

Ivanhoe

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Ivanhoe is a novel by Sir Walter Scott. It was written in 1819, and is set in 12th-century England, an example of historical fiction. *Ivanhoe* is sometimes given credit for helping to increase popular interest in the Middle Ages in 19th century Europe and America (see Romanticism). John Henry Newman claimed that Scott "had first turned men's minds in the direction of the middle ages," while Carlyle and Ruskin made similar claims to Scott's overwhelming influence over the revival, based primarily on the publication of this novel.^[1]

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Scenes from the *Illustrated London News* of Arthur Sullivan's operatic adaptation.

Author	Sir Walter Scott
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Series	Waverley Novels
Genre(s)	Historical novel
Publisher	A. Constable
Publication date	1820
Preceded by	<i>Rob Roy</i>
Followed by	<i>Kenilworth</i>

Plot introduction

Ivanhoe is the story of one of the remaining Saxon noble families at a time when the English nobility was overwhelmingly Norman. It follows the Saxon protagonist, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, who is out of favour with his father for his allegiance to the Norman king Richard I of England. The story is set in 1194, after the failure of the Third Crusade, when many of the Crusaders were still returning to Europe. King Richard, who had been captured by the Duke of Saxony, on his way back, was still supposed to be in the arms of his captors. The legendary Robin Hood, initially under the name of Locksley, is also a character in the story, as are his "merry men", including Friar Tuck and less so, Alan-a-Dale. (Little John is merely mentioned.) The character that Scott gave to Robin Hood in *Ivanhoe* helped shape the modern notion of this figure as a cheery noble outlaw.

Other major characters include Ivanhoe's intractable Saxon father, Cedric, a descendant of the Saxon King Harold Godwinson; various Knights Templar and churchmen; the loyal serfs Gurth the swineherd and the jester Wamba, whose observations punctuate much of the action; and the Jewish moneylender, Isaac of York, equally passionate of money and his daughter, Rebecca. The book was written and published during a period of

increasing struggle for emancipation of the Jews in England, and there are frequent references to injustice against them.

Plot summary

Sir Wilfred of Ivanhoe is disinherited by his father Cedric of Rotherwood, for supporting the Norman King Richard and for falling in love with the Lady Rowena, Cedric's ward and a descendant of the Saxon Kings of England. Cedric had planned to marry her to the powerful Lord Aethelstane, pretender to the Saxon Crown of England, thus cementing a Saxon political alliance between two rivals for the same claim. Ivanhoe accompanies King Richard I to the Crusades, where he is stated to have played a notable role in the Siege of Acre.

The book opens with a scene of Norman knights and prelates seeking the hospitality of Cedric the Saxon, of Rotherwood. They are guided there by a palmer, fresh returned from the Holy Land. The same night, seeking refuge from the inclement weather and bandits, the Jew Isaac of York arrives at Rotherwood. Following the night's meal, characterised in keeping with the times by a heated exchange of words between the Saxon hosts and their Norman guests, the palmer observes one of the Normans, the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert issue orders to his Saracen soldiers to follow Isaac of York after he leaves Rotherwood in the morning and relieve him of his possessions a safe distance from the castle.

The palmer then warns the Jewish money lender of his peril and assists his escape from Rotherwood, at the crack of dawn. The swineherd Gurth refuses to open the gates until the palmer whispers a few words in his ear, which turns Gurth as helpful as he was recalcitrant earlier. This is but one of the many mysterious incidents that occur throughout the tale.

Isaac of York offers to repay his debt to the palmer by offering him a suit of armour and a destrier, to participate in the tournament of Ashby where he was bound. His offer is made on the surmise that the palmer was in reality a knight, having observed his knight's chain and spurs (a fact that he mentions to the palmer). Though the palmer is taken by surprise, he acquiesces to the offer, after the admonition that both armour and horse would be forfeit if he lost in combat.

The story then moves to the scene of the famed tournament of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, which was presided over by Prince John Lackland of England. Other characters in attendance are Cedric, Athelstane, the Lady Rowena, Isaac of York, his daughter Rebecca, Robin of Locksley and his men, Prince John's advisor Waldemar Fitzurse and numerous Norman knights.

