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

How They Held the Bass for King James--1691-1693 recounts one of the boldest episodes in the Jacobite struggle, where four men, once prisoners on a lonely rock fortress in the Firth of Forth, turned captivity into rebellion. The Bass Rock, often used to imprison those loyal to the Covenant, had seen hymns echo off its cliffs as prisoners clung to faith within cold, damp stone. But in 1691, that somber silence was shattered when Halyburton, Middleton, Roy, and young Dunbar, imprisoned there under grim prospects, took fate into their own hands. With only the ocean for escape and death as their expected end, they seized a moment of weakness when most of the garrison had gone ashore. What followed wasn’t desperation—it was brilliance. With stealth and strength, they overtook the remaining guards and raised their own banner, transforming prison walls into a Jacobite citadel.

Once in control, the rebels declared the fortress held for King James, and their audacity echoed across the coast. Ships that once passed unbothered now found themselves stopped and taxed by these new rulers of the sea-rock. Messages were smuggled, reinforcements arrived, and a garrison of four grew bolder, leveraging their position against Williamite shipping with a flair both daring and theatrical. The government, embarrassed and enraged, responded with force. William’s navy and soldiers surrounded the rock, hoping to bring the defiant few to heel. But the Bass held firm,

resisting fire and famine for months, even years. Their cause might have seemed lost elsewhere, but atop that rocky fortress, Jacobitism burned with furious clarity.

Twice they repelled full assaults, sending seasoned soldiers back to the shore, humiliated by the resilience of men once thought broken. Their rifles answered cannon, and their resolve confounded every commander sent to break it. The Bass became more than a fortress; it became a symbol of defiance, perched on the edge of the sea. Yet no legend lives forever without cost. Over time, food dwindled, powder ran low, and the tide of support withdrew. Starved and isolated, the defenders made the difficult choice to surrender—not with a cry of defeat, but under terms that reflected their grit and cunning. The flag was lowered, but their spirit, it seemed, would not bow.

When the emissaries came to receive the surrender, they expected bitterness or arrogance. Instead, Middleton received them with unexpected warmth, offering wine and food, as though they had been guests rather than conquerors. This act, part generosity and part political theatre, became a final statement of honor and dignity. He may have yielded the rock, but he never yielded pride. Their fight had stirred the imagination of sympathizers and mocked the power of a rising empire. Though the Bass was lost to the Jacobites, the story endured, not as a failure but as a firebrand act of loyalty and ingenuity. It captured the resilience of men driven by faith and loyalty, fighting not because they expected to win, but because they could not stand idle while their king was overthrown.

The rocky island itself, carved by wind and wave, became a character in the tale—unyielding, ancient, and perfectly suited for legends. The men who held it were not knights in gleaming armor, but outlaws, prisoners, and partisans—ordinary Scots who carved their place into history with sheer resolve. Their saga reminds us that courage often rises in the most unexpected places, and that history remembers not only victors, but those who dared the impossible. The holding of the Bass Rock was no grand campaign; it was a whisper of rebellion shouted from a crag above the sea. And though the wind has long carried away their voices, the echoes of their defiance still cling to the cliffs.

The Promise of Helen

The Promise of Helen opens with the soft echo of a vow reaching beyond time, as a voice calls out not only to a woman once lost but to an entire era of romance thought buried. It speaks not just to Helen, the individual, but to a spirit once believed gone—of love unbound by death, of memory refusing silence. In this vision, the beloved rises again, not from the grave in sorrow, but in radiance, drawn back by the sheer strength of devotion. The passage is less concerned with realism than with the deep emotional truths buried in longing and reunion. Even if the world insists she is married, or buried, or forever gone, the speaker declares otherwise: she returns because love, once awakened, does not yield to endings. And in her return is also the return of something greater—an old, golden promise that romance can still live.

As the tale unfolds, the focus widens from Helen to something broader and more symbolic: the fall and hopeful rise of King Romance himself. Once a vibrant sovereign of stories filled with duels, daring escapes, and love untainted by irony, he now lies abandoned, his kingdom scattered across forgotten bookshelves and neglected imaginations. Critics and scholars, armed with cynicism, have declared his reign outdated, his tales too naive for the modern mind. They say the knights are all gone, the forests quiet, and no one sings beneath castle walls anymore. But the chapter resists this. It does not mourn passively; it rebels. For in the distance, from rivers like the Tugela and the Tweed, there rise new figures bearing old souls—willing again to believe in courage, to defend lost causes, and to suffer for beauty.

