

SIR WALTER SCOTT
BY *L. D. L.* GEORGE
SAINTSBURY



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SIR
WALTER
SCOTT

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FAMOUS
SCOTS:
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PREFACE

To the very probable remark that 'Another little book about Scott is not wanted,' I can at least reply that apparently it is, inasmuch as the publishers proposed this volume to me, not I to them. And I believe that, as a matter of fact, no 'little book about Scott' has appeared since the *Journal* was completed, since the new and important instalment of *Letters* appeared (in both cases with invaluable editorial apparatus by Mr. David Douglas), and especially since Mr. Lang's *Lockhart* was published. It is true that no one of these, nor any other book that is likely to appear, has altered, or is likely to alter, much in a sane estimate of Sir Walter. His own matchless character and the genius of his first biographer combined to set before the world early an idea, of which it is safe to say that nothing that should lower it need be feared, and hardly anything to heighten it can be reasonably hoped. But as fresh items of illustrative detail are made public, there can be no harm in endeavouring to incorporate something of what they give us in fresh abstracts and *aperçus* from time to time. And for the continued and, as far as space permits, detailed criticism of the work, it may be pleaded that criticism of Scott has for many years been chiefly general, while in criticism, even more than in other things, generalities are deceptive.

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SIR WALTER SCOTT



CHAPTER I

LIFE TILL MARRIAGE

Scott's own 'autobiographic fragment,' printed in Lockhart's first volume, has made other accounts of his youth mostly superfluous, even to a day which persists in knowing better about everything and everybody than it or they knew about themselves. No one ever recorded his genealogy more minutely, with greater pride, or with a more saving sense of humour than Sir Walter. He was connected, though remotely, with gentle families on both sides. That is to say, his great-grandfather was son of the Laird of Raeburn, who was grandson of Walter Scott of Harden and the 'Flower of Yarrow.' The great-grandson, 'Beardie,' acquired that cognomen by letting his beard grow like General Dalziel, though for the exile of James II., instead of the death of Charles I.—'whilk was the waur reason,' as Sir Walter himself might have said.

Beardie's second son, being more thoroughly sickened of the sea in his first voyage than Robinson Crusoe, took to farming and Whiggery, and married the daughter of Haliburton of Newmains—there was also Macdougall and Campbell blood on the spindle side of the older generations of the family. Their eldest son Walter, father of Sir Walter, was born in 1729, and, being bred to the law, became the original, according to undisputed tradition, of the 'Saunders Fairford' of *Redgauntlet*, the most autobiographical as well as not the least charming of the novels. He married Anne Rutherford, who, through her mother, brought the blood of the Swintons of Swinton to enrich the joint strain; and from her father, a member of a family distinguished in the annals of the University of Edinburgh, may have transmitted some of the love for books which was not the most prominent feature of the other ingredients.

Walter himself was the third 'permanent child' (to adopt an agreeable phrase of Mr. Traill's about another person) of a family of twelve, only five of whom survived infancy. His three brothers, John, Thomas, and Daniel, and his sister Anne, all figure in the records; but little is heard of John and not much of Anne. Thomas, the second, either had, or was thought by his indulgent brother to have, literary talents, and was at one time put up to father the novels; while Daniel (whose misconduct in money matters, and still more in showing the white

feather, brought on him the only display of anything that can be called rancour recorded in Sir Walter's history) concerns us even less. The date of the novelist's birth was 15th August 1771, the place, 'the top of the College Wynd,' a locality now whelmed in the actual Chambers Street face of the present Old University buildings, and near that of Kirk of Field. Escaping the real or supposed dangers of a consumptive wet-nurse, he was at first healthy enough; but teething or something else developed the famous lameness, which at first seemed to threaten loss of all use of the right leg. The child was sent to the house of his grandfather, the Whig farmer of Sandyknowe, where he abode for some years under the shadow of Smailholm Tower, reading a little, listening to Border legends a great deal, and making one long journey to London and Bath. This first blessed period of 'making himself'[1] lasted till his eighth year, and ended with a course of sea-bathing at Prestonpans, where he met the original in name and perhaps in nature of Captain Dalgetty, and the original in character of the Antiquary. Then he returned (*circ.* 1779) to his father's house, now in George Square, to his numerous, if impermanent, family of brothers and sisters, and to the High School. The most memorable incident of this part of his career is the famous episode of 'Greenbreaks.'[\[2\]](#)

His health, as he grew up, becoming again weak, the boy was sent once more Borderwards—this time to Kelso, where he lived with an aunt, went to the town school, and made the acquaintance there, whether for good or ill, who shall say? of the Ballantynes. And he had to return to Kelso for the same cause, at least once during his experiences at College, where he did not take the full usual number of courses, and acquired no name as a scholar. But he always read.

As it had not been decided whether he was to adopt the superior or the inferior branch of the law, he was apprenticed to his father at the age of fifteen, as a useful preparation for either career. He naturally enough did not love 'engrossing,' but he did not cross his father's soul by refusing it, and though returns of illness occurred now and then, his constitution appeared to be gradually strengthening itself, partly, as he thought, owing to the habit of very long walks, in which he took great delight. He tried various accomplishments; but he could neither draw, nor make music, nor (at this time) write. Still he always read—irregularly, uncritically, but enormously, so that to this day Sir Walter's real learning is under-estimated. And he formed a very noteworthy circle of friends—William Clerk, 'Darsie Latimer,' the chief of them all. It must have been just after he entered his father's office that he met Burns, during that poet's famous visit to Edinburgh in 1786-87.

Considerably less is known of his late youth and early manhood than either of his childhood or of his later life. His letters—those invaluable and unparalleled sources of biographical information—do not begin till 1792, the year of his majority, when (on July 11) he was called to the Bar. But it is a universal tradition that, in these years of apprenticeship, in more senses than one, he, partly in gratifying his own love of wandering, and partly in serving his father's business by errands to clients, etc., did more than lay the foundation of that unrivalled knowledge of Scotland, and of all classes in it, which plays so important a part in his literary work. I say 'of all classes in it,' and this point is of the greatest weight. Scott has been accused (for the most part foolishly) of paying an exaggerated respect to rank. If this had been true, it would at least not have been due to late or imperfect acquaintance with persons of rank. Democratic as the Scotland of this century has sometimes been called, it is not uncommon to find a considerable respect for aristocracy in the greatest Scotch Radicals; and Scott was notoriously not a Radical. But his familiarity with all ranks from an early age is undoubted, and only very shallow or prejudiced observers will doubt the beneficial effect which this had on his study of humanity.^[3] The uneasy caricature which mars Dickens's picture of the upper, and even the upper middle, classes is as much absent from his work as the complete want of familiarity with the lower which appears, for instance, in *Bulwer*. It is certain that before he had written anything, he was on familiar terms with many persons, both men and women, of the highest rank—the most noteworthy among his feminine correspondents being Lady Louisa Stuart (sister of the Marquis of Bute and grand-daughter of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu) and Lady Abercorn. With the former the correspondence is always on the footing of mere though close friendship, literary and other; in part at least of that with Lady Abercorn, I cannot help suspecting the presence, especially on the lady's side, of that feeling,

'Too warm for friendship and too pure for love,'

which undoubtedly sometimes does exist between men and women who cannot, and perhaps who would not if they could, turn love into marriage.

However this may be, it is, let it be repeated, certain that Scott, in the six years from his fifteenth, when he is said to have first visited the Highlands and seen Rob Roy's country, to his majority, and yet again in the five or six between his call to the Bar and his marriage, visited many, if not all, parts of Scotland; knew high and low, rich and poor, with the amiable interest of his temperament and the

keen observation of his genius; took part in business and amusement and conviviality (he accuses himself later of having been not quite free from the prevalent peccadillo of rather deep drinking); and still and always *read*. He joined the 'Speculative Society' in January 1791, and, besides taking part in the debates on general subjects, read papers on Feudalism, Ossian, and Northern Mythology, in what were to be his more special lines.

His young lawyer friends called him 'Colonel Grogg,' a *sobriquet* not difficult to interpret on one of the hints just given, and 'Duns Scotus,' which concerns the other; while yet a third characteristic, which can surprise nobody, is indicated in the famous introduction of him to a boisterous party of midshipmen of the Marryat type by James Clerk, the brother of Darsie Latimer, who kept a yacht, and was fond of the sea: 'You may take Mr. Scott for a poor *lamiter*, gentlemen, but he is the first to begin a row and the last to end it.'

It appears that it was from a time somewhat before the call that the beginning of Scott's famous, his unfortunate, and (it has been the fashion, rightly or wrongly, to add) his only love affair dates. Some persons have taken the trouble to piece together and eke out the references to 'Green Mantle,' otherwise Miss Stuart of Belches, later Lady Forbes. It is better to respect Scott's own reticence on a subject of which very little is really known, and of which he, like most gentlemen, preferred to say little or nothing. The affection appears to have been mutual; but the lady was probably not very eager to incur family displeasure by making a match decidedly below her in rank, and, at that time, distinctly imprudent in point of fortune. But the courtship, such as it was, appears to have been long, and the effects of the loss indelible. Scott speaks of his heart as 'handsomely pieced'—'pieced,' it may be observed, not 'healed.' A healed wound sometimes does not show; a pieced garment or article of furniture reminds us of the piecing till the day when it goes to fire or dustbin. But it has been supposed, with some reason, that those heroines of Scott's who show most touch of personal sympathy—Catherine Seyton, Die Vernon, Lilius Redgauntlet—bear features, physical or mental or both, of this Astarte, this

'Lost woman of his youth, yet unpossessed.'

And no one can read the *Diary* without perceiving the strange bitter-sweet, at the moment of his greatest calamity, of the fact that Sir William Forbes, who rendered him invaluable service at his greatest need, was his successful rival thirty years before, and the widower of 'Green Mantle.'

This affair came to an end in October 1796; and it may astonish some wise people, accustomed to regard Scott as a rather humdrum and prosaic person, who escaped the scandals so often associated with the memory of men of letters from sheer want of temptation, to hear that one of his most intimate friends of his own age at the time 'shuddered at the violence of his most irritable and ungovernable mind.' There is no reason to doubt the fidelity of this description. And those who know something of human nature will be disposed to assign the disappearance of the irritableness and ungovernableness precisely to this incident, and to the working of a strong mind, confronted by fate with the question whether it was to be the victim or the master of its own passions, fighting out the battle once for all, and thenceforward keeping its house armed against them, it may be with some loss, but certainly with much gain.

It has been said that he states (with a touch of irony, no doubt) that his heart was 'handsomely pieced'; and it is not against the theory hinted in the foregoing paragraph, but, on the contrary, in favour of it, that the piecing did not take long. In exactly a year Scott became engaged to Miss Charlotte Margaret Carpenter or Charpentier,^[4] and they were married on Christmas Eve, 1797, at St. Mary's, Carlisle. They had met at Gilsland Spa in the previous July, and the courtship had not taken very long. The lady was of French extraction, had an only brother in the service of the East India Company, and, being an orphan, was the ward of the Marquis of Downshire,—circumstances on which gossips like Hogg made impertinent remarks. It is fair, however, to 'the Shepherd' to say that he speaks enthusiastically both of Mrs. Scott's appearance ('one of the most beautiful and handsome creatures I ever saw in my life'; 'a perfect beauty') and of her character ('she is cradled in my remembrance, and ever shall be, as a sweet, kind, and affectionate creature').^[5] She was very dark, small, with hair which the Shepherd calls black, Lockhart dark brown; her features not regular, but her complexion, figure, and so forth 'unusually attractive.' Not very much is said about her in any of the authentic accounts, and traditional tittle-tattle may be neglected. She does not seem to have been extremely wise, and was entirely unliterary; but neither of these defects is a *causa redhibitionis* in marriage; and she was certainly a faithful and affectionate wife. At any rate, Scott made no complaints, if he had any to make, and nearly the most touching passage in the *Diary* is that written after her death.

The minor incidents, not literary, of his life, between his call to the Bar and his marriage, require a little notice, for they had a very great influence on the character of his future work. His success at the Bar was moderate, but his fees

increased steadily if slowly. He defended (unsuccessfully) a Galloway minister who was accused among other counts of 'toying with a sweetie-wife,' and it is interesting to find in his defence some casuistry about *ebrius* and *ebriosus*, which reminds one of the Baron of Bradwardine. He took part victoriously in a series of battles with sticks, between Loyalist advocates and writers and Irish Jacobin medical students, in the pit of the Edinburgh theatre during April 1794. In June 1795 he became a curator of the Advocates' Library, and a year later engaged (of course on the loyal side) in another great political 'row,' this time in the streets.

Above all, in the spring and summer between the loss of his love and his marriage, he engaged eagerly in volunteering, becoming quartermaster, paymaster, secretary, and captain in the Edinburgh Light Horse—an occupation which has left at least as much impression on his work as Gibbon's equally famous connection with the Hampshire Militia on his. His friendships continued and multiplied; and he began with the sisters of some of his friends, especially Miss Cranstoun (his chief confidante in the 'Green Mantle' business) and Miss Erskine, the first, or the first known to us, of those interesting correspondences with ladies which show him perhaps at his very best. For in them he plays neither jack-pudding, nor coxcomb, nor sentimentalist, nor any of the involuntary counterparts which men in such cases are too apt to play; and they form not the least of his titles to the great name of gentleman.

But by far the most important contribution of these six or seven years to his 'making' was the further acquaintance with the scenery, and customs, and traditions, and dialects, and local history of his own country, which his greater independence, enlarged circle of friends, and somewhat increased means enabled him to acquire. It is quite true that to a man with his gifts any microcosm will do for a macrocosm in miniature. I have heard in conversation (I forget whether it is in any of the books) that he picked up the word 'whomled' (= 'bucketed over'—'turned like a tub'), which adds so much to the description of the nautical misfortune of Claud Halcro and Triptolemus in *The Pirate*, by overhearing it from a scold in the Grassmarket. But still the enlarged experience could not but be of the utmost value. It was during these years that he saw Glamis Castle in its unspoiled state, during these that, in connection with the case of the unfortunate but rather happily named devotee of Bacchus and Venus, M'Naught, he explored Galloway, and obtained the decorations and scenery, if not the story, of *Guy Mannering*. He also repeated his visits to the English side of the Border, not merely on the occasion during which he met Miss Carpenter, but earlier, in a

second excursion to Northumberland.

But, above all, these were the years of his famous 'raids' into Liddesdale, then one of the most inaccessible districts of Scotland, under the guidance of Mr. Shortreed of Jedburgh—raids which completed the information for *Guy Mannering*, which gave him much of the material for the *Minstrelsy*, and the history of which has, I think, delighted every one of his readers and biographers, except one or two who have been scandalised at the exquisite story of the Arrival of the Keg.^[6] Of these let us not speak, but, regarding them with a tender pity not unmixed with wonder, pass to the beginnings of his actual literary life and to the history of his early married years. The literature a little preceded the life; but the life certainly determined the growth of the literature.

CHAPTER II

EARLY LITERARY WORK

It is pretty universally known, and must have been perceived even from the foregoing summary, that Scott was by no means a very precocious writer. He takes rank, indeed, neither with those who, according to a famous phrase, 'break out threescore thousand strong' in youth; nor with those who begin original composition betimes, and by degrees arrive at excellence; nor yet with those who do not display any aptitude for letters till late in life. His class—a fourth, which, at least as regards the greater names of literature, is perhaps the smallest of all—comprises those who may almost be said to drift into literary work and literary fame, whose first production is not merely tentative and unoriginal, but, so to speak, accidental, who do not discover their real faculty for literary work till after a pretty long course of casual literary play.

Part of this was no doubt due to the fact—vouched for sufficiently, and sufficiently probable, though not, so far as I know, resting on any distinct and firsthand documentary evidence—that Walter Scott the elder had, even more than his *eidolon* the elder Fairford, that horror of literary employment on the part of his son which was for generations a tradition among persons of business, and which is perhaps not quite extinct yet. For this opposition, as is well known, rather stimulates than checks, even in dutiful offspring, the noble rage. It was due partly, perhaps, to a metaphysical cause—the fact that until Scott was well past his twentieth year, the wind of the spirit was not yet blowing, that the new poetical and literary day had not yet dawned; and partly to a more commonplace reason or set of reasons. About 1790 literary work was extremely badly paid;^[7] and, even if it had been paid better, Scott had no particular need of money. Till his marriage he lived at home, spent his holidays with friends, or on tours where the expenses were little or nothing, and obtained sufficient pocket-money, first by copying while he was still apprenticed to his father, then by his fees when he was called. He could, as he showed later, spend money royally when he had it or thought he had it; but he was a man of no extravagant tastes of the ordinary kind, and Edinburgh was not in his days at all an extravagant place of living. Even when he married, he was by no means badly off. His wife, though not exactly an heiress, had means which had been estimated at five hundred a year, and which

seem never to have fallen below two hundred; Scott's fees averaged about another two hundred; he evidently had an allowance from his father (who had been very well off, and was still not poor), and before very long the Sheriffship of Selkirkshire added three hundred more, though he seems to have made this an excuse for giving up practice, which he had never much liked. His father's death in 1799 put him in possession of some property; legacies from relations added more. Before the publication of the *Lay* (when he was barely three-and-thirty), Lockhart estimates his income, leaving fees and literary work out of the question, at nearly if not quite a thousand a year; and a thousand a year at the beginning of the century went as far as fifteen hundred, if not two thousand, at its close.

Thus, with no necessity to live by his pen, with no immediate or extraordinary temptation to use it for gain, and as yet, it would seem, with no overmastering inducement from his genius to do so, while he at no time of his life felt any stimulus from vanity, it is not surprising that it was long before Scott began to write in earnest. A few childish verse translations and exercises of his neither encourage nor forbid any particular expectations of literature from him; they are neither better nor worse than those of hundreds, probably thousands, of boys every year. His first published performance, now of extreme rarity, and not, of course, produced with any literary object, was his Latin call-thesis on the rather curious subject (which has been, not improbably, supposed to be connected with his German studies and the terror-literature of the last decade of the century) of the disposal of the dead bodies of legally executed persons. His first English work was directly the result of the said German studies, to which, like many of his contemporaries, he had been attracted by fashion. It consisted of nothing more than the well-known translations of Bürger's *Lenore* and *Wild Huntsman*, which were issued in a little quarto volume by Manners & Miller of Edinburgh, in October 1796—a date which has the special interest of suggesting that Scott sought some refuge in literature from the agony of his rejection by Miss Stuart.

These well-known translations, or rather imitations, the first published under the title of *William and Helen*, which it retains, the other as *The Chase*, which was subsequently altered to the better and more literal rendering, show unmistakably the result of the study of ballads, both in the printed forms and as orally delivered. Some crudities of rhyme and expression are said to have been corrected at the instance of one of Scott's (at this time rather numerous) Egerias, the beautiful wife of his kinsman, Scott of Harden, a young lady partly of German extraction, but of the best English breeding. Slight books of the kind,

even translations, made a great deal more mark sometimes in those days than they would in these; but there were a great many translations of *Lenore* about, and except by Scott's friends, little notice was taken of the volume. There were some excuses for the neglect, the best perhaps being that English criticism at the time was at nearly as low an ebb as English poetry. A really acute critic could hardly have mistaken the difference between Scott's verse and the fustian or tinsel of the Della Cruscans, the frigid rhetoric of Darwin, or the drivel of Hayley. Only Southey had as yet written ballad verses with equal vigour and facility; and, I think, he had not yet published any of them. It is Scott who tells us that he borrowed

'Tramp, tramp, along the land they rode,
Splash, splash, along the sea,'

from Taylor of Norwich; but Taylor himself had the good taste to see how much it was improved by the completion—

'The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
The fashing pebbles flee'—

which last line, indeed, Coleridge himself hardly bettered in the not yet written *Ancient Mariner*, the *ne plus ultra* of the style. It must be mainly a question of individual taste whether the sixes and eights of the *Lenore* version or the continued eights of the *Huntsman* please most. But any one who knows what the present state of British poetry was in October 1796 will be more than indifferently well satisfied with either.

It was never Scott's way to be cast down at the failure or the neglect of any of his work; nor does he seem to have been ever actuated by the more masculine but perhaps equally childish determination to 'do it again' and 'shame the fools.' It seems quite on the cards that he might have calmly acquiesced in want of notoriety, and have continued a mere literary lawyer, with a pretty turn or verse and a great amount of reading, if his most intimate friend, William Erskine, had not met 'Monk' Lewis in London, and found him anxious for contributions to his *Tales of Wonder*. Lewis was a coxcomb, a fribble, and the least bit in the world of a snob: his *Monk* is not very clean fustian, and most of his other work rubbish. But he was, though not according to knowledge, a sincere Romantic; he had no petty jealousy in matters literary; and, above all, he had, as Scott recognised, but as has not been always recognised since, a really remarkable and then novel command of flowing but fairly strict lyrical measures, the very things needed to

thaw the frost of the eighteenth-century couplet. Erskine offered, and Lewis gladly accepted, contributions from Scott, and though *Tales of Wonder* were much delayed, and did not appear till 1801, the project directly caused the production of Scott's first original work in ballad, *Glenfinlas* and *The Eve of St. John*, as well as the less important pieces of the *Fire King*, *Frederick and Alice*, etc.

In *Glenfinlas* and *The Eve* the real Scott first shows, and the better of the two is the second. It is not merely that, though Scott had a great liking for and much proficiency in 'eights,' that metre is never so effective for ballad purposes as eights and sixes; nor that, as Lockhart admits, *Glenfinlas* exhibits a Germanisation which is at the same time an adulteration; nor even that, well as Scott knew the Perthshire Highlands, they could not appeal to him with the same subtle intimacy of touch as that possessed by the ruined tower where, as a half-paralysed infant, he had been herded with the lambs. But all these causes together, and others, join to produce a freer effect in *The Eve*. The eighteenth century is farther off; the genuine mediæval inspiration is nearer. And it is especially noticeable that, as in most of the early performances of the great poetical periods, an alteration of metrical etiquette (as we may call it) plays a great part. Scott had not yet heard that recitation of *Christabel* which had so great an effect on his work, and through it on the work of others. But he had mastered for himself, and by study of the originals, the secret of the *Christabel* metre, that is to say, the wide licence of equivalence in trisyllabic and dissyllabic feet,^[8] of metre catalectic or not, as need was, of anacrusis and the rest. As is natural to a novice, he rather exaggerates his liberties, especially in the cases where the internal rhyme seduces him. It is necessary not merely to slur, but to gabble, in order to get some of these into proper rhythm, while in other places the mistake is made of using so many anapæsts that the metre becomes, not as it should be, iambic, with anapæsts for variation, but anapæstic without even a single iamb. But these are 'sma' sums, sma' sums,' as saith his own Bailie Jarvie, and on the whole the required effect of vigour and variety, of narrative giving place to terror and terror to narrative is capitally achieved. Above all, in neither piece, in the less no more than in the more successful, do we find anything of what the poet has so well characterised in one of his early reviews as the 'spurious style of tawdry and affected simplicity which trickles through the legendary ditties' of the eighteenth century. 'The hunt is up' in earnest; and we are chasing the tall deer in the open hills, not coursing rabbits with toy terriers on a bowling-green.

The writing of these pieces had, however, been preceded by the publication of Scott's second volume, the translation of *Goetz von Berlichingen*, for which Lewis had arranged with a London bookseller, so that this time the author was not defrauded of his hire. He received twenty-five guineas, and was to have as much more for a second edition, which the short date of copyright forestalled. The book appeared in February 1799, and received more attention than the ballads, though, as Lockhart saw, it was in fact belated, the brief English interest in German *Sturm und Drang* having ceased directly, though indirectly it gave Byron much of his hold on the public a dozen years later. At about the same time Scott executed, but did not publish, an original, or partly original, dramatic work of the same kind, *The House of Aspen*, which he contributed thirty years later to *The Keepsake*. Few good words have ever been said for this, and perhaps not many persons have ever cared much for the *Goetz*, either in the original or in the translation. Goethe did not, in drama at least, understand adventurous matter, and Scott had no grasp of dramatic form.[9]

It has been said that there was considerable delay in the publication of the *Tales of Wonder*; and some have discussed what direct influence this delay had on Scott's further and further advance into the waters of literature. It is certain that he at one time thought of publishing his contributions independently, and that he did actually print a few copies of them privately; and it is extremely probable that his little experiments in publication, mere *hors-d'œuvre* as they were, had whetted his appetite. Even the accident of his friend Ballantyne's having taken to publishing a newspaper, and having room at his press for what I believe printers profanely call 'job-work,' may not have been without influence. What is certain is that the project of editing a few Border ballads—a selection of his collection which might make 'a neat little volume of four or five shillings'—was formed roughly in the late autumn of 1799, and had taken very definite shape by April 1800. Heber, the great bibliophile and brother of the Bishop, introduced Scott to that curious person Leyden, whose gifts, both original and erudite, are undoubted, although perhaps his exile and early death have not hurt their fame. And it so happened that Leyden was both an amateur of old ballads and (for the two things went together then, though they are sternly kept apart now) a skilful fabricator of new. The impetuous Borderer pooh-poohed a 'thin thing' such as a four or five shilling book, and Scott, nothing loath, extended his project. Most of his spare time during 1800 and 1801 was spent on it; and besides corresponding with the man who 'fished this murex up,' Bishop Percy, he entered into literary relations with Joseph Ritson. Even Ritson's waspish character seems to have been softened by Scott's courtesy, and perhaps even more by the joint facts that

he had as yet attained no literary reputation, and neither at this nor at any other time gave himself literary airs. He also made the acquaintance of George Ellis, who became a warm and intimate friend. These were the three men of the day who, since Warton's death, knew most of early English poetry, and though Percy was too old to help, the others were not.