In the first day of the tournament, a bout of individual jousting, a mysterious masked knight identifying himself only as "Desdichado", supposedly Spanish for the "Disinherited One" (though actually meaning "Unfortunate"), makes his appearance and manages to defeat some of the best Norman lances, including the Templar Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Maurice de Bracy, a leader of a group of "Free Companions" (mercenary knights), and the baron Reginald Front-de-Boeuf. The masked knight declines to reveal himself despite Prince John's request, but is nevertheless declared the champion of the day and, as his due, is permitted to choose the Queen of the Tournament, which honour he bestows upon the Lady Rowena.

On the second day, which is a *melée*, Desdichado, as champion of the first day, is chosen to be leader of one party. Most of the leading knights of the realm, however, flock to the opposite standard under which Desdichado's vanquished opponents of the previous day fight. Desdichado's side is soon hard pressed and he himself unfairly beset by multiple foes simultaneously, when a knight who had till then taken no part in the battle, thus earning the sobriquet *Le Noir Faineant* or the *Black Sluggard*, rides to the Desdichado's rescue. The rescuing knight, having evened the odds by his action, then slips away. Though the Desdichado was instrumental in wringing victory, Prince John being displeased with his behaviour of the previous day, wishes to bestow his

accolades on the Black Knight who had ridden to the rescue. Since the latter is nowhere to be found, he is forced to declare the Desdichado the champion. At this point, being forced to unmask himself to receive his coronet, the Desdichado is revealed to be Wilfred of Ivanhoe himself, returned from the Crusades. This causes much consternation to Prince John and his coterie who now fear the imminent return of King Richard.

Because he is severely wounded in the competition and Cedric refuses to have anything to do with him, he is taken into the care of Rebecca, the beautiful daughter of Isaac of York, a skilled healer. She convinces her father to take him with them to York, where he may be best treated. There follows a splendid account of a feat of archery by Locksley, or Robin Hood at the conclusion of the tournament.

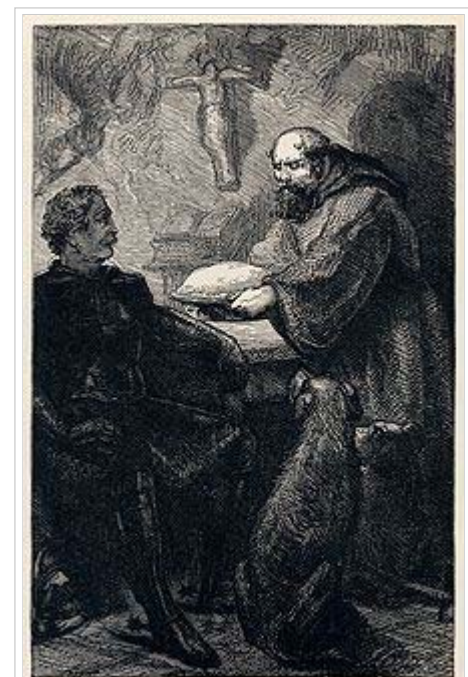
In the meanwhile, Maurice de Bracy finds himself infatuated with the Lady Rowena and, with his companions-in-arms, plans to abduct her. In the forests between Ashby and York, the Lady Rowena, her guardian Cedric and the Saxon thane Aethelstane encounter Isaac of York, Rebecca and the wounded Ivanhoe, who were abandoned by their servants for fear of bandits. The Lady Rowena, in response to the supplication of Isaac and Rebecca, urges Cedric to take them under his protection till York. Cedric acquiesces to it, being unaware that the wounded man is Ivanhoe. En route, they are captured by Maurice de Bracy and his companions and taken to Torquilstone, the castle of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf. The swineherd and serf, Gurth, who had run away from Rotherwood to serve Ivanhoe as squire at the tournament, and who was recaptured by Cedric when Ivanhoe was identified, manages to escape.

The Black Knight, having taken refuge for the night in the hut of a local friar, the Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst, volunteers his assistance on learning about the predicament of the captives from Robin of Locksley who comes to rouse the friar for an attempt to free them. They then besiege the Castle of Torquilstone with Robin Hood's own men, including the friar, and the Saxon yeomen they manage to raise, who are angered by the oppression of Reginald Front-de-Boeuf and his neighbour, Philip de Malvoisin.

