



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

THE WAVERLEY NOVELS.

By SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Illustrated Household Edition. Fifty volumes of portable size, printed in 16mo form. Price, 75 cents per volume, in handsome cloth binding, stamped with appropriate designs. Sets of the Waverley Novels can also be obtained in various library bindings, from a plain, simple style, to the highest qualities of calf and morocco work.

The paper is of fine quality; the stereotype plates are not old ones repaired, the type having been cast expressly for this edition. The Novels are illustrated with capital steel plates, engraved in the best manner, by Joseph Andrews, H. Wright Smith, and Freeman, after drawings and paintings by the most eminent artists, among whom are Birket Foster, Darley, Billings, Landseer, Harvey, and Faed. This Edition contains all the latest notes and corrections of the Author, an ample Glossary, and a complete Index of all the personages and incidents of the various tales; and some curious additions, especially in "Guy Mannering" and the "Bride of Lammermoor"; being the fullest edition of the Novels ever published. *The notes are at the foot of the page*, — a great convenience to the reader.

No works of the imagination, of the same extent, have ever been received with so great favor as the Waverley Novels. Since their first publication, not fewer than a Hundred and Thirty Thousand copies have been sold in Great Britain, and a very large number in the United States. These have been printed in a variety of forms, to suit the taste of the public; but there has long been wanted an edition of portable size, combining the advantages of a clear, readable type, and uniformity with other standard English authors. This want the publishers of the "Household Edition" have labored to supply; and they feel warranted in saying that they have succeeded in their endeavors, by the fact that they have already sold more than Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand volumes of this edition, while the demand for complete sets seems to be steadily increasing.

The following is the arrangement of the Novels, any of which will be sold separately, if desired.

WAVERLEY, 2 vols.
GUY MANNERING, 2 vols.
THE ANTIQUARY, 2 vols.
ROB ROY, 2 vols.
OLD MORTALITY, 2 vols.
BLACK DWARF,
LEGEND OF MONTROSE, } 2 vols.
HEART OF MID-LOTHIAN, 2 vols.
BRIDE OF LAMMERMOOR, 2 vols.
IVANHOE, 2 vols.
THE MONASTERY, 2 vols.
THE ABBOT, 2 vols.
KENILWORTH, 2 vols.
THE PIRATE, 2 vols.
THE FORTUNES OF NIGEL, 2 vols.
PEVERIL OF THE PEAK, 2 vols.
QUENTIN DURWARD, 2 vols.

ST. RONAN'S WELL, 2 vols.
REDGAUNTLET, 2 vols.
THE BETROTHED,
THE HIGHLAND WIDOW, } 2 vols.
THE TALISMAN,
TWO DROVERS,
MY AUNT MARGARET'S MIRROR, } 2 vols.
THE TAPESTRIED CHAMBER,
THE LAIRD'S JOCK, }
WOODSTOCK, 2 vols.
THE FAIR MAID OF PERTH, 2 vols.
ANNE OF GEIERSTEIN, 2 vols.
COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS, 2 vols.
THE SURGEON'S DAUGHTER, } 2 vols.
CASTLE DANGEROUS,
INDEX AND GLOSSARY, }

☞ Sets of the "Household Edition," or any of the separate Novels, sent free of expense to any part of the country, on receipt of the price.

TICKNOR & FIELDS, BOSTON.

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

LIFE OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

VOL. III.



Mother of Sir Walter Scott.

Published by Tickner and Fields, Boston.

1851.

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

BY

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART.

A NEW EDITION.

VOL. III.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.

M DCCCLXI.

RIVERSIDE, CAMBRIDGE :
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY
HENRY O. HOUGHTON.

CONTENTS
OF
VOLUME THIRD.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1808-1809.

	PAGE
Quarrel with Messrs. Constable and Hunter — John Ballantyne established as a bookseller in Edinburgh — Scott's Literary Projects — The Edinburgh Annual Register, &c. — Meeting of James Ballantyne and John Murray — Murray's visit to Ashestiel — Politics — The Peninsular War — Project of the Quarterly Review — Correspondence with Ellis, Gifford, Morritt, Southey, Sharpe, &c.	7

CHAPTER XIX.

1809-1810.

Case of a Poetical Tailor condemned to Death at Edinburgh — His Letters to Scott — Death of Camp — Scott in London — Mr. Morritt's description of him as "a Lion" in Town — Dinner at Mr. Sotheby's — Coleridge's Fire, Famine, and Slaughter — The Quarterly Review started — First Visit to Rokeby — The Lady of the Lake begun — Excursion to the Trossachs and Loch Lomond — Letter on Byron's English Bards and Scotch Reviewers — Death of Daniel Scott — Correspondence about Mr. Canning's Duel with Lord Castlereagh — Miss Baillie's Family Legend acted at Edinburgh — Theatrical Anecdotes — Kemble — Siddons — Terry — Letter on the Death of Miss Seward, . . .	49
---	----

CHAPTER XX.

1810.

Affair of Thomas Scott's Extractorship discussed in the House of Lords — Speeches of Lord Lauderdale, Lord Melville, &c. —	
--	--

	PAGE
Lord Holland at the Friday Club — Publication of the Lady of the Lake — Correspondence concerning Versification with Ellis and Canning — The Poem criticised by Jeffrey and Mackintosh — Letters to Southey and Morritt — Anecdotes from James Ballantyne's Memoranda,	87
CHAPTER XXI.	
1810.	
First Visit to the Hebrides — Staffa — Skye — Mull — Iona, &c.— The Lord of the Isles projected — Letters to Joanna Baillie, Southey, and Morritt,	117
CHAPTER XXII.	
1810-1811.	
Life of Miss Seward — Waverley resumed — Ballantyne's Critique on the First Chapters of the Novel — Waverley again laid aside — Unfortunate Speculations of John Ballantyne & Co.; History of the Culdees; Tixall Poetry; Beaumont and Fletcher; Edinburgh Annual Register, &c. — Scott's Essay on Judicial Reform — His scheme of going to India — Letters on the War in the Peninsula — Death of Lord President Blair — and of Lord Melville — Publication of the Vision of Don Roderick — The Inferno of Altisidora, &c.,	135
CHAPTER XXIII.	
1811.	
New Arrangement concerning the Clerks of Session — Scott's first Purchase of Land — Abbotsford; Turn-again, &c. — Joanna Baillie's Orra, &c. — Death of James Grahame — and of John Leyden,	161
CHAPTER XXIV.	
1811-1812.	
The Poem of Rokeby begun — Correspondence with Mr Morritt — Death of Henry Duke of Buccleuch — George Ellis — John Wilson — Apprentices of Edinburgh — Scott's "Nick-Nackatories" — Letter to Miss Baillie on the Publication of Childe Harold — Correspondence with Lord Byron.	185

CHAPTER XXV.

1812-1813.

	PAGE
The "Flitting" to Abbotsford — Plantations — George Thomson — Rokeby and Triermain in progress — Excursion to Flodden, Bishop-Auckland, and Rokeby Park — Correspondence with Crabbe — Life of Patrick Carey, &c. — Publication of Rokeby — and of the Bridal of Triermain,	211

CHAPTER XXVI.

1813.

Affairs of John Ballantyne & Co. — Causes of their derangement — Letters of Scott to his Partners — Negotiation for relief with Messrs. Constable — New purchase of Land at Abbotsford — Embarrassments continued — John Ballantyne's Expresses — Drumlanrig, Penrith, &c. — Scott's meeting with the Marquis of Abercorn at Longtown — His application to the Duke of Buccleuch — Offer of the Poet-Laureateship — considered — and declined — Address of the City of Edinburgh to the Prince-Regent — its reception — Civic Honors conferred on Scott — Question of Taxation on Literary Income — Letters to Mr. Morritt, Mr. Southey, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Crabbe, Miss Baillie, and Lord Byron,	262
--	-----

MEMOIRS
OF THE
LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Quarrel with Messrs. Constable and Hunter — John Ballantyne established as a Bookseller in Edinburgh — Scott's Literary Projects — The Edinburgh Annual Register, &c. — Meeting of James Ballantyne and John Murray — Murray's Visit to Ashestiel — Politics — The Peninsular War — Project of the Quarterly Review — Correspondence with Ellis, Gifford, Morritt, Southey, Sharpe, &c.

1808-1809.

THE reader does not need to be reminded that Scott at this time had business enough on his hand, besides combing the mane of Brown Adam, and twisting couples for Douglas and Percy. He was deep in Swift; and the Ballantyne press was groaning under a multitude of works, some of them already mentioned, with almost all of which his hand as well as his head had something, more or less, to do. But a serious change was about to take place in his relations with the spirited publishing house which had hitherto been the most efficient supporters of that press; and his letters begin to be much

occupied with differences and disputes which, uninteresting as the details would now be, must have cost him many anxious hours in the apparently idle autumn of 1808. Mr. Constable had then for his partner Mr. Alexander Gibson Hunter, afterwards Laird of Blackness, to whose intemperate language, much more than to any part of Constable's own conduct, Scott ascribed this unfortunate alienation ; which, however, as well as most of my friend's subsequent misadventures, I am inclined to trace in no small degree, to the influence which a third person, hitherto unnamed, was about this time beginning to exercise over the concerns of James Ballantyne.

John Ballantyne, a younger brother of Scott's school-fellow, was originally destined for the paternal trade of a *merchant* — (that is to say, a dealer in everything from fine broadcloth to children's tops) — at Kelso. The father seems to have sent him when very young to London, where, whatever else he may have done in the way of professional training, he spent some time in the banking-house of Messrs. Currie. On returning to Kelso, however, the "*department*" which more peculiarly devolved upon him was the tailoring one.* His personal habits had not been improved by his brief sojourn in the Great City, and his business, in consequence (by his own statement) of the irregularity of his life, gradually melted to nothing in his hands. Early in 1805, his goods were sold off, and barely sufficed to pay his debts. The worthy old couple found refuge with their ever affectionate eldest son, who provided his father with some little occupation (real or nominal) about the printing-office ; and

* The first time that William Laidlaw saw John Ballantyne, he had come to Selkirk to measure the troopers of the Yeomanry Cavalry, of whom Laidlaw was one, for new breeches. [1839.]

thus John himself again quitted his native place, under circumstances which, as I shall show in the sequel, had left a deep and painful trace even upon that volatile mind.

He had, however, some taste, and he at least fancied himself to have some talent for literature ; * and the rise of his elder brother, who also had met with no success in his original profession, was before him. He had acquired in London great apparent dexterity in book-keeping and accounts. He was married by this time ; and it might naturally be hoped, that with the severe lessons of the past, he would now apply sedulously to any duty that might be intrusted to him. The concern in the Canon-gate was a growing one, and James Ballantyne's somewhat indolent habits were already severely tried by its multifarious management. The Company offered John a salary of £200 a-year as clerk ; and the destitute *ex-merchant* was too happy to accept the proposal. †

He was a quick, active, intrepid little fellow ; and in society so very lively and amusing, so full of fun and merriment, such a thoroughly light-hearted droll, all-over quaintness and humorous mimicry ; and moreover, such a keen and skilful devotee to all manner of field-sports,

* John Ballantyne, upon the marvellous success of *Waverley*, wrote and published a novel, called "The Widow's Lodgings." More wretched trash never was.

† The reader, who compares this account of John Ballantyne's early life with that given in the former (English) edition of this work (Vol. II. p. 196), will observe some alterations that I have made — but they are none of them as to points of the very slightest importance. The sketch of John's career, drawn up by himself, shortly before his death, confirms every word I had said as to anything of substantial consequence — and indeed tells the story more unfavorably for *him* than I did — or do. It was printed in Vol. V. of the first edition, p. 77 ; and will be reprinted in its proper place, *sub anno* 1821. [1839.]

from fox-hunting to badger-baiting inclusive, that it was no wonder he should have made a favourable impression on Scott, when he appeared in Edinburgh in this destitute plight, and offered to assist James in book-keeping, which the latter never understood, or could bring himself to attend to with regularity. The contrast between the two brothers was not the least of the amusement; indeed that continued to amuse him to the last. The elder of these is painted to the life in an early letter of Leyden's, which, on the Doctor's death, he, though not (I fancy) without wincing, permitted Scott to print: — "Methinks I see you with your confounded black beard, bull-neck, and upper lip turned up to your nose, while one of your eyebrows is cocked perpendicularly, and the other forms pretty well the base of a right-angled triangle, opening your great gloating eyes, and crying — *But, Leyden!!!*" James was a short, stout, well-made man, and would have been considered a handsome one, but for these grotesque frowns, starts, and twistings of his features, set off by a certain mock majesty of walk and gesture, which he had perhaps contracted from his usual companions, the emperors and tyrants of the stage. His voice in talk was grave and sonorous, and he sung well (theatrically well), in a fine rich bass. John's tone in singing was a sharp treble — in conversation something between a croak and a squeak. Of *his* style of story-telling it is sufficient to say that the late Charles Mathews's "old Scotch lady" was but an imperfect copy of the original, which the great comedian first heard in my presence from his lips.* He was shorter than James, but lean as a scarecrow, and he rather hopped than walked: his feat-

* The reader will find an amusing anecdote of Johnny in the *Memoirs of Mathews*, by his widow, vol. ii. p. 382. [1839.]

ures, too, were naturally good, and he twisted them about quite as much, but in a very different fashion. The elder brother was a gourmand — the younger liked his bottle and his bowl, as well as, like Johnny Armstrong, “a hawk, a hound, and a fair woman.” Scott used to call the one Aldiborontiphoscophornio — the other Rigdum-funnidos. They both entertained him; they both loved and revered him; and I believe would have shed their heart’s blood in his service; but they both, as men of affairs, deeply injured him — and above all, the day that brought John into pecuniary connexion with him was the blackest in his calendar. A more reckless, thoughtless, improvident adventurer never rushed into the serious responsibilities of business; but his cleverness, his vivacity, his unaffected zeal, his gay fancy always seeing the light side of everything, his imperturbable good-humour, and buoyant elasticity of spirits, made and kept him such a favourite, that I believe Scott would have as soon have ordered his dog to be hanged, as harboured, in his darkest hour of perplexity, the least thought of discarding “jocund Johnny.”

The great bookseller of Edinburgh was a man of calibre infinitely beyond these Ballantynes. Though with a strong dash of the sanguine, without which, indeed, there can be no great projector in any walk of life, Archibald Constable was one of the most sagacious persons that ever followed his profession. A brother poet of Scott says to him, a year or two before this time, “Our butteracious friend at the Cross turns out a deep draw-well;” and another eminent literator, still more closely connected with Constable, had already, I believe, christened him “The Crafty.” Indeed, his fair and very handsome physiognomy carried a bland astuteness of ex-

pression, not to be mistaken by any who could read the plainest of nature's handwriting. He made no pretensions to literature — though he was in fact a tolerable judge of it generally, and particularly well skilled in the department of Scotch antiquities. He distrusted himself, however, in such matters, being conscious that his early education had been very imperfect; and moreover, he wisely considered the business of a critic as quite as much out of his "proper line" as authorship itself. But of that "proper line," and his own qualifications for it, his estimation was ample; and — often as I may have smiled at the lofty serenity of his self-complacence — I confess I now doubt whether he rated himself too highly as a master in the true science of the bookseller. He had, indeed, in his mercantile character, one deep and fatal flaw — for he hated accounts, and systematically refused, during the most vigorous years of his life, to examine or sign a balance-sheet; but for casting a keen eye over the remotest indications of popular taste — for anticipating the chances of success and failure in any given variety of adventure — for the planning and invention of his calling — he was not, in his own day at least, surpassed; and among all his myriad of undertakings, I question if any one that really originated with himself, and continued to be superintended by his own care, ever did fail. He was as bold as far-sighted — and his disposition was as liberal as his views were wide. Had he and Scott from the beginning trusted as thoroughly as they understood each other; had there been no third parties to step in, flattering an overweening vanity on the one hand into presumption, and on the other side spurring the enterprise that wanted nothing but a bridle, I have no doubt their joint career might have been one of unbroken prosperity.

But the Ballantynes were jealous of the superior mind, bearing, and authority of Constable ; and though he too had a liking for them both personally — esteemed James's literary tact, and was far too much of a humourist not to be very fond of the younger brother's company — he could never away with the feeling that they intervened unnecessarily, and left him but the shadow, where he ought to have had the substantial lion's share, of confidence. On his part, again, he was too proud a man to give entire confidence where that was withheld from himself ; and more especially, I can well believe that a frankness of communication as to the real amount of his capital and general engagements of business, which would have been the reverse of painful to him in habitually confidential intercourse with Scott, was out of the question where Scott's proposals and suggestions were to be met in conference, not with his own manly simplicity, but the buckram pomposity of the one, or the burlesque levity of the other, of his plenipotentiaries.

The disputes in question seem to have begun very shortly after the contract for the Life and Edition of Swift had been completed ; and we shall presently see reason to infer that Scott to a certain degree was influenced at the moment by a soreness originating in the recent conduct of Mr. Jeffrey's Journal — that great primary source of the wealth and authority of the house of Constable. The then comparatively little-known bookseller of London, who was destined to be ultimately Constable's most formidable rival in more than one department of publishing, has told me, that when he read the article on Marmion, and another on general politics, in the same number of the Edinburgh Review, he said to himself — “ Walter Scott has feelings both as a gentle-

man and a Tory, which these people must now have wounded ; — the alliance between him and the whole clique of the Edinburgh Review, its proprietor included, is shaken ; ” and, as far at least as the political part of the affair was concerned, John Murray’s sagacity was not at fault. We have seen with what thankful alacrity he accepted a small share in the adventure of *Marmion* — and with what brilliant success that was crowned ; nor is it wonderful that a young bookseller, conscious of ample energies, should now have watched with eagerness the circumstances which seemed not unlikely to place within his own reach a more intimate connexion with the first great living author in whose works he had ever had any direct interest. He forthwith took measures for improving and extending his relations with James Ballantyne, through whom, as he guessed, Scott could best be approached. His tenders of employment for the Canongate press were such, that the apparent head of the firm proposed a conference at Ferrybridge, in Yorkshire ; and there Murray, after detailing some of his own literary plans — particularly that already alluded to, of a *Novelist’s Library* — in his turn sounded Ballantyne so far, as to resolve at once on pursuing his journey into Scotland. Ballantyne had said enough to satisfy him that the project of setting up a new publishing house in Edinburgh, in opposition to Constable, was already all but matured ; and he, on the instant, proposed himself for its active co-operator in the metropolis. The printer proceeded to open his budget further, mentioning, among other things, that the author of *Marmion* had “ both another Scotch poem and a *Scotch novel* on the stocks ; ” and had, moreover, chalked out the design of an *Edinburgh Annual Register*, to be conducted in opposition to the politics and

criticism of Constable's Review. These tidings might have been enough to make Murray proceed farther northwards; but there was a scheme of his own which had for some time deeply occupied his mind, and the last article of this communication determined him to embrace the opportunity of opening it in person at Ashestiel. He arrived there about the middle of October. The 26th Number of the Edinburgh Review, containing Mr. Brougham's celebrated article, entitled, "Don Cevallos, on the usurpation of Spain," had just been published; and one of the first things Scott mentioned in conversation was, that he had so highly resented the tone of that essay, as to give orders that his name might be discontinued on the list of subscribers.* Mr. Murray could not have wished better auspices for the matter he had come to open; and, shortly after his departure, Scott writes as follows, to his prime political confidant:—

"To George Ellis, Esq., Claremont.

"Ashestiel, Nov. 2d, 1808.

"Dear Ellis,—We had, equally to our joy and surprise, a flying visit from Heber, about three weeks ago. He staid but three days—but, between old stories and new, we made them very merry in their passage. During his stay, John Murray, the bookseller in Fleet Street, who has more real knowledge of what concerns his business than any of his brethren—at least than any of them that I know—came to canvass a most important plan, of which I am now, in 'dern privacie,' to give

* "When the 26th Number appeared, Mr. Scott wrote to Constable in these terms:—'The Edinburgh Review *had* become such as to render it impossible for me to continue a contributor to it.—*Now*, it is such as I can no longer continue to receive or read it.' The list of the then subscribers exhibits in an indignant dash of Constable's pen opposite Mr. Scott's name, the word—'STOP! ! !'—*Letter from Mr. R. Cadell.*

you the outline. I had most strongly recommended to our Lord Advocate * to think of some counter-measures against the Edinburgh Review, which, politically speaking, is doing incalculable damage. I do not mean this in a mere party view;—the present Ministry are not all that I could wish them — for (Canning excepted) I doubt there is among them too much *self-seeking*, as it was called in Cromwell's time; and what is their misfortune, if not their fault, there is not among them one in the decided situation of paramount authority, both with respect to the others and to the Crown, which is, I think, necessary, at least in difficult times, to produce promptitude, regularity, and efficiency in measures of importance. But their political principles are sound English principles, and, compared to the greedy and inefficient horde which preceded them, they are angels of light and of purity. It is obvious, however, that they want defenders both in and out of doors. Pitt's

— 'Love and fear glued many friends to him;
And now he's fallen, those tough commixtures melt.' *

Were this only to affect a change of hands, I should expect it with more indifference; but I fear a change of principles is designed. The Edinburgh Review tells you coolly, 'We foresee a speedy revolution in this country as well as Mr. Cobbett;' and, to say the truth, by degrading the person of the Sovereign — exalting the power of the French armies, and the wisdom of their counsels — holding forth that peace (which they allow can only be purchased by the humiliating prostration of our honour) is indispensable to the very existence of this country — I think, that for these two years past, they have done their utmost to hasten the accomplishment of their own prophecy. Of this work 9000 copies are printed quarterly, and no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it, because, independent of its politics, it gives the only valuable literary

* The Right Hon. John Campbell Colquhoun, husband of Scott's early friend, Mary Anne Erskine.

† Slightly altered from *3d K. Henry VI.* Act II. Scene 6.

criticism which can be met with. Consider, of the numbers who read this work, how many are there likely to separate the literature from the politics — how many youths are there, upon whose minds the flashy and bold character of the work is likely to make an indelible impression; and think what the consequence is likely to be.

“ Now, I think there is balm in Gilead for all this; and that the cure lies in instituting such a Review in London as should be conducted totally independent of bookselling influence, on a plan as liberal as that of the Edinburgh, its literature as well supported, and its principles English and constitutional. Accordingly, I have been given to understand that Mr. William Gifford is willing to become the conductor of such a work, and I have written to him, at the Lord Advocate’s desire, a very voluminous letter on the subject. Now, should this plan succeed, you must hang your birding-piece on its hooks, take down your old Anti-jacobin armour, and ‘remember your swashing blow.’ It is not that I think this projected Review ought to be exclusively or principally political — this would, in my opinion, absolutely counteract its purpose, which I think should be to offer to those who love their country, and to those whom we would wish to love it, a periodical work of criticism conducted with equal talent, but upon sounder principle than that which has gained so high a station in the world of letters. Is not this very possible? In point of learning, you Englishmen have ten times our scholarship; and as for talent and genius, ‘Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than any of the rivers in Israel?’ Have we not yourself and your cousin, the Roses, Malthus, Matthias, Gifford, Heber, and his brother? Can I not procure you a score of blue-caps who would rather write for us than for the Edinburgh Review if they got as much pay by it? ‘A good plot, good friends, and full of expectation — an excellent plot, very good friends!’* ”

“ Heber’s fear, was, lest we should fail in procuring regular

* Hotspur — 1st *K. Henry IV.* Act II. Scene 3.

steady contributors; but I know so much of the interior discipline of reviewing, as to have no apprehension of that. Provided we are once set a-going, by a few dashing numbers, there would be no fear of enlisting regular contributors; but the amateurs must bestir themselves in the first instance. From Government we should be entitled to expect confidential communication as to points of fact (so far as fit to be made public), in our political disquisitions. With this advantage, our good cause and St. George to boot, we may at least divide the field with our formidable competitors, who, after all, are much better at cutting than parrying, and whom uninterrupted triumph has as much unfitted for resisting a serious attack, as it has done Buonaparte for the Spanish war. Jeffrey is, to be sure, a man of the most uncommon versatility of talent, but what then?

‘General Howe is a gallant commander,
There are others as gallant as he.’

Think of all this, and let me hear from you very soon on the subject. Canning is, I have good reason to know, very anxious about the plan. I mentioned it to Robert Dundas, who was here with his lady for two days on a pilgrimage to Melrose, and he approved highly of it. Though no literary man, he is judicious, *clair-voyant*, and uncommonly sound-headed, like his father, Lord Melville. With the exceptions I have mentioned, the thing continues a secret.

“I am truly happy you think well of the Spanish business: they have begun in a truly manly and rounded manner, and barring internal dissension, are, I think, very likely to make their part good. Buonaparte’s army has come to assume such a very motley description as gives good hope of its crumbling down on the frost of adversity setting in. The Germans and Italians have deserted him in troops, and I greatly doubt his being able to assemble a very huge force at the foot of the Pyrenees, unless he trusts that the terror of his name will be sufficient to keep Germany in subjugation, and Austria in awe. The finances of your old Russian friends are said to

be ruined out and out; such is the account we have from Leith.

“Enough of this talk. Ever yours,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

The readiness with which Mr. Ellis entered into the scheme thus introduced to his notice, encouraged Scott to write still more fully; indeed, I might fill half a volume with the correspondence now before me concerning the gradual organization, and ultimately successful establishment of the Quarterly Review. But my only object is to illustrate the liberality and sagacity of Scott's views on such a subject, and the characteristic mixture of strong and playful language in which he developed them; and I conceive that this end will be sufficiently accomplished, by extracting two more letters of this bulky series. Already, as we have seen, before opening the matter even to Ellis, he had been requested to communicate his sentiments to the proposed editor of the work, and he had done so in these terms:—

“*To William Gifford, Esq., London.*

“Edinburgh, October 25, 1808.

“Sir,—By a letter from the Lord Advocate of Scotland, in consequence of a communication between his Lordship and Mr. Canning on the subject of a new Review to be attempted in London, I have the pleasure to understand that you have consented to become the editor, a point which, in my opinion, goes no small way to ensure success to the undertaking. In offering a few observations upon the details of such a plan, I only obey the commands of our distinguished friends, without having the vanity to hope that I can point out any thing which was not likely to have at once occurred to a person of Mr. Gifford's literary experience and eminence. I shall, however,

beg permission to offer you my sentiments, in the miscellaneous way in which they occur to me. The extensive reputation and circulation of the Edinburgh Review is chiefly owing to two circumstances: First, that it is entirely uninfluenced by the booksellers, who have contrived to make most of the other Reviews merely advertising sheets to puff off their own publications; and, secondly, the very handsome recompense which the editor not only holds forth to his regular assistants, but actually forces upon those whose circumstances and rank make it a matter of total indifference to them. The editor, to my knowledge, makes a point of every contributor receiving this *bonus*, saying that Czar Peter, when working in the trenches, received pay as a common soldier. This general rule removes all scruples of delicacy, and fixes in his service a number of persons who might otherwise have felt shy in taking the price of their labours, and even the more so because it was an object of convenience to them. There are many young men of talent and enterprise who are extremely glad of a handsome apology to work for fifteen or twenty guineas, although they would not willingly be considered as hired reviewers. From this I deduce two points of doctrine: first, that the work must be considered as independent of all bookselling influence; secondly, that the labours of the contributors must be regularly and handsomely recompensed, and that it must be a rule that each one shall accept of the price of his labour. John Murray of Fleet Street, a young bookseller of capital and enterprise, and with more good sense and propriety of sentiment than fall to the share of most of the trade, made me a visit at Ashestiel a few weeks ago, and as I found he had had some communication with you upon the subject, I did not hesitate to communicate my sentiments to him on these and some other points of the plan, and I thought his ideas were most liberal and satisfactory.

“The office of the editor is of such importance, that had you not been pleased to undertake it, I fear the plan would have fallen wholly to the ground. The full power of control must, of course, be vested in the editor for selecting, curtailing, and

correcting the contributions to the Review. But this is not all; for, as he is the person immediately responsible to the bookseller that the work (amounting to a certain number of pages, more or less) shall be before the public at a certain time, it will be the editor's duty to consider in due time the articles of which each number ought to consist, and to take measures for procuring them from the persons best qualified to write upon such and such subjects. But this is sometimes so troublesome, that I foresee with pleasure you will be soon obliged to abandon your resolution of writing nothing yourself. At the same time, if you will accept of my services as a sort of jackal or lion's provider, I will do all in my power to assist in this troublesome department of editorial duty. But there is still something behind, and that of the last consequence. One great resource to which the Edinburgh editor turns himself, and by which he gives popularity even to the duller articles of his Review, is accepting contributions from persons of inferior powers of writing, provided they understand the books to which the criticisms relate; and as such are often of stupifying mediocrity, he renders them palatable by throwing in a handful of spice — namely, any lively paragraph or entertaining illustration that occurs to him in reading them over. By this sort of veneering, he converts, without loss of time, or hindrance of business, articles which, in their original state, might hang in the market, into such goods as are not likely to disgrace those among which they are placed. This seems to be a point in which an editor's assistance is of the last consequence; for those who possess the knowledge necessary to review books of research or abstruse disquisition, are very often unable to put the criticism into a readable, much more a pleasant and captivating form; and as their science cannot be attained 'for the nonce,' the only remedy is to supply their deficiencies, and give their lucubrations a more popular turn.

“There is one opportunity possessed by you in a particular degree — that of access to the best sources of political information. It would not, certainly, be advisable that the work should assume, especially at the outset, a professed political

character. On the contrary, the articles on science and miscellaneous literature ought to be of such a quality as might fairly challenge competition with the best of our contemporaries. But as the real reason of instituting the publication is the disgusting and deleterious doctrine with which the most popular of our Reviews disgraces its pages, it is essential to consider how this warfare should be managed. On this ground, I hope it is not too much to expect from those who have the power of assisting us, that they should on topics of great national interest furnish the reviewers, through the medium of their editor, with accurate views of points of fact, so far as they are fit to be made public. This is the most delicate, and yet most essential part of our scheme. On the one hand, it is certainly not to be understood that we are to be held down to advocate upon all occasions the cause of administration. Such a dereliction of independence would render us entirely useless for the purpose we mean to serve. On the other hand, nothing will render the work more interesting than the public learning, not from any vaunt of ours, but from their own observation, that we have access to early and accurate information in point of fact. The Edinburgh Review has profited much by the pains which the Opposition party have taken to possess the writers of all the information they could give them on public matters. Let me repeat that you, my dear sir, from enjoying the confidence of Mr. Canning and other persons in power, may easily obtain the confidential information necessary to give credit to the work, and communicate it to such as you may think proper to employ in laying it before the public.

“ Concerning the mode and time of publication, I think you will be of opinion that monthly, in the present dearth of good subjects of Review, would be too often, and that a quarterly publication would both give you less trouble, and be amply sufficient for discussing all that is likely to be worth discussion. The name to be assumed is of some consequence, though any one of little pretension will do. We might, for example, revive the ‘English Review,’ which was the name of Gilbert

Stuart's.* Regular correspondents ought to be sought after; but I should be little afraid of finding such, were the reputation of the Review once decidedly established by three or four numbers of the very first order. As it would be essential to come on the public by surprise, that no unreasonable expectation or artificial misrepresentation might prejudice its success, the authors employed in the first number ought to be few and of the first rate. The choosing of subjects would also be a matter of anxious consideration: for example, a good and distinct essay on Spanish affairs would be sufficient to give a character to the work. The lucubrations of the Edinburgh Review, on that subject, have done the work great injury with the public; and I am convinced, that of the many thousands of copies now distributed of each Number, the quantity might be reduced one-half at least, by any work appearing, which, with the same literary talent and independent character, should speak a political language more familiar to the British ear than that of subjugation to France. At the same time, as I before hinted, it will be necessary to maintain the respect of the public by impartial disquisition; and I would not have it said, as may usually be predicated of other Reviews, that the sentiments of the critic were less determined by the value of the work than by the purpose it was written to serve. If a weak brother will unadvisedly put forth his hand to support even the ark of the constitution, I would expose his arguments, though I might approve of his intention and of his conclusions. I should think an open and express declaration of political tenets, or of opposition to works of a contrary tendency, ought for the same reason to be avoided. I think, from the little observation I have made, that the Whigs suffer most deeply from cool sarcastic reasoning and occasional ridicule. Having long had a sort of command of the press, from the neglect of all literary assistance on the part of those who

* "The English Review" was started in January 1783, under the auspices of the elder Mr. John Murray of Fleet Street. It had Dr. G. Stuart for Editor, and ranked among its contributors Whittaker the historian of Manchester, Dr. William Thomson, &c. &c.

thought their good cause should fight its own battle, they are apt to feel with great acuteness any assault in that quarter; and having been long accustomed to push, have in some degree lost the power to parry. It will not, therefore, be long before they make some violent retort, and I should not be surprised if it were to come through the Edinburgh Review. We might then come into close combat with a much better grace than if we had thrown down a formal defiance. I am, therefore, for going into a state of hostility without any formal declaration of war. Let our forces for a number or two consist of volunteers and amateurs, and when we have acquired some reputation, we shall soon levy and discipline forces of the line.

“After all, the matter is become very serious,—eight or nine thousand copies of the Edinburgh Review are regularly distributed, merely because there is no other respectable and independent publication of the kind. In this city, where there is not one Whig out of twenty men who read the work, many hundreds are sold; and how long the generality of readers will continue to dislike politics, so artfully mingled with information and amusement, is worthy of deep consideration. But it is not yet too late to stand in the breach; the first number ought, if possible, to be out in January, and if it can burst among them like a bomb, without previous notice, the effect will be more striking. Of those who might be intrusted in the first instance, you are a much better judge than I am. I think I can command the assistance of a friend or two here, particularly William Erskine, the Lord Advocate’s brother-in-law and my most intimate friend. In London you have Malthus, George Ellis, the Roses, *cum pluribus aliis*. Richard Heber was with me when Murray came to my farm, and knowing his zeal for the good cause, I let him into our counsels. In Mr. Frere we have the hopes of a potent ally. The Rev. Reginald Heber would be an excellent coadjutor, and when I come to town I will sound Matthias. As strict secrecy would of course be observed, the diffidence of many might be overcome;—for scholars you can be at no loss while Oxford stands where it

did, — and I think there will be no deficiency in the scientific articles.

“Once more I have to apologize for intruding on you this hasty, and therefore long, and probably confused letter; I trust your goodness will excuse my expressing any apology for submitting to your better judgment my sentiments on a plan of such consequence. I expect to be called to London early in the winter, perhaps next month. If you see Murray, as I suppose you will, I presume you will communicate to him such of my sentiments as have the good fortune to coincide with yours. Among the works in the first Number, Fox’s history, Grattan’s speeches, a notable subject for a quizzing article, and any tract or pamphlet that will give an opportunity to treat of the Spanish affairs, would be desirable subjects of criticism. I am, with great respect, Sir, your most obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT.”

On the 18th of November, Scott enclosed to Mr. Ellis “the rough scroll” (that now transcribed) of his letter to Mr. Gifford; — “this being,” he says, “one of the very few epistles of which I thought it will be as well to retain a copy.” He then proceeds as follows: —

“Supposing you to have read said scroll, you must know further, that it has been received in a most favourable manner by Mr. Gifford, who approves of its contents in all respects, and that Mr. Canning has looked it over, and promised such aid as is therein required. I therefore wish you to be apprised fully of what could hardly be made the subject of writing, unless in all the confidence of friendship. Let me touch a string of much delicacy — the political character of the Review. It appears to me that this should be of a liberal and enlarged nature, resting upon principles — indulgent and conciliatory as far as possible upon mere party questions — but stern in detecting and exposing all attempts to sap our constitutional fabric. Religion is another slippery station; here also I would endeavour to be as impartial as the subject will admit of. This

character of impartiality, as well as the maintenance of a high reputation in literature, is of great consequence to such of our friends as are in the Ministry, as our more direct efforts in their favour; for these will only be successful in proportion to the influence we shall acquire by an extensive circulation; to procure which, the former qualities will be essentially necessary. Now, *entre nous*, will not our editor be occasionally a little warm and pepperish? — essential qualities in themselves, but which should not quite constitute the leading character of such a publication. This is worthy of a *memento*.

“As our start is of such immense consequence, don't you think Mr. Canning, though unquestionably our Atlas, might for a day find a Hercules on whom to devolve the burthen of the globe, while he writes us a review? I know what an audacious request this is; but suppose he should, as great statesmen sometimes do, take a political fit of the gout, and absent himself from a large ministerial dinner, which might give it him in good earnest, — dine at three on a chicken and pint of wine, — and lay the foundation at least of one good article? Let us but once get afloat, and our labour is not worth talking of; but, till then, all hands must work hard.

“Is it necessary to say that I agree entirely with you in the mode of treating even delinquents? The truth is, there is policy, as well as morality, in keeping our swords clear as well as sharp, and not forgetting the gentlemen in the critics. The public appetite is soon gorged with any particular style. The common Reviews, before the appearance of the Edinburgh, had become extremely mawkish; and, unless when prompted by the malice of the bookseller or reviewer, gave a dawdling, maudlin sort of applause to everything that reached even mediocrity. The Edinburgh folks squeezed into their sauce plenty of acid, and were popular from novelty as well as from merit. The minor Reviews and other periodical publications, have *outrèd* the matter still farther, and given us all abuse, and no talent. But by the time the language of vituperative criticism becomes general — (which is now pretty nearly the case) — it affects the tympanum of the public ear no more than

rogue or *rascal* from the cage of a parrot, or *blood-and-wounds* from a horse-barrack. This, therefore, we have to trust to, that decent, lively, and reflecting criticism, teaching men not to abuse books only, but to read and to judge them, will have the effect of novelty upon a public wearied with universal efforts at blackguard and indiscriminating satire. I have a long and very sensible letter from John Murray the bookseller, in which he touches upon this point very neatly. By the by, little Weber may be very useful upon antiquarian subjects, in the way of collecting information and making remarks; only, you or I must re-write his lucubrations. I use him often as a pair of eyes in consulting books and collating, and as a pair of hands in making extracts. Constable, the great Edinburgh editor, has offended me excessively by tyrannizing over this poor Teutcher, and being rather rude when I interfered. It is a chance but I may teach him that he should not kick down the scaffolding before his house is quite built. Another bomb is about to break on him besides the Review. This is an Edinburgh Annual Register, to be conducted under the auspices of James Ballantyne, who is himself no despicable composer, and has secured excellent assistance. I cannot help him, of course, very far, but I will certainly lend him a lift as an adviser. I want all my friends to befriend this work, and will send you a *prospectus* when it is published. It will be *valde* anti-Foxite. This is a secret for the present.

“For heaven’s sake do not fail to hold a meeting as soon as you can. Gifford will be admirable at service, but will require, or I mistake him much, both a spur and a bridle,—a spur on account of habits of literary indolence induced by weak health,—and a bridle, because, having renounced in some degree general society, he cannot be supposed to have the habitual and instinctive feeling enabling him to judge at once and decidedly on the mode of letting his shafts fly down the breeze of popular opinion. But he has worth, wit, learning, and extensive information; is the friend of our friends in power, and can easily correspond with them; is in no danger of having private quarrels fixed on him for public criticism;

nor very likely to be embarrassed by being thrown into action in public life alongside of the very people he has reviewed, and probably offended. All this is of the last importance to the discharge of his arduous duty. It would be cruel to add a word to this merciless epistle, excepting love to Mrs. Ellis and all friends. Leyden, by the by, is triumphant at Calcutta—a *Judge*, of all things!—and making money! He has flourished like a green bay tree under the auspices of Lord Minto, his countryman. Ever yours,
WALTER SCOTT.”

Among others whom Scott endeavoured to enlist in the service of the new Review was his brother Thomas, who on the breaking up of his affairs in Edinburgh, had retired to the Isle of Man, and who shortly afterwards obtained the office in which he died, that of paymaster to the 70th regiment. The poet had a high opinion of his brother's literary talents, and thought that his knowledge of our ancient dramatists, and his vein of comic narration, might render him a very useful recruit. He thus communicates his views to Thomas Scott, on the 19th November, and, as might be expected, the communication is fuller and franker than any other on the subject:—

“*To Thomas Scott, Esq., Douglas, Isle of Man.*

“Dear Tom,—Owing to certain pressing business, I have not yet had time to complete my collection of Shadwell* for you, though it is now nearly ready. I wish you to have all the originals to collate with the edition in 8vo. But I have a more pressing employment for your pen, and to which I think it particularly suited. You are to be informed, but under the

* Mr. T. Scott had meditated an edition of Shadwell's plays,—which, by the way, his brother considered as by no means meriting the utter neglect into which they have fallen, chiefly in consequence of Dryden's satire.

seal of the strictest secrecy, that a plot has been long hatching by the gentlemen who were active in the Anti-jacobin paper, to countermine the Edinburgh Review, by establishing one which should display similar talent and independence, with a better strain of politics. The management of this work was much pressed upon me; * but though great prospects of emolument were held out, I declined so arduous a task, and it has devolved upon Mr. Gifford, author of the *Baviad*, with whose wit and learning you are well acquainted. He made it a stipulation, however, that I should give all the assistance in my power, especially at the commencement; to which I am, for many reasons, nothing loth. Now, as I know no one who possesses more power of humour or perception of the ridiculous than yourself, I think your leisure hours might be most pleasantly passed in this way. Novels, light poetry, and quizzical books of all kinds, might be sent you by the packet; you glide back your reviews in the same way, and touch, upon the publication of the number (quarterly), ten guineas per printed sheet of sixteen pages. If you are shy of communicating directly with Gifford, you may, for some time at least, send your communications through me, and I will revise them. We want the matter to be a *profound secret* till the first number is out. If you agree to try your skill I will send you a novel or two. You must understand, as Gadshill tells the Chamberlain, that you are to be leagued with ‘Trojans that thou drest not of, the which for sport sake are content to do the profession some grace;’ † and thus far I assure you, that if by paying attention to your style and subject you can distinguish yourself creditably, it may prove a means of finding you powerful friends were anything opening in your island. Constable, or rather that Bear his partner, has behaved to me of late not very civilly, and I owe Jeffrey a flap with a fox-tail on account of his review of *Marmion*, and thus doth ‘the whirligig of time

* This circumstance was not revealed to Mr. Murray. I presume, therefore, the invitation to Scott must have proceeded from Mr. Canning.

† 1st K. *Henry IV.* Act I. Scene 1.

bring about my revenges.'* The late articles on Spain have given general disgust, and many have given up the Edinburgh Review on account of them.

“My mother holds out very well, and talks of writing by this packet. Her cask of herrings, as well as ours, red and white, have arrived safe, and prove most excellent. We have been both dining and supping upon them with great gusto, and are much obliged by your kindness in remembering us. Yours affectionately,
W. S.”

I suspect, notwithstanding the opinion to the contrary expressed in the following extract, that the preparations for the new journal did not long escape the notice of either the editor or the publishers of the Edinburgh Review. On receiving the celebrated *Declaration of Westminster* on the subject of the Spanish war, which bears date the 15th December 1808, Scott says to Ellis —

“I cannot help writing a few lines to congratulate you on the royal declaration. I suspect by this time the author is at Claremont,† for, if I mistake not egregiously, this spirited composition, as we say in Scotland, fathers itself in the manliness of its style. It has appeared, too, at a most fortunate time, when neither friend nor foe can impute it to temporary motives. Tell Mr. Canning that the old women of Scotland will defend the country with their distaffs, rather than that troops enough be not sent to make good so noble a pledge. Were the thousands that have mouldered away in petty conquests or Liliputian expeditions united to those we now have in that country, what a band would Moore have under him!
. Jeffrey has offered terms of pacification, engaging

* *Twelfth Night*, Act V. Scene 1.

† Scott's friend had mentioned that his cousin (now Lord Seaford) expected a visit from Mr. Canning, at Claremont, in Surrey; which beautiful seat continued in the possession of the Ellis family, until it was purchased by the crown, on the marriage of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, in 1816.

that no party politics should again appear in his Review. I told him I thought it was now too late, and reminded him that I had often pointed out to him the consequences of letting his work become a party tool. He said 'he did not care for the consequences — there were but four men he feared as opponents.' — 'Who were these?' — 'Yourself for one.' — 'Certainly you pay me a great compliment; depend upon it I will endeavour to deserve it.' — 'Why, you would not join against me?' — 'Yes I would, if I saw a proper opportunity: not against you personally, but against your politics.' — 'You are privileged to be violent.' — 'I don't ask any privilege for undue violence. But who are your other foemen?' — 'George Ellis and Southey.' The fourth he did not name. All this was in great good-humour; and next day I had a very affecting note from him, in answer to an invitation to dinner. He has no suspicion of the Review whatever; but I thought I could not handsomely suffer him to infer that I would be influenced by those private feelings respecting *him*, which, on more than one occasion, he has laid aside when I was personally concerned."