The scheme grew and grew, especially by the inclusion in it of the publication not merely of ballads, but of the romance of *Sir Tristrem* (of the authorship of which by someone else than Thomas the Rhymer, Scott never would be convinced), till the neat four or five shilling volume was quite out of the question. When at last the two volumes of the first (Kelso) edition appeared in 1802, not merely was *Sir Tristrem* omitted, but much else which, still without 'the knight who fought for England,' subsequently appeared in a third. The earliest form of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* is a very pretty book; it deservedly established the fame of Ballantyne as a printer, and as it was not printed in the huge numbers which have reduced the money value of Sir Walter's later books, it is rather surprising that it is not more sought after than it is at present. My copy—I do not know whether by exception or not—wears the rather unusual livery of pink boards instead of the common blue, grey, or drab. The paper and type are excellent; the printing (with a few slips in the Latin quotations such as *concedunt* for *comedunt*) is very accurate, and the frontispiece, a view of Hermitage Castle in the rain, has the interest of presenting what is said to have been a very faithful view of the actual state of Lord Soulis' stronghold and the place of the martyrdom of Ramsay, attained by the curious stages of (1) a drawing by Scott, who could not draw at all; (2) a rifacimento by Clerk, who had never seen the place; and (3) an engraving by an artist who was equally innocent of local knowledge.

The book, however, which brought in the modest profit of rather less than eighty pounds, would have been of equal moment under whatever guise it had pleased to assume. The shock of Percy's *Reliques* was renewed, and in a far more favourable atmosphere, before a far better prepared audience. The public indeed had not yet been 'ground-baited' up to the consummation of thousands of copies of poetry as they were later by Scott himself and Byron; but an edition of eight hundred copies went off in the course of the year, and a second, with the additional volume, was at once called for. It contained, indeed, not much original verse, though 'Glenfinlas' and 'The Eve,' with Leyden's 'Cout of Keeldar,' 'Lord Soulis,' etc., appeared in it after a fashion which Percy had set and Evans had continued. But the ballads, familiar as they have become since, not merely in the

Minstrelsy itself, but in a hundred fresh collections, selections, and what not, could never be mistaken by anyone fitted to appreciate them. 'The Outlaw Murray,' with its rub-a-dub of *e* rhymes throughout, opens the book very cunningly, with something not of the best, but good enough to excite expectation,—an expectation surely not to be disappointed by the immortal agony (dashed with one stroke of magnificent wrath) of 'Helen of Kirkconnell,' the bustle, frolic, and battle-joy of the Border pieces proper, the solemn notes of 'The Lyke-Wake Dirge,' the eeriness of 'Clerk Saunders' and 'The Wife of Usher's Well.'

Even Percy had not been lucky enough to hit upon anything so characteristic of the *average* ballad style at its best as the opening stanza of 'Fause Foodrage'—

'King Easter courted her for her lands,
King Wester for her fee,
King Honour for her comely face
And for her fair bodie';

and Percy would no doubt have been tempted to 'polish' such more than average touches as Margaret's 'turning,' without waking, in the arms of her lover as he receives his deathblow, or as the incomparable stanza in 'The Wife of Usher's Well' which tells how—

'By the gates of Paradise
That birk grew fair enough.'

Those who study literature in what they are pleased to call a scientific manner have, as was to be expected, found fault (mildly or not, according to their degree of sense and taste) with Scott, for the manner in which he edited these ballads. It may be admitted that the practice of mixing imitations with originals is a questionable one; and that in some other cases, Scott, though he was far from the illegitimate and tasteless fashion of alteration, of which in their different ways Allan Ramsay and Percy himself had set the example, was not always up to the highest lights on this subject of editorial faithfulness. It must, for instance, seem odd to the least pedantic nowadays that he should have thought proper to print Dryden's *Virgil* with Dr. Somebody's pedantic improvements instead of Dryden's own text. But the case of the ballads is very different. Here, it must be remembered, there is no authentic original at all. Even in the rare cases, where very early printed or MS. copies exist, we not only do not know that these are the originals, we have every reasonable reason for being pretty certain that they

are not. In the case of ballads taken down from repetition, we know as a matter of certainty that, according to the ordinary laws of human nature, the reciter has altered the text which he or she heard, that that text was in its day and way altered by someone else, and so on almost *ad infinitum*. 'Mrs. Brown's version,' therefore, or Mr. Smith's, or Mr. Anybody's, has absolutely no claims to sacrosanctity. It is well, no doubt, that all such versions should be collected by someone (as in this case by Professor Child) who has the means, the time, and the patience. But for the purposes of reading, for the purposes of poetic enjoyment, such a collection is nearly valueless. We must have it for reference, of course; nobody grudges the guineas he has spent for the best part of the last twenty years on Professor Child's stately, if rather cumbrous, volumes. But who can *read* a dozen versions, say, of 'The Queen's Marie' with any pleasure? What is exquisite in one is watered, messed, spoiled by the others.

Therefore I shall maintain that though the most excellent way of all might have been to record his alterations, and the original, in an appendix-dustbin of *apparatus criticus*, Scott was right, and trebly right, in such dealing as that with the first stanza of 'Fause Foodrage,' which I have quoted and praised. That stanza, as it stands above, does not occur in any of the extant quasi-originals. 'Mrs. Brown's MS.,' from which, as Professor Child says, with almost silent reproach, Scott took his text, 'with some forty small changes,' reads—

'King Easter has courted her for her gowd,
King Wester for her fee,
King Honour for her lands sae braid,
And for her fair bodie.'

Now this is clearly wrong. Either 'gowd' or 'lands' is a mere repetition of 'fee,' and if not,^[10] the reading does not point any ethical antithesis between Kings Easter and Wester and their more chivalrous rival. As it happens, there are two other versions, shorter and less dramatic, but one of them distinctly giving, the other implying, the sense of Scott's alteration. Therefore I say that Scott was fully justified in adjusting the one text that he did print, especially as he did it in his own right way, and not in the wrong one of Percy and Mickle. There is here no Bentleian impertinence, no gratuitous meddling with the at least possibly genuine text of a known and definite author. The editor simply picks out of the mud, and wipes clean, something precious, which has been defaced by bad usage, and has become masterless.

The third volume of the *Minstrelsy* was pretty speedily got ready, with more matter; and *Sir Tristrem* (which is in a way a fourth) was not very long in following. This last part contained a *tour de force* in the shape of a completion of the missing part by Scott himself, a completion which, of course, shocks philologists, but which was certainly never written for them, and possesses its own value for others.

Not the least part of the interest of the *Minstrelsy* itself was the editor's appearance as a prose-writer. Percy had started, and others down to Ritson had continued, the practice of interspersing verse collections with dissertations in prose; and while the first volume of the *Minstrelsy* contained a long general introduction of more than a hundred pages, and most of the ballads had separate prefaces of more or less length, the preface to 'Young Tamlane' turned itself into a disquisition on fairy lore, which, being printed in small type, is probably not much shorter than the general introduction. In these pieces (the Fairy essay is said to be based on information partly furnished by Leyden) all the well-known characteristics of Scott's prose style appear—its occasional incorrectness, from the strictly scholastic point of view, as well as its far more than counterbalancing merits of vivid presentation, of arrangement, not orderly in appearance but curiously effective in result, of multifarious facts and reading, of the bold pictorial vigour of its narrative, of its pleasant humour, and its incessant variety.

Nor was this the only opportunity for exercising himself in the medium which, even more than verse, was to be his, that the earliest years of the century afforded to Scott. The *Edinburgh Review*, as everybody knows, was started in 1802. Although its politics were not Scott's, they were for some years much less violently put forward and exclusively enforced than was the case later; indeed, the Whig Review started with much the same ostensible policy as the Whig Deliverer a century before, the policy, at least in declared intention, of using both parties as far as might be for the public good. The attempt, if made *bona fide*, was not more successful in one case than in the other; but it at least permitted Tories to enlist under the blue-and-yellow banner. The standard-bearer, Jeffrey, moreover, was a very old, an intimate, and a never-quite-to-be-divorced friend of Scott's. At a later period, Scott's contributions to periodicals attained an excellence which has been obscured by the fame of the poems and novels together, even more unjustly than the poems have been obscured by the novels alone. His reviews at this time on Southey's *Amadis*, on Godwin's *Chaucer*, on Ellis's *Specimens*, etc., are a little crude and amateurish, especially in the direction (well known, to those who have ever had to do with editing, as a besetting sin of novices) of substituting a mere account of the book, with a few expressions of like and dislike, for a grasped and reasoned criticism of it. But this is far less peculiar to them than those who have not read the early numbers of the great reviews may suppose. The fact is that Jeffrey himself, Sydney Smith, Scott, and others were only feeling for the principles and practice of reviewing, as they themselves later, and the brilliant second generation of Carlyle and Macaulay, De Quincey and Lockhart, were to carry it out. Perhaps the very best specimens of Scott's powers in this direction are the prefaces which he contributed much later and gratuitously to John Ballantyne's *Novelists' Library*—things which hardly yield to Johnson's *Lives* as examples of the combined arts of criticism and biography. At the time of which we speak he was 'making himself' in this direction as in others. I hope that Jeffrey and not he was responsible for a fling at Mary Woollstonecraft in the Godwin article, which would have been ungenerous in any case, and which in this was unpardonable. But there is nothing else to object to, and the *Amadis* review in particular is a very interesting one.

We must now look back a little, so as to give a brief sketch of Scott's domestic life, from his marriage until the publication of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which, with that of *Waverley* and the crash of 1825-26, supplies the three turning-points of his career. After a very brief sojourn in lodgings (where the landlady was shocked at Mrs. Scott's habit of sitting constantly in her drawing-

room), the young couple took up their abode in South Castle Street. Hence, not very long afterwards, they moved to the house—the famous No. 39—in the northern division of the same street, which continued to be her home for the rest of her Edinburgh life, and Scott's so long as he could afford a house in Edinburgh. Their first child was born on the 14th of October 1798, but did not live many hours. As was (and for the matter of that is) much more customary with Edinburgh residents, even of moderate means, than it has been for at least a century with Londoners, Scott, while his own income was still very modest, took a cottage at Lasswade in the neighbourhood. Here he lived during the summer for years; and in March 1799 he and his wife went to London, for the first time in his case since he had been almost a baby. His father died during this visit, after a painful breakdown, which is said to have suggested the touching particulars of the deathbed of Chrystal Croftangry's benefactor (not 'the elder Croftangry,' as is said in a letter quoted by Lockhart), and was repeated to some extent in Scott's own case.

His appointment to the Sheriff[depute]ship of Selkirkshire was made in December 1799, and gave, for light work, three hundred a year. It need not have interfered with even an active practice at the Bar had such fallen to him, and at first did not impose on him even a partial residence. The Lord-Lieutenant, however, Lord Napier of Ettrick, insisted on this, and though Scott rather resented a strictness which seems not to have been universal, he had to comply. He did not, however, do so at once, and during the last year of the century and its two successors, Lasswade and Castle Street were Scott's habitats, with various radiations; while in the spring of 1803 he and Mrs. Scott repeated their visit to London and extended it to Oxford. It is not surprising to read his confession in sad days, a quarter of a century later, of the 'ecstatic feeling' with which he first saw this, the place in all the island which was his spiritual home. The same year saw the alarm of invasion which followed the resumption of hostilities after the armistice of Amiens; and Scott's attention to his quartermastership, which he still held, seems to have given Lord Napier the idea that he was devoting himself, not only *tam Marti quam Mercurio*, but to Mars rather at Mercury's expense.^[11] Scott, however, was never fond of being dictated to, and he and his wife were still at Lasswade when the Wordsworths visited them in the autumn, though Scott accompanied them to his sheriffdom on their way back to Westmoreland. He had not yet wholly given up practice, and though its rewards were not munificent, they reached about this time, it would seem, their maximum sum of £218, which, in the days of his fairy-money, he must often have earned by a single morning's work.

Lord Napier, by no means improperly (for it was a legal requirement, though often evaded, that four months' residence per annum should be observed), persisted; and Scott, after a pleasing but impracticable dream of taking up his summer residence in the Tower of Harden itself, which was offered to him, took a lease of Ashestiel, a pleasant country house,—'a decent farmhouse,' he calls it, in his usual way,—the owner of which was his relation, and absent in India. The place was not far from Selkirk, on the banks of the Tweed and in the centre of the Buccleuch country. He seems to have settled there by the end of July 1804. The family, after leaving it for the late autumn session in Edinburgh, returned at Christmas, by which time *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, though not actually published, was printed and ready. It was issued in the first week of the new year 1805, being, except Wordsworth's and Coleridge's, the first book published, which was distinctly and originally characteristic of the new poetry of the nineteenth century.



CHAPTER III

THE VERSE ROMANCES

Although Scott was hard upon his thirty-fifth year when the *Lay* appeared, and although he had already a considerable literary reputation in Edinburgh, and some in London, the amount of his original publications was then but small. Indeed, on the austere principles of those who deny 'originality' to such things as reviews, or as the essays in the *Minstrelsy*, it must be limited to a mere handful, though of very pleasant delights, the half-dozen of ballads made up by 'Glenfinlas,' 'The Eve of St. John,' the rather inferior 'Fire King,' the beautiful 'Cadzow Castle' (not yet mentioned, but containing some of its author's most charming *topic* lines), the fragment of 'The Grey Brother,' and a few minor pieces.

With the *Lay* he took an entirely different position. The mere bulk of the poem was considerable; and, putting for the instant entirely out of question its peculiarities of subject, metre, and general treatment, it was a daring innovation in point of class. The eighteenth century had, even under its own laws and conditions, distinctly eschewed long narrative poems, the unreadable epics of Glover, for instance, belonging to that class of exception which really does prove the rule. Pope's *Rape* had been burlesque, and his *Dunciad*, satire; hardly the ghost of a narrative had appeared in Thomson and Young; Shenstone, Collins, Gray, had nothing *de longue haleine*; the entire poetical works of Goldsmith probably do not exceed in length a canto of the *Lay*; Cowper had never attempted narrative; Crabbe was resting on the early laurels of his brief *Village*, etc., and had not begun his tales. *Thalaba*, indeed, had been published, and no doubt was not without effect on Scott himself; but it was not popular, and the author was still under the sway of the craze against rhyme. To all intents and purposes the poet was addressing the public, in a work combining the attractions of fiction with the attractions of verse at considerable length, for the first time since Dryden had done so in his *Fables*, a hundred and five years before. And though the mastery of the method might be less, the stories were original, they were continuous, and they displayed an entirely new gust and seasoning both of subject and of style.

There can be no doubt at all, for those who put metre in its proper place, that a very large, perhaps the much larger, part of the appeal of the *Lay* was metrical. The public was sick of the couplet—had indeed been sickened twice over, if the abortive revolt of Gray and Collins be counted. It did not take, and was quite right in not taking, to the rhymeless, shortened Pindaric of Sayers and Southey, as to anything but an eccentric 'sport' of poetry. What Scott had to offer was practically new, or at least novel. It is universally known—and Scott, who was only too careless of his own claims, and the very last of men to steal or conceal those of others, made no secret of it—that the suggestion of the *Lay* in metre came from a private recitation or reading of Coleridge's *Christabel*, written in the year of Scott's marriage, but not published till twenty years later, and more than ten after the appearance of the *Lay*. Coleridge seems to have regarded Scott's priority with an irritability less suitable to his philosophic than to his poetical character.^[12] But he had, in the first place, only himself, if anybody, to blame; in the second, Scott more than made the loan his own property by the variations executed on its motive; and in the third, Coleridge's original right was far less than he seems to have honestly thought, and than most people have guilelessly assumed since.

For the iambic dimeter, freely altered by the licences of equivalence, anacrusis, and catalexis, though not recently practised in English when *Christabel* and the *Lay* set the example, is an inevitable result of the clash between accented, alliterative, asyllabic rhythm and quantitative, exactly syllabic metre, which accompanied the transformation of Anglo-Saxon into English. We have distinct approaches to it in the thirteenth century *Genesis*; it attains considerable development in Spenser's *The Oak and the Brere*; anybody can see that the latter part of Milton's *Comus* was written under the breath of its spirit. But it had not hitherto been applied on any great scale, and the delusions under which the eighteenth century laboured as to the syllabic restrictions of English poetry had made it almost impossible that it should be. At the same time, that century, by its lighter practice on the one hand in the octosyllable, on the other in the four-footed anapæstic, was making the way easier for those who dared a little: and Coleridge first, then Scott, did the rest.

We have seen that in some of his early ballad work Scott had a little overdone the licence of equivalence, but this had probably been one of the formal points on which, as we know, the advice of Lewis, no poet but a remarkably good metrist, had been of use to him. And he acquitted himself now in a manner which, if it never quite attains the weird charm of *Christabel* itself at its best, is

more varied, better sustained, and, above all, better suited to the story-telling which was, of course, Scott's supremest gift. It is very curious to compare Coleridge's remarks on Scott's verse with those of Wordsworth, in reference to the *White Doe of Rylstone*. Neither in *Christabel*, nor in the *White Doe*, is there a real *story* really told. Coleridge, but for his fatal weaknesses, undoubtedly could have told such a story; it is pretty certain that Wordsworth could not. But Scott could tell a story as few other men who have ever drawn breath on the earth could tell it. He had been distinguished in the conversational branch of the art from his youth up, and though it was to be long before he could write a story in prose, he showed now, at the first attempt, how he could write one in verse.

Construction, of course, was not his forte; it never was. The plot of the *Lay*, if not exactly non-existent, is of the simplest and loosest description; the whole being in effect a series of episodes strung together by the loves of Margaret and Cranstoun and the misdeeds of the Goblin Page. Even the Book supplies no real or necessary *nexus*. But the romance proper has never required elaborate construction, and has very rarely, if ever, received it. A succession of engaging or exciting episodes, each plausibly joined to each, contents its easy wants; and such a succession is liberally provided here. So, too, it does not require strict character-drawing—a gift with which Scott was indeed amply provided, but which he did not exhibit, and had no call to exhibit, here. If the personages will play their parts, that is enough. And they all play them very well here, though the hero and heroine do certainly exhibit something of that curious nullity which has been objected to the heroes nearly always, the heroines too frequently, of the later prose novels.

But even those critics who, as too many critics are wont to do, forgot and forget that 'the prettiest girl in the world' not only cannot give, but ought not to be asked to give, more than she has, must have been, and must be, very unreasonable if they find fault with the subject and stuff of the *Lay*. Jeffrey's remark about 'the present age not enduring' the Border and minstrel details was contradicted by the fact, and was, as a matter of taste, one of those strange blunders which diversified his often admirably acute critical utterances. When he feared their effects on '*English* readers,' he showed himself, as was not common with him, actually ignorant of one of the simplest general principles of the poetic appeal, that is to say, the element of *strangeness*. But we must not criticise criticism here, and must only add that another great appeal, that of variety, is amply given, as well as that of unfamiliarity. The graceful and touching, if a little conventional, overture of the Minstrel introduces with the truest art the vigorous

sketch of Branksome Tower. The spirits of flood and fell are allowed to impress and not allowed to bore us; for the quickest of changes is made to Deloraine's ride—a kind of thing in which Scott never failed, even in his latest and saddest days. The splendid Melrose opening of the Second Canto supports itself through the discovery of the Book, and finds due contrast in the description (or no-description) of the lovers' meeting; the fight and the Goblin Page's misbehaviour and punishment (to all, at least, but those, surely few now, who are troubled by the Jeffreyan sense of 'dignity'), the decoying and capture of young Buccleuch, and the warning of the clans are certainly no ungenerous provision for the Third; nor the clan anecdotes (especially the capital episode of the Beattisons), the parley, the quarrel of Howard and Dacre, and the challenge, for the Fourth. There is perhaps less in the Fifth, for Scott seems to have been afraid of another fight in detail; but the description of the night before, and the famous couplet—

'T'd give the lands of Deloraine
Dark Musgrave were alive again'—

would save it if there were nothing else, as there is much. And if the actual conclusion has no great interest (Scott was never good at conclusions, as we shall find Lady Louisa Stuart telling him frankly later), the Sixth Canto is full, and more than full, of brilliant things—the feast, the Goblin's tricks, his carrying-off, the pilgrimage, and, above all, the songs, especially 'Rosabelle' and the version of the 'Dies Iræ.'

The mention of these last may fairly introduce a few words on the formal and metrical characteristics of the poem, remarks which perhaps some readers resent, but which must nevertheless be made, inasmuch as they are to my mind by far the most important part of poetical criticism. Scott evidently arranged his scheme of metre with extreme care here, though it is possible that after this severe exercise he let it take care of itself to some extent later. His introduction is in the strict octosyllable, with only such licences of slur or elision—

'The pi | *tying Duch* | ess praised its chime,'
'*He had played* | it to King Charles the Good'—

as the greatest precisians might have allowed themselves. But the First Canto breaks at once into the full licence, not merely of equivalence,—that is to say, of substituting an anapæst or a trochee for an iamb,—but of shifting the base and rhythm of any particular verse, or of set batches of verses, between the three ground-feet, and, further, of occasionally introducing sixes, as in the ballad

metre, and even fours—

'Bards long | shall tell
How Lord Wal | ter fell,'

instead of the usual eights.

In similar fashion he varies the rhymes, passing as the subject or the accompaniment of the word-music may require, from the couplet to the quatrain, and from the quatrain to the irregularly rhymed 'Pindaric'; always, however, taking care that, except in the set lyric, the quatrain shall not fall too much into definite stanza, but be interlaced in sense or sound sufficiently to carry on the narrative. The result, to some tastes, is a medium quite unsurpassed for the particular purpose. The only objection to it at all capable of being maintained, that I can think of, is that the total effect is rather lyrical than epic. And so much of this must be perhaps allowed as comes to granting that Scott's verse-romance is rather a long and cunningly sustained and varied ballad than an epic proper.

The *Lay*, though not received with quite that eager appetite for poetry which Scott was 'born to introduce,' and of which he lived long enough to see the glutting, had a large and immediate sale. The author, not yet aware what a gold mine his copyrights were, parted with this after the first edition, and received in all rather less than £770, a sum trifling in comparison with his after gains; but probably the largest that had as yet been received by any English poet for a single volume not published by subscription. It is curious that, at the estimated rate of three for one in comparing the value of money at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the sum almost exactly equals that paid by Tonson for Dryden's *Fables*, the last book, before the *Lay* itself, which had united popularity, merit, and bulk in English verse. But Dryden was the acknowledged head of English literature at the time, and Scott was a mere beginner. He was probably even better pleased with the quality of the praise than with the quantity of the pudding. For though professional criticism, then in no very vigorous state, said some silly things, it was generally favourable; and a saying of Pitt (most indifferent, as a rule, of all Prime Ministers to English literature) is memorable not merely as summing up the general impression, but as defining what that impression was in a fashion quite invaluable to the student of literary history. The Pilot that Weathered the Storm, it seems, said of the description of the Minstrel's hesitation before playing, 'This is a sort of thing I might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given by poetry.' To the present generation and the last, the

reverse expression would probably seem more natural. We say, of Mr. Watts or of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, that they have put, in 'Love and Death' or in 'Love among the Ruins,' what we might have expected from poetry, but could hardly have thought possible in painting. But a hundred years of studious convention and generality, of deliberate avoidance of the poignant, and the vivid, and the detailed, and the coloured in poetry had made Pitt's confession as natural as another hundred years of contrary practice from Coleridge to Rossetti have made ours.

The publication of the *Lay* immediately preceded, and perhaps its success had no small share in deciding, the most momentous and unfortunate step of Scott's life, his entry into partnership with James Ballantyne. The discussion of the whole of this business will best be postponed till the date of its catastrophe is reached, but a few words may be said on the probable reasons for it. Much, no doubt, was the result of that combination of incalculable things which foolish persons of one kind call mere chance, of which foolish persons of another kind deny the existence, and which wise men term, from different but not irreconcilable points of view, Providence, or Luck, or Fate. But a little can be cleared up. Scott had evidently made up his mind that he should not succeed at the Bar, and had also persuaded himself that the very success of the *Lay* had made failure certain. The ill success of his brother Thomas, with the writer's business inherited from their father, perhaps inconvenienced and no doubt frightened him. In fact, though his harsher judges are wrong in attributing to him any undue haste to be rich, he certainly does seem to have been under a dread of being poor; a dread no doubt not wholly intelligible and partly morbid in a young man still under thirty-five, with brilliant literary and some legal prospects, who had, independently of fees, literary or legal, a secured income of about a thousand a year. He probably thought, and was right in thinking, that the book trade was going to 'look up' to a degree previously unknown; he seems throughout to have been under one of those inexplicable attractions towards the Ballantynes which now and then exist, as Hobbes says, 'in the greater towards the meaner, but not contrary'; and perhaps there was another cause which has not been usually allowed for enough. Good Christian and good-natured man as he was, Scott was exceedingly proud; and though joining himself with persons of dubious social position in mercantile operations seems an odd way of pride, it had its temptations. I do not doubt but that from the first Scott intended, more or less vaguely and dimly, to extend the printing business into a publishing one, and so to free himself from any necessity of going cap-in-hand to publishers.

However, for good or for ill,—I think it was mainly for ill,—for this reason or for that, the partnership was formed, at first indirectly by way of loan, then directly by further advance on security of a share in the business, and finally so that Scott became, though he did not appear, the leading partner. And the very first letter that we have of his about business shows the fatal flaw which he, the soul of honour, seems never to have detected till too late, if even then. The scheme for an edition of Dryden was already afloat, and the first editor proposed was a certain Mr. Foster, who 'howled about the expense of printing.' 'I still,' says Scott to Ballantyne, 'stick to my answer that *I know nothing of the matter*, but that, settle it how he and you will, *it must be printed by you or be no concern of mine. This gives you an advantage in driving the bargain.*' Perhaps; but how about the advantage to Mr. Foster of being advised by Ballantyne's partner to employ Ballantyne, while he was innocent of the knowledge of the identity of partner and adviser, and was even told that Scott 'knew nothing of the matter'?