At Torquilstone, Maurice de Bracy presses his suit with the Lady Rowena, while his love goes unrequited. In the meantime, Brian de Bois-Guilbert, who had accompanied de Bracy on the raid, takes Rebecca for his captive, and tries to force his attentions on her, which are rebuffed. Front-de-Boeuf, in the meantime, tries to wring a hefty ransom, by torture, from Isaac of York. Isaac refuses to pay a farthing unless his daughter is freed from her Templar captor.

When the besiegers deliver a note to yield up the captives, their Norman captors retort with a message for a priest to administer the Final Sacrament to the captives. It is then that Wamba slips in, disguised as a priest, and takes the place of Cedric, who thus escapes, bringing important information on the strength of the garrison and its layout.

Then follows an account of the storming of the castle. Front-de-Boeuf is killed while de Bracy surrenders to the Black Knight, who identifies himself as Richard of England. Showing mercy, the Black Knight releases de Bracy. Brian de Bois-Guilbert escapes with Rebecca and Isaac is released from his underground dungeon by the Clerk of Copmanhurst. The Lady Rowena is saved by Cedric, while the crippled Ivanhoe is plucked from the flames of the castle by the Black Knight. In the fighting, Aethelstane is grievously wounded while attempting to rescue Rebecca, whom he mistakes for Rowena.



LE NOIR FAINEANT IN THE HERMIT'S CELL
Out of the recesses of a dark closet, into which this aperture gave admittance, the hermit brought a large pastry, baked in a pewter platter of unusual dimensions.—PAGE 171.

Le Noir Faineant in the Hermit's Cell by J. Cooper, Sr. From an 1886 edition of Walter Scott's works

Subsequently, in the woodlands, Robin Hood plays host to the Black Knight. Word is also conveyed by De Bracy to Prince John of the King's return and the fall of Torquilstone.

In the meantime, Bois-Guilbert rushes with his captive to the nearest Templar Preceptory, which is under his friend Albert de Malvoisin, expecting to be able to flee the country. However, Lucas de Beaumanoir, the Grand-Master of the Templars is unexpectedly present there. He takes umbrage at de Bois-Guilbert's sinful passion, which is in violation of his Templar vows and decides to subject Rebecca to a trial for witchcraft, for having cast a spell on so devoted a Templar brother as Bois-Guilbert. She is found guilty through a flawed trial and pleads for a trial by combat. Bois-Guilbert, who had hoped to fight as her champion incognito, is devastated by the Grand-Master's ordering him to fight against her champion. Rebecca then writes to her father to procure a champion for her.

Meanwhile Cedric organises Aethelstane's funeral at Kyningestun, in the midst of which the Black Knight, arrives with a companion. Cedric, who had not been present at Robin Hood's carousal, is ill-disposed towards the Black Knight on learning his true identity. But King Richard calms Cedric and reconciles him with his son, convincing him to agree to the marriage of Ivanhoe and Rowena. Shortly after, Aethelstane emerges – not dead, but having been laid in his coffin alive by avaricious monks, desirous of the funeral money. Over Cedric's renewed protests, Aethelstane pledges his homage to the Norman King Richard and urges Cedric to marry the Lady Rowena to Ivanhoe. Cedric yields, not unwillingly.

Soon after this reconciliation, Ivanhoe receives a message from Isaac of York beseeching him to fight on Rebecca's behalf. Upon arriving at the scene of the witch-burning Ivanhoe forces Bois-Guilbert from his saddle, but does not kill him – the Templar dies "a victim to the violence of his own contending passions," which is pronounced by the Grand Master as the judgment of God and proof of Rebecca's innocence. King Richard, who had quit the funeral feast soon after Ivanhoe's departure, then arrives at the Templar Preceptory, banishes the Templars from the Preceptory and declares that the Malvoisins' lives are forfeit for having aided in the plots against him.

Fearing further persecution, Rebecca and her father leave England for Granada, prior to which she comes to bid Rowena a fond farewell. Ivanhoe and Rowena marry and live a long and happy life together, though the final paragraphs of the book note that Ivanhoe's long service was cut short when King Richard met a premature death in battle.