As to Messrs. Constable and Co., it is not to be supposed that the rumours of the rival journal would tend to soothe those disagreeable feelings between them and Scott, of which I can trace the existence several months beyond the date of Mr. Murray's arrival at Ashestiel. Something seems to have occurred before the end of 1808 which induced Scott to suspect, that among other sources of uneasiness had been a repentant grudge in the minds of those booksellers as to their bargain about the new edition of Swift; and on the 2d of January 1809, I find him requesting, that if, on reflection, they thought they had hastily committed themselves, the deed might be forthwith cancelled. On the 11th of the same month, Messrs. Constable reply as follows:—

“ To Walter Scott, Esq.

“ Sir, — We are anxious to assure you that we feel no dissatisfaction at any part of our bargain about Swift. Viewing it as a safe and respectable speculation, we should be very sorry to agree to your relinquishing the undertaking, and indeed rely with confidence on its proceeding as originally arranged. We regret that you have not been more willing to overlook the unguarded expression of our Mr. Hunter about which you complain. We are very much concerned that any circumstance should have occurred that should thus interrupt our friendly intercourse ; but as we are not willing to believe that we have done anything which should prevent our being again friends, we may at least be permitted to express a hope that matters may hereafter be restored to their old footing between us, when the misrepresentations of interested persons may cease to be remembered. At any rate, you will always find us, what we trust we have ever been, Sir, your faithful servants,

A. CONSTABLE & Co.”

Scott answers :

“ To Messrs. Constable & Co.

“ Edinburgh, 12th January 1809.

“ Gentlemen, — To resume, for the last time, the disagreeable subject of our difference, I must remind you of what I told Mr. Constable personally, that no *single unguarded expression*, much less the misrepresentation of any person whatever, would have influenced me to quarrel with any of my friends. But if Mr. Hunter will take the trouble to recollect the general opinion he has expressed of my undertakings, and of my ability to execute them, upon many occasions during the last five months, and his whole conduct in the bargain about Swift, I think he ought to be the last to wish his interest compromised on my account. I am only happy the breach has taken place before there was any real loss to complain of, for although I have had my share of popularity, I cannot expect it to be more lasting

than that of those who have lost it after deserving it much better.

“In the present circumstances, I have only a parting favour to request of your house, which is, that the portrait for which I sat to Raeburn shall be considered as done at my debit, and for myself. It shall be of course forthcoming for the fulfilment of any engagement you may have made about engraving, if such exists. Sadler will now be soon out, when we will have a settlement of our accounts. I am, Gentlemen, your obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT.”

Mr. Constable declined, in very handsome terms, to give up the picture. But for the present the breach was complete. Among other negotiations which Scott had patronised twelve months before, was one concerning the publication of Miss Seward's Poems. On the 19th of March 1809, he writes as follows to that lady:—

“Constable, like many other folks who learn to undervalue the means by which they have risen, has behaved, or rather suffered his partner to behave, very uncivilly towards me. But they may both live to know that they should not have kicked down the ladder till they were sure of their footing. The very last time I spoke to him on business was about your poems, which he promised faithfully to write about. I understood him to decline your terms, in which he acted wrong; but I had neither influence to change his opinion, nor inclination to interfere with his resolution. He is a very enterprising, and, I believe, a thoroughly honest man, but his vanity in some cases overpowers his discretion.”

One word as to the harsh language in which Constable's then partner is mentioned in several of the preceding letters. This Mr. Hunter was, I am told by friends of mine who knew him well, a man of considerable intelligence and accomplishments, to whose personal

connexions and weight in society the house of Constable and Co. owed a great accession of business and influence. He was, however, a very keen politician; regarded Scott's Toryism with a fixed bitterness; and, moreover, could never conceal his impression that Scott ought to have embarked in no other literary undertakings whatever, until he had completed his edition of Swift. It is not wonderful that, not having been bred regularly to the bookselling business, he should have somewhat misapprehended the obligation which Scott had incurred when the bargain for that work was made; and his feeling of his own station and consequence was no doubt such as to give his style of conversation, on doubtful questions of business, a tone for which Scott had not been prepared by his previous intercourse with Mr. Constable. The defection of the poet was, however, at once regretted and resented by both these partners; and Constable, I am told, often vented his wrath in figures as lofty as Scott's own. "Ay," he would say, stamping on the ground with a savage smile, "Ay, there is such a thing as rearing the oak until it can support itself."

All this leads us to the second stage, one still more unwise and unfortunate than the first, in the history of Scott's commercial connexion with the Ballantynes. The scheme of starting a new bookselling house in Edinburgh, begun in the shortsighted heat of pique, had now been matured;—I cannot add, either with composed observation or rational forecast— for it was ultimately settled that the ostensible and chief managing partner should be a person without capital, and neither by training nor by temper in the smallest degree qualified for such a situation; more especially where the field was to be taken against long experience, consummate skill, and resources

which, if not so large as all the world supposed them, were still in comparison vast, and admirably organized. The rash resolution was, however, carried into effect, and a deed, deposited, for secrecy's sake, in the hands of Scott, laid the foundation of the firm of "John Ballantyne and Co., booksellers, Edinburgh." Scott appears to have supplied all the capital, at any rate his own *one-half* share, and *one-fourth*, the portion of James, who, not having any funds to spare, must have become indebted to some one for it. It does not appear from what source John acquired his, the remaining *fourth*; but *Rigdum-funnidos* was thus installed in Hanover Street as the avowed rival of "The Crafty."

The existing bond of copartnership is dated in July 1809; but I suspect this had been a revised edition. It is certain that the new house were openly mustering their forces some weeks before Scott desired to withdraw his Swift from the hands of the old one in January. This appears from several of the letters that passed between him and Ellis while Gifford was arranging the materials for the first number of the Quarterly Review, and also between him and his friend Southey, to whom, perhaps, more than any other single writer, that journal owed its ultimate success.

To Ellis, for example, he says, on the 13th of December 1808: —

"Now let me call your earnest attention to another literary undertaking, which is, in fact, a subsidiary branch of the same grand plan. I transmit the *prospectus* of an Edinburgh Annual Register. I have many reasons for favouring this work as much as I possibly can. In the first place, there is nothing even barely tolerable of this nature, though so obviously necessary to future history. Secondly, Constable was on the point

of arranging one on the footing of the Edinburgh Review, and subsidiary thereunto, — a plan which has been totally disconcerted by our occupying the vantage-ground. Thirdly, this work will be very well managed. The two Mackenzies,* William Erskine *cum plurimis aliis*, are engaged in the literary department, and that of science is conducted by Professor Leslie, a great philosopher, and as abominable an animal as I ever saw. He writes, however, with great eloquence, and is an enthusiast in mathematical, chemical, and mineralogical pursuits. I hope to draw upon you in this matter, particularly in the historical department, to which your critical labours will naturally turn your attention. You will ask what I propose to do myself. In fact, though something will be expected, I cannot propose to be very active unless the Swift is abandoned, of which I think there is some prospect, as I have reason to complain of very indifferent usage, — not indeed from Constable, who is reduced to utter despair by the circumstance, but from the stupid impertinence of his partner, a sort of Whig run mad. I have some reason to believe that Ballantyne, whose stock is now immensely increased, and who is likely to enlarge it by marriage, will commence publisher. Constable threatened him with withdrawing his business from him as a printer on account of his being a Constitutionalist. He will probably by this false step establish a formidable rival in his own line of publishing, which will be most just retribution. I intend to fortify Ballantyne by promising him my continued friendship, which I hope may be of material service to him. He is much liked by the literary people here; has a liberal spirit, and understanding business very completely, with a good general idea of literature, I think he stands fair for success.

“But, Oh! Ellis, these cursed, double cursed news, have sunk my spirits so much, that I am almost at disbelieving a Providence. God forgive me! But I think some evil demon has been permitted, in the shape of this tyrannical monster whom God has sent on the nations visited in his anger. I am

* The Man of Feeling, and Colin Mackenzie of Portmore.

confident he is proof against lead and steel, and have only hopes that he may be shot with a silver bullet,* or drowned in the torrents of blood which he delights to shed. Oh for True Thomas and Lord Soulis's cauldron! † Adieu, my dear Ellis. God bless you! — I have been these three days writing this by snatches.”

The “cursed news” here alluded to were those of Napoleon's advance by Somosierra, after the dispersion of the armies of Blake and Castaños. On the 23d of the same month, when the Treason of Morla and the fall of Madrid were known in Edinburgh, he thus resumes: — (Probably while he wrote, some cause with which he was not concerned was occupying the Court of Session): —

“Dear Ellis, — I have nothing better to do but to vent my groans. I cannot but feel exceedingly low. I distrust what we call thoroughbred soldiers terribly, when anything like the formation of extensive plans, of the daring and critical nature which seems necessary for the emancipation of Spain, is required from them. Our army is a poor school for genius — for the qualities which naturally and deservedly attract the applause of our generals, are necessarily exercised upon a small scale. I would to God Wellesley were now at the head of the English in Spain. His late examination shows his acute

* See note, “Proof against shot given by Satan.” — *Old Mortality*, chap. xvi.

† “On a circle of stones they placed the pot,
 On a circle of stones but barely nine;
 They heated it red and fiery hot,
 Till the burnish'd brass did glimmer and shine.
 They roll'd him up in a sheet of lead,
 A sheet of lead for a funeral pall;
 They plunged him in the cauldron red,
 And melted him, lead, and bones and all.”

See the Ballad of *Lord Soulis*, and notes, *Border Minstrelsy*.

and decisive talents for command ;* and although I believe in my conscience, that when he found himself superseded, he suffered the pigs to run through the business, when he might in some measure have prevented them —

‘ Yet give the haughty devil his due,
Though bold his quarterings, they are true.’

Such a man, with an army of 40,000 or 50,000 British, with the remains of the Gallician army, and the additional forces which every village would furnish in case of success, might possess himself of Burgos, open a communication with Arragon, and even Navarre, and place Buonaparte in the precarious situation of a general with 100,000 enemies between him and his supplies ;— for I presume neither Castaños nor Palafox are so broken as to be altogether disembodied. But a general who is always looking over his shoulder, and more intent on saving his own army than on doing the service on which he is sent, will hardly, I fear, be found capable of forming or executing a plan which its very daring character might render successful. What would we think of an admiral who should bring back his fleet and tell us old Keppel’s story of a lee-shore, and the risk of his Majesty’s vessels ? Our sailors have learned that his Majesty’s ships were built to be stranded, or burnt, or sunk, or at least to encounter the risk of these contingencies, when his service requires it ; and I heartily wish our generals would learn to play for the gammon, and not to sit down contented with a mere saving game. What, however, can we say of Moore, or how judge of his actions, since the Supreme Junta have shown themselves so miserably incapable of the arduous exertions expected from them ? Yet, like Pistol, they spoke

* This refers to Sir Arthur Wellesley’s evidence before the Court of Inquiry into the circumstances which led to the Convention (miscalled) of Cintra. For the best answer to the then popular suspicion, which Scott seems to have partaken, as to the conduct of Sir Arthur when superseded in the moment of victory at Vimiero, I refer to the contemporary despatches lately published in Colonel Gurwood’s invaluable compilation.

bold words at the bridge too,* and I admired their firmness in declaring O'Farrel, and the rest of the Frenchified Spaniards, traitors. But they may have Roman pride, and want Roman talent to support it; and in short, unless God Almighty should raise among them one of those extraordinary geniuses who seem to be created for the emergencies of an oppressed people, I confess I still incline to despondence. If Canning could send a portion of his own spirit with the generals he sends forth, my hope would be high indeed. The proclamation was truly gallant.

“As to the Annual Register, I do agree that the Prospectus is in too stately a tone — yet I question if a purer piece of composition would have attracted the necessary attention. We must sound a trumpet before we open a show. You will say we have added a tambourin; but the mob will the more readily stop and gaze; nor would their ears be so much struck by a sonata from Viotti. Do you know the Review begins to get wind here? An Edinburgh bookseller asked me to recommend him for the sale here, and said he heard it confidentially from London. — Ever yours,
W. S.”

I may also introduce here a letter of about the same date, and referring chiefly to the same subjects, addressed by Scott to his friend, Mr. Charles Sharpe,† then at Oxford. The allusion at the beginning is to a drawing of Queen Elizabeth, as seen “dancing high and disposedly,” in her private chamber, by the Scotch ambassador, Sir James Melville, whose description of the exhibition is one of the most amusing things in his Memoirs. This production of Mr. Sharpe's pencil, and the delight with which Scott used to expatiate on its merits, must be well remembered by every one that ever visited the poet at

* *K. Henry V.* Act IV. Scene 4.

† Scott's acquaintance with Mr. Sharpe began when the latter was very young. He supplied Scott, when compiling the *Minstrelsy*, with the ballad of the “Tower of Repentance,” &c.

Abbotsford. — Some of the names mentioned in this letter as counted on by the projectors of the Quarterly Review will, no doubt, amuse the reader.

“ *To Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq., Christ Church, Oxford.*

“ Edinburgh, 30th December 1808.

“ My Dear Sharpe, — The inimitable virago came safe, and was welcomed by the inextinguishable laughter of all who looked upon her caprioles. I was unfortunately out of town for a few days, which prevented me from acknowledging instantly what gave me so much pleasure, both on account of its intrinsic value, and as a mark of your kind remembrance. You have, I assure you, been upmost in my thoughts for some time past, as I have a serious design on your literary talents, which I am very anxious to engage in one or both of the two following schemes. *Imprimis*, it has been long the decided resolution of Mr. Canning and some of his literary friends, particularly Geo. Ellis, Malthus, Frere, W. Rose, &c., that something of an independent Review ought to be started in London. This plan is now on the point of being executed, after much consultation. I have strongly advised that politics be avoided, unless in cases of great national import, and that their tone be then moderate and manly; but the general tone of the publication is to be literary. William Gifford is editor, and I have promised to endeavour to recruit for him a few spirited young men able and willing to assist in such an undertaking. I confess you were chiefly in my thoughts when I made this promise; but it is a subject which for a thousand reasons I would rather have talked over than written about — among others more prominent I may reckon my great abhorrence of pen and ink, for writing has been so long a matter of duty with me, that it is become as utterly abominable to me as matters of duty usually are. Let me entreat you, therefore, to lay hold of Macneill,* or any other new book you like, and

* “ *The Pastoral, or Lyric Muse of Scotland; in three Cantos,*” 4to, by Hector Macneill, appeared in Dec. 1808.

give us a good hacking review of it. I retain so much the old habit of a barrister, that I cannot help adding, the fee is ten guineas a-sheet, which may serve to buy an odd book now and then — as good play for nothing, you know, as work for nothing; but besides this, your exertions in this cause, if you shall choose to make any, will make you more intimately acquainted with a very pleasant literary coterie than introductions of a more formal kind; and if you happen to know George Ellis already, you must, I am sure, be pleased to take any trouble likely to produce an intimacy between you. The Hebers are also engaged, *item* Rogers, Southey, Moore (Anacreon), and others whose reputations Jeffrey has murdered, and who are rising to cry wo upon him, like the ghosts in King Richard; for your acute and perspicacious judgment must ere this have led you to suspect that this same new Review, which by the way is to be called ‘the Quarterly,’ is intended as a rival to the Edinburgh; and if it contains criticism not very inferior in point of talent, with the same independence on booksellers’ influence (which has ruined all the English Reviews), I do not see why it should not divide with it the public favour. Observe carefully, this plan is altogether distinct from one which has been proposed by the veteran Cumberland, to which is annexed the extraordinary proposal that each contributor shall place his name before his article, a stipulation which must prove fatal to the undertaking. If I did not think this likely to be a very well managed business, I would not recommend it to your consideration; but you see I am engaged with no ‘foot land-rakers, no long-staff sixpenny strikers, but with nobility and tranquillity, burgomasters, and great oneyers,’ and so forth.*

“The other plan refers to the enclosed prospectus, and has long been a favourite scheme of mine, of William Erskine’s, and some of my other cronies here. Mr. Ballantyne, the editor, only undertakes for the inferior departments of the work, and for keeping the whole matter in train. We are

* Gadshill — 1st K. Henry IV. Act II. Scene 1.

most anxious to have respectable contributors, and the smallest donation in any department, poetry, antiquities, &c. &c., will be most thankfully accepted and registered. But the historical department is that in which I would chiefly wish to see you engaged. A lively luminous picture of the events of the last momentous year, is a task for the pen of a man of genius; as for materials, I could procure you access to many of a valuable kind. The appointments of our historian are £300 a-year — no deaf nuts. Another person* has been proposed, and written to, but I cannot any longer delay submitting the thing to your consideration. Of course, you are to rely on every assistance that can be afforded by your humble comdumble, as Swift says. I hope the great man will give us his answer shortly — and if his be negative, pray let yours be positive. Our politics we would wish to be constitutional, but not party. You see, my good friend, what it is to show your good parts before unquestionable judges.

“I am forced to conclude abruptly. Thine entirely,
“ W. SCOTT.”

Mr. Morrith was by this time beginning to correspond with the poet pretty frequently. The first of their letters, however, that serves to throw light on Scott's personal proceedings, is the following:—

“ *To J. B. S. Morrith, Esq., Rokeby Park, Yorkshire.*

“Edinburgh, 14th January 1809.

“My Dear Sir,— For a long while I thought my summons to London would have been immediate, and that I should have had the pleasure to wait upon you at Rokeby Park in my way to town. But, after due consideration, the commissioners on our Scottish reform of judicial proceedings resolved to begin their sittings at Edinburgh, and have been in full activity ever since last St. Andrew's day. You are not ignorant that in business of this nature, very much of the detail, and of prepar-

* Mr. Southey — who finally undertook the task proposed to him.

ing the materials for the various meetings, necessarily devolves upon the clerk, and I cannot say but that my time has been fully occupied.

“Meanwhile, however, I have been concocting, at the instigation of various loyal and well-disposed persons, a grand scheme of opposition to the proud critics of Edinburgh. It is now matured in all its branches, and consists of the following divisions. A new review in London, to be called the Quarterly, William Gifford to be the editor; George Ellis, Rose, Mr. Canning if possible, Frere, and all the ancient Anti-Jacobins, to be concerned. The first number is now in hand, and the allies, I hope and trust, securely united to each other. I have promised to get them such assistance as I can, and most happy should I be to prevail upon you to put your hand to the ark. You can so easily run off an article either of learning or of fun, that it would be inexcusable not to afford us your assistance. Then, sir, to turn the flank of Messrs. Constable and Co., and to avenge myself of certain impertinences which, in the vehemence of their Whiggery, they have dared to indulge in towards me, I have prepared to start against them at Whitsunday first the celebrated printer, Ballantyne (who had the honour of meeting you at Ashestiel), in the shape of an Edinburgh publisher, with a long purse* and a sound political creed, not to mention an alliance offensive and defensive with young John Murray of Fleet Street, the most enlightened and active of the London trade. By this means I hope to counterbalance the predominating influence of Constable and Co., who at present have it in their power and inclination to forward or suppress any book as they approve or dislike its political tendency. Lastly, I have caused the said Ballantyne to venture upon an Edinburgh Annual Register, of which I send you a prospectus. I intend to help him myself as far as time will admit, and hope to procure him many respectable coadjutors.

* The purse was, alas! Scott's own. Between May 1805 and the end of 1810, he invested cash to the extent of *at least* £9000 in the Ballantyne companies!

“My own motions southwards remain undetermined, but I conceive I may get to town about the beginning of March, when I expect to find you *en famille* in Portland Place. Our Heber will then most likely be in town, and altogether I am much better pleased that the journey is put off till the lively season of gaiety.

“I am busy with my edition of Swift, and treasure your kind hints for my direction as I advance. In summer I think of going to Ireland to pick up anything that may be yet recoverable of the Dean of St. Patrick’s. Mrs. Scott joins me in kindest and best respects to Mrs. Morritt. I am, with great regard, Dear Sir, your faithful humble servant,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

The two following letters seem to have been written at the *clerk’s table*, the first shortly before, and the second very soon after, the news of the battle of Corunna reached Scotland:—

“*To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

“Edinburgh, 14th January 1809.

“Dear Southey, — I have been some time from home in the course of the holidays, but immediately on my return set about procuring the books you wished to see. There are only three of them in our library, namely —

Dobrizzhoffer de Abiponibus, 3 vols.

A French translation of Gomella’s *History of Oronoquo*.

Ramuzio Navigazioni, &c. &c.

Of these I can only lay my hands immediately on Dobrizzhoffer, which I have sent off by the Carlisle coach, addressed to the care of Jollie the bookseller for you. I do this at my own risk, because we never grant license to send the books out of Scotland, and should I be found to have done so I may be censured, and perhaps my use of the library suspended. At the same time, I think it hard you should take a journey in

this deadly cold weather, and trust you will make early inquiry after the book. Keep it out of sight while you use it, and return it as soon as you have finished. I suppose these same Abipones were a nation to my own heart's content, being, as the title-page informs me, *bellicosi et equestres*, like our old Border lads. Should you think of coming hither, which perhaps might be the means of procuring you more information than I can make you aware of, I bespeak you for my guest. I can give you a little chamber in the wall, and you shall go out and in as quietly and freely as your heart can desire, without a human creature saying 'why doest thou so?' Thalaba is in parturition too, and you should in decent curiosity give an eye after him. Yet I will endeavour to recover the other books (now lent out), and send them to you in the same way as Dob. travels, unless you recommend another conveyance. But I expect this generosity on my part will rather stir your gallantry to make us a visit when this abominable storm has passed away. My present occupation is highly unpoetical — clouting, in short, and cobbling our old Scottish system of jurisprudence, with a view to reform. I am clerk to a commission under the authority of Parliament for this purpose, which keeps me more than busy enough.

"I have had a high quarrel with Constable and Co. The Edinburgh Review has driven them quite crazy, and its success led them to undervalue those who have been of most use to them — but they shall dearly abye it. The worst is, that being out of a publishing house, I have not interest to be of any service to Coleridge's intended paper.* Ballantyne, the printer, intends to open shop here on the part of his brother, and I am sure will do all he can to favour the work. Does it positively go on ?

"I have read Wordsworth's lucubrations in the Courier † and much agree with him. Alas! we want everything but

* Mr. Coleridge's "Friend" was originally published in weekly papers.

† Mr. Wordsworth's Remarks on the Convention of Cintra were afterwards collected in a pamphlet.

courage and virtue in this desperate contest. Skill, knowledge of mankind, ineffable unhesitating villany, combination of movement and combination of means, are with our adversary. We can only fight like mastiffs, boldly, blindly, and faithfully. I am almost driven to the pass of the Covenanters, when they told the Almighty in their prayers, he should no longer be their God; and I really believe, a few Gazettes more will make me turn Turk or Infidel. Believe me, in great grief of spirit, Dear Southey, ever yours,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

“Mrs. Scott begs kind remembrance to Mrs. Southey. The bed in the said chamber in the wall is a double one.”

“*To the Same.*”

“Edinburgh, 31st January 1809.

“My Dear Southey, — Yesterday I received your letter, and to-day I despatched Gomella and the third volume of Ramuzio. The other two volumes can also be sent, if you should find it necessary to consult them. The parcel is addressed to the paternal charge of your Keswick carrier. There is no hurry in returning these volumes, so don't derange your operations by hurrying your extracts, only keep them from any profane eye. I dipped into Gomella while I was waiting for intelligence from you, and was much edified by the *bonhomme* with which the miracles of the Jesuits are introduced.

“The news from Spain gave me such a mingled feeling, that I never suffered so much in my whole life from the disorder of spirits occasioned by affecting intelligence. My mind has naturally a strong military bent, though my path in life has been so very different. I love a drum and a soldier as heartily as ever Uncle Toby did, and between the pride arising from our gallant bearing, and the deep regret that so much bravery should run to waste, I spent a most disordered and agitated night, never closing my eyes but what I was harassed with visions of broken ranks, bleeding soldiers, dying horses — ‘and

all the currents of a heady fight.* I agree with you that we want energy in our cabinet — or rather their opinions are so different, that they come to wretched compositions between them, which are worse than the worst course decidedly followed out. Canning is most anxious to support the Spaniards, and would have had a second army at Corunna, but for the positive demand of poor General Moore that empty transports should be sent thither. So the reinforcements were disembarked. I fear it will be found that Moore was rather an excellent officer, than a general of those comprehensive and daring views necessary in his dangerous situation. Had Wellesley been there, the battle of Corunna would have been fought and won at Somosierra, and the ranks of the victors would have been reinforced by the population of Madrid. Would to God we had yet 100,000 men in Spain. I fear not Buonaparte's tactics. The art of fence may do a great deal, but '*a la stoccata*,' as Mercutio says, cannot carry it away from national valour and personal strength. The Opposition have sold or bartered every feeling of patriotism for the most greedy and selfish *egoisme*.

“Ballantyne's brother is setting up here as a bookseller, chiefly for publishing. I will recommend Coleridge's paper to him as strongly as I can. I hope by the time it is commenced he will be enabled to send him a handsome order. From my great regard for his brother, I shall give this young publisher what assistance I can. He is understood to start against Constable and the Reviewers, and publishes the Quarterly. Indeed he is in strict alliance, offensive and defensive, with John Murray of Fleet Street. I have also been labouring a little for the said Quarterly, which I believe you will detect. I hear very high things from Gifford of your article. About your visit to Edinburgh, I hope it will be a month later than you now propose, because my present prospects lead me to think I must be in London the whole month of April. Early in May I must return, and will willingly take the lakes in my way in

* 1st *K. Henry IV.* Act II. Scene 2.

hopes you will accompany me to Edinburgh, which you positively must not think of visiting in my absence.

“Lord Advocate, who is sitting behind me, says the Ministers have resolved not to abandon the Spaniards *coute qui coute*. It is a spirited determination—but they must find a general who has, as the Turks say, *le Diable au corps*, and who, instead of standing staring to see what they mean to do, will teach them to dread those surprises and desperate enterprises by which they have been so often successful. Believe me, Dear Southey, yours affectionately,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

“Mrs. Scott joins me in best compliments to Mrs. Southey. I hope she will have a happy hour. Pray, write me word when the books come safe. What is Wordsworth doing, and where the devil is his Doe? * I am not sure if he will thank me for proving that all the Nortons escaped to Flanders, one excepted. I never knew a popular tradition so totally groundless as that respecting their execution at York.”

* “The White Doe of Rylestone”, was published by Longman and Co. in 1819.

CHAPTER XIX.

*Case of a Poetical Tailor condemned to Death at Edinburgh—
His Letters to Scott—Death of Camp—Scott in London—
Mr. Morrilt's Description of him as "a Lion" in Town—
Dinner at Mr. Sotheby's—Coleridge's Fire, Famine, and
Slaughter—The Quarterly Review started—First Visit to
Rokeby—The Lady of the Lake begun—Excursion to the
Trossachs and Loch Lomond—Letter on Byron's English
Bards and Scotch Reviewers—Death of Daniel Scott—
Correspondence about Mr. Canning's Duel with Lord Castle-
reagh—Miss Baillie's Family Legend acted at Edinburgh—
Theatrical Anecdotes—Kemble—Siddons—Terry—Let-
ter on the Death of Miss Seward.*

1809–1810.

IN the end of 1808, a young man, by name Andrew Stewart, who had figured for some years before as a poetical contributor to the Scots Magazine, and inserted there, among other things, a set of stanzas in honour of The Last Minstrel,* was tried, and capitally convicted, on a charge of burglary. He addressed, some weeks

* One verse of this production will suffice:—

“Sweetest Minstrel that e'er sung
Of valorous deeds by Scotia done,
Whose wild notes warbled in the win',
Delightful strain!
O'er hills and dales, and vales amang,
We've heard again,” &c.

after his sentence had been pronounced, the following letters :—

“ *To Walter Scott, Esq., Castle Street.* ”

“ Edinburgh Tolbooth, 20th January 1809.

“ Sir,— Although I am a stranger to you, yet I am not to your works, which I have read and admired, and which will continue to be read and admired as long as there remains a taste for true excellence. Previous to committing the crime for which I am now convicted, I composed several poems in the Scottish dialect, which I herewith send for your perusal, and humbly hope you will listen to my tale of misery. I have been a truly unfortunate follower of the Muses. I was born in Edinburgh, of poor, but honest parents. My father is by trade a bookbinder, and my mother dying in 1798, he was left a widower, with five small children, who have all been brought up by his own industry. As soon as I was fit for a trade, he bound me apprentice to a tailor in Edinburgh, but owing to his using me badly, I went to law. The consequence was, I got up my indentures after being only two years in his service. To my father’s trade I have to ascribe my first attachment to the Muses. I perused with delight the books that came in the way; and the effusions of the poets of my country I read with rapture. I now formed the resolution of not binding myself to a trade again, as by that means I might get my propensity for reading followed. I acted as clerk to different people, and my character was irreproachable. I determined to settle in life, and for that purpose I married a young woman I formed a strong attachment to. Being out of employment these last nine months, I suffered all the hardships of want, and saw

‘ Poverty, with empty hand
And eager look, half-naked stand.’ — *Ferguson.*

Reduced to this miserable situation, with my wife almost starving, and having no friends to render me the smallest assistance, I resided in a furnished room till I was unable to pay the rent, and then I was literally turned out of doors, like poor

Dermody, in poverty and rags. Having no kind hand stretched out to help me, I associated with company of very loose manners, till then strangers to me, and by them I was led to commit the crime I am condemned to suffer for. But my mind is so agitated, I can scarce narrate my tale of misery. My age is only twenty-three, and to all appearance will be cut off in the prime. I was tried along with my brother, Robert Stewart, and John M'Intyre, for breaking into the workshop of Peter More, calico-glazer, Edinburgh, and received the dreadful sentence to be executed on the 22d of February next. We have no friends to apply to for Royal Mercy. If I had any kind friend to mention my case to my Lord Justice-Clerk, perhaps I might get my sentence mitigated. You will see my poems are of the humorous cast. Alas! it is now the contrary. I remain your unfortunate humble servant,

“ANDREW STEWART.”

“*To the Same.*”

“Tolbooth, Sunday.

“Sir, I received your kind letter last night, enclosing one pound sterling, for which I have only to request you will accept the return of a grateful heart. My prayers, while on earth, will be always for your welfare. Your letter came like a ministering angel to me. The idea of my approaching end darts across my brain; and, as our immortal bard, Shakspeare, says, ‘harrows up my soul.’ Some time since, when chance threw in my way Sir William Forbes’s Life of Beattie, the account of the closing scene of Principal Campbell, as therein mentioned, made a deep impression on my mind. ‘At a time,’ says he, ‘when Campbell was just expiring, and had told his wife and niece so, a cordial happened unexpectedly to give some relief. As soon as he was able to speak, he said he wondered to see their faces so melancholy and covered with tears at the apprehension of his departure. ‘*At that instant,*’ said he, ‘*I felt my mind in such a state in the thoughts of my immediate dissolution, that I can express my feelings in no other way*’

than by saying I was in a rapture. There is something awfully satisfactory in the above.

“I have to mention, as a dying man, that it was not the greed of money that made me commit the crime, but the extreme pressure of poverty and want.

“How silent seems all — not a whisper is heard,
Save the guardians of night when they bawl;
How dreary and wild appears all around;
No pitying voice near my call.

“O life, what are all thy gay pleasures and cares,
When deprived of sweet liberty's smile?
Not hope, in all thy gay charms arrayed,
Can one heavy hour now beguile.

“How sad is the poor convict's sorrowful lot,
Condemned in these walls to remain,
When torn from those that are nearest his heart,
Perhaps ne'er to view them again.

“The beauties of morning now burst on my view,
Remembrance of scenes that are past,
When contentment sat smiling, and happy my lot —
Scenes, alas! formed not for to last.

“Now fled are the hours I delighted to roam
Scotia's hills, dales, and valleys among,
And with rapture would list to the songs of her bards,
And love's tale as it flowed from the tongue.

“Nought but death now awaits me; how dread, but how true!
How ghastly its form does appear!
Soon silent the muse that delighted to view
And sing of the sweets of the year.

“You are the first gentleman I ever sent my poems to, and I never corrected any of them, my mind has been in such a state. I remain, Sir, your grateful unfortunate servant,

“ANDREW STEWART.”

It appears that Scott, and his good-natured old friend,

Mr. Manners, the bookseller, who happened at this time to be one of the bailies of Edinburgh, exerted their joint influence in this tailor-poet's behalf, and with such success, that his sentence was commuted for one of transportation for life. A thin octavo pamphlet, entitled, "POEMS, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Andrew Stewart; printed for the benefit of the Author's Father, and sold by Manners and Miller, and A. Constable and Co., 1809," appeared soon after the convict's departure for Botany Bay. But as to his fortunes in that new world I possess no information. There seemed to me something so striking in the working of his feelings as expressed in his letters to Scott, that I thought the reader would forgive this little episode.

In the course of February, Mr. John Ballantyne had proceeded to London, for the purpose of introducing himself to the chief publishers there in his new capacity, and especially of taking Mr. Murray's instructions respecting the Scotch management of the Quarterly Review. As soon as the spring vacation began, Scott followed him by sea. He might naturally have wished to be at hand while his new partner was forming arrangements on which so much must depend; but some circumstances in the procedure of the Scotch Law Commission had made the Lord Advocate request his presence at this time in town. There he and Mrs. Scott took up their quarters, as usual, under the roof of their kind old friends the Dumergues; while their eldest girl enjoyed the advantage of being domesticated with the Miss Baillies at Hampstead. They staid more than two months, and this being his first visit to town since his fame had been crowned by Marmion, he was of course more than ever the object of general curiosity and attention. Mr. Mor-

ritt saw much of him, both at his own house in Portland Place and elsewhere, and I transcribe a few sentences from his *memoranda* of the period.

“Scott,” his friend says, “more correctly than any other man I ever knew, appreciated the value of that apparently enthusiastic *engouement* which the world of London shows to the fashionable wonder of the year. During this sojourn of 1809, the homage paid him would have turned the head of any less-gifted man of eminence. It neither altered his opinions, nor produced the affectation of despising it; on the contrary, he received it, cultivated it, and repaid it in its own coin. ‘All this is very flattering,’ he would say, ‘and very civil; and if people are amused with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories, or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.’ If he dined with us and found any new faces, ‘Well, do you want me to play lion to-day?’ was his usual question — ‘I will roar if you like it to your heart’s content.’ He would, indeed, in such cases put forth all his inimitable powers of entertainment — and day after day surprised me by their unexpected extent and variety. Then, as the party dwindled, and we were left alone, he laughed at himself, quoted — ‘Yet know that I one Snug the joiner am — no lion fierce,’ &c. — and was at once himself again.

“He often lamented the injurious effects for literature and genius resulting from the influence of London celebrity on weaker minds, especially in the excitement of ambition for this subordinate and ephemeral *reputation du salon*. ‘It may be a pleasant gale to sail with,’ he said, ‘but it never yet led to a port that I should like to

anchor in ;' nor did he willingly endure, either in London or in Edinburgh, the little exclusive circles of literary society, much less their occasional fastidiousness and petty partialities.

“One story which I heard of him from Dr. Howley, now Archbishop of Canterbury (for I was not present), was very characteristic. The Doctor was one of a grand congregation of lions, where Scott and Coleridge, *cum multis aliis*, attended at Sotheby's. Poets and poetry were the topics of the table, and there was plentiful recitation of effusions as yet unpublished, which of course obtained abundant applause. Coleridge repeated more than one, which as Dr. H. thought, were eulogized by some of the company with something like affectation, and a desire to humble Scott by raising a poet of inferior reputation on his shoulders. Scott, however, joined in the compliments as cordially as anybody, until, in his turn, he was invited to display some of his occasional poetry, much of which he must, no doubt, have written. Scott said he had published so much, he had nothing of his own left that he could think worth their hearing, but he would repeat a little copy of verses which he had shortly before seen in a provincial newspaper, and which seemed to him almost as good as anything they had been listening to with so much pleasure. He repeated the stanzas now so well known of ‘Fire, Famine, and Slaughter.’ The applauses that ensued were faint — then came slight criticisms, from which Scott defended the unknown author. At last a more bitter antagonist opened, and fastening upon one line, cried, ‘This at least is absolute nonsense.’ Scott denied the charge — the Zoilus persisted — until Coleridge, out of all patience, exclaimed, ‘For God's sake let Mr. Scott alone — I wrote the poem.’ This ex-

position of the real worth of dinner criticism can hardly be excelled.*

“He often complained of the real dulness of parties where each guest arrived under the implied and tacit obligation of exhibiting some extraordinary powers of talk or wit. ‘If,’ he said, ‘I encounter men of the world, men of business, odd or striking characters of professional excellence in any department, I am in my element, for they cannot lionize me without my returning the compliment and learning something from them.’ He was much with George Ellis, Canning, and Croker, and delighted in them,—as indeed who did not?—but he loved to study eminence of every class and sort, and his rising fame gave him easy access to gratify all his curiosity.”

The meetings with Canning, Croker, and Ellis, to which Mr. Morritt alludes, were, as may be supposed, chiefly occupied with the affairs of the Quarterly Review. The first number of that Journal appeared while Scott was in London: it contained three articles from his pen—namely, one on the Reliques of Burns; another on the Chronicle of the Cid; and a third on Sir John Carr’s

* It may amuse the reader to turn to Mr. Coleridge’s own stately account of this lion-show in Grosvenor Street, in the Preface to his celebrated Eclogue. There was one person present, it seems, who had been in the secret of its authorship—Sir Humphrey Davy; and no one could have enjoyed the scene more than he must have done. “At the house,” Coleridge says, “of a gentleman who, by the principles and corresponding virtues of a sincere Christian, consecrates a cultivated genius and the favourable accidents of birth, opulence, and splendid connexions, it was my good fortune to meet, in a dinner party, with more men of celebrity in science or polite literature than are commonly found collected around the same table. In the course of conversation, one of the party reminded an illustrious poet,” &c. &c. — *Coleridge’s Poetical Works*, Edition 1835, vol. i. p. 274.

Tour through Scotland. His conferences with the editor and publisher were frequent; and the latter certainly contemplated, at this time, a most close and intimate connexion with him, not only as a reviewer, but an author; and, consequently, with both the concerns of the Messrs. Ballantyne. Scott continued for some time to be a very active contributor to the Quarterly Review; nor, indeed, was his connexion with it ever entirely suspended. But John Ballantyne transacted business in a fashion which soon cooled, and in no very long time dissolved, the general "alliance offensive and defensive" with Murray, which Scott had announced before leaving Edinburgh to both Southey and Ellis.

On his return northwards he spent a fortnight in Yorkshire with Mr. Morritt; but his correspondence, from which I resume my extracts, will show, among other things, the lively impression made on him by his first view of Rokeby.

The next of these letters reminds me, however, that I should have mentioned sooner the death of Camp, the first of not a few dogs whose names will be "freshly remembered" as long as their master's works are popular. This favourite began to droop early in 1808, and became incapable of accompanying Scott in his rides; but he preserved his affection and sagacity to the last. At Ashestiel, as the servant was laying the cloth for dinner, he would address the dog lying on his mat by the fire, and say, "Camp, my good fellow, the Sheriff's coming home by the ford — or by the hill;" and the sick animal would immediately bestir himself to welcome his master, going out at the back door or the front door, according to the direction given, and advancing as far as he was able, either towards the ford of the Tweed, or the

bridge over the Glenkinnon burn beyond Laird Nippy's gate. He died about January 1809, and was buried in a fine moonlight night, in the little garden behind the house in Castle Street, immediately opposite to the window at which Scott usually sat writing. My wife tells me she remembers the whole family standing in tears about the grave, as her father himself smoothed down the turf above Camp with the saddest expression of face she had ever seen in him. He had been engaged to dine abroad that day, but apologized on account of "the death of a dear old friend;" and Mr. Macdonald Buchanan was not at all surprised that he should have done so, when it came out next morning that Camp was no more.

"To George Ellis, Esq.

Edinburgh, July 8, 1809.

"My Dear Ellis, — We reached home about a fortnight ago, having lingered a little while at Rokeby Park, the seat of our friend Morritt, and one of the most enviable places I have ever seen, as it unites the richness and luxuriance of English vegetation with the romantic variety of glen, torrent, and copse, which dignifies our northern scenery. The Greta and Tees, two most beautiful and rapid rivers, join their currents in the demesne. The banks of the Tees resemble, from the height of the rocks, the glen of Roslin, so much and justly admired. The Greta is the scene of a comic romance,* of which I think I remember giving you the outline. It concerns the history of a 'Felon Sowe,' —

'Which won'd in Rokeby wood,
Ran endlong Greta side,'

bestowed by Ralph of Rokeby on the freres of Richmond — and the misadventures of the holy fathers in their awkward attempts to catch this intractable animal. We had the pleas-

* Scott printed this Ballad in the Notes to his poem of Rokeby.

ure to find all our little folks well, and are now on the point of shifting quarters to Ashestiel. I have supplied the vacancy occasioned by the death of poor old Camp with a terrier puppy of the old shaggy Celtic breed. He is of high pedigree, and was procured with great difficulty by the kindness of Miss Dunlop of Dunlop; so I have christened him Wallace, as the donor is a descendant of the Guardian of Scotland. Having given you all this curious and valuable information about my own affairs, let me call your attention to the enclosed, which was in fact the principal cause of my immediately troubling you." * * *

The enclosure, and the rest of the letter, refer to the private affairs of Mr. Southey, in whose favour Scott had for some time back been strenuously using his interest with his friends in the Government. How well he had, while in London, read the feelings of some of those ministers towards each other, appears from various letters written upon his return to Scotland. It may be sufficient to quote part of one addressed to the distinguished author whose fortunes he was exerting himself to promote. To him Scott says (14th June),—“Mr. Canning’s opportunities to serve you will soon be numerous, or they will soon be gone altogether; for he is of a different mould from some of his colleagues, and a decided foe to those half measures which I know you detest as much as I do. It is not his fault that the cause of Spain is not at this moment triumphant. This I know, and the time will come when the world will know it too.”

Before fixing himself at Ashestiel for the autumn, he had undertaken to have a third poem ready for publication by the end of the year, and probably made some progress in the composition of the *Lady of the Lake*. On the rising of the Court in July, he went, accompanied

by Mrs. Scott and his eldest daughter, to revisit the localities, so dear to him in the days of his juvenile rambling, which he had chosen for the scene of his fable. He gave a week to his old friends at Cambusmore, and ascertained, in his own person, that a good horseman, well mounted, might gallop from the shore of Loch Vennachar to the rock of Stirling within the space allotted for that purpose to FitzJames. From Cambusmore the party proceeded to Ross Priory, and, under the guidance of Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, explored the islands of Loch Lomond, Arrochar, Loch Sloy, and all the scenery of a hundred desperate conflicts between the Macfarlanes, the Colquhouns, and the Clan Alpine. At Buchanan House, which is very near Ross Priory, Scott's friends, Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart, were then visiting the Duke of Montrose; he joined them there, and read to them the Stag Chase, which he had just completed under the full influence of the *genius loci*.

It was on this occasion, at Buchanan House, that he first saw Lord Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." On this subject he says, in his Introduction to *Marmion* of 1830—"When Byron wrote his famous satire, I had my share of flagellation among my betters. My crime was having written a poem for a thousand pounds, which was no otherwise true than that I sold the copyright for that sum. Now, not to mention that an author can hardly be censured for accepting such a sum as the booksellers are willing to give him, especially as the gentlemen of the trade made no complaints of their bargain, I thought the interference with my private affairs was rather beyond the limits of literary satire. I was, moreover, so far from having had anything to do with the offensive criticism in the *Edinburgh*, that I had

remonstrated with the editor, because I thought the 'Hours of Idleness' treated with undue severity. They were written, like all juvenile poetry, rather from the recollection of what had pleased the author in others, than what had been suggested by his own imagination; but nevertheless I thought they contained passages of noble promise."

I need hardly transcribe the well-known lines —

"Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
The golden-crested haughty Marmion, —"

down to

"For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
And bid a long 'good-night to Marmion, —'"

with his Lordship's note on the last line — "Good-night to Marmion, the pathetic and also prophetic exclamation of Henry Blount, Esquire, on the death of honest Marmion." — But it may entertain my readers to compare the style in which Scott alludes to Byron's assault in the preface of 1830, with that of one of his contemporary letters on the subject. Addressing (August 7, 1809) the gentleman in whose behalf he had been interceding with Mr. Canning, he says — "By the way, is the ancient * * * *, whose decease is to open our quest, thinking of a better world? I only ask because about three years ago I accepted the office I hold in the Court of Session, the revenue to accrue to me only on the death of the old incumbent. But my friend has since taken out a new lease of life, and unless I get some Border lad to cut his throat, may, for aught I know, live as long as I shall; — such odious deceivers are these invalids. Mine reminds me of Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, and will certainly throttle me if I can't somehow dismount him. If I were once in possession of

my reversionary income, I would, like you, bid farewell to the drudgery of literature, and do nothing but what I pleased, which might be another phrase for doing very little. I was always an admirer of the modest wish of a retainer in one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays —

‘ I would not be a serving man
To carry the cloak-bag still,
Nor would I be a falconer,
The greedy hawks to fill;
But I would be in a good house,
And have a good master too,
But I would eat and drink of the best,
And *no* work would I do.’ *

In the mean time, it is funny enough to see a whelp of a young Lord Byron abusing me, of whose circumstances he knows nothing, for endeavouring to scratch out a living with my pen. God help the bear, if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws. I can assure the noble imp of fame it is not my fault that I was not born to a park and £5000 a-year, as it is not his lordship's merit, although it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents or success. Adieu, my dear friend. I shall be impatient to hear how your matters fadge.”