Even before the quarrel which soon occurred with Constable established the Ballantynes—nominally the other brother John—as publishers, Scott had begun, and was constantly pressing upon the different publishing houses with which he was connected, a variety of literary schemes of the most ambitious and costly character. All these books were to be printed by Ballantyne, and many of them edited by himself; while, when the direct publishing business was added, there was no longer any check on this dangerous proceeding. It is most curious how Scott, the shrewdest and sanest of men in the vast majority of affairs, seems to have lost his head wherever books or lands were concerned. Himself both an antiquary and an antiquarian,^[13] as well as a lover of literature, he seems to have taken it for granted that the same combination of tastes existed in the public to an extent which would pay all expenses, however lavishly incurred. To us, nowadays, who know how cold a face publishers turn on what we call really interesting schemes, and how often these schemes, even when fostered, miscarry or barely pay expenses,—who are aware that even the editors of literary societies, where expenses are assured beforehand, have to work for love or for merely nominal fees, simply because the public will not buy the books,—it is not so wonderful that some of Scott's schemes never got into being at all, and that others were dead losses, as that any 'got home.' His *Dryden*, an altogether admirable book, on which he lavished labour, and great part of which appealed to a still dominant prestige, may just have carried the editor's certainly not excessive fee of forty guineas a volume, or about £750 for the whole. But when one reads of twice that sum paid for the *Swift*, of £1300 for the thirteen quartos of the *Somers Papers*, and so forth, the feeling is not that the sums paid were at

all too much for the work done, but that the publishers must have been very lucky men if they ever saw their money again. The two first of these schemes certainly, the third perhaps, deserved success; and still more so did a great scheme for the publication of the entire *British Poets*, to be edited by Scott and Campbell, which indeed fell through in itself, but resulted indirectly in Campbell's excellent *Specimens* and Chalmers's invaluable if not very comely *Poets*. Even another project, a *Corpus Historicorum*, would have been magnificent, though it could hardly have been bookselling war. But the *Somers Tracts* themselves, the *Memoirs* and papers of Sadler, Slingsby, Carleton, Cary, etc., were of the class of book which requires subvention of some kind to prevent it from being a dead loss; and when the preventive check of the unwillingness of publishers was removed by the fatal establishment of 'John Ballantyne & Co.,' things became worse still. There are few better instances of the eternal irony of fate than that the author of the admirable description of the bookseller's horror at Mr. Pembroke's Sermons^[14] should have permitted, should have positively caused, the publishing at what was in effect his own risk, or rather his own certainty of loss, not merely of Weber's ambitious *Beaumont and Fletcher*, but of collections of *Tixall Poetry*, *Histories of the Culdees*, Wilson's *History of James the First*, and the rest.

As the beginning of 1805 saw the first birth of his real books, so the end of it saw that of the last of his children according to the flesh. His firstborn, as has been said, did not live. But Walter (born November 1799), Sophia (born October 1801), Anne (born February 1803), and Charles (born December 1805) survived infancy; and it is quite probable that these regular increases to his family, by suggesting that he might have a large one, stimulated Scott's desire to enlarge his income. As a matter of fact, however, the quartette of two boys and two girls was not exceeded. The domestic life at Castle Street and Ashestiel, from the publication of the *Lay* to that of *Marmion* in 1808,—indeed to that of *The Lady of the Lake* in May 1810,—ran smoothly enough; and there can be little doubt that these five years were the happiest, and in reality the most prosperous, of Scott's life. He had at once attained great fame, and was increasing it by each successive poem; his immense intellectual activity found vent besides in almost innumerable projects, some of which were in a way successful, and some of which, if they did himself no very great good pecuniarily, did good to more or less deserving friends and *protégés*. His health had, as yet, shown no signs whatever of breaking down; he was physically in perfect condition for, and at Ashestiel he had every opportunity of indulging in, the field sports in which his soul delighted at least as much as in reading and writing; he had pleasant

intervals of wandering; and, to crown it all, he was, during this period, established in reversionary prospect, if not yet in actual possession, of an income which should have put even his anxieties at rest, and which certainly might have made him dissociate himself from the dangerous and doubtful commercial enterprises in which he had engaged. This reversion was that of a Clerkship of Session, one of an honourable, well-paid, and by no means laborious group of offices which seems to have been accepted as a comely and comfortable set of shelves for advocates of ability, position, and influence, who, for this reason or that, were not making absolutely first-rate mark at the Bar. The post to which Scott was appointed was in the possession of a certain Mr. Hope, and as no retiring pension was attached to these places, it was customary to hold them on the rather uncomfortable terms of doing the work till the former holder died, without getting any money. But before many years a pension scheme was put in operation; Mr. Hope took his share of it, and Scott entered upon thirteen hundred a year in addition to his Sheriffship and to his private property, without taking any account at all of literary gains. The appointment had not actually been completed, though the patent had been signed, when the Fox and Grenville Government came in, and it so happened that the document had been so made out as to have enabled Scott, if he chose, to draw the whole salary and leave his predecessor in the cold. But this was soon set right.

In the visit to London which he paid (apparently for the purpose of getting the error corrected), he made the acquaintance of the unlucky Princess of Wales, who was at this time rather a favourite with the Tories. And when he came back to Scotland, the trial of Lord Melville gave him an opportunity of distinguishing himself by a natural and very pardonable partisanship, which made his Whig friends rather sore. Politics in Edinburgh ran very high during this short break in the long Tory domination, and from it dates a story, to some minds, perhaps, one of the most interesting of all those about Scott, and connected indelibly with the scene of its occurrence. It tells how, as he was coming down the Mound with Jeffrey and another Whig, after a discussion in the Faculty of Advocates on some proposals of innovation, Jeffrey tried to laugh the difference off, and how Scott, usually stoical enough, save in point of humour, broke out with actual tears in his eyes, 'No, no! it is no laughing matter. Little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland shall remain!' He would probably have found no great reason at the other end of the century to account himself a false prophet; and he might have thought his prophecies in fair way of fulfilment not in Scotland only.

During 1806 and 1807 the main occupations of Scott's leisure (if he can ever be said to have had such a thing) were the *Dryden* and *Marmion*. The latter of these appeared in February and the former in April 1808, a perhaps unique example of an original work, and one of criticism and compilation, both of unusual bulk and excellence, appearing, with so short an interval, from the same pen.

As for *Marmion*, it is surely by far the greatest, taking all constituents of poetical greatness together, of Scott's poems. It was not helped at the time, and probably never has been helped, by the author's plan of prefixing to each canto introductions of very considerable length, each addressed to one or other of his chief literary friends, and having little or nothing at all to do with the subject of the tale. Contemporaries complained that the main poem was thereby intolerably interrupted; posterity, I believe, has taken the line of ignoring the introductions altogether. This is a very great pity, for not only do they contain some of Scott's best and oftenest quoted lines, but each is a really charming piece of occasional verse, and something more, in itself. The beautiful description of Tweedside in late autumn, the dirge on Nelson, Pitt, and Fox (which last, of course, infuriated Jeffrey), and, above all, the splendid passage on the *Morte d'Arthur* (which Scott had at this time thought of editing, but gave up to Southey) adorn the epistle to Rose; the picture of Ettrick Forest in that to Marriott is one of the best sustained things the poet ever did; the personal interest of the Erskine piece is of the highest, though it has fewer 'purple' passages, and it is well-matched with that to Skene; while the fifth to Ellis and the sixth and last to Heber nobly complete the batch. Only, though the things in this case *are* both rich and rare,

'We wonder what the devil they do there';

and Lockhart unearthed, what Scott seems to have forgotten, the fact that they were originally intended to appear by themselves. It is a pity they did not; for, excellent as they are, they are quite out of place as interludes to a story, the serried range of which not only does not require but positively rejects them.

For here, while Scott had lost little, if anything, of the formal graces of the *Lay*, he had improved immensely in grip and force. Clare may be a bread-and-butter heroine, and Wilton a milk-and-water lover, but the designs of *Marmion* against both give a real story-interest, which is quite absent from the *Lay*. The figure of Constance is really tragic, not melodramatic merely, and makes one regret that Scott, in his prose novels, did not repeat and vary her. All the accessories, both in incident and figure, are good, and it is almost superfluous to praise the last canto. It extorted admiration from the partisan rancour and the literary

prudishness of Jeffrey; it made the disturbed dowagers of the *Critical Review*, who thought, with Rymer, that 'a hero ought to be virtuous,' mingle applause with their fie-fies; it has been the delight of every reader, not a milksop, or a faddist, or a poetical man-of-one-idea, ever since. The last canto of *Marmion* and the last few 'Aventiuren' of the *Nibelungen Lied* are perhaps the only things in all poetry where a set continuous battle (not a series of duels as in Homer) is related with unerring success; and the steady *crescendo* of the whole, considering its length and intensity, is really miraculous. Nay, even without this astonishing finale, the poem that contained the opening sketch of Norham, the voyage from Whitby to Holy Island, the final speech of Constance, and the famous passage of her knell, the Host's Tale, the pictures of Crichton and the Blackford Hill view, the 'air and fire' of the 'Lochinvar' song, the phantom summons from the Cross of Edinburgh, and the parting of Douglas and Marmion, could spare half of these and still remain one of the best of its kind, while every passage so spared would be enough to distinguish any poem in which it occurred.

The considerable change in the metre of *Marmion* as compared with the *Lay* is worth noticing. Here, as there, the 'introductions' are, for the most part, if not throughout, in continuous octosyllabic couplets. But, in the text, the couplet plays also a much larger part than it does in the *Lay*, and where it is dropped the substitute is not usually the light and extremely varied medley of the earlier poem, so much as a sort of irregular (and sometimes almost regular) stanza arrangement, sets of (usually three) octosyllables being interspersed with sixes, rhyming independently. The batches of monorhymed octosyllables sometimes extend to even four in number, with remarkably good effect, as, for instance, in the infernal proclamation from the Cross. Altogether the metrical scheme is of a graver cast than that of the *Lay*, and suits the more serious and tragical colour of the story.

It has been mentioned above in passing that Jeffrey reviewed *Marmion* on the whole unfavourably. The story of this review is well known: how the editor-reviewer (with the best intentions doubtless) sent the proof with a kind of apology to Scott on the morning of a dinner-party in Castle Street; how Scott showed at least outward indifference, and Mrs. Scott a not unamiable petulance; and how, though the affair caused no open breach of private friendship, it doubtless gave help to the increasing Whiggery of the *Review* and its pusillanimous policy in regard to the Spanish War in severing Scott's connection with it, and determining him to promote, heart and soul, the opposition venture of the *Quarterly*. Of this latter it was naturally enough proposed by Canning that

Scott should be editor; but, as naturally, he does not seem to have even considered the proposal. He would have hated living in London; no salary that could have been offered him could have done more than equal, if so much, the stipends of his Sheriffship and the coming Clerkship, which he would have had to give up; and the work would have interfered much more seriously than his actual vocations with his literary avocations. Besides, it is quite certain that he would not have made a good editor. In the first place, he was fitted neither by education nor by temperament for the troublesome and 'meticulous' business of knocking contributions into shape. And, in the second, he would most assuredly have fallen into the most fatal of all editorial errors—that of inserting articles, not because they were actually good or likely to be popular, but because the subjects were interesting, or the writers agreeable, to himself. But he backed the venture manfully with advice, by recruiting for it, and afterwards by contributing to it.

It so happened, too, that about the same time he had dissensions with the publisher as well as with the editor of the *Edinburgh*. Constable, though he had not entered into the intimate relations with Scott and the Ballantynes that were afterwards so fatal, had made the spirited bid of a thousand pounds for *Marmion*, and the much more spirited and (it is to be feared) much less profitable one of fifteen hundred for the *Swift*. He had, however, recently taken into partnership a certain Mr. Hunter of Blackness. This Hunter must have had some merits—he had at any rate sufficient wit to throw the blame of the fact that sojourn in Scotland did not always agree with Englishmen on their disgusting habit of 'eating too much *and not drinking enough*.' But he was a laird of some family, and he seems to have thought that he might bring into business the slightly hectoring ways which were then tolerated in Scotland from persons of quality to persons of none or less. He was a very bitter Whig, and, therefore, ill disposed towards Scott. And, lastly, he had, or thought he had, a grievance against his distinguished 'hand' in respect of the *Swift*, to wit, that the editor of that well-paid compilation did not devote himself to it by any means exclusively enough. Now Scott, though the most good-natured of men and only too easy to lead, was absolutely impossible to drive; and his blood was as ready as the 'bluid of M'Foy' itself to be set on fire at the notion of a cock-laird from Fife not merely treating a Scott with discourtesy, but imputing doubtful conduct to him. He offered to throw up the *Swift*, and though this was not accepted, broke for a time all other connection with Constable—an unfortunate breach, as it helped to bring about the establishment of the Ballantyne publishing business, and so unquestionably began Scott's own ruin. It is remarkable that a similar impatience of interference

afterwards broke Scott's just-begun connection with Blackwood, which, could it have lasted, would probably have saved him. For that sagacious person would certainly never have plunged, or, if he could have helped it, let anyone else plunge, into Charybdis.

Between the publication of *Marmion* and that of *The Lady of the Lake* Scott was very busy in bookmaking and bookselling projects. It was characteristic of the mixture of bad luck and bad management which hung on the Ballantynes from the first that even their *Edinburgh Annual Register*, published as it was in the most stirring times, and written by Scott, by Southey, and others of the very best hands, was a failure. He made some visits to London, and (for the scenery of the new poem) to the Trossachs and Loch Lomond; and had other matters of concern, the chief of which were the death of his famous bull-terrier Camp, and two troublesome affairs connected with his brothers. One of these, the youngest, Daniel, after misconduct of various kinds, had, as mentioned above, shown the white feather during a negro insurrection in Jamaica, and so disgusted his brother that when he came home to die, Scott would neither see him, nor, when he died, go to his funeral. The other concerned his brother Thomas, who, after his failure as a writer, had gone from prudential motives to the Isle of Man, where he for a time was an officer in the local Fencibles. But before leaving Edinburgh, and while he was still a practising lawyer, his brother had appointed him to a small post in his own gift as Clerk. Not only was there nothing discreditable in this according to the idea of any time,—for Thomas Scott's education and profession qualified him fully for the office,—but there were circumstances which, at that time, showed rather heroic and uncommon virtue. For the actual vacancy had occurred in a higher and more valuable post, also in Scott's gift, and he, instead of appointing his brother to this, promoted a deserving subordinate veteran, and gave the lower and less valuable place to Thomas. The latter's circumstances, however, obliged him to perform his duties by deputy, and a Commission then sitting ultimately abolished the office altogether, with a retiring allowance of about half the salary. Certain Whig peers took this up as a job, and Lord Lauderdale, supported by Lord Holland, made in the House of Lords very offensive charges against Scott personally for having appointed his brother to a place which he knew would be abolished,^[15] and against Thomas for claiming compensation in respect of duties which he had never performed. The Bill was, however, carried; but Scott was indignant at the loss threatened to his brother and the imputation made on himself, and 'cut' Lord Holland at a semi-public dinner not long afterwards. For this he was and has since been severely blamed, and his behaviour was perhaps a little 'perfervid.'

But everybody knows, or should know, that there are few things more trying to humanity than to be accused of improper conduct when a man is hugging himself on having behaved with unusual and saint-like propriety.

The Lady of the Lake appeared in May 1810, being published by Ballantyne and Miller, and at once attained enormous popularity. Twenty thousand copies were sold within the year, two thousand of which were costly quartos; and while there can be no doubt that this was the highest point of Scott's poetical vogue, there is, I believe, not much doubt that the poem has always continued to be a greater favourite with the general than any other of his. It actually, more than any other, created the *furor* for Scottish scenery and touring, which has never ceased since; it supplied in the descriptions of that scenery, in the fight between Roderick and Fitz-James, and in other things, his most popular passages; and it has remained probably the type of his poetry to the main body of readers.

Yet there are some who like it less than any other of the major divisions of that poetry, and this is by no means necessarily due either to a desire to be eccentric or to the subtler but almost equally illegitimate operation of the want of novelty—of the fact that its best effects are but repetitions of those of *Marmion* and the *Lay*. For, fine as it is, it seems to me to display the drawbacks of Scott's scheme and method more than any of the longer poems. Douglas, Ellen, Malcolm, are null; Roderick and the king have a touch of theatricality which I look for in vain elsewhere in Scott; there is nothing fantastic in the piece like the Goblin Page, and nothing tragical like Constance. There is something teasing in what has been profanely called the 'guide-book' character—the cicerone-like fidelity which contrasts so strongly with the skilfully subordinated description in the two earlier and even in the later poems. Moreover, though Ellis ought not to have called the octosyllable 'the Hudibrastic measure' (which is only a very special variety of it), he was certainly right in objecting to its great predominance in unmixed form here.

The critics, however, sang the praises of the poem lustily. Even Jeffrey—perhaps because it was purely Scottish (he had thought *Marmion* not Scottish enough), perhaps because its greater conventionality appealed to him, perhaps because he wished to make atonement—was extremely complimentary. And certainly no one need be at a loss for things to commend positively, whatever may be his comparative estimate. The fine Spenserian openings (which Byron copied almost slavishly in the form of the stanza he took for *Harold*), the famous beginning of the stag, the description of the pass (till Fitz-James begins to soliloquise), some of the songs (especially the masterly 'Coronach'), the passage of the Fiery Cross,

the apparition of the clan (not perhaps so great as some have thought it, but still great), the struggle, the guard-room (which shocked Jeffrey dreadfully)—these are only some of the best things. But I own that I turn from the best of them to the last stand of the spearmen at Flodden, and the unburying of the Book in the *Lay*.

It may, perhaps, not be undesirable to anticipate somewhat, in order to complete the sketch of the verse romances in this chapter; for not very long after the publication of the *Lady of the Lake*, Scott resumed the writing of *Waverley*, which effected an entire change in the direction of his literature; and it was not a twelvemonth later that he planned the establishment at Abbotsford, which was thenceforward the headquarters of his life.

The first poem to follow was one which lay out of the series in subject, scheme, and dress, and which perhaps should rather be counted with his minor and miscellaneous pieces—*The Vision of Don Roderick*. It was written with rapidity, even for him, and with a special purpose; the profits being promised beforehand to the Committee of the Portuguese Relief Fund, formed to assist the sufferers from Massena's devastations. It consists of rather less than a hundred Spenserian stanzas, the story of Roderick merely ushering in a magical revelation, to that too-amorous monarch, of the fortunes of the Peninsular War and its heroes up to the date of writing. The *Edinburgh Review*, which hated the war, was very angry because Scott did not celebrate Sir John Moore (whether as a good Whig or a bad general it did not explain); but even Jeffrey was not entirely unfavourable, and the piece was otherwise well received. The description of the subterranean hall beneath the Cathedral of Toledo is as good as we should expect, and the verses on Saragossa and on the forces of the three kingdoms are very fine. But the whole was something of a *torso*, and it is improbable that Scott could ever have used the Spenserian stanza to good effect for continuous narrative. Even in its individual shape, that great form requires the artistic patience as well as the natural gift of men like its inventor, or like Thomson, Shelley, and Tennyson, in other times and of other schools, to get the full effect out of it; while to connect it satisfactorily with its kind and adjust it to narrative is harder still.

The true succession, however, after this parenthesis, was taken up by *Rokeby*, which was dated on the very last day of 1812. Its reception was not exceedingly enthusiastic; for Byron, borrowing most of his technique and general scheme from Scott, and joining with these greater apparent passion and a more novel and unfamiliar local colour, had appeared on the scene as a 'second lion.' The public, a 'great-sized monster of ingratitude,' had got accustomed to Scott, if not weary

of him. The title^[16] was not very happy; and perhaps some harm was really done by one of the best of Moore's many good jokes in the *Twopenny Postbag*, where he represented Scott as coming from Edinburgh to London

'To do all the gentlemen's seats by the way'

in romances of half a dozen cantos.

The poem, however, is a very delightful one, and to some tastes at least very far above the *Lady of the Lake*. Scott, indeed, clung to the uninterrupted octosyllable more than ever; but that verse, if a poet knows how to manage it, is by no means so unsuited for story-telling as Ellis thought; and Scott had here more story to tell than in any of his preceding pieces, except *Marmion*. The only character, indeed, in which one takes much interest is Bertram Risingham; but he is a really excellent person, the cream of Scott's ruffians, whether in prose or verse; appearing well, conducting himself better, and ending best of all. Nor is Oswald, the contrasted villain, by any means to be despised; while the passages—on which the romance, in contradistinction to the classical epic, stands or falls—are equal to all but the very best in *Marmion* or the *Lay*. Bertram's account of the first and happier events at Marston Moor, as well as of his feelings as to his comradeship with Mortham; the singularly beautiful opening of the second canto

'Far in the chambers of the west';

with the description of Upper Teesdale; Bertram's clamber on the cliff, with its reminiscences of the 'Kittle Nine Steps,'—these lead on to many other things as good, ending with that altogether admirable bit of workmanship, Bertram's revenge on Oswald and his own death. Matilda is one of the best of Scott's verse-heroines, except Constance—that is to say, the best of his good girls—and she has the interest of being avowedly modelled on 'Green Mantle.' Nor in any of the poems do the lyrics give more satisfactory setting-off to the main text. Indeed, it may be questioned whether any contains such a garland as—to mention only the best—is formed by

'O, Brignall banks are wild and fair';

the exquisite

'A weary lot is thine, fair maid,'

adapted from older matter with a skill worthy of Burns himself; the capital bravura of Allen-a-Dale; and that noble Cavalier lyric—

'When the dawn on the mountain was misty and grey.'

The Bridal of Triermain was published in 1813, not long after *Rokeby*, and, like that poem, drew its scenery from the North of England; but in circumstances, scale, and other ways it forms a pair with *Harold the Dauntless*, and they had best be noticed together.

The Lord of the Isles, the last of the great quintet, appeared in December 1814. Scott had obtained part of the scenery for it in an earlier visit to the Hebrides, and the rest in his yachting voyage (see below) with the Commissioners of Northern Lights, which also gave the *décor* for *The Pirate*. The poem was not more popular than *Rokeby* in England, and it was even less so in Scotland, chiefly for the reason, only to be mentioned with all but silent amazement, that it was 'not bitter enough against England.' Its faults are, of course, obvious enough. Central story there is simply none; the inconvenience that arises to the hero from his being addressed by two young ladies cannot awake any very sympathetic tear, nor does either Edith of Lorn or Isabel Bruce awaken any violent desire to offer to relieve him of one of them. The versification, however, is less uniform than that of *Rokeby* or *The Lady of the Lake*, and there are excellent passages—the best being, no doubt, the Abbot's extorted blessing on the Bruce; the great picture of Loch Coruisk, which, let people say what they will, is marvellously faithful; part of the voyage (though one certainly could spare some of the 'merrilys'); the landing in Carrick; the rescue of the supposed page; and, finally, Bannockburn, which even Jeffrey admired, though its want of 'animosity' shocked him.

The two last of the great poems—there was indeed a third, *The Field of Waterloo*, written hastily for a subscription, and not worthy either of Scott or of the subject—have not by any means the least interest, either intrinsic or that of curiosity. Indeed, as a matter of liking, not quite disjoined from criticism, I should put them very high indeed. Both were issued anonymously, and with indications intended to mislead readers into the idea that they were by Erskine; the intention being, it would seem, partly to ascertain how far the author's mere name counted in his popularity, partly also to 'fly kites' as to the veering of the public taste in reference to the verse romance in general. By the time of the publication of *Harold the Dauntless* in 1817, Scott could hardly have had any intention of deserting the new way—his own exclusive right—in which he was already walking firmly. But the *Bridal of Triermain* appeared very shortly after *Rokeby*, and was, no doubt, seriously intended as a test.

In both pieces the author fell back upon his earlier scheme of metre, the *Christabel* blend of iambic with anapæstic passages, instead of the nearly pure iambs of his middle poems. The *Bridal*, partly to encourage the Erskine notion, it would seem, is hampered by an intermixed outline-story, told in the introductions, of the wooing and winning of a certain Lucy by a certain Arthur, both of whom may be very heartily wished away. But the actual poem is more thoroughly a Romance of Adventure than even the *Lay*, has much more central interest than that poem, and is adorned by passages of hardly less beauty than the best of the earlier piece. It is astonishing how anyone of the slightest penetration could have entertained the slightest doubt about the authorship of

'Come hither, come hither, Henry my page,
Whom I saved from the sack of Hermitage';

still more of that of the well-known opening of the Third Canto, one of the triumphs of that 'science of names' in which Scott was such a proficient—

'Bewcastle now must keep the Hold,
Speir-Adam's steeds must bide in stall,
Of Hartley-burn the bowmen bold
Must only shoot from battled wall;
And Liddesdale may buckle spur,
And Teviot now may belt the brand,
Tarras and Ewes keep nightly stir,
And Eskdale foray Cumberland!'

But these are only the most unmistakable, not the best. The opening specification of the Bride; the admirable 'Lyulph's Tale,' with the first appearance of the castle, and the stanza (suggested no doubt by a famous picture) of the damsels dragging Arthur's war-gear; the courtship, and Guendolen's wiles to retain Arthur, and the parting; the picture of the King's court; the tournament; all these are good enough. But I am not sure that the description of Sir Roland's tantalised vigil in the Vale of St. John, with the moonlit valley (itself a worthy pendant even to the Melrose), and the sudden and successful revelation of the magic hold when the knight flings his battle-axe, does not even surpass the Tale. Nor do I think that the actual adventures of this Childe Roland in the dark towers are inferior. The trials and temptations are of stock material, but all the best matter is stock, and this is handled with a rush and dash which more than saves it. I hope the tiger was only a magic tiger, and went home comfortably with the damsels of

Zaharak. It seems unfair that he should be actually killed. But this is the only thing that disquiets me; and it is impossible to praise too much De Vaux's ingenious compromise between tasteless asceticism and dangerous indulgence in the matter of 'Asia's willing maids.'