Characters

- *Wilfred of Ivanhoe* – a knight and son of Cedric the Saxon
- *Rebecca* – a Jewish healer, daughter of Isaac of York
- *Rowena* – a noble Saxon Lady
- *Prince John* – brother of King Richard
- *The Black Knight* or *Knight of the Fetterlock* – King Richard the Lionhearted, incognito
- *Locksley* – i.e., Robin Hood, an English yeoman
- *The Hermit or Clerk of Copmanhurst* — i.e., Friar Tuck
- *Brian de Bois-Guilbert* – a Templar Knight
- *Isaac of York* – the father of Rebecca; a Jewish merchant and money-lender
- *Prior Aymer* – Prior of Jorvaulx
- *Reginald Front-de-Boeuf* – a local baron who was given Ivanhoe's estate by Prince John
- *Cedric the Saxon* – Ivanhoe's father
- *Lucas de Beaumanoir* – fictional Grand Master of the Knights Templars
- *Conrade de Montfichet* – Templar
- *Maurice De Bracy* – Captain of the Free Companions

- *Waldemar Fitzurse* – Prince John's loyal minion
- *Aethelstane* – last of the Saxon royal line
- *Albert de Malvoisin* – Preceptor of Templestowe
- *Philip de Malvoisin* – local baron (brother of Albert)
- *Gurth* – Cedric's loyal Swineherd
- *Wamba* – Cedric's loyal Jester

Unofficial sequels

- In 1850, novelist William Makepeace Thackeray wrote a spoof sequel to *Ivanhoe* called *Rebecca and Rowena*.
- Edward Eager's book *Knight's Castle* (1956) magically transports four children into the story of Ivanhoe.
- Christopher Vogler wrote a sequel called *Ravenskull* (2006), published by Seven Seas Publishing.
- Pierre Efratas wrote a sequel called *Le Destin d'Ivanhoe* (2003), published by Editions Charles Corlet.
- Simon Hawke uses the story as the basis for *The Ivanhoe Gambit* the first novel in his time travel adventure series TimeWars.
- The 1839 Eglinton Tournament held by the 13th Earl of Eglinton at Eglinton Castle in Ayrshire was inspired and modelled on Ivanhoe.

Allusions to real history and geography

The location of the novel is centred upon South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire in England. Castles mentioned within the story include Ashby de la Zouch where the opening tournament is held (now a ruin in the care of English Heritage), York (though the mention of Clifford's Tower, likewise an English Heritage property, and still standing, is anachronistic, it not having been called that until later after various rebuilds) and 'Coningsburgh', which is based upon Conisbrough Castle near Doncaster (also English Heritage and a popular tourist attraction). Reference is made within the story, too, to York Minster, where the climactic wedding takes place, and to the Bishop of Sheffield, although the Diocese of Sheffield was not founded until 1914. These references within the story contribute to the notion that Robin Hood lived or travelled in and around this area.

The ancient town of Conisbrough has become so dedicated to the story of *Ivanhoe* that many of the streets, schools and public buildings are named after either characters from the book or the 12th-century castle.

Influence on Robin Hood legend

The modern vision of Robin Hood as a cheerful, patriotic rebel owes much to *Ivanhoe*. "Locksley" becomes Robin's title in this novel and hereafter, although it is first mentioned as Robin's birthplace in 1600 and used as an epithet in one ballad. Robin Hood from Locksley becomes Robin of Locksley, alias Robin Hood. The Saxon-Norman conflict first mooted as an influence on the legend by Joseph Ritson is made a major theme by Scott, and remains so in many subsequent retellings. Scott actually shuns the convention of depicting Robin as a dispossessed nobleman, but *Ivanhoe* has contributed to this strand of the legend, too, because subsequent Robin Hoods (e.g. in the 1922 Douglas Fairbanks film, and 1991's *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*) take on Wilfrid of Ivanhoe's own characteristics – they are returning Crusaders, have quarrelled with their fathers, and so forth. Also, the modern practice of depicting Robin as a contemporary of Richard I first appears in this novel; before that, he was generally placed two centuries later.