These renewed champions do not mimic the past; they renew it. Marsac and Micah Clarke walk paths shaped by new history but guided by the same light of romance. Their causes may seem modern—partisan battles, political imprisonment, moral defiance—but the essence remains rooted in love, loyalty, and the belief that the soul of a story can outlive any century. Each figure becomes a torchbearer, carrying the

flame through new shadows. And so, the cry spreads: King Romance is not dead. He was sleeping, and now he wakes, wand in hand, to transform the grey world back into something golden. It’s not about escaping the present, but about infusing it with magic once forgotten.

The restoration of King Romance is not merely a literary argument—it is a deeply felt reclamation of joy, wonder, and the thrill of earnest storytelling. Even as the world prizes skepticism and realism, the chapter insists there is still room for awe and gallantry. It suggests that romance need not fade just because the world has changed; it only needs to adapt without surrendering its heart. Stories still exist where sacrifice has meaning, where honor is not a punchline, and where love, no matter how far-flung or fatal, compels the reader to believe in something bigger than themselves. The knights may wear new clothes, and the dragons might breathe different fire, but the adventure still calls.

This revival is not nostalgic for its own sake. It is celebratory, insisting that what was once meaningful can be made meaningful again—not as imitation but as inheritance. The chapter draws strength from its ability to blend old echoes with new voices, inviting readers to once again ride into battle not for conquest but for conviction. It is a reminder that while styles change and tastes evolve, the human need for stories that elevate, inspire, and enchant remains eternal. Helen’s return, like Romance’s, is not about undoing death but about awakening the parts of the soul untouched by it. Through her promise and the kingdom’s restoration, the text asks us to believe again—not in fantasy, but in the beauty of belief itself.

In the end, *The Promise of Helen* is less about Helen or even King Romance than it is about the reader. It offers a mirror, asking: what stories do you still carry? What promises lie waiting in your own forgotten kingdoms? And most of all—what would you do, if someone told you that your most cherished myths were never gone, only sleeping? This chapter dares to wake them.

The Fairy Minister

The Fairy Minister steps quietly into history during the troubled year of 1692, where conflict raged at Killiecrankie and lives were lost to both sword and political betrayal. Yet in Aberfoyle, away from bloodied fields, Reverend Robert Kirk walked in peace among mossy hills, believed to be touched by something more delicate and ancient than war. Revered by his congregation and, curiously, beloved by the Fairies, Kirk spent his final days in quiet communion with the unseen. Legends grew from his deep knowledge of the fairy realm—of green knolls, twilight dances, and whispers carried on the breeze. When he vanished, not buried but absorbed into mystery, many said he had been taken by those otherworldly friends. Neither condemned nor saved, he became a soul lodged between realms, immortalized in silence and folklore, remembered as the minister who knew too much.

His fate stirred both wonder and envy. While others aged and faltered under earthly burdens, Kirk was believed to serve in the eternal twilight of the Fairy Court, dressed in green, his sermons now delivered beneath moonlit branches. Tales of laboring Brownies and seductive fairy maidens have since faded, and the heaths lie quiet where once ghostly dances spun through the night. The world has become too loud, too taxed, too logical for fairies to remain. Yet in some corners of the imagination, Kirk’s voice still lingers, offering blessings beyond human creed. His story remains not as warning, but as an invitation to believe in something softer, more mysterious, and defiantly unknowable. That he was chosen speaks not to power, but to a deep harmony with the hidden order of the world.

In a whimsical shift, the tale drifts to Robert Louis Stevenson, a man far from Scotland’s lochs but bound by the same love for myth and wonder. Stevenson, though exiled by health to gentler climates, carried the wild spirit of the north within him. There were no peats to burn, no trout-filled streams to stir, and certainly no

Presbyterian fire in his tropical surroundings—but his imagination made up for all that. The poem gently mocks his absence from the homeland, yet praises how his words ignite the same flickering belief that Kirk once embodied. Though physically distant, Stevenson stayed tethered by memory, and that connection—like Kirk's with the Fairies—transcended time and soil.