Harold the Dauntless is much slighter, as indeed might be expected, considering that it was finished in a hurry, long after the author had given up poetry as a main occupation. But the half burlesque Spenserians of the overture are very good; the contrasted songs, 'Dweller of the Cairn' and 'A Danish Maid for Me,' are happy. Harold's interview with the Chapter is a famous bit of bravura; and all concerning the Castle of the Seven Shields, from the ballad introducing it, through the description of its actual appearance (in which, by the way, Scott shows almost a better grasp of the serious Spenserian stanza than anywhere else) to the final battle of Odin and Harold, is of the very best Romantic quality. Perhaps, indeed, it is because (as the *Critical Review*, the Abdiel of 'classical' orthodoxy among the reviews of the time, scornfully said), 'both poems are romantic enough to satisfy all the parlour-boarders of all the ladies' schools in England,' that they are so pleasant. It is something, in one's grey and critical age, to feel genuine sympathy with the parlour-boarder.

The chapter has already stretched to nearly the utmost proportions compatible with the scale of this little book, and we must not indulge in very many critical remarks on the general character of the compositions discussed in it. But I have never carried out the plan (which I think indispensable) of reading over again whatever work, however well known, one has to write about, with more satisfaction. The main defects lie on the surface. Despite great felicities of a certain kind, these poems have no claim to formal perfection, and occasionally sin by very great carelessness, if not by something worse. The poet frankly shows himself as one whose appeal is not that of 'jewels five words long,' set and arranged in phrases of that magical and unending beauty which the very greatest poets of the world command. His effect, even in description, is rather of mass than of detail. He does not attempt analysis in character, and only skirts passion. Although prodigal enough of incident, he is very careless of connected plot. But his great and abiding glory is that he revived the art, lost for centuries in England, of telling an interesting story in verse, of riveting the attention through thousands of lines of poetry neither didactic nor argumentative. And of his separate passages, his patches of description and incident, when the worst has been said of them, it will remain true that, in their own way and for their own purpose, they cannot be surpassed. The already noticed comparison of any of

Scott's best verse-tales with *Christabel*, which they formally imitated to some extent, and with the *White Doe of Rylstone*, which followed them, will no doubt show that Coleridge and Wordsworth had access to mansions in the house of poetry where Scott is never seen. But in some respects even their best passages are not superior to his; and as tales, as romances, his are altogether superior to theirs.



CHAPTER IV

THE NOVELS, FROM *WAVERLEY* TO *REDGAUNTLET*

In the opening introduction to the collected edition of the novels, Scott has given a very full account of the genesis of *Waverley*. These introductions, written before the final inroad had been made on his powers by the united strength of physical and moral misfortune, animated at once by the last glow of those powers, and by the indefinable charm of a fond retrospection, displaying every faculty in autumn luxuriance, are so delightful that they sometimes seem to be the very cream and essence of his literary work in prose. Indeed, I have always wondered why they have not been published separately as a History of the Waverley Novels by their author. Yet the public, I believe, with what I fear must be called its usual lack of judgment in some such matters, seems never to have read them very widely. An exception, however, may possibly have been made in the case of this first one, opening as it has long done every new issue of the whole set of novels. At anyrate, in one way or another, it is probably known, at least to those who take an interest in Scott, that he had begun *Waverley* and thrown it aside some ten years before its actual appearance, at a time when he was yet a novice in literature. He had also attempted one or two other things,—a completion of Strutt's *Queenhoo Hall*, the beginning of a tale about Thomas the Rhymer, etc., which are now appended to the introduction itself,—and he had once, in 1810, resumed *Waverley*, and again thrown it aside. At last, when his supremacy as a popular poet was threatened by Byron, and when, perhaps, he himself was a little wearying of the verse tale, he discovered the fragment while searching for fishing-tackle in the old desk where he had put it, and after a time resolved to make a new and anonymous attempt on public favour.

By the time—1814—when the book actually appeared, considerable changes, both for good and for bad, had occurred in Scott's circumstances; and the total of his literary work, independently of the poems mentioned in the last chapter, had been a good deal increased. Ashestiel had been exchanged for Abbotsford; the new house was being planned and carried out so as to become, if not exactly a palace, something much more than the cottage which had been first talked of; and the owner's passion for buying, at extravagant prices, every neighbouring patch of mostly thankless soil that he could get hold of was growing by

indulgence. He himself, in 1811 and the following years, was extremely happy and extremely busy, planting trees, planning rooms, working away at *Rokeby* and *Triermain* in the general sitting-room of the makeshift house, with hammering all about him (now, the hammer and the pen are perhaps of all manual implements the most deadly and irreconcilable foes!), corresponding with all sorts and conditions of men; furnishing introductions and contributions (in some cases never yet collected) to all sorts and conditions of books, and struggling, as best he saw his way, though the way was unfortunately not the right one, with the ever-increasing difficulties of Ballantyne & Company. I forget whether there is any evidence that Dickens consciously took his humorous incarnation of the duties of a 'Co.' from Scott's own experience. But Scott as certainly had to provide the money, the sense, the good-humour, and the rest of the working capital as Mark Tapley himself. The merely pecuniary part of these matters may be left to the next chapter; it is sufficient to say that, aggravated by misjudgment in the selection and carrying out of the literary part, it brought the firm in 1814 exceedingly near the complete smash which actually happened ten years later. One is tempted to wish that the crash had come, for it was only averted by the alliance with Constable which was the cause of the final downfall. Also, it would have come at a time when Scott was physically better able to bear it; it could hardly in any degree have interfered with the appearance of *Waverley* and its followers; and it would have had at least a chance of awakening their author to a sense of the double mistake of engaging his credit in directly commercial concerns, and of sinking his money in land and building. However, things were to be as they were, and not otherwise.

How anxious Constable must have been to recover Scott (Hunter, the stone of stumbling, was now removed by death) is evident from the mere list of the titles of the books which he took over in whole or part from the Ballantynes. Even his Napoleonic audacity quailed before the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, with its handsome annual loss of a thousand a year, at Brewster's *Persian Astronomy*, in 4to and 8vo, and at *General Views of the County of Dumfries*. But he saddled himself with a good deal of the 'stock' (which in this case most certainly had not its old sense of 'assets'), and in May 1813, Scott seems to have thought that if John Ballantyne would curb his taste for long-dated bills, things might go well. Unluckily, John did not choose to do so, and Scott, despite the warning, was equally unable to curb his own for peat-bogs, marl-pits, the Cauldshiels Loch, and splendid lots of ancient armour. By July there was again trouble, and in August things were so bad that they were only cleared by Scott's obtaining from the Duke of Buccleuch a guarantee for £4000. It was in consenting to this that

the Duke expressed his approval of Scott's determination to refuse the Laureateship, which had been offered to him, and which, in consequence of his refusal and at his suggestion, was conferred upon Southey. Even the guarantee, though it did save the firm, saved it with great difficulty.

In the following winter Scott had an adventure with his eccentric German amanuensis, Henry Weber, who had for some time been going mad, and who proposed a duel with pistols (which he produced) to his employer in the study at Castle Street. *Swift* appeared at last in the summer, and it was in June 1814 that the first of a series of wonderful *tours de force* was achieved by the completion, in about three weeks, of the last half of *Waverley*. One of the most striking things in Lockhart is the story of the idle apprentice who became industrious by seeing Scott's hand traversing the paper hour after hour at his study window. The novel actually appeared on July 7, and, being anonymous, made no immediate 'move,' as booksellers say, before Scott set off a fortnight later for his long-planned tour with the Commissioners of Northern Lights—the Scottish Trinity House—in their yacht, round the northern half of the island and to Orkney and Shetland. To abstract his own admirable account of the tour^[17] would be a task grateful neither to writer nor to reader, the latter of whom, if he does not know it already, had better lose no time in making its acquaintance. On the return in September, Scott was met by two pieces of bad and good tidings respectively—the death of the Duchess of Buccleuch, and the distinct, though not as yet 'furious,' success of his novel.

There is no doubt that the early fragments in tale-telling which have been noticed above do not display any particular skill in the art; nor is there much need to quarrel with those who declare that the opening of *Waverley*^[18] itself ranks little, if at all, above them. I always read it myself; but I believe most people plunge almost at once into the Tullyveolan visit. By doing so, however, they miss not merely the critical pleasure of comparing a man's work (as can rarely be done) during his period of groping for the way, with his actual stumble into it for the first time, but also such justification as there is for the hero's figure. Nobody ever judged the unlucky captain of Gardiner's better than his creator, who at the time frankly called him 'a sneaking piece of imbecility,' and avowed, with as much probability as right, that 'if he had married Flora, she would have set him up on the chimney-piece, as Count Borowlaski's^[19] wife used to do.' But his weaknesses have at least an excuse from his education and antecedents, which does not appear if these antecedents are neglected.

Still, the story-interest only begins when *Waverley* rides into the bear-warded

avenue; it certainly never ceases till the golden image of the same totem is replaced in the Baron of Bradwardine's hand. And it is very particularly to be observed that this interest is of a kind absolutely novel in combination and idiosyncrasy. The elements of literary interest are nowhere new, except in what is, for aught we know, accidentally the earliest literature *to us*. They are all to be found in Homer, in the Book of Job, in the *Agamemnon*, in the *Lancelot*, in the *Poem of the Cid*. But from time to time, in the hands of the men of greater genius, they are shaken up afresh, they receive new adjustments, and a touch of something personal which transforms them. This new adjustment and touch produced in Scott's case what we call the Historical Novel.^[20] It is quite a mistake to think that he was limited to this. *Guy Mannering* and *The Antiquary* among the earlier novels, *St. Ronan's Well* and the exquisite introductory sketch to the *Chronicles of the Canongate* among the later, would disprove that. But the historical novel was the new kind that he was 'born to introduce,' after many failures in many generations. It is difficult to say whether it was accident or property which made his success in it co-existent with his success in depicting national character, scenery, and manners. Attempts at this, not always unsuccessful attempts, had indeed been made before. It had been tried frequently, though usually in the sense of caricature, on the stage; it had been done quite recently in the novel by Miss Edgeworth (whom Scott at least professed to regard as his governess here), and much earlier in this very department of Scotch matters by Smollett. But it had never been done with really commanding ability on the great scale.

In *Waverley* Scott supplied these two aspects, the historical-romantic and the national-characteristic, with a felicity perhaps all the more unerring in that it seems to have been only partly conscious. The subject of 'the Forty-five' was now fully out of taboo, and yet retained an interest more than antiquarian. The author had the amplest stores of knowledge, and that sympathy which is so invaluable to the artist when he keeps it within the limits of art. He seems to have possessed by instinct (for there was nobody to teach him) the paramount secret of the historical novelist, the secret of making his central and prominent characters fictitious, and the real ones mostly subsidiary. On the other hand, the knowledge of his native country, which he had been accumulating for almost the whole of his nearly four-and-forty years of life, was joined in him with that universal knowledge of humanity which only men of the greatest genius have. I am, indeed, aware that both these positions have been attacked. I was much pleased, some time after I had begun to write this little book, to find in a review of the present year of grace these words: 'Scott only knew a small portion of

human nature, and he was unable to portray the physiognomy of the past.' I feared at first that this might be only one of the numerous flings of our young barbarians, a pleasant, or pleasantly intended, flirt of the heels of the New Humour. But the context showed that the writer was in deadly earnest. I shall not attempt here to explain to him, in a popular or any other style, that he is, perhaps, not quite right. Life itself is not long enough—'little books' are decidedly too short—for a demonstration that the Pacific Ocean is not really a small portion of the terrestrial water-space, or that Alexander was able to overrun foreign countries. We may find a little room in the Conclusion to say something more about Scott's range and his faculty. Here it will be enough to wear our friend's rue with a slight difference, and to say that *Waverley* and its successors showed in their author knowledge, complete in all but certain small parts, of human nature, and an almost unlimited faculty of portraying the physiognomy of the past.

It was scarcely to be expected that a book which was anonymous, and of which only a very few persons knew the real authorship, while even those who guessed it at all early were not so very many, should attain immediate popularity. Lockhart says that the slowness of the success was exaggerated, but his own figures prove that it was somewhat leisurely. Five editions, one (the second) of two thousand, the others of one thousand each, supplied the demand of the first six months, and a thousand copies more that of the next eighteen months—a difference from the almost instantaneous myriads of the poems, quite sufficient to show very eloquently how low the prose novel then stood in popular favour. It is the greatest triumph of Scott, from this low point of view, that his repeated blows heated the public as they did, till at the fourth publication, within but a year or two, Constable actually dared to start with ten thousand copies at once, and they were all absorbed in no time.

Scott had always been a rapid worker, but it was only now, under the combined stimulus of the new-found gift, the desire for more land and a statelier Abbotsford, and the pressure of the affairs of Ballantyne & Co., that he began to work at the portentous rate which, though I do not believe that it at all injured the quality of his production, pretty certainly endangered his health. During 1814 he had written nearly all his *Life of Swift*, nearly all *Waverley*, the *Lord of the Isles*, and an abundance of 'small wares,' essays, introductions, and what not. The major part of *Guy Mannering*—perhaps the very best of the novels, for merit of construction and interest of detail—seems to have been written in less than a month, at the extreme end of this year and the beginning of 1815. The whole

appears to have been done in six weeks, to 'shake himself free of *Waverley*'—probably the most gigantic exhibition of the 'hair of the dog' recorded in literature.

The *donnée* of this novel was furnished by a Dumfries surveyor of taxes, Mr. Train, the scenery by that early visit to Galloway, in the interest of the reverend toyer with sweetie-wives, which has been recorded. Other indebtedness, such as that of Hatteraick to the historical or legendary free-trader, Yawkins, and the like, has been traced. But the charm of the whole lies in none of these things, nor in all together, but in Scott's own fashion of working them up. Nothing at first could seem to be a greater contrast with *Waverley* than this tale. No big wars, no political hazards; but a double and tenfold portion of human nature and local colour. This last element had in the earlier book been almost entirely supplied by Tullyveolan and its master; for Fergus and the Highland scenes, good as they are, are not much more than a furbishing up of the poem-matter of this kind, especially in the *Lady of the Lake*. But here the supply of character was liberal and the variety of scenery extraordinary. We cannot judge the innovation fully now, but let anyone turn to the theatrical properties of Godwin and Holcroft, of Mrs. Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis, and he will begin to have a better idea of what *Guy Mannering* must have been to its first readers. As usual, the personages who head the *dramatis personæ* are not the best. Bertram, though less of a nincompoop than *Waverley*, is not very much; Lucy is a less lively *ange de candeur* than Rose, and nothing else; and Julia's genteel-comedy missishness does not do much more than pair off with Flora's tragedy-queen air. 'Mannering, Guy, a Colonel returned from the Indies,' is, perhaps, also too fair a description of the player of the title-part.^[21] But we trouble ourselves very little about these persons. As for characters, the author opens fire on us almost at the very first with Dominie Sampson and Meg Merrilees, and the hardly less excellent figure of Bertram's well-meaning booby of a father; gives us barely time to make their acquaintance before we meet Dandie Dinmont; brings up almost superfluous reinforcements with Mr. Pleydell, and throughout throws in Hatteraick and Glossin, Jock Jabos and his mistress, and Sir Robert Haslewood, the company at Kippletringan, and at the funeral, and elsewhere, in the most reckless spirit of literary lavishness. Nor is he less prodigal of incident and scene. The opening passage of Mannering's night-ride could not have been bettered if the painter had taken infinitely more pains. Bertram's walk and the skirmish with the prowlers are simply first-rate; the Edinburgh scenes have always excited admiration as the very best of their kind; and the various passages which lead to the working out of justice on Glossin and Hatteraick are not merely told with a gusto, but

arranged with a craftsmanship, of which the latter is unfortunately less often present than the former in the author's later work. There is hardly any book of Scott's on which it is more tempting to dwell than this. Although the demand had not yet reached anything like its height, two thousand copies were sold in forty-eight hours, and five thousand in three months.

In March 1815 Scott went to London, and met two persons of distinction, the Regent and Lord Byron. There seems to be a little doubt whether George did or did not adapt the joke of the hanging judge, about 'checkmating this time,' to the authorship of the *Waverley* novels; but there is no doubt that he was very civil. With Byron Scott was at once on very good terms, for Scott was not the man to bear any grudge for the early fling in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*; and Byron, whatever his faults, 'had more of lion' in him than to be jealous of such a rival. The difference of their characters was such as to prevent them from being in the strict sense friends; and Scott's comparison of Byron, after the separation, to a peacock parted from the hen and lifting up his voice to tell the world about it, has a rather terribly far-reaching justice, both of moral and literary criticism, on that noble bard's whole life and conversation. But there were no little jealousies between them, and apparently some real liking.

This visit to London was extended to Brussels and Paris, with the result in verse of the already mentioned and not particularly happy *Field of Waterloo*, in prose of the interesting *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, an account of the tour. Both were published (the poem almost immediately, *Paul* not till the new year) after Scott's return to Abbotsford at the end of September; and he set to work during the later autumn on his third novel, *The Antiquary*. The book appeared in May 1816, at about the time of the death of Major John Scott, the last but one of the poet's surviving brothers. It was not at first so popular as *Guy Mannering*, which, however, it very rapidly caught up even in that respect: nor is this bad start surprising. To good judges nowadays the book appeals as strongly at least as any other of its author's—in fact, *Monkbarns* and the *Mucklebackits*, the rescue of Sir Arthur and Isabel, the scenes in the ruins of St. Ruth's, and especially Edie Ochiltree, were never surpassed by him. But the story was a daring innovation, or return, among the novels of its own day. It boldly rejected most of the ordinary sources of romance interest. It had very little plot; its humorous characters, though touched with the rarest art, were not caricatured; and (for which it certainly cannot be praised) that greatest fault of Scott's,—perhaps his only great fault as a novelist,—the 'huddling up' of the end, appears in it for the first, though unluckily by no means for the last, time. But it would have been a

very sad thing for the public taste if it had definitely refused *The Antiquary*. A book which contains within the compass of the opening chapters such masterpieces as the journey to the Hawes, the description of the Antiquary's study, and the storm and rescue, must have had a generation of idiots for an audience if it had not been successful. Moreover, it had, as Scott's unwearied biographer has already noted, a new and special source of interest in the admirable fragmentary mottoes, invented to save the greater labour of discovery, which adorn its chapter-headings.[22] Lockhart himself thought that Scott never quite equalled these first three novels. I cannot agree with him there; but what is certain is that he in them discovered, with extraordinary felicity, skill in three different kinds of novel—the historical, the romantic-adventurous, and that of ordinary or almost wholly ordinary life; and that even he never exactly added a fourth kind to his inventions, though he varied them wonderfully within themselves. The romance partly historical, the romance mainly or wholly fictitious, and the novel of manners; these were his three classes, and hardly any others.

It is not entirely explained what were the reasons which determined Scott to make his next venture, the *Tales of my Landlord*, under a fresh pseudonym, and also to publish it not with Constable, but with Murray and Blackwood. Lockhart's blame of John Ballantyne may not be unfair; but it is rather less supported by documentary evidence than most of his strictures on the Ballantynes. And the thing is perhaps to be sufficiently accounted for by Scott's double dislike, both as an independent person and a man of business, of giving a monopoly of his work to one publisher, and by his constant fancy for trying experiments on the public—a fancy itself not wholly, though partially, comprehensible. As a matter of fact, *Old Mortality* and the *Black Dwarf* were offered to and pretty eagerly accepted by Murray and Blackwood, on the terms of half profits and the inevitable batch of 'old stock.' The story of the unlucky quarrel with Blackwood in consequence of some critical remarks of his on the end of the *Black Dwarf*,—remarks certainly not inexcusable,—and of Scott's famous letter in reply, will doubtless receive further elucidation in the forthcoming chronicle of the House of 'Ebony'; but it is told with fair detail, in the second edition of Lockhart, from the actual archives.

Scott doubled his work during the summer and autumn by undertaking the historical department, relinquished by Southey, of the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, yet the two *Tales* were ready in November, and appeared on the 1st of December 1816. Murray wrote effusively to Scott (who, it must be remembered,

was not even to his publishers the known author), and received a very amusing reply, from which one sentence may be quoted as an example of those which have brought upon Sir Walter the reproach of falsehood, or at least disingenuousness, from Goodman Dull. 'I assure you,' he writes, 'I have never read a volume of them till they were printed,' a delightful selection of words, for it looks decisive, and means absolutely nothing. Nobody but a magician, and no ordinary magician, could read a *volume* (which in the usual parlance means a printed volume) before it was printed. To back his disclaimer, Scott offered to review himself in the *Quarterly*, which he did. I certainly do not approve of authors being their own reviewers; though when (as sometimes happens) they have any brains, they probably know the faults and merits of their books better than anyone else, and can at any rate state, with a precision which is too rare in the ordinary critic, what the book is meant to be and tries to do. But this case was clearly one out of the common way, and rather part of an elaborate practical joke than anything else.

Dulness, however, had in many ways found stumbling-blocks in the first foster-children of the excellent Jedediah. The very pious and learned, if not exactly humorous or shrewd, Dr. M'Crie, fell foul of the picture of the Covenanters given in *Old Mortality*. No one who knows the documents is likely to agree with him now, and from hardly any point of view but his could the greatness of the book be denied. Although Scott's humour is by no means absent from it, that quality does not perhaps find quite such an opportunity, even in Mause and Cuddie, as in the Baron, and the Dominie, and the inhabitants of Monkbarns. But as a historical novel, it is a far greater one than *Waverley*. Drumclog, the siege of Tillietudlem, above all, the matchless scene where Morton is just saved from murder by his own party, surpass anything in the earlier book. But greater than any of these single things is one of the first and the greatest of Scott's splendid gallery of romantic-historic portraits, the stately figure of Claverhouse. All the features which he himself was to sum up in that undying sentence of Wandering Willie's Tale later are here put in detail and justified.

As for the companion to this masterly book, I have always thought the earlier part of the *Black Dwarf* as happy as all but the best of Scott's work. But the character of the *Dwarf* himself was not one that he could manage. The nullity of Earnscliff and Isabel is complete. Isabel's father is a stagy villain, or rather rascal (for Victor Hugo's antithesis between *scélérat* and *maroufle* comes in here), and even Scott has never hustled off a conclusion with such complete *insouciance* as to anything like completeness. Willie of Westburnflat here, like Christie of the

Clinthill later, is one of our old friends of the poems back again, and welcome back again. But he and Hobbie can hardly save a book which Scott seems to have thrown in with its admirable companion, not as a makeweight, but rather as a foil.

Between the first and the second sets of *Tales*, the 'Author of *Waverley*,' true to his odd design of throwing the public off the scent, reappeared, and the result was *Rob Roy*. Perhaps because it was written under the first attacks of that 'cramp of the stomach' which, though obscurely connected with his later and more fatal ailments, no doubt ushered them in something more than an accidental manner, Scott did not at first much like *Rob*. But he was reconciled later; and hardly anybody else (except those exceedingly unhappy persons who cannot taste him at all) can ever have had any doubt about it. That the end is even more than usually huddled, that the beginning may perhaps have dawdled a little over commercial details (I do not think so myself, but Lady Louisa Stuart did), and that the distribution of time, which lingers over weeks and months before and after it devotes almost the major part of the book to the events of forty-eight hours, is irregular, even in the eyes of those who are not serfs to the unities, cannot be denied. But almost from the introduction of Frank to Diana, certainly from his setting off in the grey of the morning with Andrew Fairservice, to the point at least where the heroine stoops from her pony in a manner equally obliging and graceful, there is no dropped stitch, no false note. Nor in any book are there so many of Scott's own characters, and others not quite so much his own. Helen Macgregor, perhaps, does not 'thrill our blood and overpower our reason,' as she did Lady Louisa's, simply because we were born some hundred years later than that acute and accomplished granddaughter of Lady Mary; and Rashleigh pretty frequently, Rob himself now and then, may also savour to us a little of the boards and the sawdust. But, as a rule, Rob does not; and for nobody else, not even for the fortunate Frank,—who has nothing to do but to walk through his part creditably, and does it,—need any allowance be made. The Bailie is, with Shallow, his brother justice (upon whom he justly looks down, but to whom he is, I think, kind) in Arthur's bosom; Andrew Fairservice and the Dougal creature, Justice Inglewood and Sir Hildebrand, are there too. As for Die Vernon, she is the one of Scott's heroines with whom one *has to* fall in love, just as, according to a beautiful story, a thoughtless and reluctant world *had to* believe the Athanasian Creed. It is painful to say that persons on whom it is impossible to retort the charge, have sometimes insinuated a touch of vulgarity in Di. For these one can but pray; and, after all, they are usually of her sex, which in such judgments of itself counts not. All men, who

are men and gentlemen, must delight in her. And here, as always, to all but the very last, even in the twilight of *Anne of Geierstein*, the succession of scenes hurries the reader along without breath or time to stop and criticise, with nothing to do, if he is a reasonable person, but to read and enjoy and admire.

Lockhart has taken the opportunity of this point of time (1817-1818), which may be said to mark the zenith of Scott's prosperity, if not of his fame, to halt and to give a sort of survey of his father-in-law's private life at Castle Street and at Abbotsford. It forms one of the pleasantest portions of his book, containing nothing more tragic than the advent of the famous American tragedy of *The Cherokee Lovers*, which its careful author sent, that Scott might approve and publish it, in duplicate, so that the unfortunate recipient had to pay five pounds twice over for the postage of the rubbish. Of course things were not entirely as they seemed. The cramps with which, as mentioned, Scott had been already seized, during the progress of *Rob Roy*, were, though probably not caused, yet all too much helped and hastened, by the ferocious manner in which he worked his brains. For it must be doubted whether social intercourse, or even bodily exercise in company with others, is really the best refreshment after very severe mental labour. Both distract and amuse; but they do not refresh, relax, relieve, like a bath of pure solitude.

