

# Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor"

THERE'S nothing of what Sir Walter Scott called his "Big Bow Wow" manner of writing in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Whether or not it is an argument for writing under the influence of drugs, it is a fact that Scott used laudanum in liberal doses while he was writing *The Bride*. Nor did he "write" it in the usual sense. When he was ready to go ahead with the book he was very ill, suffering much pain from acute biliary colic, and unable to sit at his desk and use his pen. Dictating the book in his bedroom he sometimes groaned with pain from his illness, and when it was suggested that he should rest he asked that the door be closed



Sir Walter Scott

so that his family would not hear his cries. When he recovered Scott said he could not recollect a single incident, character or conversation from the novel. However, when he saw the printed work he found little that displeased him.

Set in East Lothian, near the sea, about 1695, *The Bride of Lammermoor* has for its theme the unfolding of an ancient prophecy about the last Laird of Ravenswood. Edgar, Master of Ravenswood, the last representative of a family dispossessed because of their part in the rebellion against the Government, falls in love with Lucy Ashton, the daughter of his ancestral enemy, who now owns the Ravenswood estates. For a while they glimpse hope and happiness, but Lucy's mother, the ambitious Lady Ashton, opposes the match, and the romance closes in death and sorrow. The story is based upon a real-life episode which fascinated Scott with its fictional possibilities; and though set in Scotland, it has a quality of universality.

Lady Ashton is perhaps the most pitiless of all the women in Scott's novels, and one noted authority on the great novelist's work suggests that Scott may have put into her character something of his feeling about Lady Stuart, the mother of a girl with whom he had fallen in love in his early years. Appar-



ently her feeling about Scott's love for her daughter was not altogether favourable.

R. J. B. Sellar, who adapted *The Bride of Lammermoor* for broadcasting as an eight-part serial—it will start from 2YC on Saturday, September 11, at 10.5 p.m., and later will be heard from other stations—wrote in the *Radio Times* that Scott's novels are always difficult to adapt. "Possibly," he wrote, "the process of dictation . . . or the effect of laudanum made him more than usually verbose when he was unfolding the tragedy of Lucy. . . For two-thirds of *The Bride* he was still stock-piling his material. And then, quite suddenly, spontaneous combustion sets the story afire, and it leaps into a roaring blaze."

# MIRACLE IN A TIN SHED

IN 1895 Marconi made, in Italy, his first practical experiments in radio communication. A year later he went to England where, in May, 1897, he and George Kemp exchanged the first wireless signals across the water between Lavernock Point, near Penarth, and the Island of Flat Holm, in the Bristol Channel. How the range was, before long, immeasurably increased Marconi explained in an historic recording made some years ago and included in *The Tin Tabernacle*, a BBC programme which will start the rounds of National stations with a broadcast from 2YA at 10.0 p.m. on Thursday, September 9. With those early transmissions the miracle had at last been achieved, and the Tin Tabernacle of this programme was a small corrugated iron hut which was built to make use of it. It huddled on the banks of the River Mersey on Seaforth Beach, near Liverpool, and it was there that the first shore station for wireless communication with ships at sea was established.

In *The Tin Tabernacle* listeners will hear the reminiscences of old timers looking back over the years, for it was in the Tabernacle that the Marine Service Depot and Wireless School was opened in 1903. The programme shows how the work done at Seaforth has

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