Robin's familiar feat of splitting his competitor's arrow in an archery contest appears for the first time in *Ivanhoe*.

Historical accuracy

The general political events depicted in the novel are relatively accurate; it tells of the period just after King Richard's imprisonment in Austria following the Crusade, and of his return to England. Yet the story is also heavily fictionalized. Scott himself acknowledged that he had taken liberties with history in his "Dedicatory Epistle" to *Ivanhoe*. Modern readers are cautioned to understand that Scott's aim was to create a compelling novel set in a historical period, not to provide a book of history.

During the period in which *Ivanhoe* is set, the nobility would have talked a mixture of Medieval English and Medieval French^[2]. The novel was written in contemporary English for a mass audience, in the same way that mainstream Hollywood movies depicting the Second World War commonly depict German characters talking in English.

There has been criticism, "... as unsupported by the evidence of contemporary records, of the enmity of Saxon and Norman, represented as persisting in the days of Richard I, which forms the basis of the story."^[3] Historian Michael Wood delivers a firm rebuttal of this view, quoting 13th-century writer Robert Manning as saying "... the English have been held in subjection ever since the Conquest"^[4].

This criticism also misses the obvious parallels between the story's background (England conquered by the Normans in 1066, when they killed Saxon King Harold at Hastings, about 130 years previously) and the situation in Scott's Scotland (Scotland's union with England in 1707, about the same length of time before Scott's writing, and the resurgence in his time of Scottish nationalism evidenced by the cult of Robert Burns, the famous poet who deliberately chose to work in Scots vernacular though he was an educated man and spoke modern English eloquently).^[5] Indeed, some experts suggest that Scott deliberately used *Ivanhoe* to illustrate his combination of Scottish patriotism and pro-British Unionism^{[6][7]}.

One inaccuracy in *Ivanhoe* created a new name in the English language: Cedric. The original Saxon name is *Cerdic* but Sir Walter mis-spelled it, the lasting effects of which are an example of metathesis. Satirist H. H. Munro commented, "It is not a name but a misspelling."

In 1194 England it would have been unlikely for Rebecca to face the threat of being burned at the stake on charges of witchcraft. It is thought that it was shortly afterwards, from the 1250s, that the Church began to undertake the finding and punishment of witches, and death did not become the usual penalty until the 15th century. Even then, the form of execution used for witches in England (unlike Scotland and Continental Europe) was hanging, burning being reserved for those also convicted of high or petty treason. However, the method of Rebecca's execution is presented as proposed by Lucas Beaumanoir, Grand Master of the Knights Templars – a Frenchman and a fanatic, determined to root out "corruption" from the Templars. It is quite plausible that Beaumanoir, like many nobles of the time, would have considered himself above the law and entitled to execute a witch in his power in any way that he chose. Witch hunts were enough of a cultural problem in Europe that even as early as AD785, the church made the burning of witches a crime itself punishable by death.

The novel's references to the Moorish king Boabdil are anachronistic, since he lived about 300 years after Richard. In the same way, even the title of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* contains a glaring anachronism.

In summary, "For a [Scottish] writer whose early novels [all set in Scotland] were prized for their historical accuracy, Scott was remarkably loose with the facts when he wrote *Ivanhoe*... But it is crucial to remember that *Ivanhoe*, unlike the *Waverly* books, is entirely a romance. It is meant to please, not to instruct, and is more an act of imagination than one of research. Despite this fancifulness, however, *Ivanhoe* does make some prescient historical points. The novel is occasionally quite critical of King Richard, who seems to love adventure more

than he loves the well-being of his subjects. This criticism did not match the typical idealized, romantic view of Richard the Lion-Hearted that was popular when Scott wrote the book, and yet it accurately echoes the way King Richard is often judged by historians today."^[8]

Rebecca Gratz as inspiration for the character Rebecca

It has been conjectured that the character of Rebecca in the book was inspired by Rebecca Gratz, a preeminent American educator and philanthropist who was the first Jewish female college student in the United States. Scott's attention had been drawn to Gratz's character by Washington Irving, who was a close friend of the Gratz family. The claim has been disputed, but it has also been well sustained in an article entitled "The Original of Rebecca in Ivanhoe", which appeared in *The Century Magazine*, 1882, pp. 679–682.