This gentleman's affairs are again alluded to in a letter to Ellis, dated Ashestiel, September 14: —

“ I do not write to whet a purpose that is not blunted, but to express my anxious wishes that your kind endeavours may succeed while it is called *to-day*, for, by all tokens, it will soon be *yesterday* with this Ministry. And they well deserve it, for crossing, jostling, and hampering the measures of the only man among them fit to be intrusted with the salvation of the coun-

* Old Merrythought — *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Act IV. Scene 5.

try. The spring-tide may, for aught I know, break in this next session of Parliament. There is an evil fate upon us in all we do at home and abroad, else why should the conqueror of Talavera be retreating from the field of his glory at a moment when, by all reasonable calculation, he should have been the soul and mover of a combined army of 150,000 English, Spaniards, and Portuguese? And why should Gifford employ himself at home in the thriftless exercise of correction, as if Mercury, instead of stretching to a race himself, were to amuse himself with starting a bedrid cripple, and making a pair of crutches for him with his own hand? Much might have been done, and may yet be done; but we are not yet in the right way. Is there no one among you who can throw a Congreve rocket among the gerunds and supines of that model of pedants, Dr. Philopatris Parr? I understand your foreign lingos too little to attempt it, but pretty things might be said upon the memorable tureen which he begged of Lord Somebody, whom he afterwards wished to prove to be mad. For example, I would adopt some of the leading phrases of *independent*, *high-souled*, *contentus parvo*, and so forth, with which he is bespattered in the Edinburgh,* and declare it *our* opinion, that, if indulged with the three wishes of Prior's tale, he would answer, like the heroine Corisca —

‘ A ladle to my silver dish
Is all I want, is all I wish.’

I did *not* review Miss Edgeworth, nor do I think it all well done; at least, it falls below my opinion of that lady's merits. Indeed I have contributed nothing to the last Review, and am, therefore, according to all rules, the more entitled to criticise it freely. The conclusion of the article on Sir John Moore is transcendently written; and I think I can venture to say, ‘*aut Erasmus, aut Diabolus.*’ Your sugar-cake is very far from being a heavy *bon-bon*; but there I think we stop. The Mis-

* See Article on Dr. Parr's Spittal Sermon, in the Edinburgh Review, No. I. October 1802.

sionaries, though very good, is on a subject rather stale, and much of the rest is absolute wading.*

“As an excuse for my own indolence, I have been in the Highlands for some time past; and who should I meet there, of all fowls in the air, but your friend Mr. Blackburn, to whom I was so much obliged for the care he took of my late unfortunate relative, at your friendly request. The recognition was unfortunately made just when I was leaving the country, and as he was in a gig, and I on the driving-seat of a carriage, the place of meeting a narrow Highland road, which looked as if forty patent ploughs had furrowed it, we had not time or space for so long a greeting as we could have wished. He has a capital good house on the banks of the Leven, about three miles below its discharge from the lake, and very near the classical spot where Matthew Bramble and his whole family were conducted by Smollett, and where Smollett himself was born. There is a new inducement for you to come to Caledon. Your health, thank God, is now no impediment; and I am told sugar and rum excel even whisky, so your purse must be proportionally distended.”

The unfortunate brother, the blot of the family, to whom Scott alludes in this letter, had disappointed all the hopes under which his friends sent him to Jamaica. It may be remarked, as characteristic of Scott at this time, that in the various letters to Ellis concerning Daniel, he speaks of him as his *relation*, never as his *brother*; and it must also be mentioned as a circumstance suggesting that Daniel had retained, after all, some sense of pride, that his West-Indian patron was allowed by himself to remain, to the end of their connexion, in ignorance of what his distinguished brother had thus thought fit to suppress. Mr. Blackburn, in fact, never knew that Daniel was Walter Scott's brother, until he was applied

* Quarterly Review, No. III. August 1809.

to for some information respecting him on my own behalf, after this narrative was begun. The story is shortly, that the adventurer's habits of dissipation proved incurable; but he finally left Jamaica under a stigma which Walter Scott regarded with utter severity. Being employed in some service against a refractory or insurgent body of negroes, he had exhibited a lamentable deficiency of spirit and conduct. He returned to Scotland a dishonoured man; and though he found shelter and compassion from his mother, his brother would never see him again. Nay, when soon after, his health, shattered by dissolute indulgence, and probably the intolerable load of shame, gave way altogether, and he died as yet a young man, the poet refused either to attend his funeral or to wear mourning for him like the rest of the family. Thus sternly, when in the height and pride of his blood, could Scott, whose heart was never hardened against the distress of an enemy, recoil from the disgrace of a brother. It is a more pleasing part of my duty to add, that he spoke to me, twenty years afterwards, in terms of great and painful contrition for the austerity with which he had conducted himself on this occasion. I must add, moreover, that he took a warm interest in a natural child whom Daniel had bequeathed to his mother's care; and after the old lady's death, religiously supplied her place as the boy's protector.

About this time the edition of Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers, &c. (3 vols. royal 4to) was at length completed by Scott, and published by Constable; but the letters which passed between the Editor and the bookseller show that their personal estrangement had as yet undergone slender alteration. The collection of the Sadler papers was chiefly the work of Mr. Arthur Clifford — but Scott

drew up the Memoir and Notes, and superintended the printing. His account of the Life of Sadler* extends to thirty pages; and both it and his notes are written with all that lively solicitude about points of antiquarian detail, which accompanied him through so many tasks less attractive than the personal career of a distinguished statesman intimately connected with the fortunes of Mary Queen of Scots. Some volumes of the edition of Somers's Tracts (which he had undertaken for Mr. Miller and other booksellers of London two or three years before) were also published about the same period; but that compilation was not finished (13 vols. royal 4to) until 1812. His part in it (for which the booksellers paid him 1300 guineas), was diligently performed, and shows abundant traces of his sagacious understanding and graceful expression. His editorial labours on Dryden, Swift, and these other collections, were gradually storing his mind with that minute and accurate knowledge of the leading persons and events both of Scotch and English history, which made his conversation on such subjects that of one who had rather lived with than read about the departed; while, unlike other antiquaries, he always preserved the keenest interest in the transactions of his own time.

The reader has seen, that during his stay in London in the spring of this year, Scott became strongly impressed with a suspicion that the Duke of Portland's Cabinet could not much longer hold together; and the letters which have been quoted, when considered along with the actual course of subsequent events, can leave little doubt that he had gathered this impression from the tone of Mr. Canning's private conversation as to the recent man-

* Republished in the Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. iv.

agement of the War Department. On the 20th of September, Lord Castlereagh tendered his resignation, and wrote the same day to Mr. Canning in these terms: "Having," he said, "pronounced it unfit that I should remain charged with the conduct of the war, and made my situation as a Minister of the Crown dependent on your will and pleasure, you continued to sit in the same Cabinet with me, and leave me not only in the persuasion that I possessed your confidence and support as a colleague, but allowed me, in breach of every principle of good faith, both public and private, to originate and proceed in the execution of a new enterprise of the most arduous and important nature (the Walcheren expedition) with your apparent concurrence and ostensible approbation. You were fully aware that, if my situation in the Government had been disclosed to me, I could not have submitted to remain one moment in office, without the entire abandonment of my private honour and public duty. You knew I was deceived, and you continued to deceive me." *

The result was a duel on the morning of the 21st, in which Mr. Canning was attended by Mr. Charles Ellis (now Lord Seaford) as his second. Mr. Canning, at the second fire, was wounded in the thigh. Both combatants retired from office; the Duke of Portland, whose health was entirely broken, resigned the premiership; and after fruitless negotiations with Lords Grey and Greenville, Mr. Percival became First Lord of the Treasury, as well as Chancellor of the Exchequer; while the Marquis Wel-

* In the Preface to Mr. Therry's Compilation of Mr. Canning's Speeches, the reader will find the contemporary documents, on which alone a fair judgment can be formed as to the origin and nature of Mr. Canning's differences with Lord Castlereagh.

lesley took the Seals of the Foreign Department, and Lord Liverpool removed from the Home Office to that which Lord Castlereagh had occupied. There were some other changes, but Scott's friend, Mr. R. Dundas (now Lord Melville), remained in his place at the head of the Board of Control.

While the public mind was occupied with the duel and its yet uncertain results, Scott wrote as follows to the nearest relation and most intimate friend of Mr. Canning's second :—

“ To George Ellis, Esq.

“ Ashestiel, Sept. 26, 1809.

“ My Dear Ellis,—Your letter gave me great pleasure, especially the outside, for Canning's frank assured me that his wound was at least not materially serious. So, for once, the envelope of your letter was even more welcome than the contents. That hairbrained Irishman's letter carries absurdity upon the face of it, for surely he would have had much more reason for personal animosity had Canning made the matter public, against the wishes of his uncle, and every other person concerned, than for his consenting, at their request, that it should remain a secret, and leaving it to them to make such communication to Lord C. as they should think proper, and when they should think proper. I am ill situated here for the explanations I would wish to give, but I have forwarded copies of the letters to Lord Dalkeith, a high-spirited and independent young nobleman, in whose opinion Mr. Canning would, I think, wish to stand well. I have also taken some measures to prevent the good folks of Edinburgh from running after any straw that may be thrown into the wind. I wrote a very hurried note to Mr. C. Ellis the instant I saw the accident in the papers, not knowing exactly where you might be, and trusting he would excuse my extreme anxiety and solicitude upon the occasion.

“I see, among other reports, that my friend, Robert Dundas, is mentioned as Secretary at War. I confess I shall be both vexed and disappointed if he, of whose talents and opinions I think very highly, should be prevailed on to embark in so patched and crazy a vessel as can now be lashed together, and that upon a sea which promises to be sufficiently boisterous. My own hopes of every kind are as low as the heels of my boots, and methinks I would say to any friend of mine as Tybalt says to Benvolio — ‘What! art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?’ I suppose the Doctor will *move* the first, and then the Whigs will come in like a land-flood, and lay the country at the feet of Buonaparte for peace. This, if his devil does not fail, he will readily patch up, and send a few hundred thousands among our coach-driving Noblesse, and perhaps among our Princes of the Blood. With the influence acquired by such *gages d’amitié*, and by ostentatious hospitality at his court to all those idiots who will forget the rat-trap of the *detenus*, and crowd there for novelty, there will be, in the course of five or six years, what we have never yet seen, a real French party in this country. To this you are to add all the Burdettites, men who, rather than want combustibles, will fetch brimstone from hell. It is not these whom I fear, however — it is the vile and degrading spirit of *egoïsme* so prevalent among the higher ranks, especially among the highest. God forgive me if I do them injustice, but I think champagne duty free would go a great way to seduce some of them; and is it not a strong symptom when people, knowing and feeling their own weakness, will, from mere selfishness and pride, suffer the vessel to drive on the shelves, rather than she should be saved by the only pilot capable of the task? I will be much obliged to you to let me know what is likely to be done — whether any fight can yet be made, or if all is over. Lord Melville had been furious for some time against this Administration — I think *he* will hardly lend a hand to clear the wreck. I should think, if Marquis Wellesley returns, he might form a steady Administration; but God wot, he must condemn most of the present rotten planks before he can lay down the new vessel.

Above all, let me know how Canning's recovery goes on. We must think what is to be done about the Review. Ever yours truly,
W. S."

Scott's views as to the transactions of this period, and the principal parties concerned in them, were considerably altered by the observation of subsequent years; but I have been much interested with watching the course of his sentiments and opinions on such subjects; and, in the belief that others may feel in the same way with myself, I shall insert, without comment, some further extracts from this correspondence:—

“ *To the Same.*

“ Ashestiel, Nov. 3, 1809.

“ My Dear Ellis, — I had your letter some time ago, which gave me less comfort in the present public emergency than your letters usually do. Frankly, I see great doubts, not to say an impossibility, of Canning's attaining that rank among the Opposition which will enable him to command the use of their shoulders to place him where — you cannot be more convinced than I am — he is entitled to stand. The *condottieri* of the Grenvilles, — for they have no political principles, and therefore no political *party*, detached from their immense influence over individuals — will hardly be seduced from their standard to that of Canning, by an eloquence which has been exerted upon them in vain, even when they might have hoped to be gainers by listening to it. The *soi-disant* Whigs stick together like burs. The ragged regiment of Burdett and Folkstone is under yet stricter discipline, for you may have observed that no lover was ever so jealous of his mistress as Sir Francis is of his mob popularity — witness the fate of Paull, Tierney, even Wardle; in short, of whomsoever presumed to rival the brazen image whom the mob of Westminster has set up.* That

* Sir Francis Burdett has lived to show how unjustly the Tories of 1809 read his political character.

either, or both of these parties, will be delighted with the accession of our friend's wisdom and eloquence, cannot for a moment be disputed. That the Grenvilles, in particular, did he only propose to himself a slice of the great pudding, would allow him to help himself where the plums lie thickest, cannot be doubted. But I think it is very doubtful whether they, closely banded and confident of triumph as they at present are, will accept of a colleague upon terms which would make him a master; and unless Canning has these, it appears to me that *we* (the Republic) should be no better than if he had retained his office in the present, or rather late, Administration. But how far, in throwing himself altogether into the arms of Opposition at this crisis, Canning will injure himself with the large and sound party who profess *Pittism*, is, I really think, worthy of consideration. The influence of his name is at present as great as you or I could wish it; but those who wish to undermine it want but, according to our Scottish proverb, 'a hair to make a tether of.' I admit his hand is very difficult to play, and much as I love and admire him, I am most interested because it is the decided interest of his country, that he should pique, repique, and capot his antagonists. But you know much of the delicacy of the game lies in *discarding*—so I hope he will be in no hurry on throwing out his cards.

"I am the more anxious on this score, because I feel an internal conviction that neither Marquis Wellesley nor Lord Melville will lend their names to bolster out this rump of an Administration. Symptoms of this are said to have transpired in Scotland, but in this retirement I cannot learn upon what authority. Should this prove so, I confess my best wishes would be realized, because I cannot see how Percival could avoid surrendering at discretion, and taking, perhaps, a peerage. We should then have an Administration *à la Pitt*, which is a much better thing than an Opposition, howsoever conducted or headed, which, like a wave of the sea, forms indeed but a single body when it is rolling towards the shore, but dashes into foam and dispersion the instant it reaches its object. Should Canning and the above-named noble peers come

to understand each other, joined to all among the present Ministry whom their native good sense, and an attachment to good warm places, will lead to hear reason, it does seem to me that we might form a deeper front to the enemy than we have presented since the death of Pitt, or rather since the dissolution of his first Administration. But if this be a dream, as it may very probably be, I still hope Canning will take his own ground in Parliament, and hoist his own standard. Sooner or later it must be successful. So much for politics — about which, after all, my neighbours the *blackcocks* know about as much as I do.

“I have a great deal to write you about a new poem which I have on the anvil — also, upon the melancholy death of a favourite greyhound bitch — rest her body, since I dare not say soul! She was of high blood and excellent promise. Should any of your sporting friends have a whelp to spare, of a good kind, and of the female sex, I would be grateful beyond measure, especially if she has had the distemper. As I have quite laid aside the gun, coursing is my only and constant amusement, and my valued pair of four-legged champions, Douglas and Percy, wax old and *unfeary*. Ever yours truly,
“W. S.”

“*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

“Gloucester Lodge, Nov. 13, 1809.

“My Dear Sir, — I am very sensibly gratified by your kind expressions, whether of condolence or congratulation, and I acknowledge, if not (with your Highland writer) the synonymousness of the two terms, at least the union of the two sentiments, as applied to my present circumstances. I am not so heroically fond of being *out* (*quâtenus out*), as not to consider that a matter of condolence. But I am at the same time sufficiently convinced of the desirableness of not being *in*, when one should be *in* to no purpose, either of public advantage or personal credit, to be satisfied that on that ground I am entitled to your congratulations.

“I should be very happy indeed to look forward, with the prospect of being able to realize it, to the trip to Scotland which you suggest to me; and still more to the visit included therein, which, as you hold it out, would not be the least part of my temptation. Of this, however, I hope we shall have opportunities of talking before the season arrives; for I reckon upon your spring visit to London, and think of it, I assure you, with great pleasure, as likely to happen at a period when I shall have it more in my power than I have had on any former occasion to enjoy the advantage of it. You will find me not in quite so romantic a scene of seclusion and tranquillity here as that which you describe—but very tranquil and secluded nevertheless, at a mile and a half’s distance from Hyde Park Corner—a distance considerable enough, as I now am, to save me from any very overwhelming ‘unda salutantium.’

“Here, or anywhere else, I beg you to believe in the very sincere satisfaction which I shall derive from your society, and which I do derive from the assurance of your regard and good opinion. Ever, my Dear Sir, very truly and faithfully yours,

“GEO. CANNING.

“P. S.—I expect, in the course of this week, to send you a copy of a more ample statement of the circumstances of my retirement, which the misrepresentations of some who, I *think*, must have known they were misrepresenting (though *that* I must not say), have rendered necessary.”

I could not quote more largely from these political letters without trespassing against the feelings of distinguished individuals still alive. I believe the extracts which I have given are sufficient to illustrate the sagacity with which Scott had at that early period apprehended the dangers to which the political career of Mr. Canning was exposed, by the jealousy of the old Tory aristocracy on the one hand, and the insidious flatteries of Whig intriguers on the other. I willingly turn from his politics

to some other matters, which about this time occupied a large share of his thoughts.

He had from his boyish days a great love for theatrical representation; and so soon as circumstances enabled him to practise extended hospitality, the chief actors of his time, whenever they happened to be in Scotland, were among the most acceptable of his guests. Mr. Charles Young was, I believe, the first of them of whom he saw much: As early as 1803 I find him writing of that gentleman to the Marchioness of Abercorn as a valuable addition to the society of Edinburgh; and down to the end of Scott's life, Mr. Young was never in the north without visiting him.

Another graceful and intelligent performer in whom he took a special interest, and of whom he saw a great deal in his private circle, was Miss Smith, afterwards Mrs. Bartley. But at the period of which I am now treating, his principal theatrical intimacy was with John Philip Kemble, and his sister Mrs. Siddons, both of whom he appears to have often met at Lord Abercorn's villa near Stanmore, during his spring visits to London after the first establishment of his poetical celebrity. Of John Kemble's personal character and manners, he has recorded his impressions in a pleasing reviewal of Mr. Boaden's Memoir.* The great tragedian's love of black-letter learning, especially of dramatic antiquities, afforded a strong bond of fellowship; and I have heard Scott say that the only man who ever seduced him into very deep potations in his middle life was Kemble. He was frequently at Ashestiel, and the "fat Scotch butler," whom Mr. Skene has described to us, by name *John Macbeth*, made sore complaints of the bad hours kept on such oc-

* *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xx. 1834; vol. i. part viii. 1841.

casions in one of the most regular of households ; but the watchings of the night were not more grievous to "Cousin Macbeth," as Kemble called the honest *beauffetier*, than were the hazards and fatigues of the morning to the representative of "the Scotch usurper." Kemble's miseries during a rough gallop were quite as grotesque as those of his namesake, and it must be owned that species of distress was one from the contemplation of which his host could never derive anything but amusement.

I have heard Scott chuckle with particular glee over the recollection of an excursion to the vale of the Ettrick, near which river the party were pursued by a bull. "Come, King John," said he, "we must even take the water," and accordingly he and his daughter plunged into the stream. But King John, halting on the bank and surveying the river, which happened to be full and turbid, exclaimed, in his usual solemn manner,

— "The flood is angry, Sheriff;
Methinks I'll get me up into a tree." *

It was well that the dogs had succeeded in diverting the bull, because there was no tree at hand which could have sustained King John, nor, had that been otherwise, could so stately a personage have dismounted and ascended with such alacrity as circumstances would have required. He at length followed his friends through the river with the rueful dignity of Don Quixote.

* John Kemble's most familiar table-talk often flowed into blank verse; and so indeed did his sister's. Scott (who was a capital mimic) often repeated her tragic exclamation to a footboy during a dinner at Ashestiel —

"You've brought me water, boy, — I asked for beer."

Another time, dining with a Provost of Edinburgh, she ejaculated, in answer to her host's apology for his *piece de resistance* —

"Beef cannot be too salt for me, my Lord!"

It was this intercourse which led Scott to exert himself very strenuously, when some change in the administration of the Edinburgh theatre became necessary — (I believe in 1808), — to prevail on Mr. Henry Siddons, the nephew of Kemble, to undertake the lease and management. Such an arrangement would, he expected, induce both Kemble and his sister to be more in Scotland than hitherto; and what he had seen of young Siddons himself led him to prognosticate a great improvement in the whole conduct of the northern stage. His wishes were at length accomplished in the summer of 1809. On this occasion he purchased a share, and became one of the acting trustees for the general body of proprietors; and thenceforth, during a long series of years, he continued to take a very lively concern in the proceedings of the Edinburgh company. In this he was plentifully encouraged by his domestic *camarilla*; for his wife had all a Frenchwoman's passion for the *spectacle*; and the elder of the two Ballantynes (both equally devoted to the company of players) was a regular newspaper critic of theatrical affairs, and in that capacity had already attained a measure of authority supremely gratifying to himself.

The first new play produced by Henry Siddons was the *Family Legend of Joanna Baillie*. This was, I believe, the first of her dramas that ever underwent the test of representation in her native kingdom; and Scott appears to have exerted himself most indefatigably in its behalf. He was consulted about all the *minutiæ* of costume, attended every rehearsal, and supplied the prologue. The play was better received than any other which the gifted authoress has since subjected to the same experiment; and how ardently Scott enjoyed its

success will appear from a few specimens of the many letters which he addressed to his friend on the occasion.

The first of these letters is dated Edinburgh, October 27, 1809. He had gone into town for the purpose of entering his eldest boy at the High School:—

“ On receiving your long kind letter yesterday, I sought out Siddons, who was equally surprised and delighted at your liberal arrangement about the Lady of the Rock. I will put all the names to rights, and retain enough of locality and personality to please the antiquary, without the least risk of bringing the clan Gillian about our ears. I went through the theatre, which is the most complete little thing of the kind I ever saw, elegantly fitted up, and large enough for every purpose. I trust, with you, that in this as in other cases, our Scotch poverty may be a counterbalance to our Scotch pride, and that we shall not need in my time a larger or more expensive building. Siddons himself observes, that even for the purposes of show (so paramount now-a-days) a moderate stage is better fitted than a large one, because the machinery is pliable and manageable in proportion to its size. With regard to the equipment of the Family Legend, I have been much diverted with a discovery which I have made. I had occasion to visit our Lord Provost (by profession a stocking-weaver), and was surprised to find the worthy magistrate filled with a new-born zeal for the drama. He spoke of Mr. Siddons' merits with enthusiasm, and of Miss Baillie's powers almost with tears of rapture. Being a curious investigator of cause and effect, I never rested until I found out that this theatric rage which had seized his lordship of a sudden, was owing to a large order for hose, pantaloons, and plaids for equipping the rival clans of Campbell and Maclean, and which Siddons was sensible enough to send to the warehouse of our excellent provost.*

* This magistrate was Mr. William Coulter (the salt-beef Amphitryon), who died in office in April 1810, and is said to have been greatly consoled on his deathbed by the prospect of so grand a funeral as must

. . . . The Laird * is just gone to the High School, and it is with inexpressible feeling that I hear him trying to babble the first words of Latin, the signal of commencing serious study; for his acquirements hitherto have been under the mild dominion of a governess. I felt very like Leontes —

“ Looking on the lines
Of my boy’s face, methought I did recoil
Thirty good years.” — †

And O! my dear Miss Baillie, what a tale thirty years can tell even in an uniform and un Hazardous course of life! How much I have reaped that I have never sown, and sown that I have never reaped! Always, I shall think it one of the proudest and happiest circumstances of my life that enables me to subscribe myself your faithful and affectionate friend,

“ W. S.”

Three months later, he thus communicates the result of the experiment: —

“ *To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

“ Jan. 30th, 1810.

“ My Dear Miss Baillie,— You have only to imagine all that you could wish to give success to a play, and your conceptions will still fall short of the complete and decided triumph of the Family Legend. The house was crowded to a most extraordinary degree; many people had come from your native capital of the west; everything that pretended to distinction, whether from rank or literature, was in the boxes, and

needs occur in the case of an actual Lord Provost of Auld Reekie. Scott used to *take him off* as saying at some public meeting, “ Gentlemen, though doomed to the trade of a stocking-weaver, I was born with the soul of a *Sheepio!* ” — (Scipio.)

* Young Walter Scott was called Gilnockie, the Laird of Gilnockie, or simply *the Laird*, in consequence of his childish admiration for Johnnie Armstrong, whose ruined tower is still extant at Gilnockie on the Esk, nearly opposite Netherby.

† *Winter’s Tale*, Act I. Scene 2.

in the pit such an aggregate mass of humanity as I have seldom if ever witnessed in the same space. It was quite obvious from the beginning, that the cause was to be very fairly tried before the public, and that if anything went wrong, no effort, even of your numerous and zealous friends, could have had much influence in guiding or restraining the general feeling. Some good-natured persons had been kind enough to propagate reports of a strong opposition, which, though I considered them as totally groundless, did not by any means lessen the extreme anxiety with which I waited the rise of the curtain. But in a short time I saw there was no ground whatever for apprehension, and yet I sat the whole time shaking for fear a scene-shifter, or a carpenter, or some of the subaltern actors, should make some blunder, and interrupt the feeling of deep and general interest which soon seized on the whole pit, box, and gallery, as Mr. Bayes has it.* The scene on the rock struck the utmost possible effect into the audience, and you heard nothing but sobs on all sides. The banquet-scene was equally impressive, and so was the combat. Of the greater scenes, that between Lorn and Helen in the castle of Maclean, that between Helen and her lover, and the examination of Maclean himself in Argyle's castle, were applauded to the very echo. Siddons announced the play '*for the rest of the week,*' which was received not only with a thunder of applause, but with cheering and throwing up of hats and handkerchiefs. Mrs. Siddons supported her part incomparably, although just recovered from the indisposition mentioned in my last. Siddons himself played Lorn very well indeed, and moved and looked with great spirit. A Mr. Terry, who promises to be a fine performer, went through the part of the Old Earl with great taste and effect. For the rest I cannot say much, excepting that from highest to lowest they were most accurately perfect in their parts, and did their very best. Malcolm de Gray was tolerable but *stickish* — Maclean came off decently — but the conspirators were sad hounds. You are, my dear

* See the Rehearsal.

Miss Baillie, too much of a democrat in your writings; you allow life, soul, and spirit to these inferior creatures of the drama, and expect they will be the better of it. Now it was obvious to me, that the poor monsters, whose mouths are only of use to spout the vapid blank verse which your modern playwright puts into the part of the confidant and subaltern villain of his piece, did not know what to make of the energetic and poetical diction which even these subordinate departments abound with in the Legend. As the play greatly exceeded the usual length (lasting till half-past ten), we intend, when it is repeated to-night, to omit some of the passages where the weight necessarily fell on the weakest of our host, although we may hereby injure the detail of the plot. The scenery was very good, and the rock, without appearance of pantomime, was so contrived as to place Mrs. Siddons in a very precarious situation to all appearance. The dresses were more tawdry than I should have judged proper, but expensive and showy. I got my brother John's Highland recruiting party to reinforce the garrison of Inverary, and as they mustered beneath the porch of the castle, and seemed to fill the court-yard behind, the combat scene had really the appearance of reality. Siddons has been most attentive, anxious, assiduous, and docile, and had drilled his troops so well that the prompter's aid was unnecessary, and I do not believe he gave a single hint the whole night; nor were there any false or ridiculous accents or gestures even among the underlings, though God knows they fell often far short of the true spirit. Mrs. Siddons spoke the epilogue * extremely well: the prologue, † which I will send you in its revised state, was also very well received. Mrs. Scott sends her kindest compliments of congratulation; she had a party of thirty friends in one small box, which she was obliged to watch like a clucking hen till she had gathered her whole flock, for the crowd was insufferable. I am going to see the Legend to-night, when I shall enjoy it quietly, for last

* Written by Henry Mackenzie.

† See Scott's *Poetical Works*, p. 635 (1841, English Ed.)

night I was so much interested in its reception that I cannot say I was at leisure to attend to the feelings arising from the representation itself. People are dying to read it. If you think of suffering a single edition to be printed to gratify their curiosity, I will take care of it. But I do not advise this, because until printed no other theatres can have it before you give leave. My kind respects attend Miss Agnes Baillie, and believe me ever your obliged and faithful servant,

“WALTER SCOTT.

“P. S. — A friend of mine writes dramatic criticism now and then. I have begged him to send me a copy of the Edinburgh paper in which he inserts his lucubrations, and I will transmit it to you: he is a play-going man, and more in the habit of expressing himself on such subjects than most people. — In case you have not got a playbill, I enclose one, because I think in my own case I should like to see it.”

The Family Legend had a continuous run of fourteen nights, and was soon afterwards printed and published by the Ballantynes.

The theatrical critic alluded to in the last of these letters was the elder of those brothers; the newspaper in which his lucubrations then appeared was the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*; and so it continued until 1817, when the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* was purchased by the two partners of the Canongate; ever after which period it was edited by the prominent member of that firm, and from time to time was the vehicle of many fugitive pieces by Scott.

In one of these letters there occurs, for the first time, the name of a person who soon obtained a large share of Scott's regard and confidence — the late ingenious comedian, Mr. Daniel Terry. He had received a good education, and been regularly trained as an architect; but

abandoned that profession, at an early period of life, for the stage, and was now beginning to attract attention as a valuable and efficient actor in Henry Siddons's new company at Edinburgh. Already he and the Ballantynes were constant companions, and through his familiarity with them, Scott had abundant opportunities of appreciating his many excellent and agreeable qualities. He had the manners and feelings of a gentleman. Like John Kemble, he was deeply skilled in the old literature of the drama, and he rivalled Scott's own enthusiasm for the antiquities of *vertu*. Their epistolary correspondence in after days was frequent, and will supply me with many illustrations of Scott's minor tastes and habits. As their letters lie before me, they appear as if they had all been penned by the same hand. Terry's idolatry of his new friend induced him to imitate his writing so zealously, that Scott used to say, if he were called on to swear to any document, the utmost he could venture to attest would be, that it was either in his own hand or in Terry's. The actor, perhaps unconsciously, mimicked him in other matters with hardly inferior pertinacity. His small lively features had acquired, before I knew him, a truly ludicrous cast of Scott's graver expression; he had taught his tiny eyebrow the very trick of the poet's meditative frown; and to crown all, he so habitually affected his tone and accent, that, though a native of Bath, a stranger could hardly have doubted he must be a Scotchman. These things afforded Scott and all their mutual acquaintances much diversion; but perhaps no Stoic could have helped being secretly gratified by seeing a clever and sensible man convert himself into a living type and symbol of admiration.

Charles Mathews and Terry were once thrown out of

a gig together, and the former received an injury which made him halt ever afterwards, while the latter escaped unhurt. "Dooms, *Dawniel*," said Mathews when they next met, "what a pity that it wasna your luck to get the game leg, mon! Your *Shirra* wad hae been the very thing, ye ken, an' ye wad hae been croose till ye war coffined!" Terry, though he did not always relish bantering on this subject, replied readily and good-humouredly by a quotation from Peter Pindar's *Bozzy and Piozzi*:—

"When Foote his leg by some misfortune broke,
Says I to Johnson, all by way of joke,
Sam, sir, in Paragraph will soon be clever,
He'll take off Peter better now than ever."

Mathews's mirthful caricature of Terry's sober mimicry of Scott was one of the richest extravaganzas of his social hours; but indeed I have often seen this Proteus dramatize the whole Ballantyne group with equal success—while Rigdumfunnidos screamed with delight, and Aldiborontiphoscophornio faintly chuckled, and the Sheriff, gently smiling, pushed round his decanters.*

Miss Seward died in March 1809. She bequeathed her poetry to Scott, with an injunction to publish it speedily, and prefix a sketch of her life; while she made her letters (of which she had kept copies) the property of Mr. Constable, in the assurance that due regard for his own interests would forthwith place the whole collection before the admiring world. Scott superintended accord-

* By the way, perhaps the very richest article in Mathews's social budget, was the scene alleged to have occurred when he himself communicated to the two Ballantynes the new titles which the Sheriff had conferred on them. Rigdum's satisfaction with his own cap and bells, and the other's indignant incredulity, passing by degrees into tragical horror, made a delicious contrast. [1839.]

ingly the edition of the lady's verses, which was published in three volumes, in August 1810, by John Ballantyne and Co.; and Constable lost no time in announcing her correspondence, which appeared a year later, in six volumes. The following letter alludes to these productions, as well as a comedy by Mr. Henry Siddons, which he had recently brought out on the Edinburgh stage; and lastly, to the *Lady of the Lake*, the printing of which had by this time made great progress.

“ To Miss Joanna Baillie.

Edinburgh, March 18, 1810.

“Nothing, my dear Miss Baillie, can loiter in my hands, when you are commanding officer. I have put the play in progress through the press, and find my publishers, the Ballantynes, had previously determined to make Mr. Longman, the proprietor of your other works, the offer of this. All that can be made of it in such a cause certainly shall, and the booksellers shall be content with as little profit as can in reason be expected. I understand the trade well, and will take care of this. Indeed, I believe the honour weighs more with the booksellers here than the profit of a single play. So much for business. You are quite right in the risk I run of failure in a third poem; yet I think I understand the British public well enough to set every sail towards the popular breeze. One set of folks pique themselves upon sailing in the wind's eye — another class drive right before it; now I would neither do one or t'other, but endeavour to go, as the sailors express it, *upon a wind*, and make use of it to carry me my own way, instead of going precisely in its direction; or, to speak in a dialect with which I am more familiar, I would endeavour to make my horse carry me, instead of attempting to carry my horse. I have a vain-glorious presentiment of success upon this occasion, which may very well deceive me, but which I would hardly confess to anybody but you, nor perhaps to you neither,

unless I knew you would find it out whether I told it you or no,—

'You are a sharp observer, and you look
Quite through the eyes of men.'—

"I plead guilty to the charge of ill-breeding to Miss * * * *. The despair which I used to feel on receiving poor Miss Seward's letters, whom I really liked, gave me a most unsentimental horror for sentimental letters. The crassest thing I ever did in my life was to poor dear Miss Seward; she wrote me in an evil hour (I had never seen her, mark that!) a long and most passionate epistle upon the death of a dear friend, whom I had never seen neither, concluding with a charge not to attempt answering the said letter, for she was dead to the world, &c. &c. &c. Never were commands more literally obeyed. I remained as silent as the grave, till the lady made so many inquiries after me, that I was afraid of my death being prematurely announced by a sonnet or an elegy. When I did see her, however, she interested me very much, and I am now doing penance for my ill-breeding, by submitting to edit her posthumous poetry, most of which is absolutely execrable. This, however, is the least of my evils, for when she proposed this bequest to me, which I could not in decency refuse, she combined it with a request that I would publish her whole literary correspondence. This I declined on principle, having a particular aversion at perpetuating that sort of gossip; but what availed it? Lo! to ensure the publication, she left it to an Edinburgh bookseller; and I anticipate the horror of seeing myself advertised for a live poet like a wild beast on a painted streamer, for I understand all her friends are depicted therein in body, mind, and manners. So much for the risks of sentimental correspondence.

"Siddons' play was truly flat, but not unprofitable; he contrived to get it well propped in the acting, and — though it was such a thing as if you or I had written it (supposing, that is, what in your case, and I think even in my own, is impossible) would have been damned seventy-fold, — yet it went through

with applause. Such is the humour of the multitude ; and they will quarrel with venison for being dressed a day sooner than fashion requires, and batten on a neck of mutton, because, on the whole, it is rather better than they expected ; however, Siddons is a good lad, and deserves success, through whatever channel it comes. His mother is here just now. I was quite shocked to see her, for the two last years have made a dreadful inroad both on voice and person ; she has, however, a very bad cold. I hope she will be able to act *Jane de Montfort*, which we have long planned. Very truly yours, W. S."

CHAPTER XX.

Affair of Thomas Scott's Extractorship discussed in the House of Lords — Speeches of Lord Lauderdale, Lord Melville, &c. — Lord Holland at the Friday Club — Publication of The Lady of the Lake — Correspondence concerning Versification with Ellis and Canning — The Poem criticised by Jeffrey and Mackintosh — Letters to Southey and Morritt — Anecdotes from James Ballantyne's Memoranda.

1810.

THERE occurred, while the latter cantos of the *Lady of the Lake* were advancing through the press, an affair which gave Scott so much uneasiness, that I must not pass it in silence. Each Clerk of Session had in those days the charge of a particular *office* or department in the Great Register House of Scotland, and the appointment of the subalterns, who therein recorded and extracted the decrees of the Supreme Court, was in his hands. Some of these situations, remunerated, according to a fixed rate of fees, by the parties concerned in the suits before the Court, were valuable, and considered not at all below the pretensions of gentlemen who had been regularly trained for the higher branches of the law. About the time when Thomas Scott's affairs as a *Writer* to the *Signet* fell into derangement, but before they were yet hopeless, a post became vacant in his brother's *office*,

which yielded an average income of £400, and which he would very willingly have accepted. The poet, however, considered a respectable man, who had grown grey at an inferior desk in the same department, as entitled to promotion, and exerted the right of patronage in his favour accordingly, bestowing on his brother the place which this person left. It was worth about £250 a-year, and its duties being entirely mechanical, might be in great part, and often had been in former times entirely, discharged by deputy. Mr. Thomas Scott's appointment to this *Extractorship* took place at an early stage of the proceedings of that Commission for inquiring into the Scotch System of Judicature, which had the poet for its secretary. Thomas, very soon afterwards, was compelled to withdraw from Edinburgh, and retired, as has been mentioned, to the Isle of Man, leaving his official duties to the care of a substitute, who was to allow him a certain share of the fees, until circumstances should permit his return. It was not, however, found so easy, as he and his friends had anticipated, to wind up his accounts, and settle with his creditors. Time passed on, and being an active man, in the prime vigour of life, he accepted a commission in the Manx Fencibles, a new corps raised by the Lord of that island, the Duke of Athol, who willingly availed himself of the military experience which Mr. Scott had acquired in the course of his long connexion with the Edinburgh Volunteers. These Manx Fencibles, however, were soon dissolved, and Thomas Scott, now engaged in the peaceful occupation of collecting materials for a History of the Isle of Man, to which his brother had strongly directed his views, was anxiously expecting a final arrangement, which might allow him to re-establish himself in Edinburgh, and resume his seat in

the Register House, when he received the intelligence that the Commission of Judicature had resolved to abolish that, among many other similar posts. This was a severe blow; but it was announced, at the same time, that the Commission meant to recommend to Parliament a scheme of compensation for the functionaries who were to be discharged at their suggestion, and that his retired allowance would probably amount to £130 per annum.

In the spring of 1810, the Commission gave in its report, and was dissolved; and a bill, embodying the details of an extensive reform, founded on its suggestions, was laid before the House of Commons, who adopted most of its provisions, and among others passed, without hesitation, the clauses respecting compensation for the holders of abolished offices. But when the bill reached the House of Lords, several of these clauses were severely reprobated by some Peers of the Whig party, and the case of Thomas Scott, in particular, was represented as a gross and flagrant *job*. The following extract from Hansard's Debates will save me the trouble of further details:—

“THOMAS SCOTT.

“THE EARL OF LAUDERDALE moved an amendment, ‘That those only be remunerated who were mentioned in the schedule.’ The application of this amendment was towards the compensation intended for Mr. Thomas Scott, the brother of Walter Scott. It appeared the former was appointed to the office of an Extractor at a time when it must have been foreseen that those offices would be abolished. Mr. Thomas Scott had not been connected previously with that sort of situation, but was recruiting for the Manx Fencibles in the Isle of Man at the time, and had not served the office, but performed its duties through the means of a deputy. He considered this transaction a perfect job. By the present bill Mr. T. Scott

would have £130 for life as an indemnity for an office, the duties of which he never had performed, while those clerks who had laboured for twenty years had no adequate remuneration.

“VISCOUNT MELVILLE supported the general provisions of the bill. With respect to Mr. T. Scott, he certainly had been in business, had met with misfortunes, and on account of his circumstances went to the Isle of Man; but with respect to his appointment, this was the fact: a situation in the same office [of the Register House] with that of his brother, of £400, became vacant, and he [Walter Scott] thought it his duty to promote a person who had meritoriously filled the situation which was afterwards granted to Mr. T. Scott. His brother was therefore so disinterested as to have appointed him to the inferior instead of the superior situation. The noble viscount saw no injustice in the case, and there was no partiality but what was excusable.

“LORD HOLLAND thought no man who knew him would suspect that he was unfavourable to men of literature; on the contrary, he felt a great esteem for the literary character of Walter Scott. He and his colleagues ever thought it their duty to reward literary merit without regard to political opinions; and he wished he could pay the same compliment to the noble and learned viscount, for he must ever recollect that the poet Burns, of immortal memory, had been shamefully neglected. But with respect to Mr. Thomas Scott, the question was quite different, for he was placed in a situation which he and his brother knew at the time would be abolished; and from Parliament he claimed an indemnity for what could not be pronounced any loss. It was unjust as regarded others, and improper as it respected Parliament.

“The amendment was then proposed and negatived. The bill was accordingly read the third time and passed.”—HANSARD, *June* 1810.

I shall now extract various passages from Scott's letters to his brother and other friends, which will show

what his feelings were while this affair continued under agitation.

“*To Thomas Scott, Esq., Douglas, Isle of Man.*”

“Edinburgh, 25th May 1810.

“My Dear Tom,—I write under some anxiety for your interest, though I sincerely hope it is groundless. The devil or James Gibson * has put it into Lord Lauderdale’s head to challenge your annuity in the House of Lords on account of your non-residence, and your holding a commission in the militia. His lordship kept his intention as secret as possible, but fortunately it reached the kind and friendly ear of Colin Mackenzie. Lord Melville takes the matter up stoutly, and I have little doubt will carry his point, unless the whole bill is given up for the season, which some concurring opposition from different quarters renders not impossible. In that case, you must, at the expense of a little cash and time, show face in Edinburgh for a week or two, and attend your office. But I devoutly hope all will be settled by the bill being passed as it now stands. This is truly a most unworthy exertion of private spite and malice, but I trust it will be in vain.”

“Edinburgh, June 12th.

“Dear Tom,—I have the pleasure to acquaint you that I have every reason to believe that the bill will pass this week. It has been *committed*; upon which occasion Lord Lauderdale stated various objections, all of which were repelled. He then adverted to your case with some sufficiently bitter observations. Lord Melville advised him to reserve his epithets till he was pleased to state his cause, as he would pledge himself to show that they were totally inapplicable to the transaction.

* James Gibson, Esq. W. S. (now Sir James Gibson-Craig of Riccarton, Bart.) had always been regarded as one of the most able and active of the Scotch Whigs—whose acknowledged chief in those days was the Earl of Lauderdale.

The Duke of Montrose also intimated his intention to defend it, which I take very kind of his Grace, as he went down on purpose, and declared his resolution to attend whenever the business should be stirred. So much for

‘The Lord of Graham, by every chief adored,
Who boasts his native philabeg restored.’* *

“Edinburgh, 21st June 1810.

“My Dear Tom, — The bill was read a third time in the House of Lords, on which occasion Lord Lauderdale made his attack, which Lord Melville answered. There was not much said on either side: Lord Holland supported Lord Lauderdale, and the bill passed without a division. So you have fairly doubled Cape Lauderdale. I believe his principal view was to insult my feelings, in which he has been very unsuccessful, for I thank God I feel nothing but the most hearty contempt both for the attack and the sort of paltry malice by which alone it could be dictated.”

The next letter is addressed to an old friend of Scott’s, who, though a stout Whig, had taken a lively interest in the success of his brother’s parliamentary business: —

“*To John Richardson, Esq., Fludyer Street, Westminster.*

“Edinburgh, 3d July 1810.