Divers events of importance happened to Scott, in the later course of the year 1818^[23] (besides a much worse recurrence of his disorder), after the *Heart of Midlothian* (the second series of the *Tales*) had been published in June, and the *Bride of Lammermoor* (the third series) had been begun. The Duke of Buccleuch, his chief, his (as he would himself have cheerfully allowed) patron, his helper in time of need, and his most intimate friend, died. So did his brother-in-law, Charles Carpenter, this latter death adding considerably, though to an extent exaggerated at first and only reversionary, to the prospects of Scott's children. He gave up an idea, which he had for some time held, of obtaining a judgeship of the Scotch Exchequer; but he received his baronetcy in April 1820. Abbotsford went on gradually and expensively completing itself; the correspondence which tells us so much and is such delightful reading continued, as if the writer had nothing else to write and nothing else to do. But for us the chief matters of interest are the two novels mentioned, and that admirable supplement to the second of them, the *Legend of Montrose*.

There can be little doubt, I think, that in at least passages, and those very large ones, of the *Heart of Midlothian*, Scott went as high as he ever had done, or ever did thereafter. I have never agreed with Lady Louisa Stuart that 'Mr. Saddletree

is not amusing,' nor that there is too much Scots law for English readers. It must be remembered that until Scott opened people's eyes, there were some very singular conventions and prejudices, even in celestial minds, about novels. Technical details were voted tedious and out of place—as, Heaven knows! M. Zola and others have shown us since, that they may very easily be made. Professional matters, the lower middle classes, etc., were thought 'low,' as Goldsmith's audience had had it, 'vulgar,' as Madame de Staël said of Miss Austen. That the farrago of the novelist's book is absolutely universal and indiscriminate, provided only that he knows what to do with it, had not dawned on the general mind. On the other hand, Lady Louisa was right in objecting to the finale,—it has been admitted that Scott was never good at a conclusion,—and personally I have always thought George Staunton uninteresting throughout. But how much does this leave! The description of the lynching of Porteous and the matchless interview with Queen Caroline are only the very best of such a series of good things that, except just at the end, it may be said to be uninterrupted. Jeanie it is unnecessary to praise; the same Lady Louisa's admiration of the wonderful art which could attract so much interest to a plain, good, not clever, almost middle-aged woman sums up all. But almost everyone plays up to Jeanie in perfection—her father and, to no small extent, her sister, her husband and Dumbiedykes, Madge Wildfire (a most difficult and most successful character) and her old fiend of a mother, the Duke and the tobacco-shop keeper. Abundant as are the good things afterwards, I do not know that Scott ever showed his actual original genius, his faculty of creation and combination, to such an extent and in such proportion again.

He certainly did not, so far as my taste goes, in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, a book which, putting the mere fragment of the *Black Dwarf* aside, seems to me his first approach to failure in prose. Lockhart, whose general critical opinions deserve the profoundest respect, thought differently—thought it, indeed, 'the most pure and perfect of all the tragedies that Scott ever penned.' Perhaps there is something in this of the same ingenuity which Scott himself showed in his disclaimer to Murray quoted above, for tragedy *per se* was certainly not Scott's forte to the same extent as were comedy and history. But I know that there are many who agree with Lockhart. On the other hand, I should say that while we do not know enough of the House of Ravenswood to feel much sympathy with its fortunes as a house, the 'conditions,' in the old sense, of its last representative are not such as to attract us much to him personally. He is already far too much of that hero of opera which he was destined to become, a sulky, stagy creature, in theatrical poses and a black-plumed hat, who cannot even play the easy and

perennially attractive part of *desdichado* so as to keep our compassion. Lucy is a simpleton so utter and complete that it is difficult even to be sorry for her, especially as Ravenswood would have made a detestable husband. The mother is meant to be and is a repulsive virago, and the father a time-serving and almost vulgar intriguer. Moreover—and all this is not in the least surprising, since he was in agonies during most of the composition, and nearly died before its close^[24]—the author has, contrary to his wont, provided very few subsidiary characters to support or carry off the principals. Caleb Balderstone has been perhaps unduly objected to by the very persons who praise the whole book; but he is certainly somewhat of what the French call a *charge*. Bucklaw, though agreeable, is very slight; Craigenfelt a mere 'super'; the Marquis shadowy. Even such fine things as the hags at the laying-out, and the visit of Lucy and her father to Wolf's Crag, and such amusing ones as Balderstone's *fabliau*-like expedients to raise the wind in the matter of food, hardly save the situation; and though the tragedy of the end is complete, it leaves me, I own, rather cold.^[25] One is sorry for Lucy, but it was really her own fault—a Scottish maiden is not usually unaware of the possibilities and advantages of 'kilting her coats of green satin' and flying from the lad she does not love to the lad she does. The total disappearance of Edgar is the best thing that could happen to him, and the only really satisfactory point is Bucklaw's very gentlemanlike sentence of arrest on all impertinent questioners.

But if the companion of the first set of *Tales* was a dead-weight rather than a make-weight, the make-weight of the third would have atoned for anything. Sometimes I think, allowing for scale and conditions, that Scott never did anything much better than *A Legend of Montrose*. First, it is pervaded by the magnificent figure of Dugald Dalgetty. Secondly, the story, though with something of the usual huddle at the end, is interesting throughout, with the minor figures capitably sketched in. Menteith, though merely outlined, is a good fellow, a gentleman, and not a stick; Allan escapes the merely melodramatic; 'Gillespie Grumach' is masterly in his brief appearances; and Montrose himself seems to me to be brought in with a skill which has too often escaped notice. For it would mar the story to deal with the tragedy of his end, and his earlier history is a little awkward to manage. Moreover, that faculty of hurrying on the successive *tableaux* which is so conspicuous in most of Scott's work, and so conspicuously absent in the *Bride* (where there are long passages with no action at all) is eminently present here. The meeting with Dalgetty; the night at Darnlinvarach, from the bravado of the candlesticks to Menteith's tale; the gathering and council of the clans; the journey of Dalgetty, with its central point

in the Inverary dungeon; the escape; and the battle of Inverlochy,—these form an exemplary specimen of the kind of interest which Scott's best novels possess as nothing of the kind had before possessed it, and as few things out of Dumas have possessed it since. Nor can the most fervent admirer of Chicot and of Porthos—I know none more fervent than myself—say in cool blood that their creator could have created Dalgetty, who is at once an admirable human being, a wonderful national type of the more eccentric kind, and the embodiment of an astonishing amount of judiciously adjusted erudition.

Many incidents of interest and some of importance occurred in Scott's private life between the date of 1818 and that of 1820, besides those mentioned already. One of these was the acquisition by Constable of the whole of his back-copyrights for the very large sum of twelve thousand pounds, a contract supplemented twice later in 1821 and 1823 by fresh purchases of rights as they accrued for nominal sums of eleven thousand pounds in addition. Unfortunately, this transaction, like almost all his later ones, was more fictitious than real. And though it was lucky that the publisher never discharged the full debt, so that when his bankruptcy occurred something was saved out of the wreck which would otherwise have been pure loss, the proceeding is characteristic of the mischievously unreal system of money transactions which brought Scott to ruin. Except for small things like review articles, etc., and for his official salaries, he hardly ever touched real money for the fifteen most prosperous years of his life, between 1810 and 1825. Promises to receive were interchanged with promises to pay in such a bewildering fashion that unless he had kept a chartered accountant of rather unusual skill and industry perpetually at work, it must have been utterly impossible for him to know at any given time what he had, what he owed, what was due to him, and what his actual income and expenditure were. The commonly accepted estimate is that during the most flourishing time, 1820-1825, he made about fifteen thousand a year, and on paper he probably did. Nor can he ever have spent, in the proper sense of the term, anything like that sum, for the Castle Street house cannot have cost, even with lavish hospitality, much to keep up, and the Abbotsford establishment, though liberal, was never ostentatious. But when large lump sums are constantly expended in purchases of land, building, furnishing, and the like; when every penny of income except official salaries goes through a complicated process of abatement in the way of discounts for six and twelve months' bills, fines for renewal, payments to banks for advances and the like—the 'clean' sums available at any given moment bear quite fantastic and untrustworthy relations to their nominal representatives. It may be strongly suspected, from the admitted decrease of a very valuable

practice under Walter Scott *père*, and from its practical disappearance under Thomas, that the genius of the Scott family did not precisely lie in the management of money.

The marriage of Sophia Scott to Lockhart, and the purchase of a commission for her eldest brother Walter in the 18th Hussars, made gaps in Scott's family circle, and also, beyond all doubt, in his finances. The first was altogether happy for him. It did not, for at anyrate some years, absolutely sever him from the dearest of his children, a lady who, to judge from her portraits, must have been of singular charm, and who seems to have been the only one of the four with much of his mental characteristics; it provided him with an agreeable companion, a loyal friend, and an incomparable biographer. Of Sir Walter Scott the second and last, not much personal idea is obtainable. The few anecdotes handed down, and his father's letters to him (we have no replies), suggest a good sort of person, slightly 'chuckle-headed' and perfervid in the wrong places, with next to no intellectual gifts, and perhaps more his mother's son than his father's. He had some difficulties in his first regiment, which seems to have been a wild one, and not in the best form; he married an heiress of the unpoetical name of Jobson, to whom and of whom his father writes with a pretty old-fashioned affection and courtesy, which perhaps gave Thackeray some traits for Colonel Newcome. Of the younger brother Charles, an Oxford man, who went into the Foreign Office, even less is recorded than of Walter. Anne Scott, the third of the family, and the faithful attendant of her father in his last evil days, died in her sister's house shortly after Sir Walter, and Mrs. Lockhart herself followed before the *Life* was finished. Scott can hardly be said to have bequeathed good luck to any of these his descendants.

It was at the end of 1819, after Walter the younger left home, and before Sophia's marriage, that the next in order of the *Waverley Novels* (now again such by title, and not *Tales of my Landlord*) appeared. This was *Ivanhoe*, which was published in a rather costlier shape than its forerunners, and yet sold to the extent of twelve thousand copies in its three-volume form. Lockhart, perhaps with one of the few but graceful escapes of national predilection (it ought not to be called prejudice) to be noticed in him, pronounces this a greater work of art, but a less in genius than its purely Scottish predecessors. As there is nothing specially English in *Ivanhoe*, but only an attempt to delineate Normans and Saxons before the final blend was formed, an Englishman may, perhaps, claim at least impartiality if he accepts the positive part of Lockhart's judgment and demurs to the negative. Although the worst of Scott's cramps were past, he was still in anything but good

health when he composed the novel, most of which was dictated, not written; and his avocations and bodily troubles together may have had something to do with those certainly pretty flagrant anachronisms which have brought on *Ivanhoe* the wrath of Dryasdust. But Dryasdust is *adeo negligibile ut negligibilis nihil esse possit*, and the book is a great one from beginning to end. The mere historians who quarrel with it have probably never read the romances which justify it, even from the point of view of literary 'document.' The picturesque opening; the Shakespearean character of Wamba; the splendid Passage of Arms; the more splendid siege of Torquilstone; the gathering up of a dozen popular stories of the 'King-and-the-Tanner' kind into the episodes of the Black Knight and the Friar; the admirable, if a little conventional, sketch of Bois-Guilbert, the pendant in prose to Marmion; the more admirable contrast of Rebecca and Rowena; and the final Judgment of God, which for once vindicates Scott from the charge of never being able to wind up a novel,—with such subsidiary sketches as Gurth, Prior Aymer, Isaac, Front-de-Bœuf (Urfried, I fear, will not quite do, except in the final interview with her tempter-victim), Athelstane, and others—give such a plethora of creative and descriptive wealth as nobody but Scott has ever put together in prose. Even the nominal hero, it is to be observed, escapes the curse of most of Scott's young men (the young men to several of whom Thackeray would have liked to be mother-in-law), and if he is not worthy of Rebecca, he does not get her. As for Richard, no doubt, he is not the Richard of history, but what does that matter? He is a most admirable re-creation, softened and refined, of the Richard of a romance which, be it remembered, is itself in all probability as old as the thirteenth century.

After speaking frankly of the *Bride of Lammermoor* and of some others of Scott's works, it may perhaps be permissible to rate the successor to *Ivanhoe* rather higher than it was rated at the time, or than it has generally been rated since. *The Monastery* was at its appearance (March 1820) regarded as a failure; and quite recently a sincere admirer of Scott confided to a fellow in that worship the opinion that 'a good deal of it really is rot, you know.' I venture to differ. Undoubtedly it does not rank with the very best, or even next to them. In returning to Scottish ground, Scott may have strengthened himself on one side, but from the distance of the times and the obscure and comparatively uninteresting period which he selected (just after the strange and rapid panorama of the five Jameses and before the advent of Queen Mary), he lost as much as he gained. An intention, afterwards abandoned, to make yet a fresh start, and try a new double on the public by appearing neither as 'Author of *Waverley*' nor as Jedediah Cleishbotham, may have hampered him a little, though it gave a

pleasant introduction. The supernatural part, though much better, as it seems to me, than is generally admitted, is no doubt not entirely satisfactory, being uncertainly handled, and subject to the warning of *Nec deus intersit*. There is some return of that superabundance of interval and inaction which has been noted in the *Bride*. And, above all, there appears here a fault which had not been noticeable before, but which was to increase upon Scott,—the fault of introducing a character as if he were to be of great pith and moment, and then letting his interest, as the vernacular says, 'tail off.' The trouble taken about Halbert by personages natural and supernatural promises the case of some extraordinary figure, and he is but very ordinary. Still, at the works of how many novelists except Scott should we grumble, if we had the admirable descriptions of Glendearg, the scenes in the Abbey, the night-ride of poor Father Philip, the escape from the Castle of Avenel, the passage of the interview of Halbert with Murray and Morton? Even the episode of Sir Piercie Shafton, though it is most indisputably true that Scott has not by any means truly represented Euphuism, is good and amusing in itself; while there are those who boldly like the White Lady personally. She is more futile than a sprite beseems; but she is distinctly 'nice.'

At any rate, nobody could (or indeed did) deny that the author, six months later, made up for any shortcoming in *The Abbot*, where, except the end (eminently of the huddled order), everything is as it should be. The heroine is, except Die Vernon, Scott's masterpiece in that kind, while all the Queen Mary scenes are unsurpassed in him, and rarely equalled out of him. Nor was there any falling off in *Kenilworth* (Jan. 1821), where he again shifted his scene to England. He has not indeed interested us very much personally in Amy Robsart, but as a hapless heroine she is altogether the superior of Lucy Ashton. The book is, among his, the 'novel without a hero,' and, considering his defects in that direction, this was hardly a drawback. It cannot be indeed said to have any one minor character which is a success of the first class. But the whole is interesting throughout. The journeys of Tressilian to Devonshire and of Amy and Wayland to Kenilworth have the curious attraction which Scott, a great traveller, and a lover of it, knew how to give to journeys, and the pageantry and Court scenes, at Greenwich and elsewhere, command admiration. Indeed, *Kenilworth* equals any of the novels in sustained variety of interest, and, unlike too many of them, it comes to a real end.

It was in 1821 that a book now necessarily much forgotten and even rare (it is comparatively seldom that one sees it in catalogues), Adolphus's *Letters on the Author of Waverley*, at once showed the interest taken in the identity of the 'Great

Unknown,' and fixed it as being that of the author of the *Lay*, with a great deal of ingenuity and with a most industrious abundance of arguments, bad and good. After such a proof of public interest, neither Scott nor Constable could be much blamed for working what has been opprobriously called the 'novel manufactory' at the highest pressure; and *The Pirate*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Peveiril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, *St. Ronan's Well*, and *Redgauntlet* were written and published in the closest succession. These books, almost all of wonderful individual excellence (*Peveiril*, I think, is the only exception), and of still more wonderful variety, were succeeded, before the crash of 1825-26, by the *Tales of the Crusaders*, admirable in part, if not wholly. When we think that all these were, with some other work, accomplished in less than five years, it scarcely seems presumption in the author to have executed, or rashness in the bookseller to have suggested, a contract for four of them in a batch—a batch unnamed, unplanned, not even yet in embryo, but simply existing *in potentia* in the brain of Walter Scott himself.

In surveying together this batch, written when the first novelty of the novels was long over, and before there was any decadence, one obtains, as well perhaps as from any other division of his works, an idea of their author's miraculous power. Many novelists since have written as much or more in the same time. But their books for the most part, even when well above the average, popular, and deservedly popular too, leave next to no trace on the mind. You do not want to read them again; you remember, even with a strong memory, nothing special about their plots; above all, their characters take little or no hold on the mind in the sense of becoming part of its intellectual circle and range.

How different is it with these six or eight novels, 'written with as much care as the others, that is to say, with none at all,' as the author wickedly remarked! *The Pirate* (December 1821) leads off, its scenery rendered with the faithfulness of recent memory, and yet adjusted and toned by the seven years' interval since Scott yachted round Orkney and Shetland. Here are the admirable characters of Brenda (slight yet thoroughly pleasing), and her father, the not too melodramatic ones of Minna, Cleveland, and Norna, the triumph of Claud Halcro (to whom few do justice), and again, the excellent keeping of story and scenery to character and incident. *The Fortunes of Nigel* (May 1822) originated in a proposed series of 'Letters of the Seventeenth Century,' in which others were to take part, and perhaps marks a certain decline, though only in senses to be distinctly defined and limited. Nothing that Scott ever did is better than the portrait of King James, which, in the absence of one from the hand of His

Majesty's actual subject for some dozen years, Mr. William Shakespeare of New Place, Stratford, is probably the most perfect thing of the kind that ever could have been or can be done. And the picture of Whitefriars, though it is borrowed to a great extent, and rather anticipated in point of time, from Shadwell's *Squire of Alsatia*, sixty or seventy years after date, is of the finest, whilst Sir Mungo Malagrowth^[26] all but deserves the same description. But this most cantankerous knight is not touched off with the completeness of Dalgetty, or even of Claud Halcro. Lord Glenvarloch adds, to the insipidity which is the bane of Scott's good heroes, some rather disagreeable traits which none of them had hitherto shown. Dalgarno in the same way falls short of his best bad heroes. Dame Suddlechop suggests, for the first time *unfavourably*, a Shakespearean ancestress, Mistress Quickly, and the story halts and fails to carry the reader rapidly over the stony path. Even Richie Moniplies, even Gentle Geordie, good as both are, fall short of their predecessors. Ten years earlier *The Fortunes of Nigel* would have been a miracle, and one might have said, 'If a man begins like this, what will he do later?' Now, thankless and often uncritical as is the chatter about 'writing out,' we can hardly compare *Nigel* with *Guy Mannering*, or *Rob Roy*, or even *The Abbot*, and not be conscious of something that (to use a favourite quotation of Scott's own), 'doth appropinque an end,' though an end as yet afar off. The 'bottom of the sack,' as the French say, is a long way from us; but it is within measurable distance.

Even a friendly critic must admit that this distance seemed to be alarmingly shortened by *Peveiril of the Peak* (January 1823), which among the full-sized novels seems to me quite his least good book, worse even than 'dotages,' as they are sometimes thought, like *Anne of Geierstein* and *Count Robert*. No one has defended the story, which, languid as it is, is made worse by the long gaps between the passages that ought to be interesting, and by a (for Scott) quite abnormal and portentous absence of really characteristic characters. Lockhart pleads for some of these, but I fear the plea can hardly be admitted. I imagine that those who read Scott pretty regularly are always sorely tempted to skip *Peveiril* altogether, and that when they do read it, they find the chariot wheels drive with a heaviness of which elsewhere they are entirely unconscious.

But in the same year (1823), *Quentin Durward* not only made up for *Peveiril*, but showed Scott's powers to be at least as great as when he wrote *The Abbot*, if not as great as ever. He has taken some liberties with history, but no more than he was perfectly entitled to take; he has paid the historic muse with ample interest for anything she lent him, by the magnificent sketch of Louis and the fine one of

Charles; he has given a more than passable hero in Quentin, and a very agreeable if not ravishing heroine in Isabelle. Above all, he has victoriously shown his old faculty of conducting the story with such a series of enthralling, even if sometimes episodic passages, that nobody but a pedant of 'construction' would care to inquire too narrowly whether they actually make a whole. Quentin's meeting with the King and his rescue from Tristan by the archers; the interviews between Louis and Crevecœur, and Louis and the Astrologer; the journey (another of Scott's admirable journeys); the sack of Schonwaldt, and the feast of the Boar of Ardennes; Louis in the lion's den at Peronne,—these are things that are simply of the first order. Nor need the conclusion, which has shocked some, shock any who do not hold, with critics of the Rymer school, that 'the hero ought always to be successful.' For as Quentin wins Isabelle at last, what more success need we want? and why should not Le Balafre, that loyal Leslie, be the instrument of his nephew's good fortune?

The recovery was perfectly well maintained in *St. Ronan's Well* (still 1823) and *Redgauntlet* (1824), the last novels of full length before the downfall. They were also, be it noticed, the first planned (while *Quentin* itself was completed) after some early symptoms of apoplectic seizure, which might, even if they had not been helped by one of the severest turns of fortune that any man ever experienced, have punished Scott's daring contempt of ordinary laws in the working of his brains.^[27] The harm done to *St. Ronan's Well* by the author's submission to James Ballantyne's Philistine prudery in protesting against the original story (in which Clara did not discover the cheat put on her till a later period than the ceremony) is generally acknowledged. As it is, not merely is the whole thing made a much ado about nothing,—for no law and no Church in Christendom would have hesitated to declare the nullity of a marriage which had never been consummated, and which was celebrated while one of the parties took the other for some one else,—but Clara's shattered reason, Tyrrel's despair, and Etherington's certainty that he has the cards in his hand, are all incredible and unaccountable—mere mid-winter madness. Nevertheless, this, Scott's only attempt at actual contemporary fiction, has extraordinary interest and great merit as such, while *Meg Dods* would save half a dozen novels, and the society at the Well is hardly inferior.

And then came *Redgauntlet*. A great lover of Scott once nearly invoked the assistance of Captain M'Turk to settle matters with a friend of his who would not pronounce *Redgauntlet* the best of all the novels, and would only go so far as to admit that it contains some, and many, of the best things. The best as a novel it

cannot be called, because the action is desultory in the extreme. There are wide gaps even in the chain of story interest that does exist, and the conclusion, admirable in itself, has even for Scott a too audacious disconnection with any but the very faintest concern of the nominally first personages. But even putting 'Wandering Willie's Tale' aside, and taking for granted the merits of that incomparable piece (of which, it may yet be gently hinted, it was not so very long ago still a singularity and mark of daring to perceive the absolute supremacy), the good things in this fascinating book defy exaggeration. The unique autobiographic interest—so fresh and keen and personal, and yet so free from the odious intrusion of actual personality—of the earlier epistolary presentment of Saunders and Alan Fairford, of Darsie and Green Mantle; Peter Peebles, peer of Scott's best; Alan's journey and Darsie's own wanderings; the scenes at the Provost's dinner-table and in Tam Turnpenny's den; that unique figure, the skipper of the *Jumping Jenny*; the extraordinarily effective presentment of Prince Charles, already in his decadence, if not yet in his dotage; the profusion of smaller sketches and vignettes everywhere grouped round the mighty central triumph of the adventures of Piper Steenie,—who but Scott has done such things? He never put so much again in a single book. There is something in it which it is hardly fanciful to take as a 'note of finishing,' as the last piece of the work, that, gigantic as it was, was not exactly collar work, not sheer hewing of wood and drawing of water for the taskmasters. And it was fitting that the book, so varied, so fresh, so gracious and kindly, so magnificent in part, with a magnificence dominating Scott's usual range, should begin with the beginnings of his own career, and should end with the practical finish, not merely of the good days, but of the days that dawned with any faint promise of goodness, in the career of the last hope of the Jacobite cause.



CHAPTER V

THE DOWNFALL OF BALLANTYNE & COMPANY

Redgauntlet, it has been said, was the last novel on the full scale before the downfall of Scott's prosperity. But before this he had begun *The Life of Napoleon* and *Woodstock*, and, in June 1825, had published the *Tales of the Crusaders*, which contain some work almost, if not quite, equal to his best, and which obtained at first a greater popularity than their immediate predecessors. It was, and generally is, held that *The Betrothed*, the earlier of the two, was saved by *The Talisman*; and there can be no doubt that this latter is the better. Contrary to the wont of novelists, Scott was at least as happy with Richard here as he had been in *Ivanhoe*, and though he owed a good deal in both to the presentation of his hero in the very interesting romance published by his old secretary Weber,—one of the best of all the English verse romances and the first English poem to show a really English patriotism,—he owed nothing but suggestion. The duel at the Diamond in the Desert is admittedly one of the happiest things of the kind by a master in that kind, and if the adventures in the chapel of Engedi are both a little farcical and a little 'apropos of nothing in particular,' the story nowhere else halts or fails till it reaches its real 'curtain' with the second *Accipe hoc!* If it had been longer, it might not have been so strong, but as it is, it is nearly perfect.

But there is also more good in *The Betrothed* than it is usual to allow. The beginning, the siege of the Garde Doloureuse, and the ghostly adventure of Eveline at the Saxon manor are excellent; while, even later, Scott has entangled the evidence against Damian and the heroine with not a little of the skill which he had shown in compromising *Waverley*. Had not James Ballantyne dashed the author's spirits with some of his cavillings, the whole might have been as much of a piece as *The Talisman* is. Indeed, it must be confessed that, though Lockhart is generous enough on this point to the man to whom he has been accused of being unjust, we have very little evidence of any improvement in Scott's work due to James, while we know that he did harm not once only. But, as it stands, the book no doubt exhibits the usual faults, that languishing of the middle action, for instance, which injures *The Bride of Lammermoor* and *The Monastery*, together with the much more common huddling and improbability of the conclusion. But we know that this last was put on hurriedly, against the grain,

and after the author, disgusted by the grumblings of others, had relinquished his work; so that we cannot greatly wonder.