Where Kirk brought the unseen close, Stevenson brings the distant near. Through story, he feeds foreign readers with glimpses of Scotland's soul—its fierce piety, its mossy hills, its legends half-believed and wholly loved. Even the pagan heart, the text jokes, might one day crave bannocks or shiver under the weight of a Scottish sermon. Stevenson becomes, in his way, a modern fairy minister—not snatched away, but willingly exiled, spreading the old songs in new lands. Just as Kirk became an emissary to the Fairies, Stevenson becomes a bridge from Scotland to the world. The two are kindred spirits, one caught between dimensions, the other between continents, both shaping the way we imagine what lies beyond the veil of reality.

This chapter, half elegy and half praise, carries the murmur of moss and myth, and in doing so, it reminds us why we turn to folklore. In Kirk, we find the sacredness of mystery kept alive by faith in the unseen. In Stevenson, we find the joy of transmitting that mystery to places unknowing. Both men reveal that wonder is not limited to childhood or to place; it travels through language, memory, and belief. Whether wandering fairy hills or tropical islands, the work remains the same—to keep enchantment alive, even when the world forgets. And in doing so, they both become legends, not because they chased magic, but because they let it find them.

The Tournay of the Heroes

The Tournay of the Heroes begins with a horn's cry that summons not just warriors but the very soul of storytelling across centuries. At this grand meeting of minds and myths, champions of classic romance step forward, clad in time-honored steel and noble resolve. Roland of Roncesvaux, echoing the trumpet of Charlemagne's battles, joins hands with Wilfred of Ivanhoe, whose code of loyalty still gleams beneath his chainmail. Behind them ride knights of lore—Hereward the Wake with quiet fury, Don Quixote with wide eyes and bent lance, and Athos, ever dignified even in the face of chaos. Each represents a piece of older literature's heartbeat, where heroism was measured in courage, sacrifice, and unwavering ideals. Their entrance is not one of mere nostalgia, but a declaration of the virtues that once guided tales through the centuries.

Opposite them stand the avatars of a shifting age—modern protagonists forged not in mythic wars, but in the complexity of society and self. Felix Holt comes not with a sword, but a sharp-edged idealism. Silas Lapham wields a revolver, not to slay dragons, but to navigate the capitalism of a changing America. Robert Elsmere bears his beads like quiet rebellion, and David Grieve arrives stripped of grandeur, but fortified with inner conviction. Around them crowd Zola's grim soldiers and Flaubert's weary country physicians—representatives of stories rooted not in heroics, but in doubt, struggle, and raw human truth. Theirs is not the gleaming armor of romance, but the dust-streaked cloak of realism, no less noble for its lack of polish.

As the jousts commence, chaos bursts from the gates. Swords and satire collide. Hereward's axe meets Felix Holt's protest; Don Quixote's erratic charge surprises the stoic Egoist. Amidst it all, absurd moments spring forth. Friar Tuck, half-drunk and entirely enthusiastic, topples Elsmere with a well-placed jug, proving that brute joy and stubborn optimism have their place in even the most philosophical battles. This duel of

ideals, as much as it is of characters, shows how storytelling morphs with its times yet holds tightly to the desire for meaning. Whether with lance or pen, each warrior fights for their worldview.

Yet the battle is not evenly matched. The Templar, stern and unforgiving, slices through ambiguity with blade and doctrine. Alan Breck's wild charm unsettles modern resolve, while the Cid and Gotz tear through metaphor and introspection with brute simplicity. But modern voices do not fade quietly. Silas Lapham takes down a knight with a well-aimed bullet, and Zola's legion makes up for skill with sheer force of narrative momentum. Blood and ink mix in the soil. The tourney becomes not a test of strength, but of relevance. What survives is not just who can strike the hardest, but who can still move the reader's heart.