“My Dear Richardson, — I ought before now to have written you my particular thanks for your kind attention to the interest which I came so strangely and unexpectedly to have in the passing of the Judicature Bill. The only purpose which I suppose Lord Lauderdale had in view was to state charges which could neither be understood nor refuted, and to give me a little pain by dragging my brother’s misfortunes into public

* These lines are slightly altered from the *Rolliad*, p. 308. The Duke had obtained the repeal of an act of Parliament forbidding the use of the Highland garb.

notice. If the last was his aim, I am happy to say it has most absolutely miscarried, for I have too much contempt for the motive which dictated his Lordship's eloquence, to feel much for its thunders. My brother loses by the bill from £150 to £200, which no power short of an act of Parliament could have taken from him; and far from having a view to the compensation, he is a considerable loser by its being substituted for the actual receipts of his office. I assure you I am very sensible of your kind and friendly activity and zeal in my brother's behalf.

"I received the *Guerras** safe; it is a fine copy, and I think very cheap, considering how difficult it is now to procure foreign books. I shall be delighted to have the *Traité des Tournois*. I propose, on the 12th, setting forth for the West Highlands, with the desperate purpose of investigating the caves of Staffa, Egg, and Skye. There was a time when this was a heroic undertaking, and when the return of Samuel Johnson from achieving it was hailed by the Edinburgh literati with 'per varios casus,' and other scraps of classical gratulation equally new and elegant. But the harvest of glory has been entirely reaped by the early discoverers; and in an age when every London citizen makes Lochlomond his washpot, and throws his shoe over Ben-Nevis, a man may endure every hardship, and expose himself to every danger of the Highland seas, from sea-sickness to the jaws of the great sea-snake, without gaining a single leaf of laurel for his pains.

"The best apology for bestowing all this tediousness upon you is, that John Burnet is dinning into the ears of the Court a botheration about the politics of the magnificent city of Culross. But I will release you sooner than I fear I shall escape myself, with the assurance that I am ever yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

I conclude the affair of Thomas Scott with a brief extract from a letter which his brother addressed to him a

* A copy of the *Guerras Civiles de Granada*.

few weeks later: — “Lord Holland has been in Edinburgh, and we met accidentally at a public party. He made up to me, but I remembered his part in your affair, and *cut* him with as little remorse as an old pen.” The meeting here alluded to occurred at a dinner of the *Friday Club*, at Fortune’s Tavern, to which Lord Holland was introduced by Mr. Thomas Thomson. Two gentlemen who were present, inform me that they distinctly remember a very painful scene, for which, knowing Scott’s habitual good-nature and urbanity, they had been wholly unprepared. One of them (Lord Jeffrey) adds, that this was the only example of rudeness he ever witnessed in him in the course of a lifelong familiarity. I have thought it due to truth and justice not to omit this disagreeable passage in Scott’s life, which shows how even his mind could at times be unhinged and perverted by the malign influence of political spleen. It is consolatory to add, that he enjoyed much agreeable intercourse in after days with Lord Holland, and retained no feelings of resentment towards any other of the Whig gentlemen named in the preceding correspondence.*

* I subjoin a list of the Members of *The Friday Club*, which was instituted in June 1803 (on the model, I believe, of Johnson’s at the Turk’s Head), down to the period of Scott’s death. The others marked, like his name, by an asterisk, are also dead.

1803. * Sir James Hall,	1803. George Cranstoun (Lord
* Professor Dugald Stewart,	Corehouse)
* Professor John Playfair,	* Walter Scott,
* Rev. Arch. Alison,	Thomas Thomson,
Rev. Sydney Smith,	Dr. John Thomson,
* Rev. Peter Elmslie,	John A. Murray (Lord Mur-
* Alex. Irving (Lord New-	ray)
ton)	Henry Brougham (Lord
* Wm. Erskine (Lord Kin-	Brougham)
nedder)	* Henry Mackenzie,

While these affairs were still in progress, the poem of the *Lady of the Lake* was completed. Scott was at the same time arranging the materials, and superintending the printing, of the collection entitled “*English Minstrelsy*,” in which several of his own minor poems first appeared, and which John Ballantyne and Co. also published in the summer of 1810. The *Swift*, too (to say nothing of reviews and the like), was going on; and so was the *Somers*. A new edition of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* was moreover at press, and in it the editor included a few features of novelty, particularly Mr. Morritt’s spirited ballad of the *Curse of Moy*. He gives a lively description of his occupations, in the following letter addressed to that gentleman:—

“*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., 24 Portland Place, London.*

“*Edinburgh, 2d March 1810.*

“My Dear Morritt, — You are very good to remember such a false knave as I am, who have omitted so long to thank you

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1803. H. Mackenzie (Lord Mackenzie), | 1811. T. F. Kennedy, |
| * Malcolm Laing, | J. Fullerton (Lord Fullerton), |
| Henry Cockburn (Lord Cockburn), | John Allen, |
| John Richardson, | * Francis Horner. |
| Francis Jeffrey (Lord Jeffrey). | Thomas Campbell, |
| William Clerk, | 1812. * George Wilson, |
| 1804. * Alex. Hamilton, | 1814. * Dr. John Gordon, |
| * Dr. Coventry, | 1816. Andrew Rutherford, |
| * Professor John Robison, | 1817. * James Keay, |
| George Strickland, | 1825. Leonard Horner, |
| * Professor Dalzell, | Professor Pillans, |
| * Lord Webb Seymour, | 1826. Count M. de Flahault, |
| * Earl of Selkirk, | * D. Cathcart (Lord Allo-way), |
| * Lord Glenbervie, | 1827. Earl of Minto, |
| 1807. * Rev. John Thomson, | William Murray, |
| 1810. John Jeffrey, | 1830. Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone. |

for a letter, bringing me the assurances of your health and remembrance, which I do not value the less deeply and sincerely for my seeming neglect. Truth is, I do not eat the bread of idleness. But I was born a Scotchman, and a bare one, and was therefore born to fight my way with my left hand where my right failed me, and with my teeth, if they were both cut off. This is but a bad apology for not answering your kindness, yet not so bad when you consider that it was only admitted as a cause of procrastination, and that I have been — let me see — I have been Secretary to the Judicature Commission, which sat daily during all the Christmas vacation. I have been editing Swift, and correcting the press, at the rate of six sheets a-week. I have been editing Somers at the rate of four ditto ditto. I have written reviews — I have written songs — I have made selections — I have superintended rehearsals — and all this independent of visiting, and of my official duty, which occupies me four hours every working day except Mondays — and independent of a new poem with which I am threatening the world. This last employment is not the most prudent, but I really cannot well help myself. My office, though a very good one for Scotland, is only held in reversion; nor do I at present derive a shilling from it. I must expect that a fresh favourite of the public will supersede me, and my philosophy being very great on the point of poetical fame, I would fain, at the risk of hastening my own downfall, avail myself of the favourable moment to make some further provision for my little people. Moreover, I cannot otherwise honestly indulge myself in some of the luxuries which, when long gratified, become a sort of pseudo necessities. As for the terrible parodies * which have come forth, I can only say with Benedict, ‘A college of such witmongers cannot flout me out of my humour.’ Had I been conscious of one place about my temper, were it even, metaphorically speaking, the tip of my heel, vulnerable to this sort of aggression, I have that respect for mine own ease, that I would have shunned being a candi-

* I suppose this is an allusion to “The Lay of the Scotch Fiddle,” “The Goblin Groom,” and some other productions, like them, long since forgotten.

date for public applause, as I would avoid snatching a honey-comb from among a hive of live bees. My present attempt is a poem, partly Highland—the scene Loch Katrine, *tempore Jacobi quinti*. If I fail, as Lady Macbeth gallantly says, I fail, and there is only a story murdered to no purpose; and if I succeed, why then, as the song says—

‘Up with the bonnie blue bonnet,
The dirk and the feather and a’.’

“I hope to show this ditty to you soon in Portland Place, for it seems determined I must go to London, though the time is not fixed. The pleasure of meeting you and half a dozen other friends, reconciles me to this change of plan, for had I answered your letter the day I received it, I would have said nothing was less likely than my going to town in spring. I hope it will be so late as to afford me an opportunity of visiting Rokeby and Greta Side on my return. The *felon sow* herself could not think of them with more affection than I do; and though I love Portland Place dearly, yet I would fain enjoy both. But this must be as *the Fates and Destinies and Sisters three* determine. Charlotte hopes to accompany me, and is particularly gratified by the expectation of meeting Mrs. Morritt. We think of our sunny days at Rokeby with equal delight.

“Miss Baillie’s play went off capitally here, notwithstanding her fond and over-credulous belief in a Creator of the world. The fact is so generally believed that it is man who makes the deity, that I am surprised it has never been maintained as a corollary, that the knife and fork make the fingers. We wept till our hearts were sore, and applauded till our hands were blistered—what could we more—and this in crowded theatres.

“I send a copy of the poetical collection, not for you, my good friend, because you would not pay your literary subscription,* but for Mrs. Morritt. I thought of leaving it as I came

* Scott alludes to some translations of Italian poetry which he had wished for Mr. Morritt’s permission to publish in the “English Minstrelsy.”

through Yorkshire, but as I can get *as yet* an office frank, it will be safer in your charge. By a parity of reasoning, you will receive a copy of the new edition of the *Minstrelsy* just finished, and about to be shipped, enriched with your *Curse of Moy*, which is very much admired by all to whom I have shown it. I am sorry that dear —— is so far from you. There is something about her that makes me think of her with a mixture of affection and anxiety—such a pure and excellent heart, joined to such native and fascinating manners, cannot pass unprotected through your fashionable scenes without much hazard of a twinge at least, if not a stab. I remember we talked over this subject once while riding on the banks of Tees, and somehow (I cannot tell why) it falls like a death-bell on my ear. She is too artless for the people that she has to live amongst. This is all vile croaking, so I will end it by begging ten times love and compliments to Mrs. Morritt, in which Charlotte heartily joins. Believe me ever, Dear Morritt, yours most faithfully,

WALTER SCOTT."

Early in May the *Lady of the Lake* came out—as her two elder sisters had done—in all the majesty of quarto, with every accompanying grace of typography, and with, moreover, an engraved frontispiece of Saxon's portrait of Scott; the price of the book, two guineas. For the copyright the poet had nominally received 2000 guineas, but as John Ballantyne and Co. retained three-fourths of the property to themselves (Miller of London purchasing the other fourth), the author's profits were, or should have been, more than this.

It ought to be mentioned, that during the progress of the poem his feelings towards Constable were so much softened, that he authorized John Ballantyne to ask, in his name, that experienced bookseller's advice respecting the amount of the first impression, the method of advertising, and other professional details. Mr. Constable

readily gave the assistance thus requested, and would willingly have taken any share they pleased in the adventure. The property had been disposed of before these communications occurred, and the triumphant success of the *coup d'essai* of the new firm was sufficient to close Scott's ears for a season against any propositions of the like kind from the house at the Cross; but from this time there was no return of anything like personal ill-will between the parties. One article of this correspondence will be sufficient.

“*To Mr. Constable.*”

“Castle Street, 13th March 1810.”

“Dear Sir, — I am sure if Mr. Hunter is really sorry for the occasion of my long absence from your shop, I shall be happy to forget all disagreeable circumstances, and visit it often as a customer and amateur. I think it necessary to add (before departing from this subject, and I hope for ever), that it is not in my power to restore our relative situation as author and publishers, because, upon the breach between us, a large capital was diverted by the Ballantynes from another object, and invested in their present bookselling concern, under an express assurance from me of such support as my future publications could give them; which is a pledge not to be withdrawn without grounds which I cannot anticipate. But this is not a consideration which need prevent our being friends and well-wishers. Yours truly,
W. SCOTT.”

Mr. Robert Cadell, the publisher of this Memoir, who was then a young man in training for his profession in Edinburgh, retains a strong impression of the interest which the *Lady of the Lake* excited there for two or three months before it was on the counter. “James Ballantyne,” he says, “read the cantos from time to time to select coteries, as they advanced at press. Common

fame was loud in their favour; a great poem was on all hands anticipated. I do not recollect that any of all the author's works was ever looked for with more intense anxiety, or that any one of them excited a more extraordinary sensation when it did appear. The whole country rang with the praises of the poet — crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown; and as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors. It is a well-ascertained fact, that from the date of the publication of the *Lady of the Lake*, the post-horse duty in Scotland rose in an extraordinary degree, and indeed it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created."

I owe to the same correspondent the following details:— "The quarto edition of 2050 copies disappeared instantly, and was followed in the course of the same year by four editions in octavo, viz. one of 3000, a second of 3250, and a third and a fourth each of 6000 copies; thus, in the space of a few months, the extraordinary number of 20,000 copies were disposed of. In the next year (1811) there was another edition of 3000; there was one of 2000 in 1814; another of 2000 in 1815; one of 2000 again in 1819; and two, making between them 2500, appeared in 1825: Since which time the *Lady of the Lake*, in collective editions of his poetry, and in separate issues, must have circulated to the extent of, at least 20,000 copies more." So that, down to the month of July 1836, the legitimate sale in Great Britain has been not less than 50,000 copies.

I have little to add to what the Introduction of 1830,

and some letters already extracted, have told us concerning the history of the composition of this poem. Indeed the coincidences of expression and illustration in the Introduction, and those private letters written twenty years before, are remarkable. In both we find him quoting Montrose's lines, and in both he quotes also "Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet," &c. In truth, both letters and Introduction were literal transcripts of his usual conversation on the subject. "A lady," he says, "to whom I was nearly related, and with whom I lived during her whole life on the most brotherly terms of affection, was residing with me (at Ashestiel) when the work was in progress, and used to ask me what I could possibly do to rise so early in the morning. At last I told her the subject of my meditations; and I can never forget the anxiety and affection expressed in her reply. 'Do not be so rash,' she said, 'my dearest cousin. You are already popular — more so perhaps than you yourself will believe, or than even I or other partial friends can fairly allow to your merit. You stand high; — do not rashly attempt to climb higher and incur the risk of a fall; for, depend upon it, a favourite will not be permitted even to stumble with impunity.' I replied to this affectionate expostulation in the words of Montrose: —

'He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all.'

'If I fail,' I said — for the dialogue is strong in my recollection, 'it is a sign that I ought never to have succeeded, and *I will write prose for life*: you shall see no change in my temper, nor will I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed —

‘Up wi’ the bonnie blue bonnet,
The dirk and the feather an’ a’!’

Afterwards I showed my critic the first canto, which reconciled her to my imprudence.” — The lady here alluded to was no doubt Miss Christian Rutherford, his mother’s sister, who, as I have already mentioned, was so little above his age, that they seem always to have lived together on the terms of equality indicated in her use of the word “cousin” in the dialogue before us. She was, however, about as devout a Shakspearian as her nephew, and the use of *cousin*, for kinsman in general, is common to all our elder dramatists.*

He says, in the same essay, “I remember that about the same time a friend started in to ‘heeze up my hope,’ like the minstrel in the old song. He was bred a farmer, but a man of powerful understanding, natural good taste, and warm poetical feeling, perfectly competent to supply the wants of an imperfect or irregular education. He was a passionate admirer of field sports, which we often pursued together. As this friend happened to dine with me at Ashestiel one day, I took the opportunity of reading to him the first canto of the *Lady of the Lake*, in order to ascertain the effect the poem was likely to produce upon a person who was but too favourable a representative of readers at large. His reception of my recitation, or prelection, was rather singular. He placed his hand across his brow, and listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs throw themselves into the lake to follow their master, who embarks with Ellen Douglas. He then started up with a sudden exclamation, struck his hand on the

* Thus Lady Capulet exclaims, on seeing the corpse of Tybalt, —
“Tybalt, my cousin! — O my brother’s child!”

table, and declared, in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase. I own I was much encouraged by the species of reverie which had possessed so zealous a follower of the sports of the ancient Nimrod, who had been completely surprised out of all doubts of the reality of the tale." Scott adds—"Another of his remarks gave me less pleasure. He detected the identity of the king with the wandering knight, Fitz-James, when he winds his bugle to summon his attendants. He was probably thinking of the lively but somewhat licentious old ballad in which the *dénouement* of a royal intrigue" [one of James V. himself by the way] "takes place as follows:—

‘He took a bugle from his side,
He blew both loud and shrill,
And four-and-twenty belted knights
Came skipping owre the hill.

‘Then he took out a little knife,
Let a’ his duddies fa’,
And he was the bravest gentleman
That was amang them a’.
And we’ll go no more a roving,’ &c.

This discovery, as Mr. Pepys says of the rent in his camlet cloak, ‘was but a trifle, yet it troubled me;’ and I was at a good deal of pains to efface any marks by which I thought my secret could be traced before the conclusion, when I relied on it with the same hope of producing effect with which the Irish postboy is said to reserve a ‘trot for the avenue.’”*

I believe the shrewd critic here introduced was the poet’s excellent cousin, Charles Scott, now laird of

* Introduction to the Lady of the Lake—1830.

Knowe-south. The story of the Irish postilion's trot he owed to Mr. Moore.

In their reception of this poem, the critics were for once in full harmony with each other, and with the popular voice. The article in the Quarterly was written by George Ellis; but its eulogies, though less discriminative, are not a whit more emphatic than those of Mr. Jeffrey in the rival Review. Indeed, I have always considered this last paper as the best specimen of contemporary criticism on Scott's poetry; and I shall therefore indulge myself with quoting here two of its paragraphs:—

“ There is nothing in Mr. Scott of the severe and majestic style of Milton — or of the terse and fine composition of Pope — or of the elaborate elegance and melody of Campbell — or even of the flowing and redundant diction of Southey; — but there is a medley of bright and glowing images, set carelessly and loosely together — a diction tinged successively with the careless richness of Shakspeare, the harshness and antique simplicity of the old romances, the homeliness of vulgar ballads and anecdotes, and the sentimental glitter of the most modern poetry — passing from the borders of the ludicrous to those of the sublime — alternately minute and energetic — sometimes artificial, and frequently negligent, but always full of spirit and vivacity — abounding in images that are striking at first sight to minds of every contexture — and never expressing a sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader any exertion to comprehend. Upon the whole, we are inclined to think more highly of the *Lady of the Lake* than of either of its author's former publications. We are more sure, however, that it has fewer faults than that it has greater beauties; and as its beauties bear a strong resemblance to those with which the public has been already made familiar in these celebrated works, we should not be surprised if its popularity were less splendid and remarkable. For our own parts, however, we are of opinion, that it will be oftener read hereafter than either

of them; and that if it had appeared first in the series, their reception would have been less favourable than that which it has experienced. It is more polished in its diction, and more regular in its versification; the story is constructed with infinitely more skill and address; there is a greater proportion of pleasing and tender passages, with much less antiquarian detail; and, upon the whole, a larger variety of characters, more artfully and judiciously contrasted. There is nothing so fine, perhaps, as the battle in *Marmion*—or so picturesque as some of the scattered sketches in the *Lay*; but there is a richness and a spirit in the whole piece, which does not pervade either of those poems—a profusion of incident, and a shifting brilliancy of colouring, that reminds us of the witchery of *Ariosto*—and a constant elasticity, and occasional energy, which seem to belong more peculiarly to the author now before us.

“It is honourable to Mr. Scott’s genius that he has been able to interest the public so deeply with this third presentment of the same chivalrous scenes; but we cannot help thinking, that both his glory and our gratification would have been greater, if he had changed his hand more completely, and actually given us a true Celtic story, with all its drapery and accompaniments, in a corresponding style of decoration. Such a subject, we are persuaded, has very great capabilities, and only wants to be introduced to public notice by such a hand as Mr. Scott’s, to make a still more powerful impression than he has already effected by the resurrection of the tales of romance. There are few persons, we believe, of any degree of poetical susceptibility, who have wandered among the secluded valleys of the Highlands, and contemplated the singular people by whom they are still tenanted—with their love of music and of song—their hardy and irregular life, so unlike the unvarying toils of the Saxon mechanic—their devotion to their chiefs—their wild and lofty traditions—their national enthusiasm—the melancholy grandeur of the scenes they inhabit—and the multiplied superstitions which still linger among them—with-
out feeling that there is no existing people so well adapted for

the purposes of poetry, or so capable of furnishing the occasions of new and striking inventions.

“ We are persuaded, that if Mr. Scott’s powerful and creative genius were to be turned in good earnest to such a subject, something might be produced still more impressive and original than even this age has yet witnessed.” *

The second of these paragraphs is a strikingly prophetic one ; and if the details already given negative the prediction of the first, — namely, that the immediate popularity of the *Lady of the Lake* would be less remarkable than that of the *Lay* or *Marmion* had been — its other prediction, that the new poem would be “ oftener read hereafter than either of the former,” has, I believe, proved just. The *Lay*, if I may venture to state the creed now established, is, I should say, generally considered as the most natural and original, *Marmion* as the most powerful and splendid, the *Lady of the Lake* as the most interesting, romantic, picturesque, and graceful of his great poems.

Of the private opinions expressed at the time of its first publication by his distinguished literary friends, and expressed with an ease and candour equally honourable

* It may interest the reader to compare with this passage a brief extract from Sir James Mackintosh’s *Indian Diary of 1811* : —

“ The subject of the *Lady*,” says he, “ is a common Highland irruption, but at a point where the neighbourhood of the Lowlands affords the best contrast of manners — where the scenery affords the noblest subject of description — and where the wild clan is so near to the Court, that their robberies can be connected with the romantic adventures of a disguised king, an exiled lord, and a high-born beauty. The whole narrative is very fine. There are not so many splendid passages for quotation as in the two former poems. This may indeed silence the objections of the critics, but I doubt whether it will promote the popularity of the poem. It has nothing so good as the *Address to Scotland*, or the *Death of Marmion*.” — *Life of Mackintosh*, vol. ii. p. 82.

to them and to him, that of Mr. Southey was, as far as I know, the only one which called forth anything like a critical reply; and even here, *more suo*, he seems glad to turn from his own productions to those of his correspondent. It will be seen that Mr. Southey had recently put forth the first volume of his History of Brazil; that his Kehama was then in the Ballantyne press; and that he had mentioned to Scott his purpose of writing another poem under the title of "Don Pelayo" — which in the issue was exchanged for that of "Roderick the Last of the Goths."

"To Robert Southey, Esq., Durham.

Edinburgh, May 20, 1810.

"My Dear Southey, — I am very sensible of the value of your kind approbation of my efforts, and trust I shall, under such good auspices, keep my ground with the public. I have studied their taste as much as a thing so variable can be calculated upon, and I hope I have again given them an acceptable subject of entertainment. What you say of the songs is very just, and also of the measure. But, on the one hand, I wish to make a difference between my former poems and this new attempt, in the general tenor of versification, and on the other, having an eye to the benefits derivable from the change of stanza, I omitted no opportunity which could be given or taken, of converting my dog-trot into a hop-step-and-jump. I am impatient to see Kehama; James Ballantyne, who has a good deal of tact, speaks very highly of the poetical fire and beauty which pervades it; and, considering the success of Sir William Jones, I should think the Hindhu mythology would not revolt the common readers, for in that lies your only danger. As for Don Pelayo, it should be exquisite under your management: the subject is noble, the parties finely contrasted in manners, dress, religion, and all that the poet desires to bring into action; and your complete knowledge of every

historian who has touched upon the period, promises the reader at once delight and instruction.

“Twenty times twenty thanks for the History of Brazil, which has been my amusement, and solace, and spring of instruction for this month past. I have always made it my reading-book after dinner, between the removal of the cloth and our early tea-time. There is only one defect I can point out, and that applies to the publishers—I mean the want of a good map. For, to tell you the truth, with my imperfect atlas of South America, I can hardly trace these same *Tups* of yours (which in our Border-dialect signifies *rams*), with all their divisions and subdivisions, through so many ramifications, without a *carte de pays*. The history itself is most singularly entertaining, and throws new light upon a subject which we have hitherto understood very imperfectly. Your labour must have been immense, to judge from the number of curious facts quoted, and unheard-of authorities which you have collected. I have traced the achievements of the Portuguese adventurers with greater interest than I remember to have felt since, when a schoolboy, I first perused the duodecimo collection of Voyages and Discoveries called the World Displayed—a sensation which I thought had been long dead within me; for, to say the truth, the philanthropic and cautious conduct of modern discoverers, though far more amiable, is less entertaining than that of the old Buccaneers, and Spaniards, and Portuguese, who went to conquer and achieve adventures, and met with strange chances of fate in consequence, which could never have befallen a well-armed boat’s crew, not trusting themselves beyond their watering-place, or trading with the natives on the principles of mercantile good faith.

“I have some thoughts of a journey and voyage to the Hebrides this year, but if I don’t make that out, I think I shall make a foray into your northern counties, go to see my friend Morritt at Greta Bridge, and certainly cast myself Keswick-ways either going or coming. I have some literary projects to talk over with you, for the re-editing some of our ancient classical romances and poetry, and so forth. I have great com-

mand of our friends the Ballantynes, and I think, so far as the filthy lucre of gain is concerned, I could make a very advantageous bargain for the time which must necessarily be bestowed in such a labour, besides doing an agreeable thing for ourselves, and a useful service to literature. What is become of Coleridge's *Friend*? I hope he had a letter from me, enclosing my trifling subscription. How does *our* friend, Wordsworth? I won't write to him, because he hates letter-writing as much as I do; but I often think on him, and always with affection. If you make any stay at Durham let me know, as I wish you to know my friend Surtees of Mainsforth.* He is an excellent antiquary, some of the rust of which study has clung to his manners; but he is good-hearted, and you would make the *summer eve* (for so by the courtesy of the kalendar we must call these abominable easterly blighting afternoons) short between you. I presume you are with my friend Dr. Southey, who, I hope, has not quite forgotten me, in which faith I beg kind compliments to him, and am ever yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

George Ellis having undertaken, at Gifford's request, to review the *Lady of the Lake*, does not appear to have addressed any letter to the poet upon the subject, until after his article had appeared. He then says simply, that he had therein expressed his candid sentiments, and hoped his friend, as great a worshipper as himself of Dryden's tales, would take in good part his remarks on the octosyllabic metre as applied to serious continued narrative. The following was Scott's reply:—

* This amiable gentleman, author of the *History of Durham*, in three volumes folio, — one of the most learned as well as interesting works of its class, — was an early and dear friend of Scott's. He died at the family seat of Mainsforth, near Durham, 11th February 1834, in his 55th year. A club has since been instituted for the publication of ancient documents, &c., connected with the history of the English Border, and called, in honour of his memory, *The Surtees Club*.

“ *To G. Ellis, Esq.*

“ My Dear Ellis, — I have been scandalously lazy in answering your kind epistle, received I don't know how long since ; but then I had been long your creditor, and I fancy correspondents, like merchants, are often glad to plead their friends' neglect of their accompt-current as an apology for their own, especially when they know that the value of the payments being adjusted, must leave a sad balance against them. I have run up an attempt on the Curse of Kehama for the Quarterly ; a strange thing it is — the Curse, I mean — and the critique is not, as the blackguards say, worth a damn ; but what I could I did, which was to throw as much weight as possible upon the beautiful passages, of which there are many, and to slur over the absurdities, of which there are not a few. It is infinite pity of Southey, with genius almost to exuberance, so much learning and real good feeling of poetry, that, with the true obstinacy of a foolish papa, he *will* be most attached to the defects of his poetical offspring. This said Kehama affords cruel openings for the quizzers, and I suppose will get it roundly in the Edinburgh Review. I could have made a very different hand of it indeed, had the order of the day been *pour déchirer*.*

“ I told you how much I was delighted with your critique on the Lady ; but, very likely moved by the same feeling for which I have just censured Southey, I am still inclined to defend the eight-syllable stanza, which I have somehow persuaded myself is more congenial to the English language — more favourable to narrative poetry at least — than that which has been commonly termed heroic verse. If you will take the trouble to read a page of Pope's Iliad, you will probably find a good many lines out of which two syllables may be struck without injury to the sense. The first lines of this translation have been repeatedly noticed as capable of being cut down from

* See this article in his *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xvii. pp. 301-337, (Edin. Ed.)

ships of the line into frigates, by striking out the said two-syllabled words, as —

‘Achilles’ wrath to Greece, the *direful* spring
Of woes unnumbered, *heavenly* goddess, sing,
That wrath which sent to Pluto’s *gloomy* reign
The souls of *mighty* chiefs in battle slain,
Whose bones unburied on the *desert* shore,
Devouring dogs and *hungry* vultures tore.’

“Now, since it is true that by throwing out the epithets underscored, we preserve the sense without diminishing the force of the verses — and since it is also true that scarcely one of the epithets are more than merely expletive — I do really think that the structure of verse which requires least of this sort of bolstering, is most likely to be forcible and animated. The case is different in descriptive poetry, because there epithets, if they are happily selected, are rather to be sought after than avoided, and admit of being varied *ad infinitum*. But if in narrative you are frequently compelled to tag your substantives with adjectives, it must frequently happen that you are forced upon those that are merely commonplaces, such as ‘*heavenly goddess*,’ ‘*desert shore*,’ and so forth; and I need not tell you, that whenever any syllable is obviously inserted for the completion of a couplet, the reader is disposed to quarrel with it. Besides, the eight-syllable stanza is capable of certain varieties denied to the heroic. Double rhymes, for instance, are congenial to it, which often give a sort of Gothic richness to its cadences; you may also render it more or less rapid by retaining or dropping an occasional syllable. Lastly, and which I think its principal merit, it runs better into sentences than any length of line I know, as it corresponds, upon an average view of our punctuation, very commonly with the proper and usual space between comma and comma. Lastly the Second, — and which ought perhaps to have been said first, — I think I have somehow a better knack at this ‘false gallop’ of verse, as Touchstone calls it, than at your more legitimate hexameters; and so there is the short and long of my longs and shorts. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT.”

Mr. Ellis recurs to the octosyllabic measure of the *Lady of the Lake* in his next letter. "I don't think," says he, "after all the eloquence with which you plead for your favourite metre, that you really like it from any other motive than that *sainte paresse* — that delightful indolence — which induces one to delight in doing those things which we can do with the least fatigue. If you will take the trouble of converting Dryden's *Theodore and Honoria* (a narrative, is it not?) into Hudibrastic measure, and after trying this on the first twenty lines you feel pleased with the transformation, I will give up the argument; — although, in point of fact, I believe that I regret the *variety* of your own old stanza, much more than the absence of that heroic measure, which you justly remark is not, without great difficulty, capable of being moulded into sentences of various lengths. When, therefore, you give us another poem, pray indulge me with rather a larger share of your ancient dithyrambics."

Canning, too, came to the side of Ellis in this debate. After telling Scott, that "on a repeated perusal" he had been "more and more delighted" with the *Lady of the Lake*, he says — "But I *should* like to see something a little different when you write next. In short, I have sometimes thought (very presumptuously) that partly by persuasion, and partly by showing the effect of a change of dress — of a fuller and more sweeping style — upon some of your favourite passages, I could induce you to present yourself next time in a Drydenic habit. Has this ever occurred to you, and have you tried it, and not liked yourself so well?" We shall see by and by what attention Scott gave to these friendly suggestions.

Of the success of the new poem he speaks as follows in his Introduction of 1830:— "It was certainly so

extraordinary as to induce me for the moment to conclude that I had at last fixed a nail in the proverbially inconstant wheel of Fortune. I had attained, perhaps, that degree of public reputation at which prudence, or certainly timidity, would have made a halt, and discontinued efforts by which I was far more likely to diminish my fame than to increase it. But — as the celebrated John Wilkes is said to have explained to King George the Third that he himself, amid his full tide of popularity, was never a Wilkite — so I can with honest truth exculpate myself from having been at any time a partisan of my own poetry, even when it was in the highest fashion with the million. It must not be supposed that I was either so ungrateful, or so superabundantly candid, as to despise or scorn the value of those whose voice had elevated me so much higher than my own opinion told me I deserved. I felt, on the contrary, the more grateful to the public, as receiving that from partiality which I could not have claimed from merit: and I endeavoured to deserve the partiality by continuing such exertions as I was capable of for their amusement.”

James Ballantyne has preserved in his *Memorandum* an anecdote strikingly confirmative of the most remarkable statement in this page of Scott's confessions. “I remember,” he says, “going into his library shortly after the publication of the *Lady of the Lake*, and finding Miss Scott (who was then a very young girl) there by herself. I asked her — ‘Well, Miss Sophia, how do you like the *Lady of the Lake*?’ Her answer was given with perfect simplicity — ‘Oh, I have not read it; papa says there's nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry.’”

In fact, his children in those days had no idea of the source of his distinction — or rather, indeed, that his

position was in any respect different from that of other Advocates, Sheriffs, and Clerks of Session. The eldest boy came home one afternoon about this time from the High School, with tears and blood hardened together upon his cheeks. — “Well, Wat,” said his father, “what have you been fighting about to-day?” With that the boy blushed and hung his head, and at last stammered out — that “he had been called *a lassie*.” “Indeed!” said Mrs. Scott, “this was a terrible mischief to be sure.” “You may say what you please, mamma,” Wat answered roughly, “but I dinna think there’s a *waufer* (shabbier) thing in the world than to be a lassie, to sit boring at a clout.” Upon further inquiry it turned out that one or two of his companions had dubbed him *The Lady of the Lake*, and the phrase was to him incomprehensible, save as conveying some imputation on his prowess, which he accordingly vindicated in the usual style of the Yards. Of the poem he had never before heard. Shortly after, this story having got wind, one of Scott’s colleagues of the Clerks’ Table said to the boy — “Gilnockie, my man, you cannot surely help seeing that great people make more work about your papa than they do about me or any other of your *uncles* — what is it, do you suppose, that occasions this?” The little fellow pondered for a minute or two, and then answered very gravely — “It’s commonly *him* that sees the hare sitting.” And yet this was the man that had his children all along so very much with him. In truth, however, young Walter had guessed pretty shrewdly in the matter, for his father had all the tact of the Sutherland Highlander, whose detection of an Irish rebel up to the neck in a bog, he has commemorated in a note upon Rokeby. Like him, he was quick to catch the *sparkle* of the future victim’s eye; and often said jest-

ingly of himself, that whatever might be thought of him as a *maker* (poet), he was an excellent *trouveur*.

Ballantyne adds: — “One day about this same time, when his fame was supposed to have reached its acmé, I said to him — ‘Will you excuse me, Mr. Scott, but I should like to ask you what you think of your own genius as a poet, in comparison with that of Burns?’ He replied — ‘There is no comparison whatever — we ought not to be named in the same day.’ ‘Indeed!’ I answered, ‘would you compare Campbell to Burns?’ ‘No, James, not at all — If you wish to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius of our country.’ — But, in fact,” (continues Ballantyne) — “he had often said to me that neither his own nor any modern popular style of composition was that from which he derived most pleasure. I asked him what it was. He answered — Johnson’s; and that he had more pleasure in reading *London*, and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, than any other poetical composition he could mention; and I think I never saw his countenance more indicative of high admiration than while reciting aloud from those productions.”

In his sketch of Johnson’s Life, Scott says — “The deep and pathetic morality of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, has often extracted tears from those whose eyes wander dry over pages professedly sentimental.” * And Lord Byron, in his *Ravenna Diary*, † has the following entry on the same subject: — “Read Johnson’s *Vanity of Human Wishes*, — all the examples and mode of giving them sublime, as well as the latter part, with the ex-

* *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 264, 1834; — vol. i. part 3d, 1841, (Edin. Ed.)

† *Life and Works*, vol. v. p. 66, (Edin. Ed.)

ception of an occasional couplet. 'Tis a grand poem — and so *true!* — true as the 10th of Juvenal himself. The lapse of ages changes all things — time — language — the earth — the bounds of the sea — the stars of the sky, and everything about, around, and underneath man, except man himself, who has always been, and always will be, an unlucky rascal. The infinite variety of lives conduct but to death, and the infinity of wishes lead but to disappointment.” —

The last line of MS. that Scott sent to the press was a quotation from the “Vanity of Human Wishes.” Yet it is the cant of our day — above all, of its poetasters, that Johnson was no poet. To be sure, they say the same of Pope — and hint it occasionally even of Dryden.

CHAPTER XXI.

First Visit to the Hebrides — Staffa — Skye — Mull — Iona, &c. — The Lord of the Isles projected — Letters to Joanna Baillie, Southey, and Morritt.

1810.

WALTER SCOTT was at this epoch in the highest spirits, and having strong reasons of various kinds for his resolution to avail himself of the gale of favour, only hesitated in which quarter to explore the materials of some new romance. His first and most earnest desire was to spend a few months with the British army in the Peninsula, but this he soon resigned, from an amiable motive, which a letter presently to be quoted will explain. He then thought of revisiting Rokeby — for he had from the first day that he spent on that magnificent domain, contemplated it as the scenery of a future poem. But the burst of enthusiasm which followed the appearance of the *Lady of the Lake* finally swayed him to undertake a journey, deeper than he had as yet gone, into the *Highlands*, and a warm invitation from the Laird of Staffa,* a brother of his friend and colleague Mr. Macdonald Buchanan, easily induced him to add a voyage to

* The reader will find a warm tribute to Staffa's character as a Highland landlord, in Scott's article on Sir John Carr's Caledonian Sketches, — (*Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xix.); and some spirited verses, written at his mansion of Ulva, in Scott's *Poetical Works*, edition 1834, vol. x. p. 356; — 1841, p. 641.

the *Hebrides*. He was accompanied by part of his family (not forgetting his dog Wallace), and by several friends besides; among others his relation Mrs. Apreece (now Lady Davy), who had been, as he says in one of his letters, “a lioness of the first magnitude in Edinburgh,” during the preceding winter. He travelled slowly with his own horses, through Argyleshire, as far as Oban; but indeed, even where post-horses might have been had, this was the mode he always preferred in these family excursions, for he delighted in the liberty it afforded him of alighting and lingering as often and as long as he chose: and, in truth, he often performed the far greater part of the day’s journey on foot — examining the map in the morning so as to make himself master of the bearings — and following his own fancy over some old disused riding track, or along the margin of a stream, while the carriage, with its female occupants, adhered to the proper road. At Oban, where they took to the sea, Mrs. Apreece met him by appointment.

He seems to have kept no journal during this expedition; but I shall string together some letters which, with the notes that he contributed many years afterwards to Mr. Croker’s Edition of Boswell, may furnish a tolerable sketch of the insular part of his progress, and of the feelings with which he first inspected the localities of his last great poem — *The Lord of the Isles*. The first of these letters is dated from the Hebridean residence of the young Laird of Staffa.*

“*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*”

“Ulva House, July 19, 1810.

“I cannot, my dear Miss Baillie, resist the temptation of

* Sir Reginald Macdonald Steuart Seton, of Staffa, Allanton, and Touch, Baronet, died on the 15th of April 1838, in his 61st year.

writing to you from scenes which you have rendered classical as well as immortal. We — which in the present case means my wife, my eldest girl, and myself — are thus far in fortunate accomplishment of a pilgrimage to the Hebrides. The day before yesterday we passed the Lady's Rock, in the Sound of Mull, so near that I could almost have touched it. This is, you know, the Rock of your *Family Legend*. The boat, by my desire, went as near as prudence permitted; and I wished to have picked a relic from it, were it but a cockle-shell or a mussel, to have sent to you; but a spring-tide was running with such force and velocity as to make the thing impossible. About two miles farther, we passed under the Castle of Duart, the seat of Maclean, consisting of one huge (indeed immense) square tower, in ruins, and additional turrets and castellated buildings (the work, doubtless, of Benlora's guardianship), on which the roof still moulders. It overhangs the strait channel from a lofty rock, without a single tree in the vicinity, and is surrounded by high and barren mountains, forming altogether as wild and dreary a scene as I ever beheld. Duart is confronted by the opposite castles of Dunstaffnage, Dunolly, Ard-tornish, and others, all once the abodes of grim feudal chiefs, who warred incessantly with each other. I think I counted seven of these fortresses in sight at once, and heard seven times seven legends of war and wonder connected with them. We landed late, wet and cold, on the Island of Mull, near another old castle called Aros, — separated, too, from our clothes, which were in a large wherry, which could not keep pace with our row-boat. Mr. Macdonald of Staffa, my kind friend and guide, had sent his piper (a constant attendant, mark that!) to rouse a Highland gentleman's family in the neighbourhood, where we were received with a profusion of kindness and hospitality. Why should I appal you with a description of our difficulties and distresses — how Charlotte lost her shoes, and little Sophia her whole collection of pebbles — how I was divorced from my razors, and the whole party looked like a Jewish sanhedrim! By this time we were accumulated as follows: — Sir George Paul, the great philanthropist, Mrs.

Apreece, a distant relation of mine, Hannah Mackenzie, a daughter of our friend Henry, and Mackinnon of Mackinnon, a young gentleman born and bred in England, but nevertheless a Highland chief.* It seems his father had acquired wealth, and this young man, who now visits the Highlands for the first time, is anxious to buy back some of the family property, which was sold long since. Some twenty Mackinnons, who happened to live within hearing of our arrival (that is, I suppose, within ten miles of Aros), came posting to see their young chief, who behaved with great kindness, and propriety, and liberality. Next day we rode across the isle on Highland ponies, attended by a numerous retinue of gillies, and arrived at the head of the salt-water loch called Loch-an-Gaoil, where Staffa's boats awaited us with colours flying and pipes playing. We proceeded in state to this lonely isle, where our honoured lord has a very comfortable residence, and were received by a discharge of swivels and musketry from his people.

“Yesterday we visited Staffa and Iona: The former is one of the most extraordinary places I ever beheld. It exceeded, in my mind, every description I had heard of it; or rather, the appearance of the cavern, composed entirely of basaltic pillars as high as the roof of a cathedral,† and running deep

* William Alexander Mackinnon, Esq., now member of Parliament for Lymington, Hants.

† “————— that wondrous dome,
 Where, as to shame the temples deck'd
 By skill of earth's architect,
 Nature herself, it seem'd, would raise
 A minster to her Maker's praise!
 Not for a meaner use ascend
 Her columns, or her arches bend;
 Nor of a theme less solemn tells
 That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,
 And still, between each awful pause
 From the high vault an answer draws,
 In varied tone prolonged and high,
 That mocks the organ's melody.
 Nor doth its entrance front in vain

into the rock, eternally swept by a deep and swelling sea, and paved as it were with ruddy marble, baffles all description. You can walk along the broken pillars, with some difficulty, and in some places with a little danger, as far as the farthest extremity. Boats also can come in below when the sea is placid,—which is seldom the case. I had become a sort of favourite with the Hebridean boatmen, I suppose from my anxiety about their old customs, and they were much pleased to see me get over the obstacles which stopped some of the party. So they took the whim of solemnly christening a great stone seat at the mouth of the cavern, Clachan-an-Bairdh, or the Poet's Stone. It was consecrated with a pibroch, which the echoes rendered tremendous, and a glass of whiskey, not poured forth in the ancient mode of libation, but turned over the throats of the assistants. The head boatman, whose father had been himself a bard, made me a speech on the occasion; but as it was in Gaelic, I could only receive it as a silly beauty does a fine-spun compliment—bow, and say nothing.

“When this fun was over (in which, strange as it may seem, the men were quite serious), we went to Iona, where there are some ancient and curious monuments. From this remote island the light of Christianity shone forth on Scotland and Ireland. The ruins are of a rude architecture, but curious to the antiquary. Our return was less comfortable; we had to row twenty miles against an Atlantic tide and some wind, besides the pleasure of seeing occasional squalls gathering to windward. The ladies were sick, especially poor Hannah Mackenzie, and none of the gentlemen escaped except Staffa and myself. The men, however, cheered by the pipes, and by their own interesting boat-songs, which were uncommonly wild and beautiful, one man leading and the others answering in

To old Iona's holy fane,
That Nature's voice might seem to say,
'Well hast thou done, frail Child of clay!
Thy humble powers that stately shrine
Task'd high and hard—but witness mine!'"

Lord of the Isles, Canto iv. St. 10.

chorus, kept pulling away without apparently the least sense of fatigue, and we reached Ulva at ten at night, tolerably wet, and well disposed for bed.

“ Our friend Staffa is himself an excellent specimen of Highland chieftainship ; he is a cadet of Clanronald, and lord of a cluster of isles on the western side of Mull, and a large estate (in extent at least) on that island. By dint of minute attention to this property, and particularly to the management of his kelp, he has at once trebled his income and doubled his population, while emigration is going on all around him. But he is very attentive to his people, who are distractedly fond of him, and he has them under such regulations as conduce both to his own benefit and their profit ; and keeps a certain sort of rude state and hospitality, in which they can take much pride. I am quite satisfied that nothing under the personal attention of the landlord himself will satisfy a Highland tenantry, and that the substitution of factors, which is now becoming general, is one great cause of emigration. This mode of life has, however, its evils ; and I can see them in this excellent man. The habit of solitary power is dangerous even to the best regulated minds, and this ardent and enthusiastic young man has not escaped the prejudices incident to his situation. But I think I have bestowed enough of my tediousness upon you. To bal- last my letter, I put in one of the hallowed green pebbles from the shore of St. Columba — put it into your work-basket until we meet, when you will give me some account of its virtues. Don't suppose the lapidaries can give you any information about it, for in their profane eyes it is good for nothing. — But the piper is sounding to breakfast, so no more (excepting love to Miss Agnes, Dr. and Mrs. Baillie), from your truly affectionate
WALTER SCOTT.”