It is impossible here to depict in detail Scott's domestic life during the years which passed since we last noticed it, and which represent the most flourishing time of his worldly circumstances. The estate of Abbotsford gradually grew, always at fancy prices, till the catastrophe itself finally prevented an expenditure of £40,000 in a lump on more land. The house grew likewise to its hundred and fifty feet of front, its slightly confused but not disagreeable external muddle of styles, and reproductions, and incorporated fragments, and its internal blend of museum and seignorial hall. It was practically completed and splendidly 'house-warmed' to celebrate the marriage (3rd February 1825) of the heir, on whom both house and estate were settled, with no very fortunate result. Between it and Castle Street the family oscillated as usual, when summer and winter, term and vacation, called them. At Abbotsford open house was always kept to a Noah's ark-full of visitors, invited and uninvited, high and low, and Castle Street saw more modest but equally cordial and constant hospitalities, in which the Lockharts were pretty frequent participators; while their country home at Chiefswood was a sort of escaping place for Sir Walter when visitors made Abbotsford unbearable. The 'Abbotsford Hunt' yearly rejoiced the neighbours; and though, as his health grew weaker, Scott's athletic and sporting exercises were necessarily and with insidious encroachment curtailed, he still did all he could in this way. In 1822 there was the great visit of George IV. to Scotland, wherein Sir Walter took a part which was only short, if short at all, of principal; and of this Lockhart has left one of his liveliest and most pleasantly subacid accounts. Visits to England were not unfrequent; and at last, in the summer of 1825, Scott made a journey, which was a kind of triumphal progress, to Ireland, with his daughter Anne and Lockhart as companions. The party returned by way of the Lakes, and the triumph was, as it were, formally wound up at Windermere in a regatta, with Wilson for admiral of the lake and Canning for joint-occupant of the triumphal boat. 'It was roses, roses all the way,' till in the autumn of the year the rue began, according to its custom, to take their place.

The immediate cause of the disaster was Scott's secret partnership in the house of Ballantyne & Co., which, dragged down by the greater concerns of Constable & Co. in Edinburgh and Hurst, Robinson, & Co. in London, failed for the nominal amount of £117,000 at the end of January 1826.^[28] Their assets were, in the first place, claims on the two other firms, which realised a mere trifle; and, in the second place, the property, the genius, the life, and the honour of Sir Walter

Scott.

When one has to deal briefly with very complicated and much-debated matters, there is nothing more important than to confine the dealing to as few points as possible. We may, I think, limit the number here to two,—the nature and amount of the indebtedness itself, and the manner in which it was met. The former, except so far as the total figures on the debtor side are concerned, is the question most in dispute. That the printing business of Ballantyne & Co. (the publishing business had lost heavily, but it had long ceased to be a drain), in the ordinary literal sense owed £117,000—that is to say, that it had lost that sum in business, or that the partners had overdrawn to that amount—nobody contends. Lockhart's account, based on presumably accurate information, not merely from his father-in-law's papers, but from Cadell, Constable's partner, is that the losses were due partly to the absolutely unbusinesslike conduct of the concern, and the neglect for many years to come to a clear understanding what its profits were and what they were not; partly to the ruinous system of eternally interchanged and renewed bills, so that, for instance, sums which Constable nominally paid years before were not actually liquidated at the time of the smash; but most of all to a proceeding which seems to pass the bounds of recklessness on one side, and to enter pretty deeply into those of fraud on the other. This is the celebrated affair of the counter-bills, things, according to Lockhart, representing no consideration or value received of any kind, but executed as a sort of collateral security to Constable when he discounted any of John Ballantyne's innumerable acceptances, and intended for use only if the real and original bills were not met. Still, according to Lockhart, this system was continued long after there was any special need for it, and a mass of counter-bills, for which the Ballantynes had never had the slightest value, and the amount of which they had either discharged or stood accountable for already on other documents, was in whole or part flung upon the market by Constable in the months of struggle which preceded his fall, and ranked against Ballantyne & Co., that is to say, Scott, when that fall came.

This account, when published in the first edition of Lockhart's *Life*, provoked strong protests from the representatives of the Ballantynes, and a rather acrimonious pamphlet war followed, in which Lockhart is accused by some not merely of acrimony, but of a supercilious and contemptuous fashion of dealing with his opponents. He made, however, no important retractations later, and it is fair to say that not one of his allegations has ever been disproved by documentary evidence, as certainly ought to have been possible while all the

documents were at hand. Nor did the *Memoirs* of Constable, published many years later, supply what was and is missing; nor does Mr. Lang, with all his pains, seem to have found anything decisive. The assertions opposed to Lockhart's are that the 'counter-bill' story is not true, and that the distresses of Ballantyne & Co., and the dangerous extent to which they were involved in complicated bill transactions with Constable, were at least partly due to reckless drawings by the senior partner for his land purchases and other private expenses. Between the two it is impossible to decide with absolute certainty.^[29] All that can be said is this. First, considering that the whole original capital of the firm was Scott's, that he had repeatedly saved it from ruin by his own exertions and credit, and that a very large part of the legitimate grist that came to its mill was supplied by his introduction of work to be printed, he was certainly entitled to the lion's share of any profit that was actually earned. Secondly, the neglect to balance accounts, and the reckless fashion of interweaving acceptance with drawing and drawing with acceptance, had, as we know, been repeatedly protested against by him. Thirdly, his private expenditure, very moderate at Castle Street, and not recklessly lavish even at Abbotsford, must have been amply covered by his official and private income *plus* no great proportion of the always large and latterly immense supplies which for nearly twenty years he derived from his pen. It is impossible to see that, except by his carelessness in neglecting to ascertain from time to time the exact liabilities of the firm, he had added to the original fault of joining it, or had in any other way deserved the blow that fell upon him. No one can believe, certainly no one has ever proved, that his earnings, and his salaries, and the value of his property, if capitalised, would not have covered, and far more than covered, the cost of Abbotsford, land and house, the settlements on his children, and the household expenses of the whole fifteen years and more since he became a housekeeper there. While, as for the printing business itself, it admittedly ought to have made a handsome profit from first to last, and certainly did make a handsome profit as soon as it fell under reasonably business-like management afterwards.

There remains the said 'original fault' of engaging in the business at all, and that, I think, can never be denied. The very introduction of joint-stock companies, to which, in part, Scott owed his ruin, has made a confusion between professional and commercial occupations which did not then exist; but even now I think it would hardly be considered decent for a public servant, discharging judicial functions, to carry on actual business in a private trading concern. Moreover, the secrecy which Scott observed—to such an extent that his family and his most intimate friends did not know the facts—could come from nothing but a sense of

something amiss, and certainly led to the commission of not a little that was so. Scott had to conceal the actual and very material truth when he applied to the Duke of Buccleuch for the guarantee that saved him a dozen years earlier. He had to conceal it from the various persons who employed Ballantyne & Co., and were induced to do so by him. He had to conceal it when he executed those settlements on his son's marriage, which certainly would have been affected had it been known that the whole of his fortune was subject to an unlimited liability. The mystery of his unconsciousness of all this may be left pretty much where Lockhart, with full acknowledgment, left it. I have said that his action seems to have originated partly in a blind and causeless fear of poverty, which, as blind and causeless fear so often does, made him run into the very danger he tried to avoid, partly in an incomprehensible partiality for the Ballantynes.[30] We have no evidence, in any degree trustworthy, that during the entire term of his connection with the firm he derived any positive profit from it at all commensurate with his actual sinkings of money and his sacrifices and exertions of various kinds. The whole thing is, once more, a mystery, and the best comment is perhaps the simple one that the means which a man takes to ruin or seriously damage himself generally do seem a mystery to others, and probably are so to himself. Nor is there anything more unusual in the colossal irony of the situation, when we find Scott, just before his own ruin, and in the act of giving his friend Terry the actor a guarantee (which, as it happened, he had to pay), writing[31] words of the most excellent sense on the rashness of engaging in commercial undertakings without sufficient capital, the madness of dealing in bills, and his own resolve to have nothing to do with any business carried on 'by discounts and renewals.' The irony, let it be repeated, is colossal; yet we meet it, we commit it, every day.

It is painful to read that during the months of uncertainty which preceded the actual crash, Scott threw the helve after the hatchet by charging himself personally, first, with an advance, or, at least, bond for £5000, and then for another of double that amount,[32] to help two firms, Constable and Hurst & Robinson, whose combined indebtedness was over half a million. But the fact of his doing so was sufficient indication of the spirit in which he would meet the crash of Ballantyne & Co. itself. The whole of the *Diary* (*v. infra*) of the period is one long illustration (without the slightest pretentiousness or self-consciousness) of the famous line of perhaps his own greatest poetical passage—

'No thought was there of dastard flight.'

He had made up his mind, before it was certainly imminent, that bankruptcy was not to be accepted; evasion of any more thorough kind, if it occurred, he dismissed at once as not even to be thought of. Yet it is perhaps to be regretted that the mode in which the disaster was actually met, heroic as it was, was substituted for that of which he had at first thought—the simple throwing up of every scrap of his property, including all but a bare subsistence out of his official incomes, which could not have been touched without difficulty. Had he done, or been able to do this, had he shaken off the vampire in stone and lime and hungry soil which had so long sucked his blood, had he sold the library, and the 'Gabions of Jonathan Oldbuck,'^[33] and the Japanese papers, and the Byron vase, and the armour, had he mortgaged his incomes by help of insurance, sold his copyrights outright, and, in short, realised everything, it does not seem absolutely certain that he might not have paid off his creditors in full, or, at least, left but a small balance to be discharged by less superhuman and fatal exertions than those actually made. The time was not a good time for selling, no doubt; but, on the other hand, the interest in Abbotsford and its master was still at its height, and the enthusiasm, which actually inspired one anonymous offer of thirty thousand pounds on loan in a lump, would probably have made good bargains for him on sales. He would then have been a free, or nearly a free man, with his own exertions untrammelled, or nearly so; and, serious as were the warnings that his health had given or received, the actual history of the next six or seven years seems to show that, had the machine been driven with less unsparing ferocity, and at a more moderate rate, it might have lasted for years, and even restored its master to competence, if not to wealth.

Unfortunately, if nothing else—family affection and perhaps also family pride did still, it may be feared, supply something else—the unlucky settlement of Abbotsford stood in the way. Legally, it is true or at least probable, this settlement might have been upset; but the trustees of Mrs. Walter Scott would probably also have felt bound to resist this, and leave to unsettle could only have been obtained on the humiliating and even slightly disgraceful plea that the granter, being practically insolvent at the time, was acting beyond his rights. It seems to have been proposed by the Bank of Scotland, during the negotiations for the arrangement which followed, that this should be done; and the reasons which dictated Scott's refusal would have equally, no doubt, prevented him from doing it in the other case.

Accordingly, it was resolved, as he declined to go into bankruptcy, that his whole property should, under a procedure half legal, half amicable, be vested in

trustees for the benefit of his creditors; nothing except the Castle Street house and some minor chattels being actually sold. He, on the other hand, undertook to devote to the liquidation of the balance of his debts all the proceeds of his future work, except a bare maintenance for himself and (on a reduced scale) for Abbotsford. How 'this fatal venture of mistaken chivalry' (to borrow a most applicable phrase of Kingsley's about another matter) was carried out we shall see, but how grossly unfair it was to Scott himself must appear at once. In return for his sacrifices he had no real legal protection; any creditor could, as a Jew named Abud actually did, threaten at any time to force bankruptcy unless he were paid at once and in full. Instead of retaining (as he would have done had the whole of his property been actually surrendered, and had he allowed the debts which came with the law to go with it) complete control of his future earnings and exertions, and making, as he might have made, restitution by instalments as a free gift, he was in such a plight that any creditor was entitled to regard him as a kind of thrall, paying debt by service as a matter of course, and deserving neither rest, nor gratitude, nor commendation. One really sometimes feels inclined to regret that Abud or somebody else was not more relentless—to pray for a Sir Giles Overreach or a Shylock among the creditors. For such a one, by his apparently malevolent but really beneficent grasping, would have in effect liberated the bondsman, who, as it was, was compelled to toil at a hopeless task to his dying day, and to hasten that dying day by the attempt.

Mention has been made above of a certain *Diary* which is our main authority, and, indeed, makes other authorities merely illustrative for a great part of the few and evil last years of Sir Walter's life. It was begun before the calamities, and just after the return from Ireland, being pleasantly christened 'Gurnal,' after a slight early phonetic indulgence of his daughter Sophia's. It was suggested—and Lockhart seems to think that it was effective—as a relief from the labour of *Napoleon*, which went slightly against the grain, even before it became bond-work. It may have been a doubtful prescription, for 'the cud^[34] of sweet and bitter fancy' is dangerous food. But it has certainly done *us* good. When Mr. Douglas obtained leave to publish it as a whole, there were, I believe, wiseacres who dreaded the effect of the publication, thinking that the passages which Lockhart himself had left out might in some way diminish and belittle our respect for Scott. They had no need to trouble themselves. It was already, as published in part in the *Life*, one of the most pathetically interesting things in biographical literature. This quality was increased by the complete publication, while it also became a new proof that 'good blood cannot lie,' that the hero is a hero even in utterances kept secret from the very valet. If, as has happened

before and might conceivably happen again, some cataclysm destroyed all Scott's other work, we should still have in this not merely an admirable monument of literature, but the picture of a character not inhumanly flawless, yet almost superhumanly noble; of the good man struggling against adversity, not, indeed, with a sham pretence of stoicism, but with that real fortitude of which stoicism is too often merely a caricature and a simulation. It is impossible not to recur to the *Marmion* passage already quoted as one reads the account of the successive misfortunes, the successive expedients resorted to, the absolute determination never to cry craven.[35]

It is from the *Diary* that we learn his own complete knowledge of the fact urged above, that it would have been better for him if his creditors had been in appearance less kind. 'If they drag me into court,' he says,[36] 'instead of going into this scheme of arrangement, they would do themselves a great injury, and perhaps eventually do the good, though it would give me great pain.' The *Diary*, illustrated as it is by the excellent selections from Skene's *Reminiscences* and other scattered or unpublished matter which Mr. Douglas has appended, exhibits the whole history of this period with a precision that could not otherwise have been hoped for, especially as pecuniary misfortunes were soon, according to the fashion of this world, to be complicated by others. For some two years before the catastrophe Lady Scott had been in weak health; and though the misfortune itself does not seem to have affected her much after the first shock, she grew rapidly worse in the spring of 1826, and, her asthma changing into dropsy, died at Abbotsford during Scott's absence in Edinburgh, when his work began in May. His successive references to her illness, and the final and justly-famous passage on her death, are excellent examples of the spirit which pervades this part of the *Diary*. This spirit is never unmanly, but displays throughout, and occasionally, as we see, to his own consciousness, that strange yet not uncommon phenomenon which is well expressed in a French phrase, *il y a quelque chose de cassé*, and which frequently comes upon men after or during the greater misfortunes of life. Neither in his references to this, nor in those to another threatened, though as yet deferred blow, expected from the ever-declining health of the Lockharts' eldest child, the 'Hugh Littlejohn' of the *Tales of a Grandfather*, is there any tone of whining on the one hand, or any mark of insensibility on the other. But there is throughout something like a confession, stoutly avoided in words, but hinted in tone and current of quotation and sentiment, that the strength, though not the courage, is hardly equal to the day. The *Diary*, both here and elsewhere, is full of good things, pleasant wit still, shrewd criticism of life, quaint citation of wise old Scots saws and good modern instances, happy judgment of men and books,—

above all, that ever-present touch of literature, without mere bookishness, which is as delightful to those who can taste it as any of Scott's gifts. And perhaps, too, we may trace, even behind this, a secret sense that, as his own Habakkuk Mucklewrath has it in the dying curse on Claverhouse, the wish of his heart had indeed been granted to his loss, and that the hope of his own pride had gone too near to destroy him.



CHAPTER VI

LAST WORKS AND DAYS

It has been mentioned that when Scott returned from Ireland, and before his misfortunes came upon him, he had already engaged in two works of magnitude, a new novel, *Woodstock*, and a *Life of Napoleon*, planned upon a very large scale, for which Constable made great preparations, and from which he expected enormous profits. After the catastrophe it became a question whether Constable's estate could claim the fulfilment of these contracts, or whether the profits of them could be devoted wholly to the liquidation of Scott's, or rather Ballantyne & Co.'s, own debts. The completion of *Woodstock* was naturally delayed until this point was settled. But from the very moment when Sir Walter had resolved to devote himself to the heroic but apparently hopeless task of paying off his nominal liabilities in full, he arranged a system of work upon these two books, and especially upon the *Napoleon*, which exceeded in dogged determination anything that even he had hitherto done. The novel was, of course, to him comparative child's play: he had written novels before in six weeks or thereabouts all told, though his impaired vigour, the depression of his spirits, and the sense of labouring for the mere purpose of pouring the results into a sieve, made things harder now. But the *Napoleon*, though he had made some preparation for this kind of writing by his elaborate and multifarious editorial work, especially by that on Dryden and Swift, was to a great extent new; and it required, what was always irksome to him, elaborate reading up of books and documents for the special purpose. No man has ever utilised the results of previous reading for his own pleasure better than Scott, and few men, not mere professed book-grubbers, have ever had vaster stores of it. But he frequently confesses—a confession which in many ways makes his plight in these years still more to be pitied—an ingrained dislike to task-work of any kind; and there is no more laborious task-work than getting up and piecing together the materials for history.

The book, one, at a rough guess, of at least a million words, was completed from end to end in less than eighteen months, during which he also wrote *Woodstock*, *Malachi Malagrowth* (*vide infra*), with several reviews and minor things, besides serving his usual number of days at the Clerk's table, devoting

necessarily much time to the not more painful than troublesome business of his pecuniary affairs, his removal from Castle Street, etc., and taking one journey of some length in the summer of 1826 to London and Paris for materials. The feat was accomplished by a rigid system of 'so much per day'—by dint of which, no doubt, an amount of work, surprising to the inexperienced, can be turned out with no necessarily disastrous consequences. But Scott, disgusted with society, and avoiding it from motives of economy as well as of want of heart, disturbed hardly at all by strangers at Abbotsford, and not at all in the lodgings and furnished houses which he took while in Edinburgh, let 'his own thought drive him like a goad' to work in the interest of his task-masters, and perhaps, also, for the sake of drowning care, pushed the system to the most extravagant lengths. We know that he sometimes worked from six in the morning to six at even, with breakfast and luncheon brought into his study and consumed there; and though his court duties made this fortunately impossible for a part of the year, at least during a part of the week, they were not a complete preservative. In the eighteen months he cleared for his bloodsuckers nearly twenty thousand pounds, eight thousand for *Woodstock* and eleven or twelve for *Napoleon*. The trifling profits of *Malachi* and the reviews seem to have been permitted to go into his own pocket. He was naturally proud of the exploit, but it may be feared that it made the end certain.

Of the merits of the *Napoleon* (the second edition of which, by the way, carried its profits to eighteen thousand pounds) it is perhaps not necessary to say very much. I should imagine that few living persons have read it word for word through, and I confess very frankly that I have not done so myself, though I think I have read enough to qualify me for judging it. It is only unworthy of its author in the sense that one feels it to have been not in the least the work that he was born to do. It is nearly as good, save for the technical inferiority of Scott's prose style, as the historical work of Southey, and very much better than the historical work of Campbell and Moore. The information is sufficient, the narrative clear, and the author can at need rise to very fair eloquence, or at least rhetoric. But it is too long to be read, as one reads Southey's *Nelson*, for its merits as biography, and not technically authoritative enough to be an exhaustive work of reference from the military, diplomatic, and political side. Above all, one cannot read a page without remembering that there were living then in England at least a dozen men who could have done it better,—Grote, Thirlwall, Mitford, Arnold, Hallam, Milman, Lingard, Palgrave, Turner, Roscoe, Carlyle, Macaulay, to mention only the most prominent, and mention them at random, were all alive and of man's estate,—and probably scores who could have done it

nearly or quite as well; while there was not one single man living, in England or in the world, who was capable of doing the work which Scott, if not as capable as ever, was still capable of doing like no one before and scarcely any one after him.

Take, for instance, *Woodstock* itself. In a very quaint, characteristic, agreeable, and, as criticism, worthless passage of *Wild Wales*, Borrow has stigmatised it as 'trash.' I only wish we had more such trash outside the forty-eight volumes of the *Waverley Novels*, or were likely to have more. The book, of course, has certain obvious critical faults—which are not in the least what made Borrow object to it. Although Scott, and apparently Ballantyne, liked the catastrophe, it has always seemed to me one of his worst examples of 'huddling up.' For it is historically and dramatically impossible that Cromwell should change his mind, or that Pearson and Robbins should wish to thwart severity which, considering the death of Humgudgeon, had a good deal more excuse than Oliver often thought necessary. Nor may the usual, and perhaps a little more than the usual, shortcomings in construction be denied. But as of old, and even more than on some occasions of old, the excellences of character, description, dialogue, and incident are so great as to atone over and over again for defects of the expected kind. If Everard has something of that unlucky quality which the author recognised in Malcolm Graeme when he said, 'I ducked him in the lake to give him something to do; but wet or dry I could make nothing of him,' Alice is quite of the better class of his heroines; and from her we ascend to personages in whose case there is very little need of apology and proviso. Sir Henry Lee, Wildrake, Cromwell himself, Charles, may not satisfy others, but I am quite content with them; and the famous scene where Wildrake is a witness to Oliver's half-confession seems to me one of its author's greatest serious efforts. Trusty Tomkins, perhaps, might have been a little better; he comes somewhat under the ban of some unfavourable remarks which Reginald Heber makes in his diary on this class of Scott's figures, though the good bishop seems to me to have been rather too severe. But the pictures of Woodstock Palace and Park have that indescribable and vivid charm which Scott, without using any of the 'realist' minuteness or 'impressionist' contortions of later days, has the faculty of communicating to such things. For myself, I can say—and I am sure I may speak for hundreds—that Tullyveolan, Ellangowan, the Bewcastle moor where Bertram rescued Dandie, Clerihugh's, Monkbarns (I do not see Knockwinnock so clearly), the home of the Osbaldistones, and the district from Aberfoyle to Loch Ard, the moors round Drumclog, Torquilstone, and, not to make the list tedious, a hundred other places, including Woodstock itself, are as real as if I had

walked over every inch of the ground and sat in every room of the houses. In some cases I have never seen the supposed originals, in others, I have recognised them as respectable, though usually inferior, representatives of Scott's conceptions. But in any case *these* are all real, all possessions, all part of the geographical and architectural furniture of the mind. They are like the wood in the 'Dream of Fair Women': one knows the flowers, one knows the leaves, one knows the battlements and the windows, the platters and the wine-cups, the cabinets and the arras. They are, like all the great places of literature, like Arden and Elsinore, like the court before Agamemnon's palace, and that where the damsel said to Sir Launcelot, 'Fair knight, thou art unhappy,' our own—our own to 'pass freely through until the end of time.'

It must not be forgotten in this record of his work that Scott wrote 'Bonnie Dundee' in the very middle of his disaster, and that he had not emerged from the first shock of that disaster, when the astonishingly clever *Letters of Malachi Malagrowth* appeared. Of the reasonableness of their main purpose—a strenuous opposition to the purpose of doing away, in Scotland as in England, with notes of a less denomination than five pounds—I cannot pretend to judge. It is possible that suppressed rage at his own misfortunes found vent, and, for him, very healthy vent, while it did harm to no one, in a somewhat too aggressive patriotism, of a kind more particularist than was usual with him. But the fire and force of the writing are so great, the alternations from seriousness to humour, from denunciation to ridicule, so excellently managed, that there are few better specimens of this particular kind of pamphlet. As for 'Bonnie Dundee,' there are hardly two opinions about that. As a whole, it may not be quite equal to 'Lochinvar,' to which it forms such an excellent pendant, and which it so nearly resembles in rhythm. But the best of it is equal as poetry, and perhaps superior as meaning. And it admirably completes in verse the tribute long before paid by *Old Mortality* in prose, to the 'last and best of Scots,' as Dryden called him in the noble epitaph,^[37] which not improbably inspired Scott himself to do what he could to remove the vulgar aspersions on the fame of the hero of Killiecrankie.

Moreover, according to his wont, Scott had barely finished, indeed he had not finished, the *Napoleon* before he had arranged for new work of two different kinds; and he was soon, without a break, actually engaged upon both tasks, one of them among the happiest things he ever undertook, and the other containing, at least, one piece of his most interesting work. These were the *Tales of a Grandfather* and the *Chronicles of the Canongate*. Both supplied him with his tasks, his daily allowance of 'leaves,'^[38] for great part of 1827, and both were

finished and the *Chronicles* actually published, before the end of it.[39]

For the actual stories comprising these *Chronicles* I have never cared much. The chief in point of size, the *Surgeon's Daughter*, deals with Indian scenes, of which Scott had no direct knowledge, and in connection with which there was no interesting literature to inspire him. It appears to me almost totally uninteresting, more so than *Castle Dangerous* itself. *The Two Drovers* and *The Highland Widow* have more merit; but they are little more than anecdotes.[40] On the other hand, the 'Introduction' to these *Chronicles*, with the history of their supposed compiler, Mr. Chrystal Croftangry, is a thing which I should be disposed to put on a level with his very greatest work. Much is admittedly personal reminiscence of himself and his friends, handled not with the clumsy and tactless directness of reporting, which has ruined so many novels, but in the great transforming way of Fielding and Thackeray. Chrystal's early thoughtless life, the sketch of his ancestry (said to represent the Scotts of Raeburn), the agony of Mr. Somerville, suggested partly by the last illness of Scott's father, the sketches of Janet M'Evoy and Mrs. Bethune Baliol (Mrs. Murray Keith of Ravelston), the visit to the lost home,—all these things are treated not merely with consummate literary effect, but with a sort of *sourdine* accompaniment of heart-throbs which only the dullest ear can miss. Nor, as we see from the *Diary*, were the author's recent misfortunes, and his sojourn in a moral counterpart of the Deserted Garden of his friend Campbell, the only disposing causes of this. He had in several ways revived the memory of his early love, Lady Forbes, long since dead. Her husband had been among the most active of his business friends in arranging the compromise with creditors, and was shortly (though Scott did not know it) to discharge privately the claim of the recalcitrant Jew bill-broker Abud, who threatened Sir Walter's personal liberty. Her mother, Lady Jane Stuart, had renewed acquaintance with him, and very soon after the actual publication sent him some MS. memorials of the days that were long enough ago—memorials causing one of those paroxysms of memory which are the best of all things for a fairly hale and happy man, but dangerous for one whom time and ill-luck have shaken.[41] He had, while the *Chronicles* were actually a-writing, revisited St. Andrews, and, while his companions were climbing St. Rule's Tower, had sat on a tombstone and thought how he carved her name in Runic letters thirty-four years before. In short, all the elements, sentimental and circumstantial, of the moment of literary projection were present, and the Introduction was no vulgar piece of 'chemic gold.'

