Richard Armitage in North and South

Written by: Elizabeth Gaskell (book) adapted into a screenplay by Sandy Welch
Directed by: Brian Percival
Aired: 14 November - 5 December 2004 BBC One
Distributor: BBC
Cast:
Richard Armitage in North and South

- John Thornton -
Richard Armitage in North and South

- Hannah Thornton - SÍNÉAD CUSACK
Richard Armitage in North and South

- Richard Hale -

TIM PIGOTT-SMITH
Richard Armitage in North and South

- Nicholas Higgins - BRENDAN COYLE
A BBC Adaptation of the Elizabeth Gaskell book about Margaret, a southerner who is forced by circumstances to move to the northern mill town of Milton where she meets mill owner, John Thornton.
Episode One
North and South opens with a view of a steam train making its way through the countryside. Our heroine Margaret Hale is aboard - looking wistfully through the window, in her hand a yellow rose.
Flashback to two months earlier - Margaret is at the smart London wedding of her cousin Edith, in the house on the beauty of Helstone. To Margaret's shock he proposes to her. She refuses telling him she's not ready for marriage.
Back on the train, and the Hale family, along with Mrs Hale’s maid Dixon are moving - leaving their picturesque village...
As Margaret is viewing one, she overhears two strangers discussing the Hales and their reasons for leaving Helstone.
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The Hales find it difficult to settle in Milton, as they can't find a servant to help Dixon and people are gossiping about them.

However, Mr. Hale is determined they will settle. He sets himself up as a Lecturer and a Private Tutor, having resigned from his church posts.

Margaret's life is changed when the widower, Mr. Thornton, moves to the area and takes over the factory. Although she is still angry with him, she makes her feelings clear and again the two of them clash.

Out walking one day, Margaret strikes up a conversation with Bessie and Nicholas Higgins, a father and daughter who both work at John Thornton's factory. Nicholas takes Margaret to meet his mother, but despite telling her that she will forget them, Margaret eventually visits and she and Bessie become friends.
Mr Thornton’s mother and his emptyheaded sister, Fanny, pay a call on the Hales. Things don’t go well and so leads to healthier employees. The other masters won’t consider installing it in their mills because of the cost.
Mr Thornton goes to the Hales for tea. Margaret provokes him again leading him to telling her of his difficult youth.
The workers from all the mills hold a meeting. As they arrive they are watched by all the masters, who are
Episode Two
It’s Spring now and the Hales have been in Milton for some months. Mrs Hale is unwell, so Margaret visits...
Margaret and Bessie become closer friends and Margaret discovers that Bessie’s ill health was caused by her work in the factory. She also learns that her brother Frederick, who was involved in a mutiny whilst in the Navy and will be hanged if he ever returns to Britain.
The workers have another meeting and the decision is taken to strike. Thornton knows that as soon as he
Despite this however, the Thorntons are making arrangements for their annual Dinner Party, to which the Hales, along with some of the masters and other prominent Miltonians are invited.

The strike begins and Margaret charitably does what she can for the strikers, supplying them with food and money. However, Mr. Thornton is very frustrated by her actions. He tells her, telling her that her actions - far from helping the family - are prolonging the strike and making things worse.
As Margaret returns home, she notices a man leaving the house. After speaking to Dixon, she discovers that her mother is ... to anyone but Mrs Hale and Dixon. Without asking Mr Hale, Margaret writes to Frederick to tell him about their mother.

She also visits the mill, to borrow a waterbed, to ease her mother's pain. The strikers arrive while she is there and ... arrive and the mob, shocked at the violence, disperses. Margaret is carried inside to recover, but overhears Fanny talking with a servant about the way she behaved. Mortified, she insists on going back home and when she gets there, she acts as if nothing untoward has happened. Mary Higgins arrives and begs her to come to Bessie who has taken ill.

Thornton decides to propose to Margaret. His mother tells him he has no choice as Margaret has thrown herself at him in ... Despite this, Thornton is convinced Margaret does not care about him, but he loves her and wants her to be his wife.