“ P. S. — I am told by the learned, the pebble will wear its way out of the letter, so I will keep it till I get to Edinburgh. I must not omit to mention, that all through these islands I have found every person familiarly acquainted with the Family Legend, and great admirers.”

It would be idle to extract many of Scott's notes on Boswell's Hebridean Journal; but the following specimens appear too characteristic to be omitted. Of the island Inchkenneth, where Johnson was received by the head of the clan Maclean, he says—

“Inchkenneth is a most beautiful little islet of the most verdant green, while all the neighbouring shore of Greban, as well as the large islands of Colonsay and Ulva, are as black as heath and moss can make them. But Ulva has a good anchorage, and Inchkenneth is surrounded by shoals. It is now uninhabited. The ruins of the huts, in which Dr. Johnson was received by Sir Allan M'Lean, were still to be seen, and some tatters of the paper hangings were to be seen on the walls. Sir George Onesiphorus Paul was at Inchkenneth with the same party of which I was a member. He seemed to me to suspect many of the Highland tales which he heard, but he showed most incredulity on the subject of Johnson's having been entertained in the wretched huts of which we saw the ruins. He took me aside, and conjured me to tell him the truth of the matter. ‘This Sir Allan,’ said he, ‘was he a *regular baronet*, or was his title such a traditional one as you find in Ireland?’ I assured my excellent acquaintance, that, ‘for my own part, I would have paid more respect to a Knight of Kerry, or Knight of Glynn — yet Sir Allan M'Lean was a *regular baronet* by patent;’ and, having given him this information, I took the liberty of asking him, in return, whether he would not in conscience prefer the worst cell in the jail at Gloucester (which he had been very active in overlooking while the building was going on) to those exposed hovels where Johnson had been entertained by rank and beauty. He looked round the little islet, and allowed Sir Allan had some advantage in exercising ground; but in other respects he thought the compulsory tenants of Gloucester had greatly the advantage. Such was his opinion of a place, concerning which Johnson has recorded that ‘it wanted little which palaces could afford.’

“ Sir Allan M’Lean, like many Highland chiefs, was embarrassed in his private affairs, and exposed to unpleasant solicitations from attorneys, called, in Scotland, *Writers* (which, indeed, was the chief motive of his retiring to Inch Kenneth). Upon one occasion he made a visit to a friend, then residing at Carron Lodge, on the banks of the Carron, where the banks of that river are studded with pretty villas. Sir Allan, admiring the landscape, asked his friend whom that handsome seat belonged to. ‘M——, the Writer to the Signet,’ was the reply. ‘Umph!’ said Sir Allan, but not with an accent of assent, ‘I mean that other house.’ ‘Oh! that belongs to a very honest fellow, Jamie ——, also a Writer to the Signet.’—‘Umph!’ said the Highland chief of M’Lean, with more emphasis than before. — ‘And yon smaller house?’—‘That belongs to a Stirling man; I forget his name, but I am sure he is a writer too; for’—— Sir Allan, who had recoiled a quarter of a circle backward at every response, now wheeled the circle entire, and turned his back on the landscape, saying, ‘My good friend, I must own you have a pretty situation here, but d—n your neighbourhood.’”

The following notices of Boswell himself, and his father, Lord Auchinleck, may be taken as literal transcripts from Scott’s *Table-Talk* :—

“ Boswell himself was callous to the *contacts* of Dr. Johnson, and when telling them, always reminds one of a jockey receiving a kick from the horse which he is showing off to a customer, and is grinning with pain while he is trying to cry out, ‘Pretty rogue — no vice — all fun.’ To him Johnson’s rudeness was only ‘*pretty Fanny’s way*.’ Dr. Robertson had a sense of good breeding, which inclined him rather to forego the benefit of Johnson’s conversation than awaken his rudeness.

“ Old Lord Auchinleck was an able lawyer, a good scholar, after the manner of Scotland, and highly valued his own advantages as a man of good estate and ancient family; and,

moreover, he was a strict Presbyterian and Whig of the old Scottish cast. This did not prevent his being a terribly proud aristocrat; and great was the contempt he entertained and expressed for his son James, for the nature of his friendship, and the character of the personages of whom he was *engoué* one after another. 'There's nae hope for Jamie, mon,' he said to a friend. 'Jamie is gane clean gyte. What do you think, mon? He's done wi' Paoli — he's off wi' the land-louping scoundrel of a Corsican; and whose tail do you think he has pinned himself to now, mon?' Here the old Judge summoned up a sneer of most sovereign contempt. 'A *dominie*, mon — an auld dominie! he kepted a schule, and caud it an *acaadamy*.' Probably if this had been reported to Johnson, he would have felt it most galling, for he never much liked to think of that period of his life; it would have aggravated his dislike of Lord Auchinleck's Whiggery and Presbyterianism. These the old Lord carried to such an unusual height, that once, when a country man came in to state some justice business, and being required to make his oath, declined to do so before his Lordship, because he was not a *covenanted* magistrate — 'Is that a' your objection, mon?' said the Judge; 'come your ways in here, and we'll baith of us tak the solemn league and covenant together.' The oath was accordingly agreed and sworn to by both, and I dare say it was the last time it ever received such homage. It may be surmised how far Lord Auchinleck, such as he is here described, was likely to suit a high Tory and Episcopalian like Johnson. As they approached Auchinleck, Boswell conjured Johnson by all the ties of regard, and in requital of the services he had rendered him upon his tour, that he would spare two subjects in tenderness to his father's prejudices; the first related to Sir John Pringle, President of the Royal Society, about whom there was then some dispute current; the second concerned the general question of Whig and Tory. Sir John Pringle, as Boswell says, escaped, but the controversy between Tory and Covenanter raged with great fury, and ended in Johnson's pressing upon the old Judge the question, what good Cromwell, of whom he had said

something derogatory, had ever done to his country? — when, after being much tortured, Lord Auchinleck at last spoke out, ‘ God ! doctor, he gart kings ken that they had a *lith* in their neck ’ — he taugt kings they had a *joint* in their necks. Jamie then set to mediating between his father and the philosopher, and availing himself of the Judge’s sense of hospitality, which was punctilious, reduced the debate to more order.”

The following letter, dated Ashestiel, August 9, appears to have been written immediately on Scott’s return from this expedition : —

“ *To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

“ My Dear Morritt, — Your letter reached me in the very centre of the Isle of Mull, from which circumstance you will perceive how vain it was for me even to attempt availing myself of your kind invitation to Rokeby, which would otherwise have given us so much pleasure. We deeply regretted the absence of our kind and accomplished friends, the Clephanes, yet, *entre nous*, as we were upon a visit to a family of the Capulets, I do not know but we may pay our respects to them more pleasantly at another time. There subsist some aching scars of the old wounds which were in former times inflicted upon each other by the rival tribes of M’Lean and Macdonald, and my very good friends the Laird of Staffa and Mrs. M’Lean Clephane are both too true Highlanders to be without the characteristic prejudices of their clans, which, in their case, divide two highly-accomplished and most estimable families, living almost within sight of each other, and on an island where polished conversation cannot be supposed to abound.

“ I was delighted, on the whole, with my excursion. The weather was most excellent during the whole time of our wanderings ; and I need not tell you of Highland hospitality. The cavern at Staffa, and indeed the island itself, *dont on parle en histoire*, is one of the few *lions* which completely maintain an extended reputation. I do not know whether its extreme resemblance to a work of art, from the perfect regu-

larity of the columns, or the grandeur of its dimensions, far exceeding the works of human industry, joined to a certain ruggedness and magnificent irregularity, by which nature vindicates her handiwork, are most forcibly impressed upon my memory. We also saw the far-famed Island of Columba, where there are many monuments of singular curiosity, forming a strange contrast to the squalid and dejected poverty of the present inhabitants of the isle. We accomplished both these objects in one day, but our return, though we had no alarms to boast of, was fatiguing to the ladies, and the sea not affording us quite such a smooth passage as we had upon the Thames (that morning we heard the voice of Lysons setting forth the contents of the records in the White Tower), did, as one may say, excite a combustion in the stomachs of some of our party. Mine being a staunch anti-revolutionist, was no otherwise troublesome than by demanding frequent supplies of cold beef and biscuit. Mrs. Apreece was of our party. Also

‘—Sir George Paul, for prison-house renowned,
A wandering knight, on high adventures bound.’

— We left this celebrated philanthropist in a plight not unlike some of the misadventures of ‘Him of the sorrowful figure.’ The worthy baronet was mounted on a quadruped, which the owners called a pony, with his woful valet on another, and travelling slowly along the coast of Mull, in order to detect the point which approached nearest to the continent, protesting he would not again put foot in a boat till he had discovered the shortest possible trajet. Our separation reminded me of the disastrous incident in Byron’s Shipwreck, when they were forced to abandon two of their crew on an unknown coast, and beheld them at a distance commencing their solitary peregrination along the cliffs.

WALTER SCOTT.”

The Iona pebble, mentioned in Scott’s letter from Ulva, being set in a brooch of the form of a harp, was sent to Joanna Baillie some months later; but it may be as well to insert here the letter which accompanied it.

The young friend, to whose return from a trip to the seat of war in the Peninsula it alludes, was John Miller, Esq., then practising at the Scotch Bar, but now an eminent King's counsel of Lincoln's Inn.

“ To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.

“Edinburgh, Nov. 23, 1810.

“I should not have been so long your debtor, my dear Miss Baillie, for your kind and valued letter, had not the false knave, at whose magic touch the Iona pebbles were to assume a shape in some degree appropriate to the person to whom they are destined, delayed finishing his task. I hope you will set some value upon this little trumpery brooch, because it is a harp, and a Scotch harp, and set with Iona stones. This last circumstance is more valuable, if ancient tales be true, than can be ascertained from the reports of dull modern lapidaries. These green stones, blessed of St. Columba, have a virtue, saith old Martin, to gratify each of them a single wish of the wearer. I believe, that which is most frequently formed by those who gather them upon the shores of the Saint, is for a fair wind to transport them from his domains. Now, after this, you must suppose everything respecting this said harp sacred and hallowed. The very inscription is, you will please to observe, in the ancient Celtic language and character, and has a very talismanic look. I hope that upon you it will have the effect of a conjuration, for the words *Buail a'n Teud* signify *Strike the String*; and thus having, like the pedlars who deal in like matters of value, exhausted all my eloquence in setting forth the excellent outward qualities and mysterious virtues of my little keepsake, I have only to add, in homely phrase, God give you joy to wear it. I am delighted with the account of your brother's silvan empire in Glo'stershire. The planting and cultivation of trees always seemed to me the most interesting occupation of the country. I cannot enter into the spirit of common vulgar farming, though I am doomed to carry on, in a small extent, that losing trade. It never occurred to

me to be a bit more happy because my turnips were better than my neighbours; and as for *grieving* my shearers, as we very emphatically term it in Scotland, I am always too happy to get out of the way, that I may hear them laughing at a distance when on the harvest rigg.

‘ So every servant takes his course,
And bad at first, they all grow worse ’ —

I mean for the purposes of agriculture, — for my hind shall kill a salmon, and my plough-boy find a hare sitting, with any man in the Forest. But planting and pruning trees I could work at from morning till night; and if ever my poetical revenues enable me to have a few acres of my own, that is one of the principal pleasures I look forward to. There is, too, a sort of self-congratulation, a little tickling self-flattery in the idea that, while you are pleasing and amusing yourself, you are seriously contributing to the future welfare of the country, and that your very acorn may send its future ribs of oak to future victories like Trafalgar.

“ You have now by my calculation abandoned your extensive domains and returned to your Hampstead villa, which, at this season of the year, though the lesser, will prove, from your neighbourhood to good society, the more comfortable habitation of the two. Dr. Baillie’s cares are transferred (I fear for some time) to a charge still more important than the poor Princess.* I trust in God that his skill and that of his brethren may be of advantage to the poor King; for a Regency, from its unsettled and uncertain tenure, must in every country, but especially where parties run so high, be a lamentable business. I wonder that the consequences which have taken place had not occurred sooner, during the long and trying suspense in which his mind must have been held by the protracted lingering state of a beloved child.

“ Your country neighbours interest me excessively. I was delighted with the man, who remembered me, though he had

* The Princess Amelia — whose death was immediately followed by the hopeless malady of King George III.

forgotten Sancho Panza; but I am afraid my pre-eminence in his memory will not remain much longer than the worthy squire's government at Barataria. Meanwhile, the Lady of the Lake is likely to come to preferment in an unexpected manner, for two persons of no less eminence than Messrs. Martin and Reynolds, play carpenters in ordinary to Covent Garden, are employed in scrubbing, careening, and cutting her down into one of those new-fashioned sloops called a melodrama, to be launched at the theatre; and my friend Mr. H. Siddons, emulous of such a noble design, is at work on the same job here. It puts me in mind of the observation with which our parish smith accompanied his answer to an inquiry whom he had heard preach on Sunday — 'Mr. such-a-one — O! sir, he made *neat work*,' thinking, doubtless, of turning off a horse-shoe handsomely. I think my worthy artizans will make neat work too before they have done with my unlucky materials — but, as Durandarte says in the cavern of Montesinos — 'Patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards.' Jeffrey was the author of the critique in the Edinburgh; he sent it to me in the sheet, with an apology for some things in that of Marmion which he said contained needless asperities; and, indeed, whatever I may think of the justice of some part of his criticism, I think his general tone is much softened in my behalf.

“ You say nothing about the drama on Fear, for which you have chosen so admirable a subject, and which, I think, will be in your own most powerful manner. I hope you will have an eye to its being actually represented. Perhaps of all passions it is the most universally interesting; for although most part of an audience may have been in love once in their lives, and many engaged in the pursuits of ambition, and some perhaps have fostered deadly hate; yet there will always be many in each case who cannot judge of the operations of these motives from personal experience: Whereas, I will bet my life there is not a soul of them but has felt the impulse of fear, were it but, as the old tale goes, at snuffing a candle with his fingers. I believe I should have been able to communicate some personal anecdotes on the subject, had I been enabled to accomplish a

plan I have had much at heart this summer, namely, to take a peep at Lord Wellington and his merry men in Portugal; but I found the idea gave Mrs. Scott more distress than I am entitled to do for the mere gratification of my own curiosity. Not that there would have been any great danger,—for I could easily, as a non-combatant, have kept out of the way of the ‘grinning honour’ of my namesake, Sir Walter Blount,* and I think I should have been overpaid for a little hardship and risk by the novelty of the scene. I could have got very good recommendations to Lord Wellington; and, I dare say, I should have picked up some curious materials for battle scenery. A friend of mine made the very expedition, and arriving at Oporto when our army was in retreat from the frontier, he was told of the difficulty and danger he might encounter in crossing the country to the southward, so as to join them on the march; nevertheless, he travelled on through a country totally deserted, unless when he met bands of fugitive peasantry flying they scarce knew whither, or the yet wilder groups of the *Ordinanza*, or *levy en masse*, who, fired with revenge or desire of plunder, had armed themselves to harass the French detached parties. At length in a low glen he heard, with feelings that may be easily conceived, the distant sound of a Highland bagpipe playing ‘The Garb of Old Gaul,’ and fell into the quarters of a Scotch regiment, where he was most courteously received by his countrymen, who assured ‘his honour he was just come in time to see the pattle.’ Accordingly, being a young man of spirit, and a volunteer sharpshooter, he got a rifle, joined the light corps, and next day witnessed the Battle of Busaco, of which he describes the carnage as being terrible. The narrative was very simply told, and conveyed, better than any I have seen, the impressions which such scenes are likely to make when they have the effect (I had almost said the charm) of novelty. I don’t know why it is I never found a soldier could give me an idea of a battle. I believe their mind is too much upon the *tactique* to

* See 1st *K. Henry IV.* Act V. Scene 3.

regard the picturesque, just as the lawyers care very little for an eloquent speech at the Bar, if it does not show good doctrine. The technical phrases of the military art, too, are unfavourable to convey a description of the concomitant terror and desolation that attends an engagement; but enough of 'this bald disjointed chat,'* from ever yours, W. S."

There appeared in the London Courier of September 15, 1810, an article signed S. T. C., charging Scott with being a plagiarist, more especially from the works of the poet for whose initials this signature had no doubt been meant to pass. On reading this silly libel, Mr. Southey felt satisfied that Samuel Taylor Coleridge could have no concern in its manufacture; but as Scott was not so well acquainted with Coleridge as himself, he lost no time in procuring his friend's indignant disavowal, and forwarding it to Ashestiel. Scott acknowledges this delicate attention as follows:—

"To Robert Southey, Esq.

"Ashestiel, Thursday.

"My Dear Southey, — Your letter, this morning received, released me from the very painful feeling, that a man of Mr. Coleridge's high talents, which I had always been among the first to appreciate as they deserve, had thought me worthy of the sort of public attack which appeared in the Courier of the 15th. The initials are so remarkable, and the trick so very impudent, that I was likely to be fairly duped by it, for which I have to request Mr. Coleridge's forgiveness. I believe attacks of any sort sit as light upon me as they can on any one. If I have had my share of them, it is one point, at least, in which I resemble greater poets — but I should not like to have them come from the hand of contemporary genius. A man, though he does

* Hotspur — 1st *K. Henry IV.* Act I. Scene 3.

not 'wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at,'* would not willingly be stooped upon by a falcon. I am truly obliged to your friendship for so speedily relieving me from so painful a feeling. The hoax was probably designed to set two followers of literature by the ears, and I dare say will be followed up by something equally impudent. As for the imitations, I have not the least hesitation in saying to you, that I was unconscious at the time of appropriating the goods of others, although I have not the least doubt that several of the passages must have been running in my head. Had I meant to steal, I would have been more cautious to disfigure the stolen goods. In one or two instances the resemblance seems general and casual, and in one, I think, it was impossible I could practise plagiarism, as Ethwald, one of the poems quoted, was published *after* the Lay of the Last Minstrel. A witty rogue, the other day, who sent me a letter subscribed Detector, proved me guilty of stealing a passage from one of Vida's Latin poems, which I had never seen or heard of; yet there was so strong a general resemblance, as fairly to authorize Detector's suspicion.

"I renounced my Greta excursion in consequence of having made instead a tour to the Highlands, particularly to the Isles. I wished for Wordsworth and you a hundred times. The scenery is quite different from that on the mainland — dark, savage, and horrid, but occasionally magnificent in the highest degree. Staffa, in particular, merits well its far-famed reputation: it is a cathedral arch, scooped by the hand of nature, equal in dimensions and in regularity to the most magnificent aisle of a gothic cathedral. The sea rolls up to the extremity in most tremendous majesty, and with a voice like ten thousand giants shouting at once. I visited Icolmkill also, where there are some curious monuments, mouldering among the poorest and most naked wretches that I ever beheld. Affectionately yours,
W. SCOTT."

The "lines of VIDA," which "Detector" had enclosed

* *Othello*, Act I. Scene 1.

to Scott as the obvious original of the address to "Woman" in *Marmion*, closing with

"When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

end as follows;— and it must be owned that, if Vida had really written them, a more extraordinary example of casual coincidence could never have been pointed out—

"Cum dolor atque supercilio gravis imminet angor,
Fungaris angelico sola ministerio!"

Detector's reference is "*VIDA ad Eranen*, El. II. v. 21;"— but it is almost needless to add there are no such lines—and no piece bearing such a title in Vida's works. Detector was no doubt some young college wag, for his letter has a Cambridge postmark.

CHAPTER XXII.

Life of Miss Seward — Waverley resumed — Ballantyne's Critique on the First Chapters of the Novel — Waverley again laid aside — Unfortunate Speculations of John Ballantyne and Co. ; History of the Culdees ; Tixall Poetry ; Beaumont and Fletcher ; Edinburgh Annual Register, &c. — Scott's Essay on Judicial Reform — His Scheme of going to India — Letters on the War in the Peninsula — Death of Lord President Blair — and of Lord Melville — Publication of the Vision of Don Roderick — The Inferno of Altesidora, &c.

1810—1811.

IN the course of this autumn appeared the Poetical Works of Miss Seward, in three volumes, with a Prefatory Memoir of her Life by Scott. This edition had, as we have seen, been enjoined by her last will — but his part in it was an ungrateful one, and the book was among the most unfortunate that James Ballantyne printed, and his brother published, in deference to the personal feelings of their partner. He had been, as was natural, pleased and flattered by the attentions of the Lichfield poetess in the days of his early aspirations after literary distinction ; but her verses, which he had with his usual readiness praised to herself beyond their worth, appeared when collected a formidable monument of mediocrity. Her Correspondence, published at the same time by Con-

stable, was considered by him with still greater aversion. He requested the bookseller to allow him to look over the MS., and draw his pen through passages in which her allusions to letters of his own might compromise him as a critic on his poetical contemporaries. To this request Constable handsomely acceded, although it was evident that he thus deprived the collection of its best chance of popularity. I see, on comparing her letters as they originally reached Scott, with the printed copies, that he had also struck out many of her most extravagant rhapsodies about himself and his works. No collection of this kind, after all, can be wholly without value; I have already drawn from it some sufficiently interesting fragments, as the biographers of other eminent authors of this time will probably do hereafter under the like circumstances: and, however affected and absurd, Miss Seward's prose is certainly far better than her verse.

And now I come to a very curious letter of James Ballantyne's, the date of which seems to fix pretty accurately the time when Scott *first* resumed the long-forgotten MS. of his *Waverley*. As in the Introduction of 1829 he mentions having received discouragement as to the opening part of the novel from two friends, and as Ballantyne on this occasion writes as if he had never before seen any portion of it, I conclude that the fragment of 1805 had in that year been submitted to Erskine alone.

“ To Walter Scott, Esq., Ashestiel.

“ Edinburgh, Sept. 15, 1810.

“ Dear Sir, — What you have sent of *Waverley* has amused me much; and certainly if I had read it as part of a new novel, the remainder of which was open to my perusal, I should have proceeded with avidity. So much for its general

effect ; but you have sent me too little to enable me to form a decided opinion. Were I to say that I was equally struck with *Waverley* as I was with the much smaller portion of the *Lady*, which you first presented to us as a specimen, the truth would not be in me ; but the cases are different. It is impossible that a small part of a fine novel can equally impress one with the decided conviction of splendour and success as a small part of a fine poem. I will state one or two things that strike me. Considering that ‘sixty years since’ only leads us back to the year 1750, a period when our fathers were alive and merry, it seems to me that the air of antiquity diffused over the character is rather too great to harmonize with the time. The period is modern ; Johnson was writing — and Garrick was acting — and in fact scarcely anything appears to have altered, more important than the cut of a coat.

“The account of the studies of *Waverley* seems unnecessarily minute. There are few novel readers to whom it would be interesting. I can see at once the connexion between the studies of *Don Quixote*, or of the *Female Quixote*, and the events of their lives ; but I have not yet been able to trace betwixt *Waverley*’s character and his studies such clear and decided connexion. The account, in short, seemed to me too particular ; quite unlike your usual mode in your poetry, and less happy. It may be, however, that the further progress of the character will defeat this criticism. The character itself I think excellent and interesting, and I was equally astonished and delighted to find in the last-written chapter, that you can paint to the eye in prose as well as in verse.

“Perhaps your own reflections are rather too often mixed with the narrative — but I state this with much diffidence. I do not mean to object to a train of reflections arising from some striking event, but I don’t like their so frequent recurrence. The language is spirited, but perhaps rather careless. The humour is admirable. Should you go on ? My opinion is, clearly — certainly. I have no doubt of success, though it is impossible to guess how much. . . . — Ever respectfully,
J. B.”

The part of the letter which I have omitted, refers to the state of Ballantyne's business at the time when it was written. He had, that same week, completed the eleventh edition of the *Lay*; and the fifth of the *Lady of the Lake* had not passed through his press, before new orders from London called for the beginning of a sixth. I presume the printer's exultation on this triumphant success had a great share in leading him to consider with doubt and suspicion the propriety of his friend's interrupting just then his career as the great caterer for readers of poetry. However this and other matters may have stood, the novel appears to have been forthwith laid aside again.

Some sentences refer to less fortunate circumstances in their joint affairs. The publishing firm was not as yet a twelvemonth old, and already James began to apprehend that some of their mightiest undertakings would wholly disappoint Scott's prognostications. He speaks with particular alarm of the edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, of which Weber had now dismissed several volumes from his incompetent and presumptuous hand. How Scott should ever have countenanced the project of an edition of an English book of this class, by a mere drudging *German*, appears to me quite inexplicable. He placed at Weber's disposal his own annotated copy, which had been offered some years before for the use of Gifford; but Weber's text is thoroughly disgraceful, and so are all the notes, except those which he owed to his patron's own pen. James Ballantyne augurs, and well might he do so, not less darkly, as to "the Aston speculation" — that is, the bulky collection entitled "Tixall poetry." "Over this," he says, "the (Edinburgh) Review of the Sadler has thrown a heavy cloud — the fact is, it seems to me to have ruined it. Here is the same editor and the same

printer, and your name withdrawn. I hope you agree with John and me, that this Aston business ought to be got rid of at almost any sacrifice. We could not now even ask a London bookseller to take a share, and a net outlay of near £2500, upon a worse than doubtful speculation, is surely 'most tolerable and not to be endured.'"

Another unpromising adventure of this season, was the publication of the History of *the Culdees* (that is, of the clergy of the primitive Scoto-Celtic Church), by Scott's worthy old friend, Dr. John Jamieson, the author of the celebrated Dictionary. This work, treating of an obscure subject, on which very different opinions were and are entertained by Episcopalians on the one hand, and the adherents of Presbyterianism on the other, was also printed and published by the Ballantynes, in consequence of the interest which Scott felt, not for the writer's hypothesis, but for the writer personally: and the result was another heavy loss to himself and his partners. But a far more serious business was the establishment of the Edinburgh Annual Register, which, as we have seen, was suggested by Scott in the very dawn of his bookselling projects. The two first volumes were issued about this time, and expectation had been highly excited by the announcement that the historical department was in the hands of Southey, while Scott and many other eminent persons were to contribute regularly to its miscellaneous literature and science. Mr. Southey was fortunate in beginning his narrative with the great era of the Spanish Revolt against Napoleon, and it exhibited his usual research, reflection, elegance, and spirit. Several of the miscellanies, also, were admirable: Mr. Southey inserted in the second volume for 1808, published in 1810, some of the most admired of his minor poems; — and Scott did

the like. He moreover drew up for that volume an Essay of considerable extent on those changes in the Scottish System of Judicature, which had occupied the attention of the Commission under which he served as secretary; and the sagacity of this piece appears, on the whole, as honourable to him, as the clear felicity of its language. Nevertheless, the public were alarmed by the prospect of two volumes annually: it was, in short, a new periodical publication on a large scale; all such adventures are hazardous in the extreme; and none of them ever can succeed, unless there be a skilful bookseller, and a zealous editor, who give a very large share of their industry and intelligence, day after day, to the conduct of all its arrangements. Such a bookseller John Ballantyne was not; such an editor, with Scott's multifarious engagements, he could not be for an Annual Register; and who, indeed, could wish that this had been otherwise? The volumes succeeded each other at irregular intervals; there was soon felt the want of one ever active presiding spirit; and though the work was continued during a long series of years, it never was the source of anything but anxiety and disappointment to its original projectors.

I am tempted, as Scott's Essay on Judicial Reform has never been included in any collection of his writings, to extract here a few specimens of a composition which appears to be as characteristic of the man as any that ever proceeded from his pen. His deep jealousy of the national honour of Scotland, his fear lest the course of innovation at this time threatened should end in a total assimilation of her Jurisprudence to the system of the more powerful sister country, and his habitual and deep-rooted dread of change in matters affecting the whole

machinery of social existence, are expressed in, among others, the following passages :—

“ An established system is not to be tried by those tests which may with perfect correctness be applied to a new theory. A civilized nation, long in possession of a code of law, under which, with all its inconveniences, they have found means to flourish, is not to be regarded as an infant colony, on which experiments in legislation may, without much charge of presumption, be hazarded. A philosopher is not entitled to investigate such a system by those ideas which he has fixed in his own mind as the standard of possible excellence. The only unerring test of every old establishment is the *effect* it has actually produced ; for that must be held to be good, from whence good is derived. The people have, by degrees, moulded their habits to the law they are compelled to obey ; for some of its imperfections, remedies have been found ; to others they have reconciled themselves ; till, at last, they have, from various causes, attained the object which the most sanguine visionary could promise to himself from his own perfect *unembodied* system. Let us not be understood to mean, that a superstitious regard for antiquity ought to stay the hand of a temperate reform. But the task is delicate, and full of danger ; perilous in its execution, and extremely doubtful in its issue. Is there not rational ground to apprehend, that, in attempting to eradicate the disease, the sound part of the constitution may be essentially injured ? Can we be quite certain that less inconvenience will result from that newly discovered and unknown remedy, than from the evil, which the juices and humours with which it has long been incorporated may have neutralized ?— that, after a thorough reformation has been achieved, it may not be found necessary to counterwork the antidote itself, by having recourse to the very error we have incautiously abjured ? We are taught, by great authority, that ‘ possibly they may espy something that may, in truth, be mischievous in some particular case, but weigh not how many inconveniences are, on the other side, prevented or remedied by

that which is the supposed vicious strictness of the law ; and he that purchases a reformation of a law with the introduction of greater inconveniences, by the amotion of a mischief, makes an ill bargain. No human law can be absolutely perfect. It is sufficient that it be best *ut plurimum* ; and as to the mischiefs that it occasions, as they are accidental and casual, so they may be oftentimes, by due care, prevented, without an alteration of the main.*

“ Every great reform, we farther conceive, ought to be taken at a point somewhat lower than the necessity seems to require. Montesquieu has a chapter, of which the title is, *Qu'il ne faut pas tout corriger*. Our improvement ought to contain within itself a principle of progressive improvement. We are thus enabled to see our way distinctly before us ; we have, at the same time, under our eyes, the ancient malady, with the palliatives by which the hand of time has controlled its natural symptoms, and the effects arising from the process intended to remove it ; and our course, whether we advance or recede, will be safe, and confident, and honourable ; whereas, by taking our reform at the utmost possible stretch of the wrong complained of, we cannot fail to bring into disrepute the order of things, as established, without any corresponding certainty that our innovations will produce the result which our sanguine hopes have anticipated ; and we thus deprive ourselves of the chance of a secure retreat, in the event of our failure.”

Nor does the following paragraph on the proposal for extending to Scotland the system of *Jury Trial* in civil actions of *all classes*, appear to me less characteristic of Scott : —

“ We feel it very difficult to associate with this subject any idea of political or personal liberty ; both of which have been supposed to be secured, and even to be rendered more valuable, by means of the trial by jury in questions of private right. It is perhaps owing to our want of information, or to the

* Lord Hale on the Amendment of the Laws.

phlegm and frigidity of our national character, that we cannot participate in that enthusiasm which the very name of this institution is said to excite in many a patriotic bosom. We can listen to the cabalistic sound of Trial by Jury, which has produced effects only to be paralleled by those of the mysterious words uttered by the Queen of the City of Enchantments, in the Arabian Tale, and retain the entire possession of our form and senses. We understand that sentiment of a celebrated author, that this barrier against the usurpation of power, in matters where power has any concern, may probably avert from our island the fate of many states that now exist but in history; and we think this great possession is peculiarly valuable in Scotland, where the privileges of the public prosecutor are not controlled by those of a grand jury. The merits of the establishment we are now examining are to be ascertained by a different test. It is merely a contrivance for attaining the ends of private justice, for developing the merits of a civil question in which individuals are interested; and that contrivance is the best, which most speedily and effectually serves the purpose for which it was framed. In causes of that description, no shield is necessary against the invasion of power; the issue is to be investigated without leaning or partiality, for whatever is unduly given to one party is unduly wrested from the other; and unless we take under our consideration those advantages which time or accident may have introduced, we see not what superiority can in the abstract be supposed to belong to this as a judicature for the determination of all or the greater number of civil actions. We discover no ground for suspecting that the judgments of a few well-educated and upright men may be influenced by any undue bias; that an interest, merely patrimonial, is more safely lodged in an obscure and evanescent body than in a dignified, independent, and permanent tribunal, versed in the science to be administered, and responsible for the decisions they pronounce; — and we suspect that a philosopher, contemplating both in his closet, will augur more danger from a system which devolves on one set of men the responsibility of doctrines taught them by an-

other, than from that system which attaches to the judges all the consequences of the law they deliver."

Some, though not all, of the changes deprecated in this Essay, had been adopted by the Legislature before it was published; others of them have since been submitted to experiment; and I believe that, on the whole, his views may safely bear the test to which time has exposed them — though as to the particular point of *trial by jury in civil causes*, the dreaded innovation, being conducted by wise and temperate hands, has in its results proved satisfactory to the people at large, as well as to the Bench and the Bar of Scotland. I have, however, chiefly introduced the above extracts as illustrative of the dissatisfaction with which Scott considered the commencement of a *system* of jurisprudential innovation; and though it must not be forgotten that his own office as a Clerk of Session had never yet brought him anything but labour, and that he consequently complained from time to time of the inroads this labour made on hours which might otherwise have been more profitably bestowed, I suspect his antipathy to this new system, as a system, had no small share in producing the state of mind indicated in a remarkable letter addressed, in the later part of this year, to his brother Thomas. The other source of uneasiness to which it alludes has been already touched upon — and we shall have but too much of it hereafter. He says to his brother (Ashestiel, 1st November 1810), "I have no objection to tell you in confidence, that, were Dundas to go out Governor-General to India, and were he willing to take me with him in a good situation, I would not hesitate to pitch the Court of Session and the booksellers to the Devil, and try my fortune in another climate." He adds, "but this is strictly *entre nous*" — nor indeed was

I aware, until I found this letter, that he had ever entertained such a design as that which it communicates. Mr. Dundas (now Lord Melville), being deeply conversant in our Eastern affairs, and highly acceptable to the Court of Directors in the office of President of the Board of Control, which he had long filled, was spoken of, at various times in the course of his public life, as likely to be appointed Governor-General of India. He had, no doubt, hinted to Scott, that in case he should ever assume that high station it would be very agreeable for him to be accompanied by his early friend: and there could be little question of his capacity to have filled with distinction the part either of an Indian secretary or of an Indian judge.

But, though it is easy to account for his expressing in so marked a manner at this particular period his willingness to relinquish literature as the main occupation of his time; it is impossible to consider the whole course of his correspondence and conversation, without agreeing in the conclusion of Mr. Morritt, that he was all along sincere in the opinion that literature ought never to be ranked on the same scale of importance with the conduct of business in any of the great departments of public life. This opinion he always expressed; and I have no doubt that, at any period preceding his acquisition of a landed property, he would have acted on it, even to the extent of leaving Scotland, had a suitable opportunity been afforded him to give that evidence of his sincerity. This is so remarkable a feature in his character, that the reader will forgive me should I recur to it in the sequel.

At the same time I have no notion that at this or any other period he contemplated abandoning literature. Such a thought would hardly enter the head of the man, not yet forty years of age, whose career had been one of

unbroken success, and whose third great work had just been received with a degree of favour, both critical and popular, altogether unprecedented in the annals of his country. His hope, no doubt, was that an honourable official station in the East might afford him both a world of new materials for poetry, and what would in his case be abundance of leisure for turning them to account, according to the deliberate dictates of his own judgment. What he desired to escape from was not the exertion of his genius, which must ever have been to him the source of his most exquisite enjoyment, but the daily round of prosaic and perplexing toils in which his connexion with the Ballantynes had involved him. He was able to combine the regular discharge of such functions with the exercise of the high powers of imagination, in a manner of which history affords no other example; yet many, no doubt, were the weary hours, when he repented him of the rash engagements which had imposed such a burden of mere task work on his energies. But his external position, before the lapse of another year, underwent a change which for ever fixed his destiny to the soil of his best affections and happiest inspirations.

The letters of Scott to all his friends have sufficiently shown the unflagging interest with which, among all his personal labours and anxieties, he watched the progress of the great contest in the Peninsula. It was so earnest, that he never on any journey, not even in his very frequent passages between Edinburgh and Ashes-tiel, omitted to take with him the largest and best map he had been able to procure of the seat of war; upon this he was perpetually poring, tracing the marches and counter-marches of the French and English by means of black and white pins; and not seldom did Mrs. Scott

complain of this constant occupation of his attention and her carriage. In the beginning of 1811, a committee was formed in London to collect subscriptions for the relief of the Portuguese, who had seen their lands wasted, their vines torn up, and their houses burnt in the course of Massena's last unfortunate campaign; and Scott, on reading the advertisement, immediately addressed Mr. Whitmore, the chairman, begging that the committee would allow him to contribute to their fund the profits, to whatever they might amount, of a poem which he proposed to write upon a subject connected with the localities of the patriotic struggle. His offer was of course accepted; and "THE VISION OF DON RODERICK" was begun as soon as the Spring vacation enabled him to retire to Ashestiel.

On the 26th of April he writes thus to Mr. Morritt, who had lost a dear young friend in the battle of Barossa: —

"I rejoice with the heart of a Scotsman in the success of Lord Wellington, and with all the pride of a seer to boot. I have been for three years proclaiming him as the only man we had to trust to — a man of talent and genius — not deterred by obstacles, not fettered by prejudices, not immured within the pedantries of his profession — but playing the general and the hero, when most of our military commanders would have exhibited the drill-sergeant, or at best the adjutant. These campaigns will teach us what we have long needed to know, that success depends not on the nice drilling of regiments, but upon the grand movements and combinations of an army. We have been hitherto polishing hinges, when we should have studied the mechanical union of a huge machine. Now — our army begin to see that the *grand secret*, as the French call it, consists only in union, joint exertion, and concerted movement. This will enable us to meet the dogs on fair terms as

to numbers, and for the rest, 'My soul and body on the action both.'

"The downfall of Buonaparte's military fame will be the signal of his ruin, and, if we may trust the reports this day brings us from Holland, there is glorious mischief on foot already. I hope we shall be able to fling fuel into the flame immediately. A country with so many dykes and ditches must be fearfully tenable when the peasants are willing to fight. How I should enjoy the disconsolate visages of those Whig dogs, those dwellers upon the Isthmus, who have been foretelling the rout and ruin which it only required their being in power to have achieved! It is quite plain, from Sir Robert Wilson's account, that they neglected to feed the lamp of Russia, and it only resulted from their want of opportunity that they did not quench the smoking flax in the Peninsula—a thought so profligate, that those who, from party or personal interest, indulged it ought to pray for mercy, and return thanks for the providential interruption which obstructed their purpose, as they would for a meditated but prevented parricide. But enough of the thorny subject of politics.

"I grieve for your loss at Barossa, but what more glorious fall could a man select for himself or friend, than dying with his sword in hand and the cry of victory in his ears?

"As for my own operations they are very trifling, though sufficiently miscellaneous. I have been writing a sketch of Buonaparte's tactics for the Edinburgh Register, and some other trumpery of the same kind. Particularly I meditate some wild stanzas referring to the Peninsula: if I can lick them into any shape, I hope to get something handsome from the booksellers for the Portuguese sufferers: 'Silver and gold have I none, but that which I have I will give unto them.' My lyrics are called the Vision of Don Roderick: you remember the story of the last Gothic King of Spain descending into an enchanted cavern to know the fate of the Moorish invasion—that is my machinery. Pray don't mention this, for some one will snatch up the subject, as I have been served before: and I have not written a line yet. I am going to Ashestiel for eight days, to fish and rhyme."

The poem was published, in 4to, in July; and the immediate proceeds were forwarded to the board in London. His friend the Earl of Dalkeith seems to have been a member of the committee, and he writes thus to Scott on the occasion:—“Those with ample fortunes and thicker heads may easily give 100 guineas to a subscription, but the man is really to be envied who can draw that sum from his own brains, and apply the produce so beneficially and to so exalted a purpose.”

In the original preface to this poem, Scott alludes to two events which had “cruelly interrupted his task”—the successive deaths of his kind friend the Lord President of the Court of Session (Blair),* and his early patron, Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville: and his letters at the time afford additional evidence of the shock his feelings had thus sustained.—

The following, to Mrs. Scott of Harden, is dated May 20th, 1811:—

“My Dear Madam,—We are deprived of the prospect of waiting upon you on the birth-day, by the confusion into which the business of this court is thrown by the most unexpected and irreparable loss which it has sustained in the death of the President. It is scarcely possible to conceive a calamity which is more universally or will be so long felt by the country. His integrity and legal knowledge, joined to a peculiar dignity of thought, action, and expression, had begun to establish in the minds of the public at large that confidence in the regular and solemn administration of justice, which is so necessary to its usefulness and respectability. My official situation, as well as the private intimacy of our families, makes me a sincere mourner on this melancholy occasion, for I feel a severe personal deprivation, besides the general share of sorrow common

* The Right Hon. Robert Blair of Avontoun, son of the Author of “The Grave.”

to all of every party or description who were in the way of witnessing his conduct.

“He was a rare instance of a man whose habits were every way averse to the cultivation of popularity, rising, nevertheless, to the highest point in the public opinion, by the manly and dignified discharge of his duty. I have been really so much shocked and out of spirits, yesterday and the day preceding, that I can write and think of nothing else.

“I have to send you the Vision of Don Roderick, as soon as we can get it out—it is a trifle I have written to eke out the subscription for the suffering Portuguese. Believe me, my dear Mrs. Scott, ever yours most truly and respectfully,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

The next letter is to Mr. Morritt, who, like himself, had enjoyed a large share of Lord Melville's friendly regard; and had more than once met his Lordship, after his fall, at the Poet's house, in Castle Street; where, by the way, the old Statesman entered with such simple-heartedness into all the ways of the happy circle, that it had come to be an established rule for the children *to sit up to supper* whenever Lord Melville dined there.

“Edinburgh, July 1, 1811.

“My Dear M.—I have this moment got your kind letter, just as I was packing up Don Roderick for you. This patriotic puppet-show has been finished under wretched auspices; poor Lord Melville's death so quickly succeeding that of President Blair, one of the best and wisest judges that ever distributed justice, broke my spirit sadly. My official situation placed me in daily contact with the President, and his ability and candour were the source of my daily admiration. As for poor dear Lord Melville, ‘Tis vain to name him whom we mourn in vain.’ Almost the last time I saw him, he was talking of you in the highest terms of regard, and expressing great hopes of again seeing you at Dunira this summer, where I

proposed to attend you. *Hei mihi! quid hei mihi? humana perpessi sumus.* His loss will be long and severely felt here, and Envy is already paying her cold tribute of applause to the worth which she maligned while it walked upon earth.

“There is a very odd coincidence between the deaths of these eminent characters, and that of a very inferior person, a dentist of this city, named Dubisson. He met the President before his death, who used a particular expression in speaking to him; the day before Lord Melville died, he also met Dubisson nearly on the same spot, and to the man’s surprise used the President’s very words in saluting him. On this second death, he expressed (jocularly, however) an apprehension that he himself would be the third—was taken ill and died in an hour’s space. Was not this remarkable? Yours ever,

“W. S.”

The Vision of Don Roderick had features of novelty, both as to the subject and the manner of the composition, which excited much attention, and gave rise to some sharp controversy. The main fable was indeed from the most picturesque region of old romance; but it was made throughout the vehicle of feelings directly adverse to those with which the Whig critics had all along regarded the interference of Britain in behalf of the nations of the Peninsula; and the silence which, while celebrating our other generals on that scene of action, had been preserved with respect to Scott’s own gallant countryman, Sir John Moore, was considered or represented by them as an odious example of genius hoodwinked by the influence of party. Nor were there wanting persons who affected to discover that the charm of Scott’s poetry had to a great extent evaporated under the severe test to which he had exposed it, by adopting, in place of those comparatively light and easy measures in which he had hitherto dealt, the most elaborate one that our literature

exhibits. The production, notwithstanding the complexity of the Spenserian stanza, had been very rapidly executed; and it shows, accordingly, many traces of negligence. But the patriotic inspiration of it found an echo in the vast majority of British hearts; many of the Whig oracles themselves acknowledged that the difficulties of the metre had been on the whole successfully overcome; and even the hardest critics were compelled to express unqualified admiration of various detached pictures and passages, which, in truth, as no one now disputes, neither he nor any other poet ever excelled. The whole setting or framework — whatever relates in short to the last of the Goths himself — was, I think, even then unanimously pronounced admirable; and no party feeling could blind any man to the heroic splendour of such stanzas as those in which the three equally gallant elements of a British army are contrasted. I incline to believe that the choice of the measure had been in no small degree the result of those hints which Scott received on the subject of his favourite octosyllabics, more especially from Ellis and Canning; and, as we shall see presently, he about this time made more than one similar experiment, in all likelihood from the same motive.