Gratz was considered among the most beautiful and educated women in her community. She never married, and is alleged to have refused a marriage proposal from a Gentile on account of her faith – a well-known incident at the time, which may have inspired the relationship depicted in the book between Rebecca and Ivanhoe.

Film, TV or theatrical adaptations

The novel has been the basis for several movies:

- *Ivanhoe* (1913): Directed by Herbert Brenon. With King Baggot, Leah Baird, and Brenon. Filmed on location in England and at Chepstow Castle in Wales
- *Ivanhoe* (1952): Directed by Richard Thorpe and starred Robert Taylor as Ivanhoe, Elizabeth Taylor as Rebecca, Joan Fontaine as Rowena, George Sanders as Bois-Guilbert, Finlay Currie as Cedric, and Sebastian Cabot. The film has a notable jousting scene as well as a well choreographed castle siege sequence. The visual spectacle is given more attention than the dialogue and underlying story, though the main points of the plot are covered. The film was nominated for three Oscars:
 - Best Picture – Pandro S. Berman
 - Best Cinematography, Color – Freddie Young
 - Best Music Score – Miklós Rózsa

There is also a Soviet movie *The Ballad of the Valiant Knight Ivanhoe* (Баллада о доблестном рыцаре Айвенго, 1983), directed by Sergey Tarasov, with songs of Vladimir Vysotsky, starring Peteris Gaudins as Ivanhoe.

There have also been many television adaptations of the novel, including:

- 1958: A television series based on the character of Ivanhoe starred Roger Moore as Ivanhoe.
- 1970: A TV miniseries starring Eric Flynn as Ivanhoe.
- 1982: *Ivanhoe*, a television movie starring Anthony Andrews as Ivanhoe, Michael Hordern as his father, Cedric, Sam Neill as Sir Brian, Olivia Hussey as Rebecca, James Mason as Isaac, Lysette Anthony as Rowena, Julian Glover as King Richard, and David Robb as Robin Hood. In this version, Sir Brian is a hero. Though he could easily have won the fight against the wounded and weakened Ivanhoe, Brian lowers his sword and allows himself to be slaughtered, thus saving the life of his beloved Rebecca.
- 1986: *Ivanhoe*, a 1986 animated telemovie produced by Burbank Films in Australia.
- 1995: Young Ivanhoe, a 1995 television series directed by Ralph L. Thomas and starring Kristen Holden-Ried as Ivanhoe, Stacy Keach, Margot Kidder, Nick Mancuso, Rachel Blanchard, and Matthew Daniels.
- 1997: *Ivanhoe the King's Knight* a televised cartoon series produced by CINAR and France Animation. General retelling of classic tale.

- 1997: *Ivanhoe*, a 6-part, 5-hour TV series, a co-production of A&E and the BBC. It stars Steven Waddington as Ivanhoe, Ciarán Hinds as Bois-Guilbert, Susan Lynch as Rebecca, Ralph Brown as Prince John and Victoria Smurfit as Rowena.
- 2000: A Channel 5 adaptation entitled *Darkest Knight* attempted to adapt Ivanhoe for an ongoing series. Ben Pullen played Ivanhoe and Charlotte Comer played Rebecca.

An operatic adaptation by Sir Arthur Sullivan (see *Ivanhoe*) ran for over 150 consecutive performances in 1891. Other operas based on the novel have been composed by Gioachino Rossini (*Ivanhoé*), Thomas Sari (*Ivanhoé*), Bartolomeo Pisani (*Rebecca*), A. Castagnier (*Rébecca*), Otto Nicolai (*Il Templario*) and Heinrich Marschner (*Der Templer und die Jüdin*). Rossini's opera is a *pasticcio* (an opera in which the music for a new text is chosen from pre-existent music by one or more composers). Scott attended a performance of it and recorded in his journal, "It was an opera, and, of course, the story sadly mangled and the dialogue, in part nonsense."^[9]

See also

- Trysting Tree – several references are made to these trees as agreed gathering places.
- *Der Templer und die Jüdin*, opera based on the novel

References

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External links

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- Online edition at eBooks@Adelaide (http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/s/scott_walter/ivanhoe/)
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