The strike broken - the workers return to the mills. Thornton calls on Margaret and tells her how grateful he is to her. ... and when Thornton tells her he loves her, she scornfully rejects him. Thornton leaves, his hopes and heart crushed.

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Episode Three

After the disastrous proposal, Thornton goes home and tells his mother that - just as he thought - Margaret will not have ... Margaret's strained reaction and wonders aloud to Mr Hale that there might be something between Thornton and Margaret.

Boucher goes to the Higgins' but despite begging, Nicholas refuses to hide him from the Police. He blames Boucher for ... for him throwing the stone. A scuffle breaks out and Nicholas says he's going to tell the police where to find Boucher.

Margaret tells her father that she's written to Frederick. Mr Hale, realising the severity of Mrs Hale's illness, tells ... but when she arrives, Bessie has died. As Margaret is sitting with her body, Nicholas comes home and is grief-stricken.
Mrs Hale rallies a little so Margaret accepts Edith's invitation to attend the Great Exhibition in London and...
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Frederick arrives in time to see his mother. She dies, surrounded by her family, but Frederick has to leave before the funeral. Three days later, Mr. Lefford通知s the family that a witness had seen Fred with Margaret. When the police come to see Margaret about it she flatly denies she was anywhere near the station. It is revealed that Fred was her brother. She realises that she is diminished in his eyes and this knowledge both shocks and distresses her.***

**Episode Four**

Marlborough Mills is in trouble, the orders can't be filled and the debt to the bank is growing. Latimer, the bank manager, wants to try a new scheme that if successful will solve all of his financial worries. Thornton refuses - he won't risk the worker's wages.

Higgins, still out of work due to being one of the Union ringleaders, goes to see Mr. Hale and tells him he's considering going into business for himself. Mr. Hale agrees to give him a loan if he finds a way to solve the worker's problems. Higgins promises he will. He moves into a house and begins working on a plan. Mr. Hale, still unconvinced, agrees to give Higgins £500 to open a subsidised dining room for the workers and their families so everyone gets at least one good meal a day.

Mrs. Thornton pays Margaret a visit. Margaret is pleased to see her until Mrs. Thornton makes it clear that she has come to inspect her. Margaret is affronted at these insinuations and walks out, leaving Mrs. Thornton lost for words.

By the time winter is coming to an end, Mr. Hale is beginning to get over the death of Mrs. Hale. He decides to go to Helstone to see Margaret. When he arrives, he catches sight of the new Vicar, Mr. Bell, and asks to be introduced. Mr. Bell, much to Mr. Hale's surprise, offers to speak to Thornton about it, but Margaret says no, although she would like him to know she doesn't want to betray Fred.

Mr. Bell, in turn confesses to Margaret that he is dying. He is leaving for Argentina, to live out the rest of his days in the sun. He asks after Margaret and reveals to a stunned Thornton that it was her brother she was with at the station that night. Watson's speculation is a huge success, making most of the Milton Masters very rich indeed, but Marlborough Mills fails. He asks after Margaret and reveals to a stunned Thornton that it was her brother she was with at the station that night. Margaret also profits handsomely because Mr. Bell had invested with Watson too, but on finding out Marlborough Mills has failed, she decides to return to Helstone. She arrives at the mill, Thornton isn't there. On the London train home, there is a delay to let another train pass.
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As Margaret stretches her legs, she sees Thornton on the Milton train. He has been to Helstone and giggles as he explains his activities. Margaret, having travelled to Milton earlier, considers these activities with a smile, holding her yellow rose.

Links

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BBC Press Release 30 April 2004

Vintage Carriage Trust North and South locations

North and South Screencap Gallery

North and South IMDB Page

Reviews
Published by BBC Worldwide 2007

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Parts 6 and 7 of this magazine covered the BBC adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South: 2 magazines plus the complete series on DVD.

It is still possible to order these back issues, but they only ship to UK, Eire and via British Forces post (BFPO).
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30 Apr 2006
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by Patricia Nicol

02 Jul 2005
'Lie back and think of England'

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Hundreds of women are in the grip of an extraordinary passion for Richard Armitage, who plays northern aristocrat John Thornton in the BBC serial North & South.

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