The delightful and universally known *Tales of a Grandfather* present no such

contrasts of literary merit, and were connected with no such powerful but exhausting emotions of the mind. They originated in actual stories told to 'Hugh Littlejohn,' they were encouraged by the fact that there was no popular and readable compendium of Scottish history, they came as easily from his pen as the *Napoleon* had run with difficulty, and are as far removed from hack-work as that vast and, to his creditors, profitable compilation must be pronounced to be on the whole near to it. The book, of course, is not in the modern sense strictly critical, though it must be remembered that the authorities for at least the earlier history of Scotland are so exceedingly few and meagre, that criticism of the saner kind has very little to fasten upon. But in this book eminently, in the somewhat later compilation for *Lardner's Cyclopædia* to a rather less degree, this absence of technical criticism is more than made up by Scott's knowledge of humanity, by the divining power, so to say, which his combined affection for the subject and general literary skill gave him, and by that singularly shrewd and pervading common sense which in him was so miraculously united with the poetical and romantic gift. I was pleased, but not at all surprised, when, some year or so ago, I asked a professed historian, and one of the best living authorities on the particular subject, what he thought of the general historic effect of Scott's work, to find him answer without the slightest hesitation that it was about the soundest thing, putting mere details aside, that exists on the matter. It may be observed, in passing, that the later compilation referred to was a marked example of the way in which Scott could at this time 'coin money.' He was offered a thousand pounds for one of the Lardner volumes; and as his sketch swelled beyond the limit, he received fifteen hundred. The entire work, much of which was simple paraphrase of the *Tales*, occupied him, it would seem, about six working weeks, or not quite so much. Can it be wondered that both before and after the crash this power of coining money should have put him slightly out of focus with pecuniary matters generally? Mediæval and other theorists on usury have been laughed at for their arguments as to the 'unnatural' nature of usurious gain, and its consequent evil. One need not be superstitious more than reason, to scent a certain unnaturalness in the gift of turning paper into gold in this other way also. Every *peau de chagrin* has a faculty of revenging itself on the possessor.

For the time, however, matters went with Scott as swimmingly as they could with a man who, by his own act, was, as he said, 'eating with spoons and reading books that were not his own,' and yet earning by means absolutely within his control, and at his pleasure to exercise or not, some twenty thousand a year. *The Fair Maid of Perth*, a title which has prevailed over what was its first, *St. Valentine's Eve*, and has entirely obscured the fact that it was issued as a second

series of the *Chronicles of the Canongate*, provided money for a new scheme. This scheme, outlined by Constable himself, and now carried out by Cadell and accepted by Scott's trustees, was for buying in the outstanding copyrights belonging to the bankrupt firm, and issuing the entire series of novels, with new introductions and notes by Scott himself, with attractive illustrations and in a cheap and handy form. Scott himself usually designates the plan as the *Magnum Opus*, or more shortly (and perhaps not without remembrance of more convivial days) 'the *Magnum*'. *The Fair Maid* itself was very well received, and seems to have kept its popularity as well as any of the later books. Indeed, the figures of the Smith, of Oliver Proudfoot (the last of Scott's humorous-pathetic characters), of the luckless Rothsay, and of Ramornie (who very powerfully affected a generation steeped in Byronism), are all quite up to the author's 'best seconds.' The opening and the close are quite excellent, especially the fight on the North Inch and 'Another for Hector!' and the middle part is full of attractive bits of the old kind. But Conachar-Eachin is rather a thing of shreds and patches, and the entire episode of Father Clement and the heresy business is dragged in with singularly little initial excuse, valid connection, or final result.

We have unluckily no diary for the last half of 1828, after Scott returned from a long stay with the Lockharts in London, and we thus hear little of the beginnings of the next novel, *Anne of Geierstein*. When the *Journal* begins again, complaints are heard from Ballantyne. Alterations (which Scott always loathed, and which certainly are detestable things) became or were thought necessary, and when the poor *Maid of the Mist* at length appeared in May 1829, she was dismissed by her begetter very unkindly, as 'not a good girl like the other Annes'—his daughter and her cousin, *fille de Thomas*, who were living with him. The book was not at all ill received, but Lockhart is apologetic about it, and it has been the habit of criticism since to share the opinions of 'Aldiborontiphoscophormio.'^[42] I cannot agree with this, and should put *Anne of Geierstein*—as a mere romance and not counting the personal touches which exalt *Redgauntlet* and the Introduction to the *Chronicles*—on a level with anything, and above most things, later than *The Pirate*. Its chief real fault is not so much bad construction—it is actually more, not less, well knit than *The Fair Maid of Perth*,—as the too great predominance of merely episodic and unnecessary things and persons, like the *Vehmgericht* and King's René's court. Its merits are manifold. The opening storm and Arthur's rescue by Anne, as well as the quarrel with Rudolf, are excellent; the journey (though too much delayed by the said Rudolf's tattlings), with the sojourn at Grafslust and the adventures at La Ferette, ranks with Scott's many admirable journeys, and high among them;

Queen Margaret is nobly presented (I wish Shakespeare, Lancastrian that he was, had had the chance of versifying the scene where she flings the feather and the rose to the winds, as a pendant to 'I called thee then vain shadow of my fortune'); and not only Philipson's rattling peal of thunder to wake Charles the Bold from his stupor, but the Duke's final scenes, come well up to the occasion. Earlier, Scott would not have made René quite such a mere old fool, and could have taken the slight touch of pasteboard and sawdust out of the Black Priest of St. Paul's. But these are small matters, and the whole merits of the book are not small. Even Arthur and Anne are above, not below, the usual hero and heroine.

The gap in the *Journal* for the last half of 1828 is matched by another and more serious one for nearly a twelvemonth, from July 1829 to May 1830, a period during which Sir Walter's health went from bad to worse, and in which he lost his Abbotsford factotum, Tom Purdie. But the first six months of 1829, and perhaps a little more, are among its pleasantest parts. The shock of the failure and of his wife's death were, as far as might be, over; he had resumed the habit of seeing a fair amount of society; his work, though still busily pursued, was less killing than during the composition of the *Napoleon*; and his affairs were looking almost rosily. A first distribution, of thirty-two thousand pounds at once, had been made among the creditors. Cadell's scheme of the *Magnum*—wisely acquiesced in by the trustees, and facilitated by a bold purchase at auction of Constable's copyrights for some eight thousand pounds, and later, of those of the poems from Longmans for about the same or a little less—was turning out a great success. They had counted on a sale of eight thousand copies; they had to begin with twelve thousand, and increase it to twenty, while the number ultimately averaged thirty-five thousand. The work of annotation and introduction was not hard, and was decidedly interesting.

Unluckily, irreparable mischief had already been done, and when the *Diary* begins again, we soon see signs of it. The actual beginning of the end had occurred before the resumption, on February 15, 1830, when Sir Walter had, in the presence of his daughter and of Miss Violet Lockhart, experienced an attack of an apoplectic-paralytic character, from which he only recovered by much blood-letting and starvation. There can be little doubt that this helped to determine him to do what he had for some time meditated, and resign his place at the Clerk's table: nor perhaps could he have well done otherwise. But the results were partly unfortunate. The work had been very trifling, and had saved him from continual drudgery indoors at home, while it incidentally provided him with society and change of scene. He was now to live at Abbotsford,—for

neither his means nor his health invited an Edinburgh residence when it was not necessary,—with surroundings only too likely to encourage 'thick-coming fancies,' out of reach of immediate skilled medical attendance, and with very dangerous temptations to carry on the use of his brain, which was now becoming almost deadly. Yet he would never give in. The pleasant and not exhausting task of arranging the *Magnum* (which was now bringing in from eight to ten thousand a year for the discharge of his debts) was supplemented by other things, especially *Count Robert of Paris*, and a book on Demonology for Murray's *Family Library*.

This last occupied him about the time of his seizure, and after the *Diary* was resumed, it was published in the summer of 1830. Scott was himself by this time conscious of a sort of aphasia of the pen (the direct result of the now declared affection of his brain), which prevented him from saying exactly what he wished in a connected manner; and the results of this are in part evident in the book. But it must always remain a blot, quite unforgivable and nearly inexplicable, on the memory of Wilson, that 'Christopher North' permitted himself to comment on some lapses in logic and style in a way which would have been rather that side of good manners and reasonable criticism in the case of a mere beginner in letters. It is true that he and Scott were at no time very intimate friends, and that there were even some vague antipathies between them. But Wilson had been deeply obliged to Scott in the matter of his professorship;^[43] he at least ought to have been nearly as well aware as we are of the condition of his benefactor's health; and even if he had known nothing of this, the rest of Sir Walter's circumstances were known to all the world, and should surely have secured silence. But it seems that Wilson was for the moment in a pet with Lockhart, to whom the *Letters on Demonology* were addressed, and so he showed, as he seldom, but sometimes did, the 'black drop,' which in his case, though not in Lockhart's, marred at times a generally healthy and noble nature. As a matter of fact, it needs either distinct malevolence or silly hypercriticism to find any serious fault with the *Demonology*. If not a masterpiece of scientific treatment in reference to a subject which hardly admits of any such thing, it is an exceedingly pleasant and amusing and a by no means un instructive medley of learning, traditional anecdote, reminiscence, and what not, on a matter which, as we know, had interested the writer from very early days, and which he regarded from his usual and invaluable combined standpoint of shrewd sense and poetical appreciation.

The decay, now not to be arrested, though its progress was comparatively slow,

was more evident in the last two works of fiction which Scott completed, *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous*. Against the first ending of the former (we do not possess it, so we cannot criticise their criticism) Ballantyne and Cadell formally protested, and Scott rewrote a great deal of it by dictation to Laidlaw. The loss of command both of character and of story-interest is indeed very noticeable. But the opening incident at the Golden Gate, the interview of the Varangian with the Imperial family, the intrusion of Count Robert, and, above all, his battle with the tiger and liberation from the dungeon of the Blachernal, with some other things, show that astonishing power of handling single incidents which was Scott's inseparable gift, and which seems to have accompanied him throughout to the very eve of his death. The much briefer *Castle Dangerous* (which is connected with an affecting visit of Scott and Lockhart to the tombs of the Douglasses) is too slight to give room for very much shortcoming. Its chief artistic fault is the happy ending—for though a romancer is in no respect bound to follow his text exactly, and happy endings are quite good things, yet it is rather too much to turn upside down the historic catastrophe of the Good Lord James's fashion of warfare. Otherwise the book is more noticeable for a deficiency of spirit, life, and light—for the evidence of shadow and stagnation falling over the once restless and brilliant scene—than for anything positively bad.

These two books were mainly dictated, the paralytic affection having injured the author's power of handwriting,^[44] to William Laidlaw between the summer of 1830 and the early autumn of 1831, increasing weakness, and the demands of the *Magnum*, preventing more speed. The last pages of *Castle Dangerous* contain Scott's farewell, and the announcement to the public of that voyage to Italy which had actually begun when the novels appeared in the month of November.

The period between the fatal seizure and the voyage to the Mediterranean has not much diary concerning it, but has been related with inimitable judgment and sympathy by Lockhart. It was, even putting failing health and obscured mental powers aside, not free from 'browner shades'; for the Reform agitation naturally grieved Sir Walter deeply, while on two occasions he was the object of popular insult and on one of popular violence. Both were at Jedburgh; but the blame is put upon intrusive weavers from Hawick. The first, a meeting of Roxburghshire freeholders, saw nothing worse than unmannerly interruption of a speech made partially unintelligible by the speaker's failing articulation. He felt it bitterly, and when hissing was repeated as he bowed farewell, is said to have replied, low, but now quite distinctly, '*Moriturus vos saluto!*' On the second, the election after the

throwing out of the first Bill, he was stoned, spat upon, and greeted with cries of 'Burke Sir Walter.'^[45] Natural indignation has often been expressed at this behaviour towards the best neighbour and the greatest man in Scotland—behaviour which, as we know, haunted him on his deathbed; but it is to be presumed that the persons who thus proclaimed their cause knew the line of conduct most worthy of it.

It does not appear with absolute certainty who first suggested the Italian journey. It could not have been expected to produce any radical cure; but it seems to have been hoped that change of scene would prevent the patient from indulging in that attempt to write from which at Abbotsford it was impossible to keep him, though it was simply slow, and not so very slow, suicide. The wishes of his family were most kindly and generously met by the Government of the day, among whose members he had many personal friends, though political opponents; and the frigate *Barham*, a cut-down seventy-four, which had the credit of being one of the smartest vessels in the navy, was assigned to take him to Malta. He had, before he left Abbotsford itself, an affecting interview with Wordsworth, which occasioned *Yarrow Revisited* and the beautiful sonnet, 'A trouble, not of clouds or weeping rain,' and had no doubt part in the initiation of the last really great thing that Wordsworth ever wrote—the *Effusion* on the deaths of Hogg, Coleridge, Crabbe, Lamb, and Scott himself, in 1835. Some stay was made with the Lockharts in London, and a little at Portsmouth, waiting for a wind; but the final departure took place on October 29, 1831.

Scott was abroad for the best part of a year, the time being chiefly made out in visits of some length to Malta, Naples, and Rome. We have a good deal of diary for this period, and it, even more than the subsidiary documents and Lockhart's summary of no doubt much that is unpublished, betrays the state of the case. Every now and then—indeed, for long passages—there is nothing very different from the matter to which, since the first warning in 1818, we have been accustomed. Scott is, if not the infinitely various but never mutable Scott of the earlier years, still constant in fun and kindness, in quaint erudition and hearty friendship, though he is all this in a slightly deadened and sicklied degree. But there are strange breaks-down and unfamiliar touches, now of almost querulous self-concern (the thing most foreign to his earlier nature), as where he complains that his companions, his son and daughter, 'are neither desirous to follow his amusements nor anxious that he should adopt theirs'; now of still more foreign callousness, as where he dismisses the news of the death of Hugh Littlejohn, whose illnesses earlier had been almost his chief anxiety, and records in the same

entry that he 'went to the opera.' The passage in the Introduction to the *Chronicles*, written not so very long before, traces with an almost horrible exactness the changes which were now taking place in himself. Moreover, he would resume the pen; and, first in Malta, then at Naples, began and went far to complete two new novels, *The Siege of Malta* and *Il Bizarro*, which, I suppose, are still at Abbotsford, with Lockhart's solemn curse on the person who shall publish them. He had now (it does not seem clear on what grounds, or by what stages) confirmed himself in the belief that he had paid off all his debts, instead of nearly half of them.^[46] And he founded divers schemes on the profits of these works, added to the (as he thought) liberated returns of the *Magnum*; and even revived his notions of buying Faldonside with its thousand acres, and 'holding all Tweed-bank, from Ettrick-foot to Calla weel.' Fêted, too, as he was, and in this condition of mind, it seems to have been difficult for his companions to make him observe the absolute temperance in food and drink which was as necessary to the staving off of the end as abstinence from brain-work; and it must be regarded as a signal proof of the extraordinary strength of his constitution that it resisted as long as it did.

At last, and of course suddenly, came the final warning of all: the occurrence, without notice, of an almost agonising home-sickness. The party travelled by land, as speedily as they could, to the Channel, a last attack of apoplectic paralysis taking place at Nimeguen; and after crossing it and reaching London, Sir Walter was taken by sea to the Forth, and thence home. The actual end was delayed but very little longer, and it has been told by Lockhart in one of those capital passages of English literature on which it is folly to attempt to improve or even to comment, and which, a hundred times quoted, can never be stale. Sir Walter Scott died at Abbotsford on September 21, 1832, and was buried four days later at Dryburgh, a post-mortem examination having disclosed considerable softening of the brain.

There remained unpaid at his death about fifty-five thousand pounds of the Ballantyne debts, besides private encumbrances on Abbotsford, etc., including the ten thousand which Constable had extracted, he knowing, from Scott unknowing, the extent of the ruin, in the hours just before it. The falling in of assurances cleared off two-fifths of this balance, and Cadell discharged the rest on the security of the *Magnum*, which was equal, though not much more than equal, to the burden in the longrun. Thus, if Scott's exertions during the last seven years of his life had benefited his own pocket, his ambition—whether wise or foolish, persons more confident in their judgment of human wishes than the

present writer must decide—would have been amply fulfilled, and his son, supposing the money to have been invested with ordinary care and luck, would have been left a baronet and squire, with at least six or seven thousand a year. As it was, he did not succeed to much more than the title, a costly house, and a not very profitable estate, burdened, though not heavily, with mortgages. This burden was reduced by the good sense of the managers of the English memorial subscription to Scott, who devoted the six or seven thousand pounds, remaining after some embezzlement, to clearing off the encumbrances as far as possible. The chief result of many Scottish tributes of the same kind was the well-known Scott Monument on the edge of Princes Street Gardens, which has the great good luck to be one of the very few not unsatisfactory things of the kind in the British Islands. By mishap rather than neglect, no monument in Westminster Abbey was erected for the greater part of the century; but one has been at last set up in May of the present year.



CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It is natural—indeed the feeling is not merely easy of excuse, but entitled to respect—that 'the pity of it,' the sombre close of so brilliant a career as Scott's, should attract somewhat disproportionate attention. Thus readers of his life are drawn more especially either to sorrow for his calamities, or to admiration of this stoutest of all hearts set to nearly the stiffest of all hills, or to casuistical debate on the 'dram of eale' that brought about his own share in causing his misfortunes. Undoubtedly, none of these things ought to escape our attention. But, in the strict court of literary and critical audit, they must not have more than their share. As a matter of fact, Scott's work was almost finished—nothing distinctly novel in kind and first-rate in quality, except the *Tales of a Grandfather* and the Introduction to the *Chronicles*, remained to be added to it—when that fatal bill of Constable's was suffered by Hurst & Robinson to be returned. And the trials which followed, though they showed the strength, the nobleness, the rare balance and solidity of his character, did not create these virtues, which had been formed and established by habit long before. *Respice finem* is not here a wise, at least a sufficient, maxim: we must look along the whole line to discern satisfactorily and thoroughly what manner of man this was in life and in letters.

What manner of man he was physically is pretty well-known from his originally numerous and almost innumerably reproduced and varied portraits; not extremely tall, but of a goodly height, somewhat shortened by his lameness and massive make, the head being distinguished by a peculiar domed, or coned, cranium. This made 'Lord Peter' Robertson give him the nickname of 'Pevenil of the Peak,' which he himself after a little adopted, and which, shortened to 'Pevenil,' was commonly used by his family. His expression, according to the intelligence of those who saw him and the mood in which he found himself, has been variously described as 'heavy,' 'homely,' and in more complimentary terms. But the more appreciative describers recognise the curiously combined humour, shrewdness, and kindness which animated features naturally irregular and quite devoid of what his own generation would have called 'chiselled elegance.' He himself asserts—and it seems to be the fact—that from the time of the disappearance of his childish maladies to the attack of cramp, or gallstones, or

whatever the evil was which came on in 1818, and from which he never really recovered, his health was singularly robust; and he appears as quite a young man to have put it to considerable, though not excessive, tests.

His conversation, like his countenance, has been variously characterised, and it is probable that the complexion of both depended, even more than it does with most men, on his company. He is acknowledged never to have 'talked for victory,' an evil and barbarous practice, which the Edinburgh wits seem to have caught from their great enemy and guest, Dr. Johnson; to have (like all good men) simply abominated talking about his own works, or indeed bookishly at all, full as his conversation was of literature; and, though a great tale-teller, to have been no monopoliser of the conversation in any way. He admits having been in youth and early middle age not disinclined to solitude,—and he does not appear to have at any time liked miscellaneous society much, though he prided himself, and very justly, on having, from all but his earliest youth, frequented many kinds of it, including the best. The perfect ease of his correspondence with all sorts and conditions of men and women may have owed something to this; but, no doubt, it owed as much to the happy peculiarities and composition of his nature and temperament.

The only fault or faults of which he has been accused with any plausibility are those which attend or proceed from a somewhat too high estimate of rank and of riches;—that is to say, a too great eagerness to obtain these things, and at the same time a too great deference for those who possessed them. From avarice, in any of the ordinary senses of the word, he was, indeed, entirely free. His generosity, if not absolutely and foolishly indiscriminate, was extraordinary, and as unostentatious as it was lavish. He certainly had no delight in hoarding money, and his personal tastes, except in so far as books, 'curios,' and so forth were concerned, were of the simplest possible. Yet, as we have seen, he was never quite content with an income which, after very early years, was always competent, and when he launched into commercial ventures, already, in prospect at least, considerable; while in the one article of spending money on house and lands he was admittedly excessive. So, too, he seems to have been really indifferent about his title, except as an adjunct to these possessions, and as something transmissible to, and serving to distinguish, the family he longed to found. Yet no instance of the slightest servility on his part to rank—much less to riches—has been produced. His address, no doubt, both in writing and conversation, was more ceremonious than would now be customary. But it must be remembered that this was then a point of good manners, and that 'your

Lordship' and 'my noble friend,' even between persons intimate with each other and on the common footing of gentlemen, were then phrases as proper and usual in private as they still are in public life.[47] Attempts have been made to excuse his attitude, on the plea that it was inherited from his father (*vide* the scene between Saunders Fairford and Herries), that it was national, that it was this, that, and the other. For my own part, I have never read or heard of any instance of it which seemed to me to exceed the due application to etiquette of the rule of distributive justice, to give every man his own. Scott, I think, would have accepted the principle, though not the application, of the sentence of Timoléon de Cossé, Duke of Brissac—'God has made thee a gentleman, and the king has made thee a duke.' And he honoured God and the king by behaving accordingly.

Of his infinite merits as a host and a guest, as a friend and as a relation, there is a superabundance of evidence. It does not appear that he ever lost an old friend; and though, like most men who have more talent for friendship than for acquaintance, he did not latterly make many new ones, the relations existing between himself and Lockhart are sufficient proof of his faculty of playing the most difficult of all parts, that of elder friend to younger. I have said above that, though in no sense touchy, he was a very dangerous person to take a liberty with; he adopted to the full the morality of his time about duelling, though he disapproved of it;[48] he was in all respects a man of the world, yet without guile.

It is, moreover, quite certain that Scott, though never talking much about religion (as, indeed, he never talked much about any of the deeper feelings of the heart), was a man very sincerely religious. He was not a metaphysician in any way, and therefore had no special inclination towards that face or summit of metaphysics which is called theology. And it is pretty clear that he had towards disputed points of doctrine, ceremony, and discipline, a not sharply or decidedly formulated attitude. But there is no doubt whatever that he was a thoroughly and sincerely orthodox Christian, and there are some slight escapes of confession unawares in his private writings, which show in what thorough conformity with his death his life had been. Few men have ever so well observed the one-half of the apostle's doctrine as to pure religion; and if he did not keep himself (in the matter of the secret partnership and others) altogether unspotted from the world, the sufferings of his last seven years may surely be taken as a more than sufficient purification. More blameless morally, I think, few men have been; fewer still better equipped with the positive virtues. And, above all, we must recognise in Scott (if we have any power of such recognition) what has been already called a certain nobleness, a certain natural inclination towards all things

high, and great, and pure, and of good report, which is rarer still than negative blamelessness or even than positive virtue.

To speak of Scott's politics is a little difficult and perhaps a little dangerous; yet they played so large a part in his life and work that the subject can hardly be omitted, especially as it comes just between those aspects of him which we have already discussed, and those to which we are coming. It has sometimes been disputed whether his Toryism was much more than mere sentiment; and of course there were not wanting in his own day fellows of the baser sort who endeavoured to represent it as mere self-interest. But no impartial person nowadays, I suppose, doubts, however meanly he may think of Scott's political creed, that that creed was part, not of his interests, not even of his mere crotchets and crazes, literary and other, but of his inmost heart and soul. That reverence for the past, that distaste for the vulgar, that sense of continuity, of mystery, of something beyond interest and calculation, which the worst foes of Toryism would, I suppose, allow to be its nobler parts, were the blood of Scott's veins, the breath of his nostrils, the marrow of his bones. My friend Mr. Lang thinks that Scott's Toryism is dead, that no successor has arisen on its ruins, that it was, in fact, almost a private structure, of which he was the architect, a tree fated to fall with its planter. Perhaps; but perhaps also

'The Little Tower with no such ease
Is won';

and there are enough still to keep watch and ward of it.

But we have of course here to look even more to his mental character than to his moral, to do with him rather as a man of genius than as a 'man of good,' though it is impossible to overlook, and difficult to overestimate, his singular eminence as both combined. Of his actual literary accomplishment, something like a detailed view has been given in this little book, and of some of its separate departments estimates have been attempted.^[49] But we may, or rather must, gather all these up here. Nor can we proceed better than by the old way of inquiry—first, What were the peculiar characteristics of his thought? and, secondly, What distinguished his expression of this thought?