In the fray, many fall. The brave Bussy is brought low, perhaps by irony more than arms. Characters from both sides lie still, neither era claiming full victory. The dust settles not with a winner, but with a question: what story matters most? Is it the knight's unwavering honor or the realist's emotional truth? And yet, as the last combatants lower their arms, a quiet understanding forms. Though different in shape and style, both camps sought the same goal—to reveal something lasting about the human spirit. It is not their weapons that make them heroic, but the weight they carry on behalf of the reader.

In the end, the Tournay does not crown a victor. It reveals a lineage. From Roland's trumpet to Zola's pen, stories evolve, but their core remains: a desire to illuminate life's trials, triumphs, and tragedies. As spectators leave the arena, echoes of clashing ideologies follow, not as noise, but as harmony in tension. For even in conflict, these characters remind us that literature is not bound by age or genre—it lives wherever courage meets vulnerability. The tourney closes, but its resonance lingers in every reader who has ever found themselves both in the dream of a knight and the doubt of a man.

Ballad of the Philanthropist

Ballad of the Philanthropist begins in a place where peace reigned so steadily, it became nearly unbearable for one man sworn to uphold the law. Pomona Road and its adjoining gardens stood as an exemplar of domestic civility—each house adorned with floral perfection, each resident attuned to quiet harmony. Chapels echoed softly on Sunday mornings, not a single public house disrupted the order, and disputes, if any, never rose above whispered discontent. But amid this polished calmness walked B. 13, a policeman whose spirit quietly eroded beneath the weight of inactivity. Crime had evaded his district entirely, leaving him not proud, but purposeless. Each night he paced his beat, untouched by disorder, yet deeply unsettled by the absence of anything to fight for.

B. 13 had no wife, no vices, and no taste for distraction. All he craved was the stir of pursuit, the satisfaction of outwitting some clever rogue, or even the noise of a petty brawl. But Pomona Road offered none of this. It was too perfect, too trimmed, and too well-mannered. His soul, dulled by routine, became a subject of curiosity to the locals, who noticed the odd heaviness in his steps. Among them was Howard Fry, a man of great wealth and greater eccentricity, known for giving generously but quietly. Seeing the despair beneath the officer’s polished brass buttons, Fry found himself struck by a strange urge—not to lecture or distract, but to help in a way no one would expect.

Howard Fry's plan defied all logic and leaned precariously on absurdity. Believing that purpose was more vital than peace, he resolved to introduce crime into Pomona Road. Not out of malice, but out of misguided empathy. A man who had once funded schools and soup kitchens now turned to burglary and arson with the same calculated generosity. Each act—tossing bricks through windows, picking locks at twilight, setting fire to tool sheds—was done with theatrical restraint. No lives were endangered, but fear spread quickly. Fry acted not as a villain but as an awkward benefactor, delivering

panic in small doses, all to revitalize the career of a single man.

And indeed, B. 13 came alive. His nightly patrols transformed into adrenaline-fueled hunts, his name whispered with awe and appreciation by once-indifferent neighbors. Reports were filed, clues collected, arrests made. Pomona Road, formerly forgettable, now echoed with tales of bravery and intrigue. The policeman’s gait grew brisk, his presence sharper. He cracked cases with the fervor of a man restored, though never suspecting that the very criminal who revived him did so with benevolent intent. Fry, meanwhile, watched from behind lace curtains, his conscience twisted by the irony that doing wrong had brought something good.

But the cost of this rebirth was not evenly shared. The community, once prized for its tranquility, was now avoided by deliverymen and feared by tradespeople. Real estate values dipped. Children were ushered indoors before dusk. Fry had introduced not only excitement, but uncertainty, and he began to question the sustainability of his scheme. How much fear could one man justify for another’s fulfillment? His philanthropy had always been rooted in relief, not unrest. Yet reversing the chaos proved harder than starting it. The crimes, though initially designed with care, began to echo. Imitators emerged. Petty thieves took advantage. The road slipped further into disorder.

B. 13, though revitalized, was not blind to the irony. As weeks passed and crimes continued, he sensed a pattern that defied criminal logic. He began to suspect something artificial in the chaos, a choreography too precise. But his gratitude, his sheer pleasure in mattering again, blurred his judgment. He did not search too hard. Perhaps deep down, he didn’t want to know. To discover Fry’s role would mean questioning the foundation of his second wind. And so the game continued, unspoken yet understood.

