road and Gardens, N., tranquility and purity adorned each corner, setting a standard of serenity untouched by the common vulgarity found elsewhere. This neighborhood, unmarred by the disturbances of brawling spouses or the threats of burglary, presented itself as a peaceful haven, boasting chapels and churches instead of public houses. Yet, this idyllic setting did not satisfy B. 13, the local policeman, whose **thirst for** action left him discontent with the lack of criminal activity to engage his detective skills.

The residents of Pomona Road, cultured and refined, rarely faltered into wrongdoing, leaving B. 13 languishing in boredom on his beat. Unacquainted with love and indifferent to its allure, he yearned for a crime to solve, a quest to rejuvenate his spirit. Observing the policeman's sorrowful state, Howard Fry, a neighboring philanthropist, empathized with B. 13's plight and pondered on a remedy to end his desolation.

Committing to a drastic solution, Howard Fry vowed to embark on a crime spree, believing that by igniting chaos, he could restore purpose to B. 13's life. With a reluctant heart, Fry engaged in numerous felonies, executed with a sense of guilt, yet driven by a peculiar aim to aid the dispirited policeman.

As violence and fear swept over Pomona Road, turning it from a sanctuary into a place dreaded by many, B. 13 found his zeal rekindled. The once tranquil neighborhood, now a scene of crime, offered him the challenge he had longed for. Nightly altercations on buses and attacks on unsuspecting individuals gave B. 13 the opportunity to shine in his role, relishing the restoration of his duty to protect and serve.

Pomona Road's transformation from a peaceful retreat to a notorious hotspot underscored the unforeseen consequences of Howard Fry's actions, a misguided attempt to inject meaning into another's existence through the pursuit of mischief,

reflecting on the complex interplay between duty, fulfillment, and the unforeseen impacts of well-intended interventions.



# NOTES

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The chapter provides fascinating insights into Jeanne d'Arc's intertwined history with Scottish forces and individuals, painting a vivid picture of her remarkable influence and the legacy that followed. Jeanne d'Arc, known for leading a victorious charge at Lagny against the Burgundians under Franquet d'Arras, had notable Scottish connections, including a Scottish artist, possibly James Polwarth or a Hume of Polwarth, who designed her banner. This connection is bolstered by a monk from Dunfermline claiming presence during Jeanne's campaigns and at her execution, highlighting her spiritual invocation in battle. Furthermore, her association with Scotland is evidenced by the account of a Scottish archer possessing her portrait and the narrative of her final moments marked by a symbolic white dove at her execution, a testimony heard during her Rehabilitation trial between 1450-56.

The text also sheds light on the presence of Scottish archers, specifically two named Lang, Lain, or Laing, in the French service around 1507, underlying the enduring Scot-French military collaborations. This historic alliance is poignantly connected to Jeanne d'Arc, whose eventual elevation to 'Venerable' status, a precursor to sainthood, underscores the enduring fascination and respect for her character and deeds. Such esteem for Jeanne is advocated through the encouragement to delve into the comprehensive records of her legal trials, as compiled by M. Quicherat, emphasizing the miraculous nature of her life and death.

Additionally, the chapter references a tale of resilience during the 1691 siege of the Bass, based on accounts from the Memoirs of Rev. John Blackader. This story, though later in time, resonates with the themes of struggle and enduring faith similar to those experienced by Jeanne d'Arc, linking the narratives across centuries through shared Scottish valor and a profound historical impact that transcended individual lives and battles.