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

- Margaret Hale -

DANIELA DENBY-ASHE
Hannah Thornton - SINÉAD CUSACK
Richard Armitage in North and South

- Richard Hale -

TIM PIGOTT-SMITH
- Nicholas Higgins - BRENDAN COYLE
Richard Armitage in North and South

- Fanny Thornton -

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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 where...
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. She...
The Hales find it difficult to settle in Milton, they can't find a servant to help Dixon and people are gossiping about them. However, Mr Hale is determined they will settle and sets himself up as a Lecturer and a Private Tutor, having resigned from his previous positions. Margaret is also finding it difficult to settle and makes a point of telling Mr Thornton that she will never marry him, despite his repeated declarations of love. Still very 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 the mill. Margaret is surprised to find that Bessie is interested in the mill and asks many questions. Bessie is also interested in Margaret and promises to visit her. Margaret eventually does visit 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
Mr Thornton goes to the Hales for tea. Margaret provokes him again leading him to telling her of his difficult youth. He tells her more about his past, which includes his father who was an 'Milton ways'. After her father explains more about Thornton's origins, Margaret begins to soften slightly towards him.
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 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 turns down the...
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 donations.
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. Leonards is found dead a day or so later, it transpires that a witness had seen him with Fred and recognised Margaret.

When the police come to see Margaret about it she flatly denies she was anywhere near the station. Thornton is the one doing the investigating. Margaret tells him she was with Fred that night.

She realises that she is diminished in his eyes and this knowledge both shocks and distresses her.

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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, tells Thornton 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 turning to crime. Mr Hale replies that if he does, he will be dealt with. As he leaves, Higgins tells Thornton he only begged him for a job because a woman who thought Thornton kind, had asked him.

Upon closer investigation, Thornton discovers Higgins was telling him the truth and goes to his home to offer him a job. Higgins tells him he'll come if royalties are deposited into a fund to feed the poor. Thornton agrees, but only if they open a subsidised dining room for the workers and their families.

Mrs Thornton pays Margaret a visit. Margaret is pleased to see her until Mrs Thornton makes it clear that she has come to speak to her about falling in with the wrong crowd. 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 the town to meet with Margaret and the other widows. Margaret visits Marlborough Mills to say goodbye and Thornton stands on the steps and watches her leave.

Three months on and Margaret is living in London. She is still in mourning and Edith is impatiently waiting for her to cheer up. She encourages Henry to propose, not knowing Margaret has already refused him.

Mr Bell comes to visit and to Margaret's delight, suggests they go to Helstone. As they meet the new Vicar, Margaret realises that if he's a radical, he will not approve of her friendship with the unmarried Thornton and decides not to tell Mr Bell.

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 peace. Margaret is shocked when he discovers Margaret is his new landlord, but when Mr Bell tries to explain further, Thornton cuts him off.

Watson's speculation is a huge success, making most of the Milton Masters very rich indeed, but Marlborough Mills fails. Latimer, the bank manager, comes and asks the staff if they will accept a fraction of their wages. 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, he tells her that Mr Hale has been to see him.

She arrives at the mill, Thornton isn't there. On the London train home, there is an delay to let another train pass. Margaret realises that if she had known, she would have been there to see him off.
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As Margaret stretches her legs, she sees Thornton getting off at Milton. He has been to Helstone and gives her a yellow rose. She crosses their arms and they get on the train. As they finally go home together on the train, Margaret gazes out of the window 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
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Published by BBC Worldwide 2007

http://www.classicdramadvd.com/

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).
Richard Armitage in North and South

Move Over Darcy, The Times, by Patricia Nicol

'Lie back and think of England', Tulsa World

In a swoon over me? Surely not, The Times by Penny Wark

'Will Richard be the new Darcy?' Eastern Daily Press
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A dashing object of desire, The Times
by Anne Ashworth

Stepping out of the shadows, The Northern Echo

Love in a Cold Climate, The Independent
by Sarah Shannon
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30 Apr 2004

Just like reel thing, The Scotsman

BBC Press Office: North and South

The Scotsman - news.scotsman.com

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