Of the letters which reached him in consequence of the appearance of *The Vision*, he has preserved several, which had no doubt interested and gratified him at the time. One of these was from Lady Wellington, to whom he had never had the honour of being presented, but who could not, as she said, remain silent on the receipt of such a tribute to the fame of “the first and best of men.” Ever afterwards she continued to correspond with him, and indeed, among the very last letters which the Duchess of Wellington appears to have written, was a most affect-

ing one, bidding him farewell, and thanking him for the solace his works had afforded her during her fatal illness. Another was in these terms : —

“ *To Walter Scott, Esq.*

“ Hinckley, July 26, 1811.

“ My Dear Sir, — I am very glad that you have essayed a new metre — new I mean for you to use. That which you have chosen is perhaps at once the most artificial and the most magnificent that our language affords ; and your success in it ought to encourage you to believe, that for you, at least, the majestic march of Dryden (to my ear the perfection of harmony) is not, as you seem to pronounce it, irrecoverable. Am I wrong in imagining that *Spenser* does not use the *plusquam-Alexandrine* — the verse which is as much longer than an Alexandrine, as an Alexandrine is longer than an ordinary heroic measure ? I have no books where I am, to which to refer. You use this — and in the first stanza.

“ Your poem has been met on my part by an exchange somewhat like that of Diomed’s armour against Glaucus’s — brass for gold — a heavy speech upon bullion. If you have never thought upon the subject — as to my great contentment I never had a twelvemonth ago — let me counsel you to keep clear of it, and forthwith put my speech into the fire, unread. It has no one merit but that of sincerity. I formed my opinion most reluctantly ; — having formed it, I could not but maintain it ; having maintained it in Parliament, I wished to record it intelligibly. But it is one which, so far from cherishing and wishing to make proselytes to, I would much rather renounce, if I could find a person to convince me that it is erroneous. This is at least an unusual state of mind in controversy. It is such as I do not generally profess on all subjects — such as you will give me credit for not being able to maintain, for instance, when either the exploits which you celebrate in your last poem, or your manner of celebrating them, are disputed or disparaged. Believe me, with great regard and esteem, very sincerely yours,

GEORGE CANNING.”

But, of all the letters addressed to the author of the *Vision of Don Roderick*, I am very sure no one was so welcome as that which reached him, some months after his poem had ceased to be new in England, from a dear friend of his earliest days, who, after various chances and changes of life, was then serving in Lord Wellington's army, as a captain in the 58th regiment. I am sure that Sir Adam Ferguson's good-nature will pardon my inserting here some extracts from a communication which his affectionate schoolfellow very often referred to in after years with the highest appearance of interest and pleasure.

“ To Walter Scott, Esq.

“ Lisbon, 31st August 1811.

“ My Dear Walter, — After such a length of silence between us, and, I grant on my part, so unwarrantable, I think I see your face of surprise on recognising this MS., and hear you exclaim — What strange wind has blown a letter from *Linton*? I must say, that although both you and my good friend Mrs. S. must long ago have set me down as a most indifferent, not to say ungrateful sort of gentleman, far otherwise has been the case, as in the course of my wanderings through this country, I have often beguiled a long march, or watchful night's duty, by thinking on the merry fireside in North Castle Street. However, the irregular roving life we lead, always interfered with my resolves of correspondence.

“ But now, quitting self, I need not tell you how greatly I was delighted at the success of the *Lady of the Lake*. I dare say you are by this time well tired of such greetings — so I shall only say, that last spring I was so fortunate as to get a reading of it, when in the lines of *Torres Vedras*, and thought I had no inconsiderable right to enter into and judge of its beauties, having made one of the party on your first visit to the *Trossachs*; and you will allow, that a little vanity on my

part on this account (everything considered) was natural enough. While the book was in my possession, I had nightly invitations to *evening parties!* to read and illustrate passages of it; and I must say that (though not conscious of much merit in the way of recitation) my attempts to do justice to the grand opening of the stag-hunt, were always followed with bursts of applause — for this Canto was the favourite among the rough sons of the fighting Third Division. At that time supplies of various kinds, especially anything in the way of delicacies, were very scanty; — and, in gratitude, I am bound to declare, that to the good offices of the Lady I owed many a nice slice of ham, and rummer of hot punch, which, I assure you, were amongst the most welcome favours that one officer could bestow on another, during the long rainy nights of last January and February. By desire of my messmates of the Black-cuffs, I some time ago sent a commission to London for a copy of the music of the Boat-Song, ‘Hail to the Chief,’ as performed at Covent Garden, but have not yet got it. If you can assist in this, I need not say that on every performance a flowing bumper will go round to the Bard. We have lately been fortunate in getting a good master to our band, who is curious in old Scotch and Irish airs, and has harmonized *Johnny Cope*, &c. &c.

“Lisbon, 6th October.

“I had written all the foregoing botheration, intending to send it by a wounded friend going home to Scotland, when, to my no small joy, your parcel, enclosing *Don Roderick*, reached me. How kind I take it your remembering old Linton in this way. A day or two after I received yours, I was sent into the Alentejo, where I remained a month, and only returned a few days ago, much delighted with the trip. You wish to know how I like the *Vision*; but as you can’t look for any learned critique from me, I shall only say that I fully entered into the spirit and beauty of it, and that I relished much the wild and fanciful opening of the introductory part; yet what particularly delighted me were the stanzas announcing the

approach of the British fleets and armies to this country, and the three delightful ones descriptive of the different troops, English, Scotch, and Irish; and I can assure you the Pats are, to a man, enchanted with the picture drawn of their countrymen, and the mention of the great man himself. Your swearing, in the true character of a minstrel, ‘shiver my harp, and burn its every chord,’ amused me not a little. From being well acquainted with a great many of the situations described, they had of course the more interest, and ‘Grim Busaco’s iron ridge’ most happily paints the appearance of that memorable field. You must know that we have got with us some bright geniuses, natives of the *dear country*, and who go by the name of ‘the poets.’ Of course, a present of this kind is not thrown away upon indifferent subjects, but it is read and repeated with all the enthusiasm your warmest wish could desire. — Should it be my fate to survive, I am resolved to try my hand on a snug little farm either up or down the Tweed, somewhere in your neighbourhood; and on this dream many a delightful castle do I build.

“I am most happy to hear that the Club* goes on in the old smooth style. I am afraid, however, that now * * * * * has become a judge, the delights of *Scrogum* and *The Tailor* will be lost, till revived perhaps by the old croupier in the shape of a battered half-pay officer. Yours affectionately,

“ADAM FERGUSSON.”

More than one of the gallant captain’s *chateaux en Espagne* were, as we shall see, realized in the sequel. I must not omit a circumstance which had reached Scott from another source, and which he always took special pride in relating, namely, that in the course of the day when the Lady of the Lake first reached Sir Adam Fergusson, he was posted with his company on a point of ground exposed to the enemy’s artillery; somewhere no doubt on the lines of Torres Vedras. The men were

* See *ante*, vol. i. p. 183.

ordered to lie prostrate on the ground ; while they kept that attitude, the Captain, kneeling at their head, read aloud the description of the battle in Canto VI., and the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza, whenever the French shot struck the bank close above them.

The only allusion which I have found, in Scott's letters, to the Edinburgh Review on his Vision, occurs in a letter to Mr. Morritt (26th September 1811), which also contains the only hint of his having been about this time requested to undertake the task of rendering into English the *Charlemagne* of Lucien Buonaparte. He says — “The Edinburgh Reviewers have been down on my poor Don hand to fist ; but, truly, as they are too fastidious to approve of the campaign, I should be very unreasonable if I expected them to like the celebration of it. I agree with them, however, as to the lumbering weight of the stanza, and I shrewdly suspect it would require a very great poet indeed to prevent the tedium arising from the recurrence of rhymes. Our language is unable to support the expenditure of so many for each stanza : even Spenser himself, with all the license of using obsolete words and uncommon spellings, sometimes fatigues the ear. They are also very wroth with me for omitting the merits of Sir John Moore ; but as I never exactly discovered in what these lay, unless in conducting his advance and retreat upon a plan the most likely to verify the desponding speculations of the fore-said reviewers, I must hold myself excused for not giving praise where I was unable to see that much was due. The only literary news I have to send you is, that Lucien Buonaparte's epic, in twenty-four *chants*, is about to appear. An application was made to me

to translate it, which I negatived of course, and that roundly." *

I have alluded to some other new experiments in versification about this time as probably originating in the many hints of Ellis, Canning, and probably of Erskine, that, if he wished to do himself full justice in poetical narration, he ought to attempt at least the rhyme of Dryden's Fables. Having essayed the most difficult of all English measures in Don Roderick, he this year tried also the heroic couplet, and produced that imitation of Crabbe, *The Poacher* — on seeing which, Crabbe, as his son's biography tells us, exclaimed, "This man, whoever he is, can do all that I can, and *something more*." This piece, together with some verses, afterwards worked up into the Bridal of Triermain, and another fragment in imitation of Moore's Lyrics, when first forwarded to Balantyne, were accompanied with a little note, in which he says — "Understand I have no idea of parody, but serious imitation, if I can accomplish it. The subject for my Crabbe is a character in his line which he has never touched. I think of Wordsworth, too, and perhaps a ghost story after Lewis. I should be ambitious of trying Campbell; but his peculiarity consists so much in the matter, and so little in the manner, that (to his praise be it spoken), I rather think I cannot touch him." The three imitations which he did execute appeared in the Edinburgh Register for 1809, published in the autumn of 1811. They were there introduced by a letter entitled *The Inferno of Altesidora*, in which he shadows out the chief reviewers of the day, especially his friends

* The ponderous epic entitled, *Charlemagne ou l'Eglise Delivrée*, was published in 1814; and an English version, by the Rev. S. Butler and the Rev. F. Hodgson, appeared in 1815. 2 vols. 4to.

Jeffrey and Gifford, with admirable breadth and yet lightness of pleasantry. He kept his secret as to this *Inferno*, and all its appendages, even from Miss Baillie — to whom he says, on their appearance, that — “the imitation of Crabbe had struck him as good; that of Moore as bad; and that of himself as beginning well, but falling off grievously to the close.” He seems to have been equally mysterious as to an imitation of the quaint love verses of the beginning of the 17th century, which had found its way shortly before into the newspapers, under the name of *The Resolve*; * but I find him acknowledging its parentage to his brother Thomas, whose sagacity had at once guessed at the truth. “As to the *Resolve*,” he says, “it is mine; and it is not — or, to be less enigmatical, it is an old fragment, which I cooped up into its present state with the purpose of quizzing certain judges of poetry, who have been extremely delighted, and declare that no living poet could write in the same exquisite taste.” These critics were his Friends of the Friday Club. When included in the *Register*, however, the *Resolve* had his name affixed to it. In that case his concealment had already answered its purpose. It is curious to trace the beginnings of the systematic mystification which he afterwards put in practice with regard to the most important series of his works.

The quarto edition of *Don Roderick* having rapidly gone off, instead of reprinting the poem as usual in a separate octavo, he inserted it entire in the current volume of the *Register*; a sufficient proof how much that undertaking was already felt to require extraordinary exertion on the part of its proprietors. Among other

* See *Poetical Works*, Edition 1834, vol. viii. p. 374.

minor tasks of the same year, he produced an edition of Wilson's *Secret History of the Court of King James I.*, in two vols. 8vo, to which he supplied a copious preface, and a rich body of notes. He also contributed two or three articles to the *Quarterly Review*.

CHAPTER XXIII.

New Arrangement concerning the Clerks of Session — Scott's first Purchase of Land — Abbotsford; Turn-again, &c. — Joanna Baillie's Orra, &c. — Death of James Grahame — and of John Leyden.

1811.

THROUGHOUT 1811, Scott's serious labour continued to be bestowed on the advancing edition of Swift; but this and all other literary tasks were frequently interrupted in consequence of an important step which he took early in the year; namely, the purchase of the first portion of what became in the sequel an extensive landed property in Roxburghshire. He had now the near prospect of coming into the beneficial use of the office he had so long filled without emolument in the Court of Session. For, connected with the other reforms in the Scotch judicature, was a plan for allowing the retirement of functionaries, who had served to an advanced period of life, upon pensions; should this meet the approbation of Parliament, there was little doubt that Mr. George Home would avail himself of the opportunity to resign the place of which he had for five years executed none of the duties; and the second Lord Melville, who had now succeeded his father as the virtual Minister for Scotland, had so much at heart a measure in itself obviously just and prudent,

that little doubt could be entertained of the result of his efforts in its behalf. The Clerks of Session, it had been already settled, were henceforth to be paid not by fees, but by fixed salaries; the amount of each salary, it was soon after arranged, should be £1300 per annum; and contemplating a speedy accession of professional income so considerable as this, and at the same time a vigorous prosecution of his literary career, Scott fixed his eyes on a small farm within a few miles of Ashestiel, which it was understood would presently be in the market, and resolved to place himself by its acquisition in the situation to which he had probably from his earliest days looked forward as the highest object of ambition, that of a Tweedside Laird. — *Sit mihi sedes utinam senectæ!*

And the place itself, though not to the general observer a very attractive one, had long been one of peculiar interest for him. I have often heard him tell, that when travelling in his boyhood with his father, from Selkirk to Melrose, the old man suddenly desired the carriage to halt at the foot of an eminence, and said, "We must get out here, Walter, and see a thing quite in your line." His father then conducted him to a rude stone on the edge of an acclivity about half a mile above the Tweed at Abbotsford, which marks the spot —

"Where gallant Cessford's life-blood dear
Reeked on dark Elliot's border spear."

This was the conclusion of the battle of Melrose, fought in 1526, between the Earls of Angus and Home, and the two chiefs of the race of Kerr on the one side, and Buccleuch on the other, in sight of the young King James V., the possession of whose person was the object of the contest. This battle is often mentioned in the Border Min-

strely, and the reader will find a long note on it, under the lines which I have just quoted from the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. In the names of various localities between Melrose and Abbotsford, such as *Skirmish-field*, *Charge-Law*, and so forth, the incidents of the fight have found a lasting record; and the spot where the retainer of Buccleuch terminated the pursuit of the victors by the mortal wound of Kerr of Cessford (ancestor of the Dukes of Roxburghe), has always been called *Turn-again*. In his own future domain the young minstrel had before him the scene of the last great Clan-battle of the Borders.

On the 12th of May 1811, he writes to James Balantyne, apologizing for some delay about proof-sheets. "My attention," he adds, "has been a little dissipated by considering a plan for my own future comfort, which I hasten to mention to you. My lease of Ashestiel is out — I now sit a tenant at will under a heavy rent, and at all the inconvenience of one when in the house of another. I have, therefore, resolved to purchase a piece of ground sufficient for a cottage and a few fields. There are two pieces, either of which would suit me, but both would make a very desirable property indeed. They stretch along the Tweed, near half-way between Melrose and Selkirk, on the opposite side from Lord Somerville, and could be had for between £7000 and £8000 — or either separate for about half the sum. I have serious thoughts of one or both, and must have recourse to my pen to make the matter easy. The worst is the difficulty which John might find in advancing so large a sum as the copy-right of a new poem; supposing it to be made payable within a year at farthest from the work going to press, — which would be essential to my purpose. Yet the Lady

of the Lake came soon home. I have a letter this morning giving me good hope of my Treasury business being carried through: if this takes place, I will buy both the little farms, which will give me a mile of the beautiful turn of Tweed, above Gala-foot — if not, I will confine myself to one. As my income, in the event supposed, will be very considerable, it will afford a sinking fund to clear off what debt I may incur in making this purchase. It is proper John and you should be as soon as possible apprized of these my intentions, which I believe you will think reasonable in my situation, and at my age, while I may yet hope to sit under the shade of a tree of my own planting. I shall not, I think, want any pecuniary assistance beyond what I have noticed, but of course my powers of rendering it will be considerably limited for a time. I hope this Register will give a start to its predecessors; I assure you I shall spare no pains. John must lend his earnest attention to clear his hands of the quire stock, and to taking in as little as he can unless in the way of exchange; in short, reefing our sails, which are at present too much spread for our ballast.”

He alludes in the same letter to a change in the firm of Messrs. Constable, which John Ballantyne had just announced to him; and, although some of his prognostications on this business were not exactly fulfilled, I must quote his expressions for the light they throw on his opinion of Constable's temper and character. “No association,” he says, “of the kind Mr. C. proposes, will stand two years with him for its head. His temper is too haughty to bear with the complaints, and to answer all the minute inquiries, which partners of that sort will think themselves entitled to make, and expect to have answered. Their first onset, however, will be terrible,

and John must be prepared to lie by. The new poem would help the presses." The new partners to which he refers were Mr. Robert Cathcart of Drum, Writer to the Signet, a gentleman of high worth and integrity, who continued to be connected with Constable's business until his death in November 1812; and Mr. Robert Cadell, who afterwards married Mr. Constable's eldest daughter.*

Of the two adjoining farms, both of which he had at this time thought of purchasing, he shortly afterwards made up his mind that one would be sufficient to begin with; and he selected that nearest to Ashestiel, and comprising the scene of Cessford's slaughter. The person from whom he bought it was an old friend of his own, whose sterling worth he venerated, and whose humorous conversation rendered him an universal favourite among the gentry of the Forest—the late Rev. Dr. Robert Douglas, minister of Galashiels—the same man to whom Mrs. Cockburn described the juvenile prodigy of George's Square, in November 1777. Dr. Douglas had never resided on the property, and his efforts to embellish it had been limited to one stripe of firs, so long and so narrow that Scott likened it to a black hair-comb. It ran from the precincts of the homestead towards *Turn-again*, and has bequeathed the name of *the Doctor's redding-kame* to the mass of nobler trees amidst which its dark straight line can now hardly be traced. The farm consisted of a rich meadow or haugh along the banks of the river, and about a hundred acres of undulated ground behind, all in a neglected state, undrained, wretchedly enclosed, much

* This union was dissolved by the death of the lady within a year of the marriage. Mr. Cadell, not long after the catastrophe of 1826, became sole publisher of Scott's later works.

of it covered with nothing better than the native heath. The farm-house itself was small and poor, with a common *kail-yard* on one flank, and a staring barn of the Doctor's erection on the other; while in front appeared a filthy pond covered with ducks and duckweed, from which the whole tenement had derived the unharmonious designation of *Clarty Hole*. But the Tweed was everything to him — a beautiful river, flowing broad and bright over a bed of milkwhite pebbles, unless here and there where it darkened into a deep pool, overhung as yet only by the birches and alders which had survived the statelier growth of the primitive Forest; and the first hour that he took possession he claimed for his farm the name of the adjoining *ford*, situated just above the influx of the classical tributary Gala. As might be guessed from the name of *Abbotsford*, these lands had all belonged of old to the great Abbey of Melrose; and indeed the Duke of Buccleuch, as the territorial representative of that religious brotherhood, still retains some seignorial rights over them, and almost all the surrounding district. Another feature of no small interest in Scott's eyes was an ancient Roman road leading from the Eildon hills to this ford, the remains of which, however, are now mostly sheltered from view amidst his numerous plantations. The most graceful and picturesque of all the monastic ruins in Scotland, the Abbey of Melrose itself, is visible from many points in the immediate neighbourhood of the house; and last, not least, on the rising ground full in view across the river, the traveller may still observe the chief traces of that ancient British barrier, the *Catrail*, of which the reader has seen frequent mention in Scott's early letters to Ellis, when investigating the antiquities of Reged and Strathclyde.

Such was the territory on which Scott's prophetic eye already beheld rich pastures, embosomed among flourishing groves, where his children's children should thank the founder. But the state of his feelings when he first called these fields his own, will be best illustrated by a few extracts from his letters. To his brother-in-law, Mr. Carpenter, he thus writes, from Ashestiel, on the 5th of August —

“ As my lease of this place is out, I have bought, for about £4000, a property in the neighbourhood, extending along the banks of the river Tweed for about half-a-mile. It is very bleak at present, having little to recommend it but the vicinity of the river; but as the ground is well adapted by nature to grow wood, and is considerably various in form and appearance, I have no doubt that by judicious plantations it may be rendered a very pleasant spot; and it is at present my great amusement to plan the various lines which may be necessary for that purpose. The farm comprehends about a hundred acres, of which I shall keep fifty in pasture and tillage, and plant all the rest, which will be a very valuable little possession in a few years, as wood bears a high price among us. I intend building a small cottage here for my summer abode, being obliged by law, as well as induced by inclination, to make this county my residence for some months every year. This is the greatest incident which has lately taken place in our domestic concerns, and I assure you we are not a little proud of being greeted as *laird* and *lady* of *Abbotsford*. We will give a grand gala when we take possession of it, and as we are very *clannish* in this corner, all the Scotts in the country, from the Duke to the peasant, shall dance on the green to the bagpipes, and drink whisky punch. Now as this happy festival is to be deferred for more than a twelvemonth, during which our cottage is to be built, &c. &c., what is there to hinder brother and sister Carpenter from giving us their company upon so gratifying an occasion? Pray, do not stay broil-

ing yourself in India for a moment longer than you have secured comfort and competence. Don't look forward to *peace*; it will never come either in your day or mine."

The same week he says to Joanna Baillie —

"My dreams about my cottage go on; of about a hundred acres I have manfully resolved to plant from sixty to seventy; as to my scale of dwelling — why, you shall see my plan when I have adjusted it. My present intention is to have only two spare bed-rooms, with dressing-rooms, each of which will on a pinch have a couch bed; but I cannot relinquish my Border principle of accommodating all the cousins and *duniwastles*, who will rather sleep on chairs, and on the floor, and in the hay-loft, than be absent when folks are gathered together; and truly I used to think Ashestiel was very much like the tent of Periebanou, in the Arabian Nights, that suited alike all numbers of company equally; ten people fill it at any time, and I remember its lodging thirty-two without any complaint. As for the *go-about* folks, they generally pay their score one way or other; for you who are always in the way of seeing, and commanding, and selecting your society, are too fastidious to understand how a dearth of news may make anybody welcome that can tell one the current report of the day. If it is any pleasure to these stragglers to say I made them welcome as strangers, I am sure that costs me nothing — only I deprecate publication, and am now the less afraid of it that I think scarce any bookseller will be desperate enough to print a new Scotch tour. Besides, one has the pleasure to tell over all the stories that have bored your friends a dozen of times, with some degree of propriety. In short, I think, like a true Scotchman, that a stranger, unless he is very unpleasant indeed, usually brings a title to a welcome along with him; and to confess the truth, I do a little envy my old friend Abonhassan his walks on the bridge of Bagdad, and evening conversations, and suppers with the guests whom he was never to see again in his life: he never fell into a scrape till he met with the

Caliph—and, thank God, no Caliphs frequent the brigg of Melrose, which will be my nearest Rialto at Abbotsford.

“I never heard of a stranger that utterly baffled all efforts to engage him in conversation, excepting one whom an acquaintance of mine met in a stage-coach. My friend,* who piqued himself on his talents for conversation, assailed this tortoise on all hands, but in vain, and at length descended to expostulation. ‘I have talked to you, my friend, on all the ordinary subjects—literature, farming, merchandise—gaming, game-laws, horse-races—suits at law—politics, and swindling, and blasphemy, and philosophy—is there any one subject that you will favour me by opening upon?’ The wight writhed his countenance into a grin—‘Sir,’ said he, ‘can you say anything clever about *bend leather?*’ There, I own, I should have been as much non-plussed as my acquaintance; but upon any less abstruse subject, I think, in general, something may be made of a stranger, worthy of his clean sheets, and beef-steak, and glass of port. You, indeed, my dear friend, may suffer a little for me, as I should for you, when such a fortuitous acquaintance talks of the intercourse arising from our meeting as anything beyond the effect of chance and civility: but these braggings break no bones, and are always a compliment to the person of whom the discourse is held, though the narrator means it to himself; for no one can suppose the affectation of intimacy can be assumed unless from an idea that it exalts the person who brags of it. My little folks are well, and I am performing the painful duty of hearing my little boy his Latin lesson every morning; painful, because my knowledge of the language is more familiar than grammatical, and because little Walter has a disconsolate yawn at intervals, which is quite irresistible, and has nearly cost me a dislocation of my jaws.”

In answering the letter which announced the acquisition of Abbotsford, Joanna Baillie says, very prettily:—

* This friend was Mr. William Clerk.

“Yourself and Mrs. Scott, and the children, will feel sorry at leaving Ashestiel, which will long have a consequence, and be the object of kind feelings with many, from having once been the place of your residence. If I should ever be happy enough to be at Abbotsford, you must take me to see Ashestiel too. I have a kind of tenderness for it, as one has for a man’s first wife, when you hear he has married a second.” The same natural sentiment is expressed in a manner characteristically different, in a letter from the Ettrick Shepherd, of about the same date:—“Are you not sorry at leaving *auld Ashestiel* for *gude an’ a’*, after having been at so much trouble and expense in making it a complete thing? Upon my word I was, on seeing it in the papers.”

That Scott had many a pang in quitting a spot which had been the scene of so many innocent and noble pleasures, no one can doubt; but the desire of having a permanent abiding-place of his own, in his ancestral district, had long been growing upon his mind; and, moreover, he had laboured in adorning Ashestiel, not only to gratify his own taste as a landscape gardener, but because he had for years been looking forward to the day when Colonel Russell * would return from India to claim possession of his romantic inheritance. And he was overpaid for all his exertions, when the gallant soldier sat down at length among the trees which an affectionate kinsman had pruned and planted in his absence. He retained, however, to the end of his life, a certain “tenderness of feeling” towards Ashestiel, which could not perhaps be better shadowed than in Joanna Baillie’s similitude. It was not his first country residence—nor could its immediate landscape be said to equal the Vale of the

* Now Major-General Sir James Russell, K. C. B.

Esk, either in actual picturesqueness, or (before Mar-
mion) in dignity of association. But it was while occupy-
ing Ashestiel that he first enjoyed habitually the free
presence of wild and solitary nature ; and I shall here
quote part of a letter, in which he alludes to his favourite
wildernesses between Tweed and Yarrow, in language,
to my mind, strongly indicative of the regrets and mis-
givings with which he must have taken his farewell
wanderings over them in the summer and autumn of
1811.

Miss Baillie had then in the press a new volume of
Tragedies, but had told her friend that the publication,
for booksellers' reasons, would not take place until win-
ter. He answers (August 24th) — "Were it possible
for me to hasten the treat I expect by such a composition
with you, I would promise to read the volume at the
silence of noonday, upon the top of Minchmuir, or Win-
dlestrawlaw. The hour is allowed, by those skilful in de-
monology, to be as full of witching as midnight itself ; and
I assure you, I have felt really oppressed with a sort of
fearful loneliness, when looking around the naked and tow-
ering ridges of desolate barrenness, which is all the eye
takes in from the top of such a mountain — the patches
of cultivation being all hidden in the little glens and val-
leys — or only appearing to make one sensible how feeble
and inefficient the efforts of art have been to contend with
the genius of the soil. It is in such a scene that the un-
known author of a fine, but unequal poem, called *Alba-
nia*, places the remarkable superstition which consists in
hearing the noise of a chase, with the baying of the
hounds, the throttling sobs of the deer, the halloos of
a numerous band of huntsmen, and the 'hoofs thick
beating on the hollow hill.' I have often repeated his

verses with some sensations of awe in such a place, and I am sure yours would effect their purpose as completely."*

Miss Baillie sent him, as soon as it was printed, the book to which this communication refers; she told him it was to be her last publication, and that she was getting her knitting-needles in order — meaning to begin her new course of industry with a purse, by way of return for his Iona brooch. The poetess mentioned, at the same time, that she had met the evening before with a Scotch lady who boasted that "she had once been Walter Scott's bedfellow." — "Don't start," adds Joanna; "it is thirty years since the irregularity took place, and she describes her old bedfellow as the drollest looking, entertaining

* The lines here alluded to — and which Scott delighted to repeat — are as follows: —

"Ere since, of old, the haughty thanes of Ross, —
 So to the simple swain tradition tells, —
 Were wont with clans, and ready vassals throng'd,
 To wake the bounding stag, or guilty wolf,
 There oft is heard, at midnight or at noon,
 Beginning faint, but rising still more loud,
 And nearer, voice of hunters, and of hounds,
 And horns, hoarse winded, blowing far and keen: —
 Forthwith the hubbub multiplies; the gale
 Labours with wilder shrieks, and rifer din
 Of hot pursuit; the broken cry of deer
 Mangled by throttling dogs; the shouts of men.
 And hoofs, thick beating on the hollow hill.
 Sudden the grazing heifer in the vale
 Starts at the noise, and both the herdsman's ears
 Tingle with inward dread. Aghast, he eyes
 The mountain's height, and all the ridges round,
 Yet not one trace of living wight discerns,
 Nor knows, o'eraud, and trembling as he stands,
 To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear,
 To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend;
 But wonders, and no end of wondering finds."

Albania — reprinted in *Scottish Descriptive Poems*,
 pp. 167, 168.

little urchin that ever was seen. I told her that you are a great strong man, six feet high, but she does not believe me." In point of fact, the assigned date was a lady's one; for the irregularity in question occurred on board the Leith smack which conveyed Walter Scott to London on his way to Bath, when he was only four years of age, A. D. 1775.

Miss Baillie's welcome volume contained, among others, her tragedy on the Passion of Fear; and Scott gives so much of himself in the letter acknowledging this present, that I must insert it at length.

"To Miss Joanna Baillie.

"My Dear Friend,— . . . It is too little to say I am enchanted with the said third volume, especially with the two first plays, which in every point not only sustain, but even exalt your reputation as a dramatist. The whole character of Orra is exquisitely supported as well as imagined, and the language distinguished by a rich variety of fancy, which I know no instance of excepting in Shakspeare. After I had read Orra twice to myself, Terry read it over to us a third time, aloud, and I have seldom seen a little circle so much affected as during the whole fifth act. I think it would act charmingly, omitting, perhaps, the baying of the hounds, which could not be happily imitated, and retaining only the blast of the horn and the halloo of the huntsmen at a distance. Only I doubt if we have now an actress that could carry through the mad scene in the fifth act, which is certainly one of the most sublime that ever were written. Yet I have a great quarrel with this beautiful drama, for you must know you have utterly destroyed a song of mine, precisely in the turn of your outlaw's ditty, and sung by persons in somewhat the same situation. I took out my unfortunate manuscript to look at it, but alas! it was the encounter of the iron and the earthen pitchers in the fable. I was clearly sunk, and the potsherds not worth gath-

ering up. But only conceive that the chorus should have run thus *verbatim* —

‘ ’Tis mirk midnight with peaceful men,
With us ’tis dawn of day.’ *

And again —

‘ Then boot and saddle, comrades boon,
Nor wait the dawn of day.’ *

“ I think the *Dream* extremely powerful indeed, but I am rather glad we did not hazard the representation. It rests so entirely on *Osterloo*, that I am almost sure we must have made a bad piece of work of it. By-the-by, a story is told of an Italian buffoon, who had contrived to give his master, a petty prince of Italy, a good hearty ducking, and a fright to boot, to cure him of an ague; the treatment succeeded, but the potentate, by way of retaliation, had his audacious physician tried for treason, and condemned to lose his head; the criminal was brought forth, the priest heard his confession, and the poor jester knelt down to the block. Instead of wielding his axe, the executioner, as he had been instructed, threw a pitcher of water on the bare neck of the criminal; here the jest was to have terminated, but poor *Gonella* was found dead on the spot. I believe the catastrophe is very possible.† The latter half of the volume I have not perused with the same attention, though I have devoured both the *Comedy* and the *Beacon* in a hasty manner. I think the approbation of the public will make you alter your intention of taking up the knitting-needle — and that I shall be as much to seek for my purse as for the bank-notes which you say are to stuff it —

* These lines were accordingly struck out of the outlaw’s song in *Rokeby*. The verses of *Orra*, to which Scott alludes, are no doubt the following:

“ The wild fire dances on the fen,
The red star sheds its ray,
Up rouse ye, then, my merry men,
It is our opening day,” &c.

Plays on the Passions, vol. iii. p. 44.

† This story is told, among others, by *Montaigne*.

though I have no idea where they are to come from. But I shall think more of the purse than the notes, come when or how they may.

“To return, I really think *Fear* the most dramatic passion you have hitherto touched, because capable of being drawn to the most extreme paroxysm on the stage. In Orra you have all gradations, from a timidity excited by a strong and irritable imagination, to the extremity which altogether unhinges the understanding. The most dreadful fright I ever had in my life (being neither constitutionally timid, nor in the way of being exposed to real danger) was in returning from Hampstead the day which I spent so pleasantly with you. Although the evening was nearly closed, I foolishly chose to take the short cut through the fields, and in that enclosure, where the path leads close by a thick and high hedge — with several gaps in it, however — did I meet one of your very thorough-paced London ruffians, at least judging from the squalid and jail-bird appearance and blackguard expression of countenance. Like the man that met the devil, I had nothing to say to him, if he had nothing to say to me, but I could not help looking back to watch the movements of such a suspicious figure, and to my great uneasiness saw him creep through the hedge on my left hand. I instantly went to the first gap to watch his motions, and saw him stooping, as I thought, either to lift a bundle or to speak to some person who seemed lying in the ditch. Immediately after, he came cowering back up the opposite side of the hedge, as returning towards me under cover of it. I saw no weapons he had, except a stick, but as I moved on to gain the stile which was to let me into the free field — with the idea of a wretch springing upon me from the cover at every step I took — I assure you I would not wish the worst enemy I ever had to undergo such a feeling as I had for about five minutes; my fancy made him of that description which usually combines murder with plunder, and though I was well armed with a stout stick and a very formidable knife, which when opened becomes a sort of *skene-dhu*, or dagger, I confess:

my sensations, though those of a man much resolved not to die like a sheep, were vilely short of heroism; so much so, that when I jumped over the stile, a sliver of the wood run a third of an inch between my nail and flesh, without my feeling the pain, or being sensible such a thing had happened. However, I saw my man no more, and it is astonishing how my spirits rose when I got into the open field; — and when I reached the top of the little mount, and all the bells in London (for aught I know) began to jingle at once, I thought I had never heard anything so delightful in my life — so rapid are the alternations of our feelings. This foolish story, — for perhaps I had no rational ground for the horrible feeling which possessed my mind for a little while, came irresistibly to my pen when writing to you on the subject of terror.

“Poor Grahame, gentle, and amiable, and enthusiastic, deserves all you can say of him; his was really a hallowed harp, as he was himself an Israelite without guile. How often have I teased him, but never out of his good-humour, by praising Dundee and laughing at the Covenanters! — but I beg your pardon; you are a Westland Whig too, and will perhaps make less allowance for a descendant of the persecutors. I think his works should be collected and published for the benefit of his family. Surely the wife and orphans of such a man have a claim on the generosity of the public.*

“Pray make my remembrance to the lady who so kindly remembers our early intimacy. I do perfectly remember being an exceedingly spoiled, chattering monkey, whom indifferent health and the cares of a kind Grandmamma and Aunt, had made, I suspect, extremely abominable to everybody who had

* James Grahame, author of *The Sabbath*, had been originally a member of the Scotch Bar, and was an early friend of Scott's. Not succeeding in the law, he — (with all his love for the Covenanters) — took orders in the Church of England, obtained a curacy in the county of Durham, and died there, on the 14th of September 1811, in the 47th year of his age. See a *Memoir of his Life and Writings* in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* for 1812, part ii. pp. 384–415.

not a great deal of sympathy and good-nature, which I dare say was the case of my *quondam* bedfellow, since she recollects me so favourably. Farewell, and believe me faithfully and respectfully, your sincere friend,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

Miss Baillie, in her next letter, mentioned the name of the “old bedfellow,” and that immediately refreshed Scott’s recollection. “I do,” he replies, “remember *Miss Wright* perfectly well. Oh, how I should like to talk over with her our voyage in the good ship the Duchess of Buccleuch, Captain Beatson, master; much of which, from the novelty doubtless of the scene, is strongly impressed on my memory. A long voyage it was — of twelve days, if I mistake not, with the variety of a day or two in Yarmouth Roads. I believe the passengers had a good deal of fun with me; for I remember being persuaded to shoot one of them with an air-gun, who, to my great terror, lay obstinately dead on the deck, and would not revive till I fell a-crying, which proved the remedy specific upon the occasion.”

The mention of Mr. Terry, in the letter about Orra, reminds me to observe that Scott’s intimacy with that gentleman began to make very rapid progress from the date of the first purchase of Abbotsford. He spent several weeks of that autumn at Ashestiel, riding over daily to the new farm, and assisting his friend with advice, which his acquirements as an architect and draughtsman rendered exceedingly valuable, as to the future arrangements about both house and grounds. Early in 1812 Terry proceeded to London, and made, on the 20th May, a very successful *debut* on the boards of the Haymarket as Lord Ogleby. He continued, however, to visit

Scotland almost every season, and no ally had more to do either with the plans ultimately adopted as to Scott's new structure, or with the collection of literary and antiquarian curiosities which now constitute its museum. From this time the series of letters between them is an ample one. The intelligent zeal with which the actor laboured to promote the gratification of the poet's tastes and fancies on the one side : on the other, Scott's warm anxiety for Terry's professional success, the sagacity and hopefulness with which he counsels and cheers him throughout, and the good-natured confidence with which he details his own projects, — both the greatest and the smallest, — all this seems to me to make up a very interesting picture. To none of his later correspondents, with the one exception of Mr. Morritt, does Scott write with a more perfect easy-heartedness than to Terry ; and the quaint dramatic turns and allusions with which these letters abound, will remind all who knew him of the instinctive courtesy with which he uniformly adopted, in conversation, a strain the most likely to fall in with the habits of any companion. It has been mentioned that his acquaintance with Terry sprung from Terry's familiarity with the Ballantynes ; as it ripened, he had, in fact, learned to consider the ingenious comedian as another brother of that race ; and Terry, transplanted to the south, was used and trusted by him, and continued to serve and communicate with him, very much as if one of themselves had found it convenient to establish his headquarters in London.

Among the letters written immediately after Scott had completed his bargain with Dr. Douglas, is one which (unlike the rest) I found in his own repositories : —

“For Doctor Leyden, Calcutta.

“Favoured by the Hon. Lady Hood.

“Ashestiel, 25th August 1811.

“My Dear Leyden, — You hardly deserve I should write to you, for I have written you two long letters since I saw Mr. Purves, and received from him your valued dagger,* which I preserve carefully till Buonaparte shall come or send for it. I might take a cruel revenge on you for your silence, by declining Lady Hood’s request to make you acquainted with her; in which case, I assure you, great would be your loss. She is quite a congenial spirit; an ardent Scotswoman, and devotedly attached to those sketches of traditionary history which all the waters of the Burrampooter cannot, I suspect, altogether wash out of your honour’s memory. This, however, is the least of her praises. She is generous, and feeling, and intelligent, and has contrived to keep her heart and social affections broad awake amidst the chilling and benumbing atmosphere of London fashion. I ought perhaps first to have told you, that Lady H. was the honourable Mary Mackenzie, daughter of Lord Seaforth, and is the wife of Sir Samuel Hood, one of our most distinguished naval heroes, who goes out to take the command in your seas. Lastly, she is a very intimate friend of Mrs. Scott’s and myself, and first gained my heart by her admiration of the Scenes of Infancy. So you see, my good friend, what your laziness would have cost you, if, listening rather to the dictates of revenge than generosity, I had withheld my pen from the inkhorn. But, to confess the truth, I fear two such minds would soon have found each other out, like good dancers in a ball-room, without the assistance of a master of ceremonies. So I may even play Sir Clement Cotterel with a good grace, since I cannot further my vengeance by withholding my good offices. My last went by favour of John Pringle,† who carried you a copy of the Lady of the Lake, a poem which I really

* A Malay crease, now at Abbotsford. —

† A son of Mr. Pringle of Whytbank.

think you will like better than Marmion on the whole, though not perhaps in particular passages. Pray let me know if it carried you back to the land of mist and mountain?

“Lady Hood’s departure being sudden, and your deserts not extraordinary (speaking as a correspondent), I have not time to write you much news. The best domestic intelligence is, that the Sheriff of Selkirkshire, his lease of Ashestiel being out, has purchased about 100 acres, extending along the banks of the Tweed just above the confluence of the Gala, and about three miles from Melrose. There, saith fame, he designs to bigg himself a bower—*sibi et amicis*—and happy will he be when India shall return you to a social meal at his cottage. The place looks at present very like ‘poor Scotland’s gear.’ It consists of a bank and haugh as poor and bare as Sir John Falstaff’s regiment; though I fear, ere you come to see, the verdant screen I am about to spread over its nakedness will have in some degree removed this reproach. But it has a wild solitary air, and commands a splendid reach of the Tweed; and, to sum all in the words of Touchstone, ‘it is a poor thing, but mine own.’* ”

“Our little folks, whom you left infants, are now shooting fast forward to youth, and show some blood, as far as aptitude to learning is concerned. Charlotte and I are wearing on as easily as this fashious world will permit. The outside of my head is waxing grizzled, but I cannot find that this snow has cooled either my brain or my heart.—Adieu, dear Leyden!—Pray, brighten the chain of friendship by a letter when occasion serves; and believe me ever yours, most affectionately,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

On the 28th of August 1811, just three days after this letter was penned, John Leyden died. On the very day when Scott was writing it, he, having accompanied the Governor-General, Lord Minto, on the expedition against

* “An ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own,” &c.

As You Like It, Act V. Scene 4.

Java, dashed into the surf, that he might be the first Briton in the armament who should set foot on the island. "When," says Scott, in his *Sketch of Leyden's Life*, "the well-concerted movements of the invaders had given them possession of the town of Batavia, he displayed the same ill-omened precipitation in his haste to examine a library, or rather warehouse of books, in which many Indian MSS. of value were said to be deposited. The apartment had not been regularly ventilated, and, either from this circumstance, or already affected by the fatal sickness peculiar to Batavia, Leyden, when he left the place, had a fit of shivering, and declared the atmosphere was enough to give any mortal a fever. The presage was too just. He took to his bed and died in three days, on the eve of the battle which gave Java to the British empire —

'Grata quies patriæ, sed et omnis terra sepulchrum.' * *

The packet in which Lady Hood, on her arrival in India, announced this event, and returned Scott's unopened letter, contained also a very touching one from the late Sir John Malcolm, who, although he had never at that time seen the poet, assumed, as a brother borderer lamenting a common friend, the language of old acquaintanceship; and to this Scott replied in the same style which, from their first meeting in the autumn of the next year, became that, on both sides, of warm and respectful attachment. I might almost speak in the like tenor of a third letter in the same melancholy packet, from another enthusiastic admirer of Leyden, Mr. Henry Ellis,† who

* This little biography of Leyden is included in Scott's *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. iv. p. 137, (Edin. Ed.)

† Now the Right Honourable Henry Ellis, appointed, in 1836, ambassador from the Court of St. James's to the Shah of Persia.

also communicated to Scott his spirited stanzas on that untimely fate ; but his personal intercourse with this distinguished diplomatist took place at a later period.

Before passing from the autumn of 1811, I may mention, that the letter of James Hogg, from which I have quoted an expression of regret as to Ashestiel, was one of many from the Shepherd, bearing about this date, which Scott esteemed worthy of preservation. Strange as the fact may appear, Hogg, on the other hand, seems to have preserved none of the answers ; but the half of the correspondence is quite sufficient to show how constantly and earnestly, in the midst of his own expanding toils and interests, Scott had continued to watch over the struggling fortunes of the wayward and imprudent Shepherd. His letters to the different members of the Buccleuch family at this time are full of the same subject. I shall insert one, addressed, on the 24th of August, to the Countess of Dalkeith, along with a presentation copy of Hogg's "Forest Minstrel." It appears to me a remarkable specimen of the simplest natural feelings on more subjects than one, couched in a dialect which, in any hands but the highest, is apt to become a cold one :—

. "Ashestiel, Aug. 24, 1811.

"Dear Lady Dalkeith,—The Ettrick Bard, who compiled the enclosed collection, which I observe is inscribed to your Ladyship, has made it his request that I would transmit a copy for your acceptance. I fear your Ladyship will find but little amusement in it ; for the poor fellow has just talent sufficient to spoil him for his own trade, without having enough to support him by literature. But I embrace the more readily an opportunity of intruding upon your Ladyship's leisure, that I might thank you for the very kind and affecting letter with

which you honoured me some time ago. You do me justice in believing that I was deeply concerned at the irreparable loss you sustained in the dear and hopeful boy * to whom all the friends of the Buccleuch family looked forward with so much confidence. I can safely say, that since that inexpressible misfortune, I almost felt as if the presence of one, with whom the recollection of past happiness might in some degree be associated, must have awakened and added to your Ladyship's distress, from a feeling that scenes of which we were not to speak, were necessarily uppermost in the recollection of both. But your Ladyship knows better than I can teach, that, where all common topics of consolation would be inapplicable, Heaven provides for us the best and most effectual lenitive in the progress of time, and in the constant and unremitting discharge of the duties incumbent on the station in which we are placed. Those of your Ladyship are important, in proportion to the elevation of your rank, and the promising qualities of the young minds which I have with so much pleasure seen you forming and instructing — to be comforts, I trust, to yourself, and an honour to society. Poor Lady Rosslyn † is gone, with all the various talent and vivacity that rendered her society so delightful. I regret her loss the more, as she died without ever making up some unkindness she had towards me for these foolish politics. It is another example of the great truth, that life is too short for the indulgence of animosity. I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect, your Ladyship's obliged and very humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

The Countess, in acknowledgment of the dedication of the Forest Minstrel, sent Hogg, through Scott's hands,

* Lord Scott. See *ante*, vol. ii. p. 288.