As to the first point, it has been pretty generally admitted—though the admissions have in some cases been carried almost too far—that we are not to look for certain things in Scott. We are not to look for any elaborately or at least scholastically minute faculty or practice of analysis or of argument. But to proceed from this to a general denial of 'philosophy' to him—that is to say, to allow him a merely superficial knowledge of human nature—is an utter mistake. I have quoted elsewhere, but the book from which the quotation is made is so rare that I may well quote here again, some remarkable words on this subject from M. Milsand, Mr. Browning's friend, and the recipient of the Dedication of the reprint of *Sordello*.^[50] It is certain that this praise might be supported with a large anthology of passages in the novels and even the poems—passages indicating an anthropological science as intimate as it is unpretentiously expressed. To some good folk in our days, who think that nothing can be profound which is naturally and simply spoken, and who demand that a human philosopher shall speak gibberish and wear his boots on his brows, the fact may be strange, but it is a fact. And it may be added that even if chapter and verse could not thus be produced, a sufficient proof, the most sufficient possible, could be otherwise provided. Scott, by the confession of all competent judges, save a very few, has created almost more men and women, undoubtedly real and lifelike, than any other prose novelist. Now you cannot create a man or a woman without knowing whereof a man and a woman are made, though the converse proposition is unfortunately by no means so universally predicable. He was content, as a rule, to put this great science of his into practice rather than to expound it in theory, to demonstrate it rather than to lecture on it, but that is all.

In the second place, we are not to look to him for any great intensity of delineation of passion, especially in the sense to which that word is more commonly confined. He has nowhere left us (as some other men of letters have) any hint that he abstained from doing this because the passion would have been so tremendous that it was on the whole best for mankind that they should not be exposed to it. The qualities of humour and of taste which were always present with Scott would have prevented this. But I should doubt whether he felt any temptation to unbosom himself, or any need to do so. The slight hints given at the time of the combined action of his misfortunes and the agitation arising from his renewed communications with Lady Jane Stuart, are almost all the indications that we have on the subject, and they are too slight to found any theory upon. It is evident that this was not his vein, or that, if the vein was there, he did not choose to work it.

To pass from negations to positives, the region in which Scott's power of conception and expression did lie, and which he ruled with wondrous range and rarely equalled power, was a strangely united kingdom of common-sense fact and fanciful or traditional romance. No writer who has had such a sense of the past, of tradition, of romantic literature, has had such a grasp of the actual working motives and conduct of mankind; none who has had the latter has even come near to his command of the former. We may take Spenser and Fielding as the princes of these separate principalities in English literature, and though each had gifts that Scott had not,—though Scott had gifts possessed by neither,—yet if we could conceive Spenser and Fielding blended, the blend would, I think, come nearer to Scott's idiosyncrasy than anything else that can be imagined. He had advanced (or rather returned) from that one-sided eighteenth-century conception of nature which was content to know *human* nature pretty thoroughly up to a certain point, and to dismiss 'prospects,' in Johnson's scornful language to Thrale, as one just like the other. But he had retained the eighteenth-century grasp of man himself, while recovering the path to the Idle Lake and the Cave of Despair, to the many-treed wood through which Una and her knight journeyed, and the Rich Strand where all the treasures of antiquity lay. We may think—apparently some of us do think—that we have improved on him in the recovery, and even in the retaining grasp. The fact of the improvement on him will take a great deal of proving, I am inclined to think; of the fact of his achievement there is no doubt.

If I must select Scott's special literary characteristic, next to that really magical faculty of placing scenes and peopling them with characters in the memory of

his readers which I have noticed before, I should certainly fix on his humour. It is a good old scholastic doctrine, that the greatest merit of anything is to be excellent in the special excellence of its kind. And in that quality which so gloriously differentiates English literature from all others, Scott is never wanting, and is almost always pre-eminent. If his patriotism, intense as it is, is never grotesque or offensive, as patriotism too often is to readers who do not share it; if his pathos never touches the maudlin; if his romantic sentiment is always saved by the sense of solid fact,—and we may assert these things without hesitation or qualification,—it is due to his humour. For this humour, never merely local, never bases its appeal on small private sympathies and understandings and pass-words which leave the world at large cold, or mystified, or even disgusted. Nor is it perhaps uncritical to set down that pre-eminently happy use, without abuse, of dialect, which has attracted the admiration of almost all good judges, to this same humour, warning him alike against the undisciplined profusion and the injudicious selection which have not been and are not unknown in some followers of his. And, further, his universal quality is free from some accompanying drawbacks which must be acknowledged in the humour of some of the other very great humorists. It is not coarse—a defect which has made prigs at all times, and especially at this time, affect horror at Aristophanes; it is not grim, like that of Swift; it is free from any very strong evidences of its owner having lived at a particular date, such as may be detected by the Devil's Advocate even in Fielding, even in Thackeray. No tricks or grimaces, no mere elaboration, no lingering to bespeak applause; but a moment of life and nature subjected to the humour-stamp and left recorded and transformed for ever—there is Scott.

That the necessary counterpart and companion of this breadth of humour should be depth of feeling can be no surprise to those who accept the only sound distinction between humour and wit. Scott himself never wore his heart on his sleeve; but to those who looked a little farther than the sleeve its beatings were sufficiently evident. The Scott who made that memorable exclamation on the Mound, and ejaculated 'No, by——!' at the discovery of the Regalia,^[51] who wrote Jeanie's speech to Queen Caroline and Habakkuk Mucklewrath's to Claverhouse, had no need ever to affect emotion, because it was always present, though repressed when it had no business to exhibit itself. And his romantic imagination was as sincere as his pathos or his indignation. He never lost the clue to 'the shores of old romance'; and, at least, great part of the secret which made him such a magician to his readers was that the spell was on himself—that the regions of fancy were as open, as familiar as Princes Street or the Parliament

Square to this solid practical Clerk of Session, who avowed that no food could to his taste equal Scotch broth, and in everything but the one fatal delusion was as sound a man of business as ever partook of that nourishing concoction.

In his execution both in prose and verse, but especially, or at least more obviously, in the latter there are certain peculiarities, in the nature (at least partly) of defect, which strike every critical eye at once. At no time, and in no case, was Scott of the order of the careful, anxious miniaturists of work, who repaint every stroke a hundred times, adjust every detail of composition over and over again, and can never have done with rehandling and perfecting. Nor did he belong to that very rare class whose work seems to be, at any rate after a slight apprenticeship, faultless from the first, to whom inelegancies of style, incorrect rhymes, licences of metre—not deliberate and intended to produce the effect they achieve, but the effect of carelessness or of momentary inability to do what is wanted—are by nature or education impossible. His nature did not give him this endowment, and his education was of the very last sort to procure it for him. He himself, not out of pique or conceit, things utterly alien from his nature, still less out of laziness, but, I believe, as a genuine, and, what is more, a correct self-criticism, has left in his private writings repeated expressions of his belief that revision and correction in his case not only did not improve the work, but were in most cases likely to do it positive harm, that the spoon was made or the horn spoiled (to adapt his country proverb) at the first draft, and once for all. I think that this was a correct judgment, and I do not see that it implies any inferiority on his part. It is not as if he ever aimed at the methods of the precisians and failed, as if it was his desire to be a 'correct' writer, a careful observer of proportion and construction, a producer of artful felicities in metre, rhythm, rhyme, phrase. We may yield to no one in the delight of tracing the exact correspondence of strophe and antistrophe in a Greek chorus, the subtle vowel-music of a Latin hymn or a passage of Rossetti's. But I cannot see why, because we rejoice in these things, we should demand them of all poetry, or why, because we rejoice in the faultless construction of Fielding or the exquisite finish of Jane Austen as novelists, we should despise the looser handling and more sweeping touch of Scott in prose fiction. It is extremely probable that, as Mr. Balfour suggested the other day in unveiling the Westminster Abbey monument, this breadth of touch obtained him his popularity abroad, nor need it impair his fame at home.

Unquestionably, though he had many minor gifts and graces, including that of incomparable lyric snatch, from the drums and fifes of 'Lochinvar' and 'Bonnie

Dundee' to the elfin music of 'Proud Maisie,' his faculty of weaving a story in prose or in verse, with varied decorations of dialogue and description and character, rather than on a cunning canvas of plot, was Scott's main forte. If it is in verse—and admirable as it is here, I think we must allow it to be—less pre-eminent than in prose, it is, first, because minor formal defects are more felt in verse than in prose; secondly, because the scope of the medium is less; and thirdly, because the medium itself was in reality not what he wanted. The verse romance of Scott is a great achievement and a delightful possession: it has had extraordinary influence on English literature, from the work of Byron, which it directly produced, and which pretty certainly would never have been produced without it, to that of Mr. William Morris, which may not impossibly have been its last echo—transformed and refreshed, but still an echo—for some time to come. But there was a little of the falsetto in it, and the interludes, of which the introductions to *Marmion* and to the *Bridal* are the most considerable, show that it gave no outlets, or outlets only awkward, for much of what he wanted to say. He defines his own general literary object admirably in a letter to Morrill. 'I have tried to induce the public to relax some of the rules of criticism, and to be amused with that medley of tragic and comic with which life presents us, not only in the same course of action, but in the same character.' The detailed remarks which have been given in earlier chapters make it unnecessary to bring out the application of this to all his work, both verse and prose. And it need but be pointed out in passing how much more satisfactorily the form of prose fiction lent itself, than the form of verse romance, to the expression of a creed which, as it had been that of Shakespeare, so it was the creed of Scott.

But a few words must be added in reference to the complaint which is often openly made, and which, I understand, is still more often secretly entertained, or taken for proved, by the younger generation—to wit, the complaint that Scott is 'commonplace' and 'conventional,' not merely in thought, but in expression. As to the thought, that is best met by the reply churlish, if not even by the reproof valiant. Scott's thought is never commonplace, and never merely conventional: it can only seem so to those who have given their own judgments in bondage to a conventional and temporary cant of unconventionality. In respect of expression, the complaint will admit of some argument which may best take the form of example. It is perfectly true that Scott's expression is not 'quintessenced'—that it has to a hasty eye an air of lacking what is called distinction; and, especially, that it has no very definite savour of any particular time. At present, as at other periods during the recorded story of literature, there is a marked preference for all these things which it is not; and so Scott is, with certain persons, in disfavour

accordingly. But it so happens that the study of this now long record of literature is itself sufficient to convince anyone how treacherous the tests thus suggested are. There never, for instance, was an English writer fuller of all the marks which these, our younger critics, desiderate in Scott, and admire in some authors of our own day, than John Lyly, the author of *Euphues*, of a large handful of very charming and interesting court dramas, and of some delightful lyrics. Those who have to teach literature impress the importance, and try to impress the interest, of Lyly on students and readers, and they do right. For he was a man not merely of talent, but (with respect to my friend Mr. Courthope, who thinks differently), I think, of genius. He had a poetical fancy, a keen and biting wit, a fairly exact proficiency in the scholarship of his time. He eschewed the obvious, the commonplace in thought, and still more in style, as passionately as any man ever has eschewed it, and, having not merely will and delicacy, but power, he not only achieved an immense temporary popularity, but even influenced the English language permanently. Yet—and those who thus praise him know it—he, the apostle of ornate prose, the model of a whole generation of the greatest wits that England has seen, the master of Shakespeare in more things than one, including romantic comedy, the originator of the English analytic novel, the 'raiser' (as I think they call it) 'of his native language to a higher power,' is dead. We shall never get anybody outside the necessarily small number of those who have cultivated the historic as well as the æsthetic sense in literature, to read him except as a curiosity or a task, because he not merely cultivated art, but neglected nature for it; because he fooled the time to the top of its bent, and let the time fool him in return; because, instead of making the common as though it were not common, he aimed and strained at the uncommon *in* and *per se*.

Scott did just the contrary. He never tried to be unlike somebody else; if he hit, as he did hit, upon great new styles of literature,—absolutely new in the case of the historical novel, revived after long trance in the case of the verse tale,—it was from no desire to innovate, but because his genius called him. Though in ordinary ways he was very much a man of his time, he did not contort himself in any fashion by way of expressing a (then) modern spirit, a Georgian idiosyncrasy, or anything of that sort; he was content with the language of the best writers and the thoughts of the best men. He was no amateur of the topsy-turvy, and had not the very slightest desire to show how a literary head could grow beneath the shoulders. He was satisfied that his genius should flow naturally. And the consequence is that it was never checked, that it flows still for us with all its spontaneous charm, and that it will flow *in omne volubilis ævum*. Among many instances of the strength which accompanied this absence of strain

one already alluded to may be mentioned again. Scott is one of the most literary of all writers. He was saturated with reading; nothing could happen but it brought some felicitous quotation, some quaint parallel to his mind from the great wits, or the small, of old. Yet no writer is less *bookish* than he; none insults his readers less with any parade, with any apparent consciousness of erudition; and he wears his learning so lightly that pedants have even accused him of lacking it because he lacks pedantry. His stream, to resume the simile, carries in solution more reading as well as more wit, more knowledge of life and nature, more gifts of almost all kinds than would suffice for twenty men of letters, yet the very power of its solvent force, as well as the vigour of its current, makes these things comparatively invisible.

In dealing with an author so voluminous and so various in his kinds and subjects of composition, it is a hard matter to say what has to be said within prescribed limits such as these, just as it is still harder to select from so copious a store of biographical information details which may be sufficient, and not more than sufficient, to give a firm and distinct picture of his life. Yet it may perhaps be questioned whether very elaborate handling is necessary for Scott. No man probably, certainly no man of letters, is more of a piece than he. As he has been subjected to an almost unparalleled trial in the revelation of his private thoughts, so his literary powers and performances extend over a range which is unusual, if not absolutely singular, in men of letters of the first rank. Yet he is the same throughout, in romance as in review, in novel as in note-writing. Except his dramatic work, a department for which he seems to have been almost totally unfitted (despite the felicity of his 'Old Play' fragments), nothing of his can be neglected by those who wish to enjoy him to the full. Yet though there is no monotony, there is a uniformity which is all the more delightfully brought out by the minor variations of subject and kind. The last as the first word about Scott should perhaps be, 'Read him. And, as far as may be, read all of him.'

When, in comparatively early days of his acquaintance with Lockhart, Scott, thinking himself near death in the paroxysms of his cramps, bequeathed to his future son-in-law, in the words of the ballad, 'the vanguard of the three,' the duty of burying him and continuing his work, if possible, he had himself limited the heritage to the defence of ancient faith and loyalty—a great one enough. But his is, in fact, a greater. From generation to generation, whosoever determines, in so far as fate and the gods allow, to hold these things fast, and, moreover, to love all good literature, to temper erudition with common sense, to let humour wait always upon fancy, and duty upon romance; whosoever at least tries to be true to

the past, to show a bold front to the present, and to let the future be as it may; whosoever 'spurns the vulgar' while endeavouring to be just to individuals, and faces 'the Secret' with neither bravado nor cringing,—he may take, if not the vanguard, yet a place according to his worth and merit, in the legion which this great captain led. Of the frequent parallels or contrasts drawn between him and Shakespeare it is not the least noteworthy that he is, of all men of letters, that one of whom we have the most intimate and the fullest revelation, while of Shakespeare we have the least. There need be very little doubt that if we knew everything about Shakespeare, he would come, as a man of mould might, scathless from the test. But we do know everything, or almost everything, about Scott, and he comes out nearly as well as anyone but a faultless monster could. For all the works of the Lord in literature, as in other things, let us give thanks—for Blake and for Beddoes as well as for Shelley and for Swift. But let everyone who by himself, or by his fathers, claims origin between Tol-Pedn-Penwith and Dunnet Head give thanks, with more energy and more confidence than in any other case save one, for the fact that his is the race and his the language of Sir Walter Scott.



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FOOTNOTES

[1] His friend Shortreed's well-known expression for the results of the later Liddesdale

'raids.'

[2] See General Preface to the Novels, or Lockhart, i. 136.

[3] He attributes to Lady Balcarres the credit of being his earliest patroness, and of giving him, when a mere shy boy, the run of her drawing-room and of her box at the theatre.

[4] He himself, in his entries of his children's births, always gives the order of the names as Margaret Charlotte.

[5] The Boar of the Forest seems, not unnaturally, to have had a rather less warm 'cradle' in Lady Scott's feelings. She thought he took liberties; and though he meant no harm, he certainly did.

[6] Lockhart, i. 270. I quote, as is usual, the second or ten-volume edition. But, for reading, some may prefer the first, in which the number of the volumes coincides with their real division, which has the memories of the death of Sophia Scott and others connected with its course, and to which the second made fewer positive additions than may be thought.—[It has been pointed out to me in reference to the word 'whomle' on the opposite page that Fergusson has 'whumble' in 'The Rising of the Session.' But if Scott had quoted, would he have altered the spelling? The Grassmarket story, moreover, exactly corresponds to his words, 'as a gudewife would whomle a bowie.']

[7] Not many years before, Johnson had denied that it was possible for a working man of letters to earn even six guineas a sheet (the *Edinburgh* began at ten and proceeded to a minimum of sixteen), '*communibus sheetibus*,' as he put it jocularly to Boswell. Southey, in the year of Scott's marriage, seems to have thought about ten shillings (certainly not more) 'not amiss' for a morning's work in reviewing.

[8] For an interesting passage showing how slow contemporary ears were to admit this, see Southey's excellent defence of his own practice to Wynn (*Letters*, i. 69).

[9] His attempts at the kind may best be despatched in a note here. Their want of merit contrasts strangely with the admirable quality of the 'Old Play' fragments scattered about the novels. *Halidon Hill* (1822), in the subject of which Scott had an ancestral interest from his Swinton blood, reminds one much more of Joanna Baillie than of its author. *Macduff's Cross* (1823), a very brief thing, is still more like Joanna, was dedicated to her, and appeared in a miscellany which she edited for a charitable purpose. *The Doom of Devorgoil*, written for Terry in the first 'cramp' attack of 1817, but not published till 1830, has a fine supernatural subject, but hardly any other merit. *Auchindrane*, the last, is by far the best.

[10] It is quite possible that Mrs. Brown's illiterate authority, or one of his predecessors in title, took 'fee' in the *third* sense of 'cattle.'

[11] He wrote for his corps the 'War Song of the Edinburgh Light Dragoons,' which appeared in the *Scots Magazine* for 1802, but was written earlier. It is good, but not so good as it would have been a few years later.

[12] It is fair to him to say that he made no public complaints, and that when some gutter-scribbler in 1810 made charges of plagiarism from him against Scott, he furnished Southey with the means of clearing him from all share in the matter (*Lockhart*, iii. 293; *Southey's Life and Correspondence*, iii. 291). But there is a suspicion of fretfulness even in the Preface to *Christabel*; and the references to Scott's poetry (not to himself) in the *Table Talk*, etc., are almost uniformly disparaging. It is true that these last are not strictly evidence.

[13] The objection taken to this word by precisians seems to ignore a useful distinction. The *antiquary* is a collector; the *antiquarian* a student or writer. The same person may be both; but he may not.

[14] *Waverley*, chap. vi. It owes a little to Smollett's Introduction to *Humphry Clinker*, but as usual improves the loan greatly.

[15] Inasmuch as he himself was secretary to the Commission which did away with it.

[16] Taken from the name of his friend Morrith's place on the Greta.

[17] *Lockhart*, iv. chaps. xxviii.-xxxiii.

[18] The name, which, as many people now know since Aldershot Camp was established, is a real one, had been already used with the double meaning by Charlotte Smith, a now much-forgotten novelist, whom Scott admired.

[19] The once celebrated 'Polish dwarf.'

[20] I may be permitted to refer—as to a *pièce justificatif* which there is no room here to give or even abstract in full—to a set of three essays on this subject in my *Essays in English Literature*. Second Series. London, 1895.

[21] This part, however, has a curious adventitious interest, owing to the idea—fairly vouched for—that Scott intended to delineate in the Colonel some points of his own character. His pride, his generosity, and his patronage of the Dominie, are not unrecognisable, certainly. And a man's idea of himself is often, even while strange to others, perfectly true to his real nature.

[22] All who do not skip such things must have enjoyed these scraps, sometimes labelled particularly, sometimes merely dubbed 'Old Play'; and they are well worth reading together, as they appear in the editions of the *Poems*. At the same time, they have been, in some cases, too hastily attributed to Sir Walter himself. For instance, that in *The Legend of Montrose*, ch. xiv., assigned to *The Tragedy of Brennoralt* (not 'valt,' as misprinted), is really from Sir John Suckling's sententious play (act iv. sc. 1), though loosely quoted.

[23] In the earlier months had taken place that famous rediscovery of the Regalia of Scotland in Edinburgh Castle, which was one of the central moments of Scott's life, and in which, as afterwards in the restoring of Mons Meg, he took a great, if not the chief, part. His influence with George IV. as Prince and King had much to do with both, and in the earlier he took the very deepest interest. The effect on himself (and on his daughter Sophia) of the actual finding of the Crown jewels is a companion incident to that previously noticed (p. 52) as occurring on the Mound. Those who cannot sympathise with either can hardly hope to understand either Scott or his work.

[24] From March to May 1819 he had a series of attacks of the cramp, so violent that he once took solemn leave of his children in expectation of decease, that the eccentric Earl of Buchan forced a way into his bedchamber to 'relieve his mind as to the arrangements of his funeral,' and that he entirely forgot the whole of the *Bride* itself. This, too, was the time of his charge to Lockhart (*Familiar Letters*, ii. 38), as to his successor in Tory letters and politics—

'Take thou the vanguard of the three,
And bury me by the bracken-bush
That grows upon yon lily lee.'

[25] It has always struck me that the other form of the legend itself—that in which the 'open window' suggests that the bridegroom's wounds were due to his rival—has far greater capabilities.

[26] Said to embody certain mental peculiarities of that ingenious draughtsman, but rather unamiable person, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe.

[27] He had said in a letter to Terry, as early as November 20, 1822, that he feared *Pevenil* 'would smell of the apoplexy.' But he made no definite complaint to any one of a particular seizure, and the date, number, and duration of the attacks are unknown.

[28] Some say £130,000, but this seems to include the £10,000 mortgage on

Abbotsford. This, however, was a private affair of Scott's own, not a transaction of the firm.

[29] I have consulted high authority on the legal side of this counter-bill story, and have been informed (with the expected caution that, the facts being so doubtful, the law is hard to give) that under Scots law these counter-bills, if they existed, would probably be allowed to rank, supposing that twenty shillings in the pound had not been paid on the first set, and to an extent sufficient to make up that sum. But Lockhart's allegation clearly is that they were so used as to charge Scott's estate to the extent of *forty* shillings in the pound.

[30] John Ballantyne had died in 1821, before the mischief was punished, but after it was done.

[31] *Lockhart*, vii. 370, 371.

[32] I am not certain whether the second advance, which was secured by mortgage on Abbotsford, included the first or not. Probably it did.

[33] A pet name for his 'curios.'

[34] Our now-accepted texts, of course, read 'food'; but no one who remembers the pleasant use which Sir Walter himself has made of the other reading in the Introduction to *Quentin Durward* will readily give it up.

[35] As Scott, like Swift and Shakespeare, like Thackeray and Fielding, never hesitated at a touch of grim humour even though it might border on grotesque, he himself would probably not have missed the coincidence of—

'Though *billmen* ply the ghastly blow,'

which suggests itself only too tragi-comically.

[36] *Journal*, Feb. 3, 1826, p. 103, ed. Douglas; *Lockhart*, viii. 216, 217.

[37] This is a translation, of course; but if anyone will compare Pitcairn's Latin and Dryden's English, he will see where the poetry comes in.

[38] He wrote on sheets of a large quarto size, in a very small and close hand, so that his usual 'task' of six 'leaves' meant about thirty pages of print, though not very small or close print.

[39] It was early in this year, on February 23, at a Theatrical Fund dinner, that he made public avowal of the authorship of *Waverley*.

[40] Cadell did not like any of them much, and objected still more to others intended to follow them. Sir Walter, therefore, kept these back, and gave them later to Heath's *Keepsake*. They now appear with their intended companions: the slightest, *The Tapestry Chamber*, is perhaps the best.

[41] Compare *Diary*, 1827, Nov. 7 ('I fairly softened myself like an old fool with recalling old stories, till I was fit for nothing but shedding tears and repeating verses the whole night'), with the famous couplet in 'Rose Aylmer'—

'A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.'

[42] Scott's name for *James Ballantyne*, as 'Rigdumfunnidos' was for John.

[43] See his own unqualified and almost too gushing acknowledgment of this ten years before, in the *Familiar Letters*, ii. 84-85, *note*.

[44] It had also caused great and very painful trouble in his lame leg, which from this time onwards had to be mechanically treated.

[45] The Burke and Hare murders were recent.

[46] The success of the *Magnum* had allowed a second large dividend to be paid, and the creditors had been generous enough to restore Scott's forks, spoons, and books to him.

[47] So, in a still earlier generation, Johnson, after calling his step-daughter 'my dearest love,' and writing in the simplest way, will end, and quite properly, with, 'Madam, your obedient, humble servant.'

[48] He made, as is well known, preparations to 'meet' General Gourgaud, who was wroth about the *Napoleon*, but who never actually challenged him.

[49] Most injustice has perforce been done to his miscellaneous verse lying outside the great poems, and not all of it included in the novels. It would be impossible to dwell on all the good things, from *Helvellyn* and *The Norman Horseshoe* onward; and useless to select a few. Some of his best things are among them: few are without force, and fire, and unstudied melody. The song-scrap, like the mottoes, in his novels are often really marvellous snatches of improvisation.

[50] Il y a plus de philosophie dans ses écrits ... que dans bon nombre de *romans philosophiques*.

[51] When some tactless person tried to play tricks with the Crown.

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