In the final days of Fry’s quiet rebellion, he confessed his motives—not to B. 13, but to his own journals, which he sealed away. His hope had been simple: to restore dignity, to give purpose to someone adrift. Yet the outcome left him uneasy. The balance

between altruism and disruption had proved more delicate than he imagined. B. 13 thrived, but Pomona Road paid the price. Fry, once revered, withdrew from public view, no longer sure whether he had saved or corrupted.

The tale closes not with judgment, but with reflection. Good intentions, however noble, can spiral when forced into unfamiliar molds. A desire to do good, if acted out without caution, may birth the very harm one sought to prevent. Pomona Road became a parable—of peace disturbed, of purpose reclaimed, and of the strange ways in which kindness, when too forceful, can blur into chaos. In the end, it asks not whether Fry was right or wrong, but whether meaning, when given by force, ever truly belongs.

Notes

Notes opens a window into a rich tapestry of shared legacy between France and Scotland, woven through the story of Jeanne d’Arc. Her military campaign at Lagny, where she triumphed over the Burgundians under Franquet d’Arras, gains added depth when her Scottish connections are considered. One remarkable detail is the possibility that her iconic banner was created by a Scottish artist, perhaps a James Polwarth or someone from the Hume family. This visual symbol, which accompanied her into battle, reflects not only her divine inspiration but the subtle presence of foreign allegiance. A monk from Dunfermline claimed to have witnessed her victories and final moments, underscoring how her story echoed even in distant lands. Through such testimonies, Jeanne’s image as a spiritual figure of resistance and purity gains transnational dimensions.

The symbolism that surrounds her martyrdom is striking. A Scottish archer reportedly kept a portrait of Jeanne, suggesting a personal veneration long before her canonization. Eyewitness accounts from the Rehabilitation trial mention a white dove appearing as her body burned—a moment interpreted by many as miraculous. Such testimony, collected decades after her death, contributed to the sacred aura that would eventually lead to her being declared ‘Venerable’ by the Church. Her spiritual legacy was not confined to France. Scotland, with its own history of resistance and faith, found in Jeanne a kindred spirit. The encouragement to consult M. Quicherat’s detailed trial records further validates the enduring curiosity and reverence her story commands, not only for its historical gravity but for its spiritual resonance.

The mention of Scottish archers in France around 1507, including two men named Lang or Laing, reminds readers of the continued Franco-Scottish alliance. These soldiers represent more than mercenary presence—they symbolize shared purpose and historical brotherhood in a continent marked by shifting loyalties. The military

service of these archers stands as a legacy echoing the Auld Alliance, which formally united France and Scotland against common enemies. Jeanne's campaign, supported by such alliances, paints her victories not merely as national achievements but as efforts sustained by international camaraderie. It highlights how wars are fought not just by nations but by individuals bound by shared values. In this sense, Jeanne's connection to Scottish support offers a broader narrative of unity in a fractured age.

Toward the end of the chapter, a compelling shift occurs through the reference to Rev. John Blackader's memoirs, particularly his account of the 1691 siege of the Bass Rock. While temporally distant from Jeanne d'Arc, the siege story mirrors her themes of resistance, sacrifice, and spiritual endurance. Those who defended the Bass did so with a faith that echoed Jeanne's, holding firm against overwhelming force with belief as their shield. This connection bridges the 15th and 17th centuries, reinforcing a timeless pattern of courage fueled by conviction. Both Jeanne's stand at Rouen and the defenders' resistance at the Bass are framed not merely as military acts, but as declarations of spiritual resolve. The faith of these figures becomes a unifying theme across generations.

These layered narratives—of Jeanne's sacrifice, the contributions of Scottish allies, and the echoes of resistance centuries later—form a portrait of enduring valor. It's not just about remembering facts, but about understanding how stories survive and inspire. In a world often eager to forget nuance, this chapter encourages a reawakening of collective memory through documented truth and shared legend. By revisiting trial records, military roles, and siege journals, the reader is offered more than history—they're given heritage. Through this lens, Jeanne d'Arc is more than a saint or soldier—she becomes a bridge between nations, centuries, and convictions. And the Scottish threads in that tapestry add weight to a narrative that refuses to fade.