† The Countess of Rosslyn, born Lady Harriet Bouverie, a very intimate friend of Lady Dalkeith, died 8th August 1810. She had, as has been mentioned before, written to Scott, resenting somewhat warmly his song at the Melville dinner. See *ante*, vol. ii. p. 244.

the donation of a hundred guineas — a sum which, to him, in those days, must have seemed a fortune ; but which was only the pledge and harbinger of still more important benefits conferred soon after her Ladyship's husband became the head of his house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Poem of Rokeby begun — Correspondence with Mr. Morritt — Death of Henry Duke of Buccleuch — George Ellis — John Wilson — Apprentices of Edinburgh — Scott's "Nick-Nackatories" — Letter to Miss Baillie on the Publication of Childe Harold — Correspondence with Lord Byron.

1811–1812.

OF the £4000 which Scott paid for the original farm of Abbotsford, he borrowed one half from his eldest brother, Major John Scott; the other moiety was raised by the Ballantynes, and advanced on the security of the as yet unwritten, though long meditated, poem of Rokeby. He immediately, I believe by Terry's counsel, requested Mr. Stark of Edinburgh, an architect of whose talents he always spoke warmly, to give him a design for an ornamental cottage in the style of the old English vicarage-house. But before this could be done, Mr. Stark died; and Scott's letters will show how, in the sequel, his building plans, checked for a season by this occurrence, gradually expanded, — until twelve years afterwards the site was occupied not by a cottage but a castle.

His first notions are sketched as follows, in a letter addressed to Mr. Morritt very shortly after the purchase: —
 "We stay at Ashestiel this season, but migrate the next

to our new settlements. I have fixed only two points respecting my intended cottage — one is, that it shall be *in* my garden, or rather kailyard — the other, that the little drawing-room shall open into a little conservatory, in which conservatory there shall be a fountain. These are articles of taste which I have long since determined upon ; but I hope, before a stone of my paradise is begun, we shall meet and colloque upon it.”

Three months later (December 20th, 1811), he opens the design of his new poem in another letter to the lord of Rokeby, whose household, it appears, had just been disturbed by the unexpected *accouchement* of a fair visitant. The allusion to the Quarterly Review, towards the close, refers to an humorous article on Sir John Sinclair’s pamphlets about the Bullion Question — a joint production of Mr. Ellis and Mr. Canning.

“ *To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq.*

“ My Dear Morritt, — I received your kind letter a week or two ago. The little interlude of the bantling at Rokeby reminds me of a lady whose mother happened to produce her upon very short notice, between the hands of a game at whist, and who, from a joke of the celebrated David Hume, who was one of the players, lived long distinguished by the name of *The Parenthesis*. My wife had once nearly made a similar blunder in very awkward circumstances. We were invited to dine at Melville Castle (to which we were then near neighbours), with the Chief Baron * and his lady, its temporary inhabitants, — when behold, the Obadiah whom I despatched two hours before dinner from our cottage to summon the Dr. Slop of Edinburgh, halting at Melville Lodge to rest his wearied horse, make apologies, and so forth, encountered the Mel-

* The late Right Honourable Robert Dundas, Chief Baron of the Scotch Court of Exchequer.

ville Castle Obadiah sallying on the identical errand, for the identical man of skill, who, like an active knight-errant, relieved the two distressed dames within three hours of each other. A blessed duet they would have made if they had put off their crying bout, as it is called, till they could do it in concert.

“And now, I have a grand project to tell you of. Nothing less than a fourth romance, in verse; the theme, during the English civil wars of Charles I., and the scene, your own domain of Rokeby. I want to build my cottage a little better than my limited finances will permit out of my ordinary income; and although it is very true that an author should not hazard his reputation, yet, as Bob Acres says, I really think Reputation should take some care of the gentleman in return. Now, I have all your scenery deeply imprinted in my memory, and moreover, be it known to you, I intend to refresh its traces this ensuing summer, and to go as far as the borders of Lancashire, and the caves of Yorkshire, and so perhaps on to Derbyshire. I have sketched a story which pleases me, and I am only anxious to keep my theme quiet, for its being piddled upon by some of your *Ready-to-catch* literati, as John Bunyan calls them, would be a serious misfortune to me. I am not without hope of seducing you to be my guide a little way on my tour. Is there not some book (sense or nonsense, I care not) on the beauties of Teesdale — I mean a descriptive work? If you can point it out or lend it me, you will do me a great favour, and no less if you can tell me any traditions of the period. By which party was Barnard Castle occupied? It strikes me that it should be held for the Parliament. Pray, help me in this, by truth, or fiction, or tradition, — I care not which, if it be picturesque. What the deuce is the name of that wild glen, where we had such a clamber on horseback up a stone staircase? — Cat’s Cradle, or Cat’s Castle, I think it was. I wish also to have the true edition of the traditional tragedy of your old house at Mortham, and the ghost thereunto appertaining, and you will do me yeoman’s service in compiling the relics of so valuable a legend. Item — Do you know anything of a striking ancient castle belonging, I think,

to the Duke of Leeds, called Coningsburgh? * Grose notices it, but in a very flimsy manner. I once flew past it on the mail-coach, when its round tower and flying buttresses had a most romantic effect in the morning dawn.

“The Quarterly is beyond my praise, and as much beyond me as I was beyond that of my poor old nurse who died the other day. Sir John Sinclair has gotten the golden fleece at last. Dogberry would not desire a richer reward for having been written down an ass. £6000 a-year! † Good faith, the whole reviews in Britain should rail at me, with my free consent, better cheap by at least a cypher. There is no chance, with all my engagements, to be at London this spring. My little boy Walter is ill with the measles, and I expect the rest to catch the disorder, which appears, thank God, very mild. Mrs. Scott joins in kindest compliments to Mrs. Morritt, — many merry Christmases to you — and believe me, truly,
yours
WALTER SCOTT.”

I insert Mr. Morritt’s answer, both for the light which it throws on various particular passages in the poem as we have it, and because it shows that some of those features in the general plan, which were censured by the professional critics, had been early and strongly recommended to the poet’s consideration by the person whom, on this occasion, he was most anxious to please.

“*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

“Rokeby, 28th December 1811.

“My Dear Scott, — I begin at the top of my paper, because your request must be complied with, and I foresee that a letter

* See note, *Ivanhoe*, ch. 42.

† Shortly after the appearance of the article alluded to, Sir John Sinclair was appointed cashier of Excise for Scotland. “It should be added,” says his biographer, “that the emoluments of the situation were greatly reduced at the death of Sir James Grant, his predecessor.”

on the antiquities of Teesdale will not be a short one. Your project delights me much, and I willingly contribute my mite to its completion. Yet, highly as I approve of the scene where you lay the events of your romance, I have, I think, some observations to make as to the period you have chosen for it. Of this, however, you will be a better judge after I have detailed my antiquarian researches. — Now, as to Barnard Castle, it was built in Henry I.'s time, by Barnard, son of Guy Baliol, who landed with the Conqueror. It remained with the Baliols till their attainder by Edward I. The tomb of Alan of Gallo-way was here in Leland's time; and he gives the inscription. Alan, if you remember, married Margaret of Huntingdon, David's daughter, and was father, by her, of Devorgild, who married John Baliol, and from whom her son, John Baliol, claimed the crown of Scotland. Edward I. granted the castle and liberties to Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; it descended (with that title) to the Nevills, and by Ann Nevill to Richard Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III. It does not appear to whom Henry VII. or his son re-granted it, but it fell soon into the hands of the Nevills, Earls of Westmoreland, by whom it was forfeited in the Rising of the North. It was granted by James I. to the citizens of London, from whom Sir Henry Vane received it by purchase. It does not seem ever to have been used as a place of strength after the Rising of the North; and when the Vanes bought it of the citizens, it was probably in a dismantled state. It was, however, a possession of the Vanes before the Civil Wars, and, therefore, with a safe conscience you may swear it stood for the Parliament. The lady for whose ghost you inquire at Rokeby, has been so buried in uncertainty, you may make what you like of her. The most interesting fiction makes her the heiress of the Rokebys, murdered in the woods of the Greta by a greedy collateral who inherited the estate. She reached the house before she expired, and her blood was extant in my younger days at Mortham tower. Others say it was a Lady Rokeby, the wife of the owner, who was shot in the walks by robbers; but she certainly became a ghost, and, under the very poetic *nom de*

guerre of Mortham Dobby, she appeared dressed as a fine lady, with a piece of white silk trailing behind her — without a head, indeed (though no tradition states how she lost so material a member), but with many of its advantages, for she had long hair on her shoulders — and eyes, nose, and mouth, in her breast. The parson once, by talking Latin to her, confined her under the bridge that crosses the Greta at my dairy, but the arch being destroyed by floods in 1771, became incapable of containing a ghost any longer, and she was seen after that time by some of the older parishioners. I often heard of her in my early youth, from a sibyl who lived in the park to the age of 105, but since her death I believe the history has become obsolete.

“The Rokebys were at all times loyal, at least from Henry IV. downward. They lived early at Mortham tower, which was, I believe, a better building than the tower of Rokeby, for here also was one where my house now stands. I fancy they got Mortham by marriage.* Colonel Rokeby, the last possessor of the old blood, was ruined in the Civil Wars by his loyalty and unthriftiness, and the estates were bought by the Robinsons, one of whom, the *long* Sir Thomas Robinson, so well-known and well-quizzed in the time of our grandfathers, after laying out most of the estate on this place, sold the place and the estate together to my father in 1769. Oliver Cromwell paid a visit to Barnard Castle in his way from Scotland, October 1648. He does not seem to have been in the castle, but lodged in the town, whence I conclude the castle was then uninhabitable. Now I would submit to you, whether, considering the course of events, it would not be expedient to lay the time of your romance as early as the war of the Roses. For, 1st, As you seem to hint that there will be a ghost or two in it, like the King of Bohemia’s giants, they will be ‘more out of the

* The heiress of Mortham married Rokeby in the reign of Edward II.; and his own castle at Rokeby having been destroyed by the Scotch after the battle of Bannockburn, he built one on his wife’s estate — the same of which considerable remains still exist — on the northern bank of the Greta.

way.' 2*d*, Barnard Castle, at the time I propose, belonged to Nevills and Plantagenets, of whom something advantageous (according to your cavalier views) may be brought forward; whereas, a short time before the Civil Wars of the Parliament, the Vanes became possessors, and still remain so; of whom, if any Tory bard should be able to say anything obliging, it will certainly be '*insigne, recens, adhuc indictum ore alio,*' and do honour to his powers of imagination. 3*d*, The knights of Rokeby itself were of high rank and fair domain at the earlier period, and were ruining themselves ignobly at the other. 4*th*, Civil war for civil war: the first had two poetical sides, and the last only one; for the roundheads, though I always thought them politically right, were sad materials for poetry; even Milton cannot make much of them. I think no time suits so well with a romance, of which the scene lies in this country, as the Wars of the two Roses — unless you sing the Rising of the North; and then you will abuse Queen Elizabeth, and be censured as an abettor of Popery. How you would be involved in political controversy — with all our Whigs, who are anti-Stuarts; and all our Tories, who are anti-Papistical! I therefore see no alternative but boldly to venture back to the days of the holy King Harry; for, God knows, it is difficult to say anything civil of us since that period. Consider only, did not Cromwell himself pray that the Lord would deliver him from Sir Harry Vane? and what will you do with him? — still more, if you take into the account the improvements in and about the castle to which yourself was witness when we visited it together? *

“There is a book of a few pages, describing the rides through and about Teesdale; I have it not, but if I can get it I will send it. It is very bare of information, but gives names. If you can get the third volume of Hutchinson's History of Durham, it would give you some useful bits of information,

* Mr. Morrutt alludes to the mutilation of a curious vaulted roof of extreme antiquity, in the great tower of Barnard Castle, occasioned by its conversion into a manufactory of patent shot; — an *improvement* at which the Poet had expressed some indignation.

though very ill written. The glen where we clambered up to Cat-castle is itself called Deepdale. I fear we have few traditions that have survived the change of farms, and property of all sorts, which has long taken place in this neighbourhood. But we have some poetical names remaining, of which we none of us know the antiquity, or at least the origin. Thus, in the scamper we took from Deepdale and Cat-castle, we rode next, if you remember, to Cotherstone, an ancient village of the Fitzhughs on the Tees, whence I showed you a rock rising over the crown of the wood, still called Pendragon Castle. The river that joins the Tees at Cotherstone is yclept the Balder, I fancy in honour of the son of Odin; for the farm contiguous to it retains the name of Woden's Croft. The parish in which it stands is Romaldkirk, the church of St. Romald the hermit, and was once a hermitage itself in Teesdale forest. The parish next to Rokeby, on the Tees below my house, is Wycliff, where the old reformer was born, and the day-star of the Reformation first rose on England.

“The family of Rokeby, who were the proprietors of this place, were valiant and knightly. They seem to have had good possessions at the Conquest (see Doomsday Book); in Henry III.'s reign they were Sheriffs of Yorkshire. In Edward II.'s reign, Froissart informs us, that when the Scotch army decamped in the night so ingeniously from Weardale that nobody knew the direction of their march, a hue and cry was raised after them, and a reward of a hundred merks annual value in land was offered by the Crown for whoever could discover them, and that de Rokeby — I think Sir Ralph — was the fortunate knight who ascertained their quarters on the moors near Hexham. In the time of Henry IV., the High-Sheriff of Yorkshire, who overthrew Northumberland and drove him to Scotland after the battle of Shrewsbury, was also a Rokeby. Tradition says that this sheriff was before this an adherent of the Percys, and was the identical knight who dissuaded Hotspur from the enterprise, on whose letter the angry warrior comments so freely in Shakspeare. They are indeed, I think, mentioned as adherents of the Percys in Chevy Chase,

and fought under their banner; I hope, therefore, that they broke that connexion from pure patriotism, and not for filthy lucre.

“Such are all the annals that occur to me at present. If you will come here, we can summon a synod of the oldest women in the country, and you shall cross-examine them as much as you please. There are many romantic spots, and old names rather than remains of peels, and towers, once called castles, which belonged to Scroops, Fitzhughs, and Nevills, with which you should be intimate before you finish your poem, — and also the abbots and monks of Egglestone, who were old and venerable people, if you carry your story back into Romish times; and you will allow that the beauty of the situation deserves it, if you recollect the view from and near the bridge between me and Barnard Castle. Coningsburgh Castle, a noble building as you say, stands between Doncaster and Rotherham. I think it belongs to Lord Fitzwilliam, but am not sure. You may easily find the account of it in Grose, or any of the other antiquarians. The building is a noble circular tower, buttressed all round, and with walls of immoderate thickness. It is of a very early era, but I do not know its date.

“I have almost filled my letter with antiquarianism; but will not conclude without repeating how much your intention has charmed us. The scenery of our rivers deserves to become classic ground, and I hope the scheme will induce you to visit and revisit it often. I will contrive to ride with you to Wensleydale and the Caves at least, and the border of Lancashire, &c. if I can; and to facilitate that trip, I hope you will bring Mrs. Scott here, that our dames may not be impatient of our absence. ‘I know each dale, and every alley green,’ between Rokeby and the Lakes and Caves, and have no scruple in recommending my own guidance, under which you will be far more likely to make discoveries than by yourself; for the people have many of them no knowledge of their own country. Should I, in consequence of your celebrity, be obliged to leave Rokeby from the influx of cockney romancers, artists, illustra-

tors, and sentimental tourists, I shall retreat to Ashestiel, or to your new cottage, and thus visit on you the sins of your writings. At all events, however, I shall raise the rent of my inn at Greta-Bridge on the first notice of your book, as I hear the people at Callander have made a fortune by you. Pray give our kindest and best regards to Mrs. Scott, and believe me ever, Dear Scott, yours very truly, J. B. S. MORRITT."

In January 1812, Scott entered upon the enjoyment of his proper salary as a Clerk of Session, which, with his sheriffdom, gave him from this time till very near the close of his life, a professional income of £1600 a-year. On the 11th of the same month he lost his kind friend and first patron, Henry, third Duke of Buccleuch, and fifth of Queensberry. Both these events are mentioned in the following letter to Joanna Baillie, who, among other things, had told Scott that the materials for his purse were now on her table, and expressed her anxiety to know who was the author of some beautiful lines on the recent death of their friend, James Grahame, the poet of the Sabbath. These verses had, it appears, found their way anonymously into the newspapers.

"To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.

"January 17th, 1812.

"My Dear Friend, — The promise of the purse has flattered my imagination so very agreeably, that I cannot help sending you an ancient silver mouth-piece, to which, if it pleases your taste, you may adapt your intended labours : this, besides, is a genteel way of tying you down to your promise ; and to bribe you still farther, I assure you it shall not be put to the purpose of holding bank-notes or vulgar bullion, but reserved as a place of deposit for some of my pretty little medals and nick-nackatories. When I do make another poetical effort, I shall certainly expect the sum you mention from the booksellers,

for they have had too good bargains of me hitherto, and I fear I shall want a great deal of money to make my cottage exactly what I should like it. Meanwhile, between ourselves, my income has been very much increased since I wrote to you, in a different way. My predecessor in the office of Clerk of Session retired to make room for me, on the amiable condition of retaining all the emoluments during his life, which, from my wish to retire from the Bar and secure a certain though distant income, I was induced to consent to; and considering his advanced age and uncertain health, the bargain was really not a bad one. But alas! like Sinbad's old man of the sea, my coadjutor's strength increased prodigiously after he had fairly settled himself on my shoulders, so that after five years' gratuitous labour I began to tire of my burden. Fortunately, Mr. Bankes' late superannuation act provides a rateable pension for office-holders obliged to retire after long and faithful services; and my old friend very handsomely consented to be transferred from my galled shoulders to the broad back of the public, although he is likely to sustain a considerable diminution of income by the exchange, to which he has declared himself willing to submit as a penalty for having lived longer than he or I expected. To me it will make a difference of £1300 a-year, no trifle to us who have no wish to increase our expense in a single particular, and who could support it on our former income without inconvenience. This I tell you in confidence, because I know you will be very well pleased with any good fortune which comes in my way. — Everybody who cares a farthing for poetry is delighted with your volume, and well they may. You will neither be shocked nor surprised at hearing that Mr. Jeffrey has announced himself of a contrary opinion. So, at least, I understand, for our very ideas of what is poetry differ so widely, that we rarely talk upon these subjects. There is something in his mode of reasoning that leads me greatly to doubt whether, notwithstanding the vivacity of his imagination, he really has any *feeling* of poetical genius, or whether he has worn it all off by perpetually sharpening his wit on the grindstone of criticism.

“I am very glad that you met my dear friend, George Ellis,—a wonderful man, who, through the life of a statesman and politician, conversing with princes, wits, fine ladies, and fine gentlemen, and acquainted with all the intrigues and trasseries of the cabinets and *ruelles* of foreign courts, has yet retained all warm and kindly feelings which render a man amiable in society, and the darling of his friends.

“The author of the elegy upon poor Grahame, is John Wilson, a young man of very considerable poetical powers. He is now engaged in a poem called the *Isle of Palms*, something in the style of Southey. He is an eccentric genius, and has fixed himself upon the banks of Windermere, but occasionally resides in Edinburgh, where he now is. Perhaps you have seen him;—his father was a wealthy Paisley manufacturer—his mother a sister of Robert Sym. He seems an excellent, warm-hearted, and enthusiastic young man; something too much, perhaps, of the latter quality, places him among the list of originals.

“Our streets in Edinburgh are become as insecure as your houses in Wapping. Only think of a formal association among nearly fifty apprentices, aged from twelve to twenty, to scour the streets and knock down and rob all whom they found in their way. This they executed on the last night of the year with such spirit, that two men have died, and several others are dangerously ill, from the wanton treatment they received. The watchword of these young heroes when they met with resistance was—*Mar him*, a word of dire import; and which, as they were all armed with bludgeons loaded with lead, and were very savage, they certainly used in the sense of Ratcliffe Highway. The worst of all this is not so much the immediate evil, which a severe example will probably check for the present, as that the formation and existence of such an association, holding regular meetings and keeping regular minutes, argues a woful negligence in the masters of these boys, the tradesmen and citizens of Edinburgh, of that wholesome domestic discipline which they ought, in justice to God and to man, to exercise over the youth intrusted to their charge; a

negligence which cannot fail to be productive of every sort of vice, crime, and folly, among boys of that age.*

“Yesterday I had the melancholy task of attending the funeral of the good old Duke of Buccleuch. It was, by his own direction, very private; but scarce a dry eye among the assistants — a rare tribute to a person whose high rank and large possessions removed him so far out of the social sphere of private friendship. But the Duke’s mind was moulded upon the kindest and most single-hearted model, and arrested the affections of all who had any connexion with him. He is truly a great loss to Scotland, and will be long missed and lamented, though the successor to his rank is heir also to his generous spirit and affections. He was my kind friend. Ever yours,

“W. SCOTT.”

The next of his letters to Joanna Baillie is curious, as giving his first impressions on reading *Childe Harold*. It contains also a striking sketch of the feelings he throughout life expressed, as to what he had observed of society in London — with a not less characteristic display of some of his own minor amusements.

“*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*”

“Ashestiel, April 4th, 1812.

“I ought not, even in modern gratitude, which may be moved by the gift of a purse, much less in minstrel sympathy, which values it more as your work than if it were stuffed with guineas, to have delayed thanking you, my kind friend, for such an elegant and acceptable token of your regard. My kindest and best thanks also attend the young lady who would not permit the purse to travel untenanted.† I shall be truly

* Three of these lads, all under eighteen years of age, were executed on the scene of one of the murders here alluded to, April the 22d, 1812. Their youth and penitence excited the deepest compassion; but never certainly was a severe example more necessary.

† The purse contained an old coin from Joanna Baillie’s niece, the daughter of the Doctor.

glad when I can offer them in person, but of that there is no speedy prospect. I don't believe I shall see London this great while again, which I do not very much regret, were it not that it postpones the pleasure of seeing you and about half-a-dozen other friends. Without having any of the cant of loving retirement, and solitude, and rural pleasures, and so forth, I really have no great pleasure in the general society of London; I have never been there long enough to attempt anything like living in my own way, and the immense length of the streets separates the objects you are interested in so widely from each other, that three parts of your time are past in endeavouring to dispose of the fourth to some advantage. At Edinburgh, although in general society we are absolute mimics of London, and imitate them equally in late hours, and in the strange precipitation with which we hurry from one place to another, in search of the society which we never sit still to enjoy, yet still people may manage their own parties and motions their own way. But all this is limited to my own particular circumstances, — for in a city like London, the constant resident has beyond all other places the power of conducting himself exactly as he likes. Whether this is entirely to be wished or not, may indeed be doubted. I have seldom felt myself so fastidious about books as in the midst of a large library, where one is naturally tempted to imitate the egregious epicure who condescended to take only one bite out of the sunny side of a peach. I suspect something of scarcity is necessary to make you devour the intellectual banquet with a good relish and digestion, as we know to be the case with respect to corporeal sustenance. But to quit all this egotism, which is as little as possible to the purpose, you must be informed that Erskine has enshrined your letter among his household papers of the most precious kind. Among your thousand admirers you have not a warmer or more kindly heart; he tells me Jeffrey talks very favourably of this volume. I should be glad, for his own sake, that he took some opportunity to retrace the paths of his criticism; but after pledging himself so deeply as he has done, I doubt much his giving way even unto conviction. As

to my own share, I am labouring sure enough, but I have not yet got on the right path where I can satisfy myself I shall go on with courage, for diffidence does not easily beset me — and the public, still more than the ladies, ‘stoop to the forward and the bold’; but then in either case, I fancy, the suitor for favour must be buoyed up by some sense of deserving it, whether real or supposed. The celebrated apology of Dryden for a passage which he could not defend, ‘that he knew when he wrote it, it was bad enough to succeed,’ was, with all deference to his memory, certainly invented to justify the fact after it was committed.

“Have you seen the Pilgrimage of Childe Harold, by Lord Byron? It is, I think, a very clever poem, but gives no good symptom of the writer’s heart or morals. His hero, notwithstanding the affected antiquity of the style in some parts, is a modern man of fashion and fortune, worn out and satiated with the pursuits of dissipation, and although there is a caution against it in the preface, you cannot for your soul avoid concluding that the author, as he gives an account of his own travels, is also doing so in his own character. Now really this is too bad; vice ought to be a little more modest, and it must require impudence at least equal to the noble Lord’s other powers, to claim sympathy gravely for the ennui arising from his being tired of his wassailers and his paramours. There is a monstrous deal of conceit in it too, for it is informing the inferior part of the world that their little old-fashioned scruples of limitation are not worthy of his regard, while his fortune and possessions are such as have put all sorts of gratifications too much in his power to afford him any pleasure. Yet with all this conceit and assurance, there is much poetical merit in the book, and I wish you would read it.

“I *have* got Rob Roy’s gun, a long Spanish-barrelled piece, with his initials, R. M. C., for Robert Macgregor Campbell, which latter name he assumed in compliment to the Argyle family, who afforded him a good deal of private support, because he was a thorn in the side of their old rival house of Montrose. I have, moreover, a relic of a more heroic charac-

ter; it is a sword which was given to the great Marquis of Montrose by Charles I., and appears to have belonged to his father, our gentle King Jamie. It had been preserved for a long time at Gartmore, but the present proprietor was selling his library, or great part of it, and John Ballantyne, the purchaser, wishing to oblige me, would not conclude a bargain, which the gentleman's necessity made him anxious about, till he flung the sword into the scale; it is, independent of its other merits, a most beautiful blade. I think a dialogue between this same sword and Rob Roy's gun might be composed with good effect.

“ We are here in a most extraordinary pickle — considering that we have just entered upon April, when, according to the poet, ‘primroses paint the sweet plain,’* instead of which, both hill and valley are doing penance in a sheet of snow of very respectable depth. Mail-coaches have been stopt — shepherds, I grieve to say, lost in the snow; in short, we experience all the hardships of a January storm at this late period of the spring; the snow has been near a fortnight, and if it departs with dry weather, we may do well enough, but if wet weather should ensue, the wheat crop through Scotland will be totally lost. — My thoughts are anxiously turned to the Peninsula, though I think the Spaniards have but one choice, and that is to choose Lord Wellington dictator; I have no doubt he could put things right yet. As for domestic politics, I really give them very little consideration. Your friends, the Whigs, are angry enough, I suppose, with the Prince Regent, but those who were most apt to flatter his follies, have little reason to complain of the usage they have met with — and he may probably think that those who were true to the father in his hour of calamity, may have the best title to the confidence of the son. The excellent private character of the old King gave him great advantages as the head of a free government. I fear the Prince will long experience the inconveniences of not having attended to his own. — Mrs. Siddons, as fame reports, has taken another engagement at Covent Garden: surely she

* Allan Ramsay's song of “The Yellow-hair'd Laddie.”

is wrong; she should have no twilight, but set in the full possession of her powers.*

“I hope Campbell’s plan of lectures will answer.† I think the brogue may be got over, if he will not trouble himself by attempting to correct it, but read with fire and feeling; he is an animated reciter, but I never heard him read.

“I have a great mind, before sealing this long scrawl, to send you a list of the contents of the purse as they at present stand:—

“1st, Miss Elizabeth Baillie’s purse-penny, called by the learned a denarius of the Empress Faustina.

“2d, A gold brooch, found in a bog in Ireland, which, for aught I know, fastened the mantle of an Irish Princess in the days of Cuthullin, or Neal of the Nine Hostages.

“3d, A toadstone — a celebrated amulet, which was never lent to any one unless upon a bond for a thousand merks for its being safely restored. It was sovereign for protecting newborn children and their mothers from the power of the fairies, and has been repeatedly borrowed from my mother, on account of this virtue.

“4th, A coin of Edward I., found in Dryburgh Abbey.

“5th, A funeral ring, with Dean Swift’s hair.

“So you see my nicknackatory is well supplied, though the purse is more valuable than all its contents.

“Adieu, my dear friend. Mrs. Scott joins in kind respects to your sister, the Doctor, and Mrs. Baillie.

“WALTER SCOTT.”

A month later, the Edinburgh Review on Lord Byron’s *Romaunt* having just appeared, Scott says to Mr. Morritt (May 12) — “I agree very much in what you

* Mrs. Siddons made her farewell appearance at Covent Garden, as Lady Macbeth, on the 29th of June 1812; but she afterwards resumed her profession for short intervals more than once, and did not finally bid adieu to the stage until the 9th of June 1819.

† Mr. Thomas Campbell had announced his first course of Lectures on English Poetry about this time.

say of Childe Harold. Though there is something provoking and insulting to morality and to feeling in his misanthropical ennui, it gives, nevertheless, an odd piquancy to his descriptions and reflections. This is upon the whole a piece of most extraordinary power, and may rank its author with our first poets. I see the Edinburgh Review has hauled its wind."

Lord Byron was, I need not say, the prime object of interest this season in the fashionable world of London; nor did the Prince Regent owe the subsequent hostilities of the noble Poet to any neglect on his part of the brilliant genius which had just been fully revealed in the Childe Harold. Mr. Murray, the publisher of the *Romant*, on hearing, on the 29th of June, Lord Byron's account of his introduction to his Royal Highness, conceived that, by communicating it to Scott, he might afford the opportunity of such a personal explanation between his two poetical friends, as should obliterate on both sides whatever painful feelings had survived the offensive allusions to *Marmion* in the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers; and this good-natured step had the desired consequences. Mr. Moore says that the correspondence "began in some inquiries which Mr. Scott addressed to Lord Byron on the subject of his interview with Royalty;"* but he would not have used that expression, had he seen the following letter:—

"To the Right Honourable Lord Byron, &c. &c.

Care of John Murray, Esq., Fleet Street, London.

"Edinburgh, July 3d, 1812.

"My Lord,—I am uncertain if I ought to profit by the apology which is afforded me, by a very obliging communi-

* *Life and Works of Lord Byron*, vol. ii. p. 155.

tion from our acquaintance, John Murray of Fleet Street, to give your Lordship the present trouble. But my intrusion concerns a large debt of gratitude due to your Lordship, and a much less important one of explanation, which I think I owe to myself, as I dislike standing low in the opinion of any person whose talents rank so highly in my own, as your Lordship's most deservedly do.

“The first *count*, as our technical language expresses it, relates to the high pleasure I have received from the Pilgrimage of Childe Harold, and from its precursors; the former, with all its classical associations, some of which are lost on so poor a scholar as I am, possesses the additional charm of vivid and animated description, mingled with original sentiment; — but besides this debt, which I owe your Lordship in common with the rest of the reading public, I have to acknowledge my particular thanks for your having distinguished by praise, in the work which your Lordship rather dedicated in general to satire, some of my own literary attempts. And this leads me to put your Lordship right in the circumstances respecting the sale of Marmion, which had reached you in a distorted and misrepresented form, and which, perhaps, I have some reason to complain, were given to the public without more particular inquiry. The poem, my Lord, was *not* written upon contract for a sum of money — though it is too true that it was sold and published in a very unfinished state (which I have since regretted), to enable me to extricate myself from some engagements which fell suddenly upon me, by the unexpected misfortunes of a very near relation. So that, to quote statute and precedent, I really come under the case cited by Juvenal, though not quite in the extremity of the classic author —

Esurit, intactam Paridi nisi vendit Agaven.

And so much for a mistake, into which your Lordship might easily fall, especially as I generally find it the easiest way of stopping sentimental compliments on the beauty, &c. of certain poetry, and the delights which the author must have taken in the composition, by assigning the readiest reason that will cut

the discourse short, upon a subject where one must appear either conceited, or affectedly rude and cynical.

“As for my attachment to literature, I sacrificed for the pleasure of pursuing it very fair chances of opulence and professional honours, at a time of life when I fully knew their value; and I am not ashamed to say, that in deriving advantages in compensation from the partial favour of the public, I have added some comforts and elegancies to a bare independence. I am sure your Lordship’s good sense will easily put this unimportant egotism to the right account, for — though I do not know the motive would make me enter into controversy with a fair or an *unfair* literary critic — I may be well excused for a wish to clear my personal character from any tinge of mercenary or sordid feeling in the eyes of a contemporary of genius. Your Lordship will likewise permit me to add, that you would have escaped the trouble of this explanation, had I not understood that the satire alluded to had been suppressed, not to be reprinted. For in removing a prejudice on your Lordship’s own mind, I had no intention of making any appeal by or through you to the public, since my own habits of life have rendered my defence as to avarice or rapacity rather too easy.

“Leaving this foolish matter where it lies, I have to request your Lordship’s acceptance of my best thanks for the flattering communication which you took the trouble to make Mr. Murray on my behalf, and which could not fail to give me the gratification which I am sure you intended. I dare say our worthy bibliopolist overcoloured his report of your Lordship’s conversation with the Prince Regent, but I owe my thanks to him nevertheless, for the excuse he has given me for intruding these pages on your Lordship. Wishing you health, spirit, and perseverance, to continue your pilgrimage through the interesting countries which you have still to pass with Childe Harold, I have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship’s obedient servant,
WALTER SCOTT.”

“P. S. — Will your Lordship permit me a verbal criticism

on Childe Harold, were it only to show I have read his *Pilgrimage* with attention? ‘*Nuestra Dama de la Pena*’ means, I suspect, not our Lady of Crime or Punishment, but our Lady of the Cliff; the difference is, I believe, merely in the accentuation of ‘*peña*.’”

Lord Byron’s answer was in these terms: —

“*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

“St. James’s Street, July 6, 1812.

“Sir, — I have just been honoured with your letter. — I feel sorry that you should have thought it worth while to notice the evil works of my nonage, as the thing is suppressed *voluntarily*, and your explanation is too kind not to give me pain. The Satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions. I cannot sufficiently thank you for your praise; and now, waiving myself, let me talk to you of the Prince Regent. He ordered me to be presented to him at a ball: and after some sayings, peculiarly pleasing from royal lips, as to my own attempts, he talked to me of you and your immortalities; he preferred you to every bard past and present, and asked which of your works pleased me most. It was a difficult question. I answered, I thought the *Lay*. He said his own opinion was nearly similar. In speaking of the others, I told him that I thought you more particularly the poet of *Princes*, as *they* never appeared more fascinating than in *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*. He was pleased to coincide, and to dwell on the description of your *Jameses* as no less royal than poetical. He spoke alternately of Homer and yourself, and seemed well acquainted with both; so that (with the exception of the Turks* and your humble servant) you were in very good company. I defy Murray to have exaggerated his Royal Highness’s opinion of your powers, nor can I pretend to enumerate all he said on the subject; but

* A Turkish ambassador and his suite figured at the ball.

it may give you pleasure to hear that it was conveyed in language which would only suffer by my attempting to transcribe it; and with a tone and taste which gave me a very high idea of his abilities and accomplishments, which I had hitherto considered as confined to *manners*, certainly superior to those of any living *gentleman*.

“This interview was accidental. I never went to the levee; for having seen the courts of Mussulman and Catholic sovereigns, my curiosity was sufficiently allayed: and my politics being as perverse as my rhymes, I had, in fact, no business there. To be thus praised by your Sovereign must be gratifying to you; and if that gratification is not alloyed by the communication being made through me, the bearer of it will consider himself very fortunately, and sincerely, your obliged and obedient servant,
BYRON.”

“P. S. — Excuse this scrawl, scratched in a great hurry, and just after a journey.”

Scott immediately replied as follows:—

“*To the Right Hon. Lord Byron, &c. &c. &c.*

“Abbotsford near Melrose, 16th July 1812.

“My Lord,—I am much indebted to your Lordship for your kind and friendly letter: and much gratified by the Prince Regent’s good opinion of my literary attempts. I know so little of courts or princes, that any success I may have had in hitting off the Stuarts is, I am afraid, owing to a little old Jacobite leaven which I sucked in with the numerous traditional tales that amused my infancy. It is a fortunate thing for the Prince himself that he has a literary turn, since nothing can so effectually relieve the ennui of state, and the anxieties of power.

“I hope your Lordship intends to give us more of Childe Harold. I was delighted that my friend Jeffrey—for such, in despite of many a feud, literary and political, I always esteem

him — has made so handsomely the *amende honorable* for not having discovered in the bud the merits of the flower; and I am happy to understand that the retractation so handsomely made was received with equal liberality. These circumstances may perhaps some day lead you to revisit Scotland, which has a maternal claim upon you, and I need not say what pleasure I should have in returning my personal thanks for the honour you have done me. I am labouring here to contradict an old proverb, and make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, namely, to convert a bare *haugh* and *brae*, of about 100 acres, into a comfortable farm. Now, although I am living in a gardener's hut, and although the adjacent ruins of Melrose have little to tempt one who has seen those of Athens, yet, should you take a tour which is so fashionable at this season, I should be very happy to have an opportunity of introducing you to anything remarkable in my fatherland. My neighbour, Lord Somerville, would, I am sure, readily supply the accommodations which I want, unless you prefer a couch in a closet, which is the utmost hospitality I have at present to offer. The fair, or shall I say the sage, Apreece that was, Lady Davy that is, is soon to show us how much science she leads captive in Sir Humphrey; so your Lordship sees, as the citizen's wife says in the farce — 'Thread-needle Street has some charms,' since they procure us such celebrated visitants. As for me, I would rather cross-question your Lordship about the outside of Parnassus, than learn the nature of the contents of all the other mountains in the world. Pray, when under 'its cloudy canopy' did you hear anything of the celebrated Pegasus? Some say he has been brought off with other curiosities to Britain, and now covers at Tattersal's. I would fain have a cross from him out of my little moss-trooper's Galloway, and I think your Lordship can tell me how to set about it, as I recognise his true paces in the high-mettled description of Ali Pacha's military court.

"A wise man said — or, if not, I, who am no wise man, now say — that there is no surer mark of regard than when your correspondent ventures to write nonsense to you. Having, therefore, like Dogberry, bestowed all my tediousness upon

your Lordship, you are to conclude that I have given you a convincing proof that I am very much your Lordship's obliged and very faithful servant,
WALTER SCOTT."

From this time the epistolary intercourse between Scott and Byron continued to be kept up; and it ere long assumed a tone of friendly confidence equally honourable to both these great competitors, without rivalry, for the favour of the literary world.

The date of the letter last quoted immediately preceded that of Scott's second meeting with another of the most illustrious of his contemporaries. He had met Davy at Mr. Wordsworth's when in the first flush of his celebrity in 1804, and been, as one of his letters states, much delighted with "the simple and unaffected style of his bearing—the most agreeable characteristic of high genius." Sir Humphrey, now at the summit of his fame, had come, by his marriage with Scott's accomplished relation, into possession of an ample fortune; and he and his bride were among the first of the poet's visitors in the original cabin at Abbotsford.

The following letter is an answer to one in which Mr. Southey had besought Scott's good offices in behalf of an application which he thought of making to be appointed Historiographer-Royal, in the room of Mr. Dutens, just dead. It will be seen that both poets regarded with much alarm the symptoms of popular discontent which appeared in various districts, particularly among the *Luddites*, as they were called, of Yorkshire, during the uncertain condition of public affairs consequent on the assassination of the Prime Minister, Mr. Percival, by Bellingham, in the lobby of the House of Commons, on the 11th of May 1812; and that Scott had, in his capacity of Sheriff, had his own share in suppressing the tu-

mults of the only manufacturing town of Selkirkshire. The last sentence of the letter alludes to a hint dropped in the Edinburgh Review, that the author of the historical department of the Edinburgh Annual Register ought to be called to the bar of the House of Commons, in consequence of the bold language in which he had criticized the parliamentary hostility of the Whigs to the cause of Spain.

“ *To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

“ Edinburgh, 4th June 1812.

“ My Dear Southey, — It is scarcely necessary to say that the instant I had your letter I wrote to the only friend I have in power, Lord Melville (if indeed he be now in power), begging him for the sake of his own character, for the remembrance of his father who wished you sincerely well, and by every other obijuration I could think of, to back your application. All I fear, if Administration remain, is the influence of the clergy, who have a strange disposition to job away among themselves the rewards of literature. But I fear they are all to pieces above stairs, and much owing to rashness and mismanagement; for if they could not go on without Canning and Wellesley, they certainly should from the beginning have invited them in as companions, and not mere retainers. On the whole, that cursed compound of madness and villany has contrived to do his country more mischief at one blow than all her sages and statesmen will be able to repair perhaps in our day. You are quite right in apprehending a *Jacquerie*; the country is mined below our feet. Last week, learning that a meeting was to be held among the weavers of the large manufacturing village of Galashiels, for the purpose of cutting a man's web from his loom, I apprehended the ringleaders and disconcerted the whole project; but in the course of my inquiries, imagine my surprise at discovering a bundle of letters and printed manifestoes, from which it appeared that the Manchester Weavers' Committee corresponds with every manufacturing town in the

South and West of Scotland, and levies a subsidy of 2s. 6*d.* per man — (an immense sum) — for the ostensible purpose of petitioning Parliament for redress of grievances, but doubtless to sustain them in their revolutionary movements. An energetic administration, which had the confidence of the country, would soon check all this; but it is our misfortune to lose the pilot when the ship is on the breakers. But it is sickening to think of our situation.

“I can hardly think there could have been any serious intention of taking the hint of the Review, and yet *liberty* has so often been made the pretext of crushing its own best supporters, that I am always prepared to expect the most tyrannical proceedings from professed demagogues.

“I am uncertain whether the Chamberlain will be liable to removal — if not, I should hope you may be pretty sure of your object. Believe me ever yours faithfully,

“WALTER SCOTT.

“*4th June.* — What a different birthday from those I have seen! It is likely I shall go to Rokeby for a few days this summer; and if so, I will certainly diverge to spend a day at Keswick.”

Mr. Southey's application was unsuccessful — the office he wished for having been bestowed, as soon as it fell vacant, on a person certainly of vastly inferior literary pretensions — the late Rev. J. S. Clarke, D. D., private librarian to the Regent.

CHAPTER XXV.

The “Flitting” to Abbotsford — Plantations — George Thomson — Rokeby and Triermain in progress — Excursion to Flodden — Bishop Auckland, and Rokeby Park — Correspondence with Crabbe — Life of Patrick Carey, &c. — Publication of Rokeby — and of the Bridal of Triermain.

1812–1813.

TOWARDS the end of May 1812, the Sheriff finally removed from Ashestiel to Abbotsford. The day when this occurred was a sad one for many a poor neighbour — for they lost, both in him and his wife, very generous protectors. In such a place, among the few evils which counterbalance so many good things in the condition of the peasantry, the most afflicting is the want of access to medical advice. As far as their means and skill would go, they had both done their utmost to supply this want; and Mrs. Scott, in particular, had made it so much her business to visit the sick in their scattered cottages, and bestowed on them the contents of her medicine-chest as well as of the larder and cellar, with such unwearied kindness, that her name is never mentioned there to this day without some expression of tenderness. Scott’s children remember the parting scene as one of unmixed affliction — but it had had, as we shall see, its lighter features.

Among the many amiable English friends whom he owed to his frequent visits at Rokeby Park, there was, I believe, none that had a higher place in his regard than the late Anne Lady Alvanley, the widow of the celebrated Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. He was fond of female society in general; but her ladyship was a woman after his heart; well born, and highly bred, but without the slightest tinge of the frivolities of modern fashion; soundly informed, and a warm lover of literature and the arts, but holding in as great horror as himself the imbecile chatter and affected ecstasies of the bluestocking generation. Her ladyship had written to him early in May, by Miss Sarah Smith (now Mrs. Bartley), whom I have already mentioned as one of his theatrical favourites; and his answer contains, among other matters, a sketch of the "Forest Flitting."

"To the Right Honourable Lady Alvanley.

Ashestiel, 25th May 1812.

"I was honoured, my dear Lady Alvanley, by the kind letter which you sent me with our friend Miss Smith, whose talents are, I hope, receiving at Edinburgh the full meed of honourable applause which they so highly merit. It is very much against my will that I am forced to speak of them by report alone, for this being the term of removing, I am under the necessity of being at this farm to superintend the transference of my goods and chattels, a most miscellaneous collection, to a small property, about five miles down the Tweed, which I purchased last year. The neighbours have been much delighted with the procession of my furniture, in which old swords, bows, targets, and lances, made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys was accommodated within the helmet of some *preux* chevalier of ancient Border fame; and the very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners and muskets. I

assure your ladyship that this caravan, attended by a dozen of ragged rosy peasant children, carrying fishing-rods and spears, and leading poneys, greyhounds, and spaniels, would, as it crossed the Tweed, have furnished no bad subject for the pencil, and really reminded me of one of the gypsey groupes of Callot upon their march.

“Edinburgh, 23th May.

“I have got here at length, and had the pleasure to hear Miss Smith speak the Ode on the Passions charmingly last night. It was her benefit, and the house was tolerable, though not so good as she deserves, being a very good girl, as well as an excellent performer.

“I have read Lord Byron with great pleasure, though pleasure is not quite the appropriate word. I should say admiration — mixed with regret, that the author should have adopted such an unamiable misanthropical tone. — The reconciliation with Holland-House is extremely edifying, and may teach young authors to be in no hurry to exercise their satirical vein. I remember an honest old Presbyterian, who thought it right to speak with respect even of the devil himself, since no one knew in what corner he might one day want a friend. But Lord Byron is young, and certainly has great genius, and has both time and capacity to make amends for his errors. I wonder if he will pardon the Edinburgh reviewers, who have read their recantation of their former strictures.

“Mrs. Scott begs to offer her kindest and most respectful compliments to your ladyship and the young ladies. I hope we shall get into Yorkshire this season to see Morritt: he and his lady are really delightful persons. Believe me, with great respect, dear Lady Alvanley, your much honoured and obliged

“WALTER SCOTT.”

A week later, in answer to a letter, mentioning the approach of the celebrated sale of books in which the Roxburghe Club originated, Scott says to his trusty ally, Daniel Terry: —

“Edinburgh, 9th June 1812.

“My Dear Terry, — I wish you joy of your success, which although all reports state it as most highly flattering, does not exceed what I had hoped for you. I think I shall do you a sensible pleasure in requesting that you will take a walk over the fields to Hampstead one of these fine days, and deliver the enclosed to my friend Miss Baillie, with whom, I flatter myself, you will be much pleased, as she has all the simplicity of real genius. I mentioned to her some time ago, that I wished to make you acquainted, so that the sooner you can call upon her, the compliment will be the more gracious. As I suppose you will sometimes look in at the Roxburghe sale, a memorandum respecting any remarkable articles will be a great favour.

“Abbotsford was looking charming, when I was obliged to mount my wheel in this court, too fortunate that I have at length some share in the roast meat I am daily engaged in turning. Our flitting and removal from Ashestiel baffled all description; we had twenty-four cart-loads of the veriest trash in nature, besides dogs, pigs, poneys, poultry, cows, calves, bare-headed wenches, and bare-breeched boys. In other respects we are going on in the old way, only poor Percy is dead. I intend to have an old stone set up by his grave, with ‘*Cy gist li preux Percie,*’ and I hope future antiquaries will debate which hero of the house of Northumberland has left his bones in Teviotdale.* Believe me yours very truly,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

This was one of the busiest summers of Scott’s busy life. Till the 12th of July he was at his post in the Court of Session five days every week; but every Saturday evening found him at Abbotsford, to observe the progress his labourers had made within doors and without in his absence; and on Monday night he returned to Edinburgh. Even before the Summer Session com-

* The epitaph of this favourite greyhound may be seen on the edge of the bank, a little way below the house of Abbotsford.

menced, he appears to have made some advance in his Rokeby, for he writes to Mr. Morritt, from Abbotsford, on the 4th of May — “As for the house and the poem, there are twelve masons hammering at the one, and one poor noddle at the other — so they are both in progress”; — and his literary labours throughout the long vacation were continued under the same sort of disadvantage. That autumn he had, in fact, no room at all for himself. The only parlour which had been hammered into anything like habitable condition, served at once for dining-room, drawing-room, school-room, and study. A window looking to the river was kept sacred to his desk; an old bed-curtain was nailed up across the room close behind his chair, and there, whenever the spade, the dibble, or the chisel (for he took his full share in all the work on hand) was laid aside, he pursued his poetical tasks, apparently undisturbed and unannoyed by the surrounding confusion of masons and carpenters, to say nothing of the lady’s small talk, the children’s babble among themselves, or their repetition of their lessons. The truth no doubt was, that when at his desk he did little more, as far as regarded *poetry*, than write down the lines which he had fashioned in his mind while pursuing his vocation as a planter, upon that bank which received originally, by way of joke, the title of *the thicket*. “I am now,” he says to Ellis (Oct. 17), “adorning a patch of naked land with trees *facturis nepotibus umbram*, for I shall never live to enjoy their shade myself otherwise than in the recumbent posture of Tityrus and Menalcaas.” But he did live to see *the thicket* deserve not only that name, but a nobler one; and to fell with his own hand many a well-grown tree that he had planted there.

Another plantation of the same date, by his eastern

boundary, was less successful. For this he had asked and received from his early friend, the Marchioness of Stafford, a supply of acorns from Trentham, and it was named in consequence *Sutherland bower*; but the field-mice, in the course of the ensuing winter, contrived to root up and devour the whole of her ladyship's goodly benefaction. A third space had been set apart, and duly enclosed, for the reception of some Spanish chestnuts offered to him by an admirer established in merchandise at Seville; but that gentleman had not been a very knowing ally as to such matters, for when the chestnuts arrived, it turned out that they had been boiled.

Scott writes thus to Terry, in September, while the Roxburghe sale was still going on:—

“I have lacked your assistance, my dear sir, for twenty whimsicalities this autumn. Abbotsford, as you will readily conceive, has considerably changed its face since the auspices of Mother Retford were exchanged for ours. We have got up a good garden wall, complete stables in the haugh, according to Stark's plan, and the old farm-yard being enclosed with a wall, with some little picturesque additions in front, has much relieved the stupendous height of the Doctor's barn. The new plantations have thriven amazingly well, the acorns are coming up fast, and Tom Purdie is the happiest and most consequential person in the world. My present work is building up the well with some *debris* from the Abbey. O for your assistance, for I am afraid we shall make but a botched job of it, especially as our materials are of a very miscellaneous complexion. The worst of all is, that while my trees grow and my fountain fills, my purse, in an inverse ratio, sinks to zero. This last circumstance will, I fear, make me a very poor guest at the literary entertainment your researches hold out for me. I should, however, like much to have the Treatise on Dreams, by the author of the New Jerusalem, which, as John Cuthbertson the

smith said of the minister's sermon, must be neat work. The *Loyal Poems*, by N. T.,* are probably by poor Nahum Tate, who associated with Brady in versifying the Psalms, and more honourably with Dryden in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*. I never saw them, however, but would give a guinea or thirty shillings for the collection. Our friend John Ballantyne has, I learn, made a sudden sally to London, and doubtless you will crush a quart with him or a pottle pot; he will satisfy your bookseller for 'The Dreamer,' or any other little purchase you may recommend for me. You have pleased Miss Baillie very much both in public and in society, and though not fastidious, she is not, I think, particularly lavish of applause either way. A most valuable person is she, and as warm-hearted as she is brilliant.—Mrs. Scott and all our little folks are well. I am relieved of the labour of hearing Walter's lesson by a gallant son of the church, who with one leg of wood, and another of oak, walks to and fro from Melrose every day for that purpose. Pray stick to the dramatic work,† and never suppose either that you can be intrusive, or that I can be uninterested in whatever concerns you. Yours,

“W. S.”

The tutor alluded to at the close of this letter was Mr. George Thomson, son of the minister of Melrose, who, when the house afforded better accommodation, was and continued for many years to be domesticated at Abbotsford. Scott had always a particular tenderness towards persons afflicted with any bodily misfortune; and Thomson, whose leg had been amputated in consequence of a rough casualty of his boyhood, had a special share in his favour from the high spirit with which he refused at the

* The Reverend Alexander Dyce says, “N. T. stands for *Nathaniel Thomson*, the Tory bookseller, who published these *Loyal Poems*.” [1839.]

† An edition of the *British Dramatists* had, I believe, been projected by Mr. Terry.

time to betray the name of the companion that had occasioned his mishap, and continued ever afterwards to struggle against its disadvantages. Tall, vigorous, athletic, a dauntless horseman, and expert at the singlestick, George formed a valuable as well as picturesque addition to the *tail* of the new laird, who often said, "In the Dominie, like myself, accident has spoiled a capital life-guardsmen." His many oddities and eccentricities in no degree interfered with the respect due to his amiable feelings, upright principles, and sound learning; nor did *Dominie Thamson* at all quarrel in after times with the universal credence of the neighbourhood that he had furnished many features for the inimitable personage whose designation so nearly resembled his own; and if he has not yet "wagged his head" in a "pulpit o' his ain," he well knows it has not been so for want of earnest and long-continued intercession on the part of the author of *Guy Mannering*.*

For many years Scott had accustomed himself to proceed in the composition of poetry along with that of prose essays of various descriptions; but it is a remarkable fact that he chose this period of perpetual noise and bustle, when he had not even a summer-house to himself, for the new experiment of carrying on two poems at the same time — and this too without suspending the heavy labour of his edition of *Swift*, to say nothing of the various lesser matters in which the *Ballantynes* were, from day to day, calling for the assistance of his judgment and his pen. In the same letter in which *William Erskine* acknowledges the receipt of the first four pages of *Rokeby*, he adverts also to the *Bridal of Triermain* as being already

* Mr. Thomson died 8th January 1838, before the publication of the first edition of these Memoirs had been completed. — [1839.]

in rapid progress. The fragments of this second poem, inserted in the Register of the preceding year, had attracted considerable notice ; the secret of their authorship had been well kept ; and by some means, even in the shrewdest circles of Edinburgh, the belief had become prevalent that they proceeded not from Scott but from Erskine. Scott had no sooner completed his bargain as to the copyright of the unwritten Rokeby, than he resolved to pause from time to time in its composition, and weave those fragments into a shorter and lighter romance, executed in a different metre, and to be published anonymously, in a small pocket volume, as nearly as possible on the same day with the avowed quarto. He expected great amusement from the comparisons which the critics would no doubt indulge themselves in drawing between himself and this humble candidate ; and Erskine good-humouredly entered into the scheme, undertaking to do nothing which should effectually suppress the notion of his having set himself up as a modest rival to his friend. Nay, he suggested a further refinement, which in the sequel had no small share in the success of this little plot upon the sagacity of the reviewers. Having said that he much admired the opening of the first canto of Rokeby, Erskine adds, "I shall request your *accoucheur* to send me your *little Dugald* too as he gradually makes his progress. What I have seen is delightful. You are aware how difficult it is to form any opinion of a work, the general plan of which is unknown, transmitted merely in legs and wings as they are formed and feathered. Any remarks must be of the most minute and superficial kind, confined chiefly to the language, and other such subordinate matters. I shall be very much amused if the secret is kept and the knowing ones taken in. To prevent any

discovery from your prose, what think you of putting down your ideas of what the preface ought to contain, and allowing me to write it over? And perhaps a quizzing review might be concocted."

This last hint was welcome; and among other parts of the preface to *Triermain* which threw out "the knowing ones," certain Greek quotations interspersed in it are now accounted for. Scott, on his part, appears to have studiously interwoven into the piece allusions to personal feelings and experiences more akin to his friend's history and character than to his own; and he did so still more largely, when repeating this experiment, in the introductory parts of *Harold the Dauntless*.

The same post which conveyed William Erskine's letter above quoted, brought him an equally wise and kind one from Mr. Morritt, in answer to a fresh application for some minute details about the scenery and local traditions of the Valley of the Tees. Scott had promised to spend part of this autumn at Rokeby Park himself; but now, busied as he was with his planting operations at home, and continually urged by Ballantyne to have the poem ready for publication by Christmas, he would willingly have trusted his friend's knowledge in place of his own observation and research. Mr. Morritt gave him in reply various particulars, which I need not here repeat, but added — "I am really sorry, my dear Scott, at your abandonment of your kind intention of visiting Rokeby — and my sorrow is not quite selfish — for seriously, I wish you could have come, if but for a few days, in order, on the spot, to settle accurately in your mind the localities of the new poem, and all their petty circumstances, of which there are many that would give interest and ornament to your descriptions. I am too much flattered

by your proposal of inscribing the poem to me, not to accept it with gratitude and pleasure. I shall always feel your friendship as an honour — we all wish our honours to be permanent — and yours promises mine at least a fair chance of immortality. I hope, however, you will not be obliged to write in a hurry on account of the impatience of your booksellers. They are, I think, ill advised in their proceeding, for surely the book will be the more likely to succeed from not being forced prematurely into this critical world. Do not be persuaded to risk your established fame on this hazardous experiment. If you want a few hundreds independent of these booksellers, your credit is so very good, now that you have got rid of your *Old Man of the Sea*, that it is no great merit to trust you, and I happen at this moment to have five or six for which I have no sort of demand — so rather than be obliged to spur Pegasus beyond the power of pulling him up when he is going too fast, do consult your own judgment and set the midwives of the trade at defiance. Don't be scrupulous to the disadvantage of your muse, and above all be not offended at me for a proposition which is meant in the true spirit of friendship. I am more than ever anxious for your success — the *Lady of the Lake* more than succeeded — I think *Don Roderick* is less popular — I want this work to be another *Lady* at the least. Surely it would be worth your while for such an object to spend a week of your time, and a portion of your *Old Man's* salary, in a mail-coach flight hither, were it merely to renew your acquaintance with the country, and to rectify the little misconceptions of a cursory view. Ever affectionately yours, J. B. S. M."

This appeal was not to be resisted. Scott, I believe, accepted Mr. Morrith's friendly offer so far as to ask his

assistance in having some of Ballantyne's bills discounted: and he proceeded the week after to Rokeby, by the way of Flodden and Hexham, travelling on horseback, his eldest boy and girl on their poneys, while Mrs. Scott followed them in the carriage. Two little incidents that diversified this ride through Northumberland have found their way into print already; but, as he was fond of telling them both down to the end of his days, I must give them a place here also. Halting at Flodden to expound the field of battle to his young folks, he found that *Marmion* had, as might have been expected, benefited the keeper of the public house there very largely; and the village Boniface, overflowing with gratitude, expressed his anxiety to have a *Scott's Head* for his sign-post. The poet demurred to this proposal, and assured mine host that nothing could be more appropriate than the portraiture of a foaming tankard, which already surmounted his door-way. "Why, the painter-man has not made an ill job," said the landlord, "but I would fain have something more connected with the book that has brought me so much good custom." He produced a well-thumbed copy, and handing it to the author, begged he would at least suggest a motto from the tale of Flodden Field. Scott opened the book at the death scene of the hero, and his eye was immediately caught by the "inscription" in black letter —

"Drink, weary pilgrim, drink, and pray
For the kind soul of Sibyl Grey," &c.

"Well, my friend," said he, "what more would you have? You need but strike out one letter in the first of these lines, and make your painter-man, the next time he comes this way, print between the jolly tankard and your own name —

"Drink, weary pilgrim, drink and PAY."

Scott was delighted to find, on his return, that this suggestion had been adopted, and for aught I know, the romantic legend may still be visible.

The other story I shall give in the words of Mr. Gil-
lies. "It happened at a small country town that Scott suddenly required medical advice for one of his servants, and, on inquiring if there was any doctor at the place, was told that there was two — one long established, and the other a new comer. The latter gentleman, being luckily found at home, soon made his appearance; — a grave, sagacious-looking personage, attired in black, with a shovel hat, in whom, to his utter astonishment, Sir Walter recognised a Scotch blacksmith, who had formerly practised, with tolerable success, as a veterinary operator in the neighbourhood of Ashestiel. — 'How, in all the world!' exclaimed he, 'can it be possible that this is John Lundie?' — 'In troth is it, your honour — just *a' that's for him.*' — 'Well, but let us hear; you were a *horse-doctor* before; now, it seems, you are a *man-doctor*; how do you get on?' — 'Ou, just extraordinary weel; for your honour maun ken my practice is vera sure and orthodox. I depend entirely upon twa *simples.*' — 'And what may their names be? Perhaps it is a secret?' — 'I'll tell your honour,' in a low tone; 'my twa simples are just *laudamy* and *calamy!*' — 'Simples with a vengeance!' replied Scott. 'But John, do you never happen to *kill* any of your patients?' — 'Kill? Ou ay, may be sae! Whiles they die, and whiles no; — but it's the will o' Providence. *Ony how, your honour, it wad be lang before it makes up for Flodden!*'" *

It was also in the course of this expedition that Scott first made acquaintance with the late excellent and ven-

* Reminiscences of Sir Walter Scott, p. 56.

erable Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham. The travellers having reached Auckland over night, were seeing the public rooms of the Castle at an early hour next morning, when the Bishop happened, in passing through one of them, to catch a glimpse of Scott's person, and immediately recognising him, from the likeness of the engravings by this time multiplied, introduced himself to the party, and insisted upon acting as cicerone. After showing them the picture-gallery and so forth, his Lordship invited them to join the morning service of the chapel, and when that was over, insisted on their remaining to breakfast. But Scott and his Lordship were by this time so much pleased with each other that they could not part so easily. The good Bishop ordered his horse, nor did Scott observe without admiration the proud curvetting of the animal on which his Lordship proposed to accompany him during the next stage of his progress. "Why, yes, Mr. Scott," said the gentle but high-spirited old man, "I still like to feel my horse under me." He was then in his 79th year, and survived to the age of ninety-two, the model in all things of a real prince of the Church. They parted after a ride of ten miles, with mutual regret; and on all subsequent rides in that direction, Bishop-Auckland was one of the poet's regular halting places.

At Rokeby, on this occasion, Scott remained about a week; and I transcribe the following brief account of his proceedings while there from Mr. Morritt's *Memorandum*:—"I had, of course," he says, "had many previous opportunities of testing the almost conscientious fidelity of his local descriptions; but I could not help being singularly struck with the lights which this visit threw on that characteristic of his compositions. The morning

after he arrived he said, 'You have often given me materials for romance — now I want a good robber's cave, and an old church of the right sort.' We rode out, and he found what he wanted in the ancient slate quarries of Brignal and the ruined Abbey of Eggleston. I observed him noting down even the peculiar little wild flowers and herbs that accidentally grew round and on the side of a bold crag near his intended cave of Guy Denzil; and could not help saying, that as he was not to be upon oath in his work, daisies, violets, and primroses would be as poetical as any of the humble plants he was examining. I laughed, in short, at his scrupulousness; but I understood him when he replied, 'that in nature herself no two scenes were exactly alike, and that whoever copied truly what was before his eyes, would possess the same variety in his descriptions, and exhibit apparently an imagination as boundless as the range of nature in the scenes he recorded; whereas — whoever trusted to imagination, would soon find his own mind circumscribed, and contracted to a few favourite images, and the repetition of these would sooner or later produce that very monotony and barrenness which had always haunted descriptive poetry in the hands of any but the patient worshippers of truth. Besides which,' he said, 'local names and peculiarities make a fictitious story look so much better in the face.' In fact, from his boyish habits, he was but half satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect with it some local legend, and when I was forced sometimes to confess with the Knife-grinder, 'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir' — he would laugh and say, 'then let us make one — nothing so easy as to make a tradition.' Mr. Morrill adds, that he had brought with him about half the bridal

of Triermain — told him that he meant to bring it out the same week with Rokeby — and promised himself particular satisfaction in *laying a trap for Jeffrey*; who, however, as we shall see, escaped the snare.

Some of the following letters will show with what rapidity, after having refreshed and stored his memory with the localities of Rokeby, he proceeded in the composition of the romance:—

“ *To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq.*

“ Abbotsford, 12th October 1812.

“ My Dear Morritt, — I have this morning returned from Dalkeith House, to which I was whisked amid the fury of an election tempest, and I found your letter on my table. More on such a subject cannot be said among friends who give each other credit for feeling as they ought.

“ We peregrinated over Stanmore, and visited the Castles of Bowes, Brough, Appleby, and Brougham with great interest. Lest our spirit of chivalry thus excited should lack employment, we found ourselves, that is, *I* did, at Carlisle, engaged in the service of two distressed ladies, being no other than our friends Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart, who overtook us there, and who would have had great trouble in finding quarters, the election being in full vigour, if we had not anticipated their puzzle, and secured a private house capable of holding us all. Some distress occurred, I believe, among the waiting damsels, whose case I had not so carefully considered, for I heard a sentimental exclamation — ‘ Am I to sleep with the greyhounds?’ which I conceived to proceed from Lady Douglas’s *souvante*, from the exquisite sensibility of tone with which it was uttered, especially as I beheld the fair one descend from the carriage with three half-bound volumes of a novel in her hand. Not having it in my power to alleviate her woes, by offering her either a part or the whole of my own couch — ‘ *Transeat,*’ quoth I, ‘ *cum cæteris erroribus.*’

“I am delighted with your Cumberland admirer,* and give him credit for his visit to the vindicator of Homer; but you missed one of another description, who passed Rokeby with great regret, I mean General John Malcolm, the Persian envoy, the Delhi resident, the poet, the warrior, the polite man, and the Borderer. He is really a fine fellow. I met him at Dalkeith, and we returned together;—he has just left me, after drinking his coffee. A fine time we had of it, talking of Troy town, and Babel, and Persepolis, and Delhi, and Langholm, and Burnfoot; † with all manner of episodes about Iskendiari, Rustan, and Johnnie Armstrong. Do you know, that poem of Ferdusi’s must be beautiful. He read me some very splendid extracts which he had himself translated. Should you meet him in London, I have given him charge to be acquainted with you, for I am sure you will like each other. To be sure, I know him little, but I like his frankness and his sound ideas of morality and policy; and I have observed, that when I have had no great liking to persons at the beginning, it has usually pleased Heaven, as Slender says, to decrease it on further acquaintance. Adieu, I must mount my horse. Our last journey was so delightful that we have every temptation to repeat it. Pray give our kind love to the lady, and believe me ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT.”

“*To the Same.*”

“Edinburgh, 29th November 1812.

“My Dear Morrith, — I have been, and still am, working very hard, in hopes to face the public by Christmas, and I

* This alluded to a ridiculous hunter of lions, who being met by Mr. Morrith in the grounds at Rokeby, disclaimed all taste for picturesque beauties, but overwhelmed their owner with Homeric Greek; of which he had told Scott.

† *Burnfoot* is the name of a farm-house on the Buccleuch estate, not far from Langholm, where the late Sir John Malcolm and his distinguished brothers were born. Their grandfather had, I believe, found refuge there after forfeiting a good estate and an ancient baronetcy in the *affair* of 1715. A monument to the gallant General’s memory has recently been erected near the spot of his birth.

think I have hitherto succeeded in throwing some interest into the piece. It is, however, a darker and more gloomy interest than I intended; but involving one's self with bad company, whether in fiction or in reality, is the way not to get out of it easily; so I have been obliged to bestow more pains and trouble upon Bertram, and one or two blackguards whom he picks up in the slate quarries, than what I originally designed. I am very desirous to have your opinion of the three first Cantos, for which purpose, so soon as I can get them collected, I will send the sheets under cover to Mr. Freeling, whose omnipotent frank will transmit them to Rokeby, where, I presume, you have been long since comfortably settled —

‘So York may overlook the town of York.’

3d King Henry VI. Act I. Scene 4.

“I trust you will read it with some partiality, because, if I have not been so successful as I could wish in describing your lovely and romantic glens, it has partly arisen from my great anxiety to do it well, which is often attended with the very contrary effect. There are two or three songs, and particularly one in praise of Brignal Banks, which I trust you will like — because, *entre nous*, I like them myself. One of them is a little dashing banditti song, called and entitled Allen-a-Dale. I think you will be able to judge for yourself in about a week. Pray, how shall I send you the *entire goose*, which will be too heavy to travel the same way with its *giblets* — for the Carlisle coach is terribly inaccurate about parcels? I fear I have made one blunder in mentioning the brooks which flow into the Tees. I have made the Balder distinct from that which comes down Thorsgill — I hope I am not mistaken. You will see the passage; and if they are the same rivulet, the leaf must be cancelled.

“I trust this will find Mrs. Morritt pretty well; and I am glad to find she has been better for her little tour. We were delighted with ours, except in respect of its short duration and Sophia and Walter hold their heads very high among their untravelled companions, from the predominance acquired

by their visit to England. You are not perhaps aware of the polish which is supposed to be acquired by the most transitory intercourse with your more refined side of the Tweed. There was an honest carter who once applied to me respecting a plan which he had formed of breeding his son, a great booby of twenty, to the Church. As the best way of evading the scrape, I asked him whether he thought his son's language was quite adapted for the use of a public speaker? — to which he answered, with great readiness, that he could knap English with any one, having twice driven his father's cart to Etal coal-hill.

“I have called my heroine Matilda. I don't much like Agnes, though I can't tell why, unless it is because it begins like Agag. Matilda is a name of unmanageable length; but, after all, is better than none, and my poor damsel was likely to go without one in my indecision.

“We are all hungering and thirsting for news from Russia. If Boney's devil does not help him, he is in a poor way. The Leith letters talk of the unanimity of the Russians as being most exemplary; and troops pour in from all quarters of their immense empire. Their commissariat is well managed under the Prince Duke of Oldenburgh. This was their weak point in former wars.

“Adieu! Mrs. Scott and the little people send love to Mrs. Morritt and you. Ever yours, WALTER SCOTT.”

“*To the Same.*”

“Edinburgh, Thursday, 10th December 1812.

“My Dear Morritt, — I have just time to say that I have received your letters, and am delighted that Rokeby pleases the owner. As I hope the whole will be printed off before Christmas, it will scarce be worth while to send you the other sheets till it reaches you altogether. Your criticisms are the best proof of your kind attention to the poem. I need not say I will pay them every attention in the next edition. But some

of the faults are so interwoven with the story, that they must stand. Denzil, for instance, is essential to me, though, as you say, not very interesting; and I assure you that, generally speaking, the *poeta loquitur* has a bad effect in narrative; and when you have twenty things to tell, it is better to be slatternly than tedious. The fact is, that the tediousness of many really good poems arises from an attempt to support the same tone throughout, which often occasions periphrasis, and always stiffness. I am quite sensible that I have often carried the opposite custom too far; but I am apt to impute it partly to not being able to bring out my own ideas well, and partly to haste — not to error in the system. This would, however, lead to a long discussion, more fit for the fireside than for a letter. I need not say that, the poem being in fact your own, you are at perfect liberty to dispose of the sheets as you please. I am glad my geography is pretty correct. It is too late to inquire if Rokeby is insured, for I have burned it down in Canto V.; but I suspect you will bear me no greater grudge than at the noble Russian who burned Moscow. Glorious news to-day from the north — *percat iste!* Mrs. Scott, Sophia, and Walter, join in best compliments to Mrs. Morritt; and I am, in great haste, ever faithfully yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

“P. S. — I have heard of Lady Hood by a letter from herself. She is well, and in high spirits, and sends me a pretty topaz seal, with a talisman which secures this letter, and signifies (it seems), which one would scarce have expected from its appearance, my name.”

We are now close upon the end of this busy twelve-month; but I must not turn the leaf to 1813, without noticing one of its miscellaneous incidents — his first intercourse by letter with the poet Crabbe. Mr. Hatchard, the publisher of his “Tales,” forwarded a copy of the book to Scott as soon as it was ready; and, the bookseller having communicated to his author some flattering ex-

pressions in Scott's letter of acknowledgment, Mr. Crabbe addressed him as follows :—

“ To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.

“ Merston, Grantham, 13th October 1812.

“ Sir,—Mr. Hatchard, judging rightly of the satisfaction it would afford me, has been so obliging as to communicate your two letters, in one of which you desire my ‘ Tales ’ to be sent ; in the other, you acknowledge the receipt of them ; and in both you mention my verses in such terms, that it would be affected in me were I to deny, and I think unjust if I were to conceal, the pleasure you give me. I am indeed highly gratified.

“ I have long entertained a hearty wish to be made known to a poet whose works are so greatly and so universally admired ; and I continued to hope that I might at some time find a common friend, by whose intervention I might obtain that honour ; but I am confined by duties near my home, and by sickness in it. It may be long before I be in town, and then no such opportunity might offer. Excuse me, then, sir, if I gladly seize this which now occurs to express my thanks for the politeness of your expressions, as well as my desire of being known to a gentleman who has delighted and affected me, and moved all the passions and feelings in turn, I believe— Envy surely excepted—certainly, if I know myself, but in a moderate degree. I truly rejoice in your success ; and while I am entertaining, in my way, a certain set of readers, for the most part, probably, of peculiar turn and habit, I can with pleasure see the effect you produce on all. Mr. Hatchard tells me that he hopes or expects that thousands will read my ‘ Tales,’ and I am convinced that your publisher might, in like manner, so speak of your ten thousands ; but this, though it calls to mind the passage, is no true comparison with the related prowess of David and Saul, because I have no evil spirit to arise and trouble me on the occasion ; though, if I had, I know no David whose skill is so likely to allay it. Once more, sir, accept my

best thanks, with my hearty wishes for your health and happiness, who am, with great esteem, and true respect,

“Dear Sir, your obedient servant,

“GEORGE CRABBE.”

I cannot produce Scott's reply to this communication. Mr. Crabbe appears to have, in the course of the year, sent him a copy of all his works, “*ex dono auctoris*,” and there passed between them several letters, one or two of which I must quote.

“*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*”

“Know you, sir, a gentleman in Edinburgh, A. Brunton (the Rev.) who dates St. John Street, and who asks my assistance in furnishing hymns which have relation to the Old or New Testament — anything which might suit the purpose of those who are cooking up a book of Scotch Psalmody? Who is Mr. Brunton? What is his situation? If I could help one who needed help, I would do it cheerfully — but have no great opinion of this undertaking.

“With every good wish, yours sincerely,

“GEO. CRABBE.”

Scott's answer to this letter expresses the opinions he always held in conversation on the important subject to which it refers; and acting upon which, he himself at various times declined taking any part in the business advocated by Dr. Brunton:—

“*To the Rev. George Crabbe, Merston, Grantham.*”

“My Dear Sir,—I was favoured with your kind letter some time ago. Of all people in the world, I am least entitled to demand regularity of correspondence; for being, one way and another, doomed to a great deal more writing than suits my indolence, I am sometimes tempted to envy the reverend hermit of Prague, confessor to the niece of Queen Gorboduc,

who never saw either pen or ink. Mr. Brunton is a very respectable clergyman of Edinburgh, and I believe the work in which he has solicited your assistance is one adopted by the General Assembly, or Convocation of the Kirk. I have no notion that he has any individual interest in it; he is a well-educated and liberal-minded man, and generally esteemed. I have no particular acquaintance with him myself, though we speak together. He is at this very moment sitting on the outside of the bar of our Supreme Court, within which I am fagging as a Clerk; but as he is hearing the opinion of the Judges upon an action for augmentation of stipend to him and to his brethren, it would not, I conceive, be a very favourable time to canvass a literary topic. But you are quite safe with him; and having so much command of scriptural language, which appears to me essential to the devotional poetry of Christians, I am sure you can assist his purpose much more than any man alive.

“I think those hymns which do not immediately recall the warm and exalted language of the Bible are apt to be, however elegant, rather cold and flat for the purposes of devotion. You will readily believe that I do not approve of the vague and indiscriminate Scripture language which the fanatics of old, and the modern Methodists, have adopted, but merely that solemnity and peculiarity of diction, which at once puts the reader and hearer upon his guard as to the purpose of the poetry. To my Gothic ear, indeed, the *Stabat Mater*, the *Dies Irae*, and some of the other hymns of the Catholic Church, are more solemn and affecting than the fine classical poetry of Buchanan; the one has the gloomy dignity of a Gothic church, and reminds us instantly of the worship to which it is dedicated; the other is more like a Pagan temple, recalling to our memory the classical and fabulous deities.* This is, probably, all referable to the association of ideas — that is, if the ‘association of ideas’ continues to be the universal pick-lock of all metaphysical difficulties, as it was when I studied moral phi-

* See *Life of Dryden*, Scott’s Miscellaneous Prose Works, (edit. 1841) p. 61.

losophy — or to any other more fashionable universal solvent which may have succeeded to it in reputation. Adieu, my dear sir, — I hope you and your family will long enjoy all happiness and prosperity. Never be discouraged from the constant use of your charming talent. The opinions of reviewers are really too contradictory to found anything upon them, whether they are favourable or otherwise; for it is usually their principal object to display the abilities of the writers of the critical lucubrations themselves. Your ‘Tales’ are universally admired here. I go but little out, but the few judges whose opinions I have been accustomed to look up to, are unanimous. Ever yours, most truly,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

“*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*”

“My Dear Sir, — Law, then, is your profession — I mean a profession you give your mind and time to — but how ‘fag as a clerk?’ Clerk is a name for a learned person, I know, in our Church; but how the same hand which held the pen of Mar-
mion, holds that with which a clerk fags, unless a clerk means something vastly more than I understand — is not to be comprehended. I wait for elucidation. Know you, dear sir, I have often thought I should love to read *reports* — that is, brief histories of extraordinary cases, with the judgments. If that is what is meant by *reports*, such reading must be pleasant; but, probably, I entertain wrong ideas, and could not understand the books I think so engaging. Yet I conclude there are *histories of cases*, and have often thought of consulting Hatchard whether he knew of such kind of reading, but hitherto I have rested in ignorance. Yours truly,

GEORGE CRABBE.”

“*To the Rev. George Crabbe.*”

“My Dear Sir, — I have too long delayed to thank you for the most kind and acceptable present of your three volumes. Now am I doubly armed, since I have a set for my cabin at

Abbotsford as well as in town ; and, to say truth, the auxiliary copy arrived in good time, for my original one suffers as much by its general popularity among my young people, as a popular candidate from the hugs and embraces of his democratical admirers. The clearness and accuracy of your painting, whether natural or moral, renders, I have often remarked, your works generally delightful to those whose youth might render them insensible to the other beauties with which they abound. There are a sort of pictures — surely the most valuable, were it but for that reason — which strike the uninitiated as much as they do the connoisseur, though the last alone can render reason for his admiration. Indeed our old friend Horace knew what he was saying when he chose to address his ode, ‘*Virginibus puerisque*,’ and so did Pope when he told somebody he had the mob on the side of his version of Homer, and did not mind the high-flying critics at Button’s. After all, if a faultless poem could be produced, I am satisfied it would tire the critics themselves, and annoy the whole reading world with the spleen.

“ You must be delightfully situated in the Vale of Belvoir — a part of England for which I entertain a special kindness, for the sake of the gallant hero, Robin Hood, who, as probably you will readily guess, is no small favourite of mine ; his indistinct ideas concerning the doctrine of *meum* and *tuum* being no great objection to an outriding Borderer. I am happy to think that your station is under the protection of the Rutland family, of whom fame speaks highly. Our lord of the ‘cairn and the scaur,’ waste wilderness and hungry hills, for many a league around, is the Duke of Buccleuch, the head of my clan ; a kind and benevolent landlord, a warm and zealous friend, and the husband of a lady — *comme il y en a peu*. They are both great admirers of Mr. Crabbe’s poetry, and would be happy to know him, should he ever come to Scotland, and venture into the Gothic halls of a Border chief. The early and uniform kindness of this family, with the friendship of the late and present Lord Melville, enabled me, some years ago, to exchange my toils as a barrister, for the lucrative and respect-

able situation of one of the Clerks of our Supreme Court, which only requires a certain routine of official duty, neither laborious nor calling for any exertion of the mind; so that my time is entirely at my own command, except when I am attending the Court, which seldom occupies more than two hours of the morning during sitting. I besides hold *in commendam* the Sheriffdom of Etrick Forest, which is now no forest; so that I am a pluralist as to law appointments, and have, as Dogberry says, 'two gowns and every thing handsome about me.'*

"I have often thought it is the most fortunate thing for bards like you and me to have an established profession, and professional character, to render us independent of those worthy gentlemen, the retailers, or, as some have called them, the midwives of literature, 'who are so much taken up with the abortions they bring into the world, that they are scarcely able to bestow the proper care upon young and flourishing babes like ours. That, however, is only a mercantile way of looking at the matter; but did any of my sons show poetical talent, of which, to my great satisfaction, there are no appearances, the first thing I should do would be to inculcate upon him the duty of cultivating some honourable profession, and qualifying himself to play a more respectable part in society than the mere poet. And as the best corollary of my doctrine, I would make him get your tale of 'The Patron' by heart from beginning to end. It is curious enough that you should have republished the 'Village' for the purpose of sending your young men to college, and I should have written the Lay of the Last Minstrel for the purpose of buying a new horse for the Volunteer Cavalry. I must now send this scrawl into town to get a frank, for, God knows, it is not worthy of postage. With the warmest wishes for your health, prosperity, and increase of fame — though it needs not — I remain most sincerely and affectionately yours,

WALTER SCOTT." †

* *Much ado about Nothing*, Act IV. Scene 2.

† Several of these letters having been enclosed in franked covers, which have perished, I am unable to affix the exact dates to them.

The contrast of the two poets' epistolary styles is highly amusing; but I have introduced these specimens less on that account, than as marking the cordial confidence which a very little intercourse was sufficient to establish between men so different from each other in most of the habits of life. It will always be considered as one of the most pleasing peculiarities in Scott's history, that he was the friend of every great contemporary poet: Crabbe, as we shall see more largely in the sequel, was no exception to the rule: yet I could hardly name one of them who, manly principles and the cultivation of literature apart, had many points of resemblance to him; and surely not one who had fewer than Crabbe.

Scott continued, this year, his care for the Edinburgh Annual Register — the historical department of which was again supplied by Mr. Southey. The poetical miscellany owed its opening piece, the Ballad of Polydore, to the readiness with which Scott entered into correspondence with its author, who sent it to him anonymously, with a letter which, like the verses, might well have excited much interest in his mind, even had it not concluded with stating the writer's age to be *fifteen*. Scott invited the youth to visit him in the country, was greatly pleased with the modesty of his manners and the originality of his conversation, and wrote to Joanna Baillie, that, "though not one of the crimps for the muses," he thought he could hardly be mistaken in believing that in the boyish author of Polydore he had discovered a true genius. When I mention the name of my friend William Howison of Clydegrove, it will be allowed that he prognosticated wisely. He continued to correspond with this young gentleman and his father, and gave both much advice, for which both were most grateful. There was inserted in

the same volume a set of beautiful stanzas, inscribed to Scott by Mr. Wilson, under the title of the "Magic Mirror," in which that enthusiastic young poet also bears a lofty and lasting testimony to the gentle kindness with which his earlier efforts had been encouraged by him whom he designates, for the first time, by what afterwards became one of his standing titles, that of "The Great Magician."

"Onwards a figure came, with stately brow,
 And, as he glanced upon the ruin'd pile
 A look of regal pride, 'Say, who art thou
 (His countenance bright'ning with a scornful smile,
 He sternly cried), 'whose footsteps rash profane
 The wild romantic realm where I have willed to reign?'

"But ere to these proud words I could reply,
 How changed that scornful face to soft and mild!
 A witching frenzy glitter'd in his eye,
 Harmless, withal, as that of playful child.
 And when once more the gracious vision spoke,
 I felt the voice familiar to mine ear;
 While many a faded dream of earth awoke,
 Connected strangely with that unknown seer;
 Who now stretch'd forth his arm, and on the sand
 A circle round me traced, as with magician's wand." &c.

Scott's own chief contribution to this volume was a brief account of the Life and Poems (hitherto unpublished) * of Patrick Carey, whom he pronounces to have been not only as stout a cavalier, but almost as good a poet as his contemporary Lovelace. That Essay was expanded, and prefixed to an edition of Carey's "Trivial

* The Rev. Alexander Dyce informs me, that *nine* of Carey's pieces were printed in 1771, for J. Murray of Fleet Street, in a quarto of thirty-five pages, entitled "Poems from a MS. written in the time of Oliver Cromwell." This rare tract had never fallen into Scott's hands. [1839.]

Poems and Triolets," which Scott published in 1820; but its circulation in either shape has been limited: and I believe I shall be gratifying the majority of my readers by here transcribing some paragraphs of his beautiful and highly characteristic introduction of this forgotten poet of the 17th century.

"The present age has been so distinguished for research into poetical antiquities, that the discovery of an unknown bard is, in certain chosen literary circles, held as curious as an augmentation of the number of fixed stars would be esteemed by astronomers. It is true, these 'blessed twinklers of the night' are so far removed from us, that they afford no more light than serves barely to evince their existence to the curious investigator; and in like manner the pleasure derived from the revival of an obscure poet is rather in proportion to the rarity of his volume than to its merit; yet this pleasure is not inconsistent with reason and principle. We know by every day's experience the peculiar interest which the lapse of ages confers upon works of human art. The clumsy strength of the ancient castles, which, when raw from the hand of the builder, inferred only the oppressive power of the barons who reared them, is now broken by partial ruin into proper subjects for the poet or the painter; and as Mason has beautifully described the change,

———— 'Time
Has mouldered into beauty many a tower,
Which, when it frowned with all its battlements,
Was only terrible.' —————

"The monastery, too, which was at first but a fantastic monument of the superstitious devotion of monarchs, or of the purple pride of fattened abbots, has gained by the silent influence of antiquity, the power of impressing awe and devotion. Even the stains and weather-taints upon the battlements of such buildings add, like the scars of a veteran, to the affecting impression:

'For time has softened what was harsh when new,
And now the stains are all of sober hue;
The living stains which nature's hand alone,
Profuse of life, pours forth upon the stone.' — *Crabbe*.

“If such is the effect of Time in adding interest to the labours of the architect, if partial destruction is compensated by the additional interest of that which remains, can we deny his exerting a similar influence upon those subjects which are sought after by the bibliographer and poetical antiquary? The obscure poet, who is detected by their keen research, may indeed have possessed but a slender portion of that spirit which has buoyed up the works of distinguished contemporaries during the course of centuries, yet still his verses shall, in the lapse of time, acquire an interest, which they did not possess in the eyes of his own generation. The wrath of the critic, like that of the son of Ossian, flies from the foe that is low. Envy, base as she is, has one property of the lion, and cannot prey on carcasses; she must drink the blood of a sentient victim, and tear the limbs that are yet warm with vital life. Faction, if the ancient has suffered her persecution, serves only to endear him to the recollection of posterity, whose generous compassion overpays him for the injuries he sustained while in life. And thus freed from the operation of all unfavourable prepossessions, his merit, if he can boast any, has more than fair credit with his readers. This, however, is but part of his advantages. The mere attribute of antiquity is of itself sufficient to interest the fancy, by the lively and powerful train of associations which it awakens. Had the pyramids of Egypt, equally disagreeable in form and senseless as to utility, been the work of any living tyrant, with what feelings, save those of scorn and derision, could we have regarded such a waste of labour? But the sight, nay the very mention of these wonderful monuments, is associated with the dark and sublime ideas which vary their tinge according to the favourite hue of our studies. The Christian divine recollects the land of banishment and of refuge; to the eyes of the historian's fancy, they excite the shades of Pharaohs and of Ptolemies, of Cheops and Merops, and Se-

sostris drawn in triumph by his sceptred slaves; the philosopher beholds the first rays of moral truth as they dawned on the hieroglyphic sculptures of Thebes and Memphis; and the poet sees the fires of magic blazing upon the mystic altars of a land of incantation. Nor is the grandeur of size essential to such feelings, any more than the properties of grace and utility. Even the rudest remnant of a feudal tower, even the obscure and almost indistinguishable vestige of an altogether unknown edifice, has power to awaken such trains of fancy. We have a fellow interest with the 'son of the winged days,' over whose fallen habitation we tread.

'The massy stones, though hewn most roughly, show
The hand of man had once at least been there.' — *Wordsworth*.

"Similar combinations give a great part of the delight we receive from ancient poetry. In the rude song of the Scald, we regard less the strained imagery and extravagance of epithet, than the wild impressions which it conveys of the dauntless resolution, savage superstition, rude festivity, and ceaseless depredation of the ancient Scandinavians. In the metrical romance, we pardon the long, tedious, and bald enumeration of trifling particulars; the reiterated sameness of the eternal combats between knights and giants; the overpowering languor of the love speeches, and the merciless length and similarity of description — when Fancy whispers to us, that such strains may have cheered the sleepless pillow of the Black Prince on the memorable eves of Cressy or Poitiers. There is a certain romance of Ferumbras, which Robert the Bruce read to his few followers, to divert their thoughts from the desperate circumstances in which they were placed, after an unsuccessful attempt to rise against the English. Is there a true Scotsman who, being aware of this anecdote, would be disposed to yawn over the romance of Ferumbras? Or, on the contrary, would not the image of the dauntless hero, inflexible in defeat, beguiling the anxiety of his war-worn attendants by the lays of the minstrel, give to these rude lays themselves an interest beyond Greek and Roman fame?"

The year 1812 had the usual share of minor literary labours — such as contributions to the journals; and before it closed, the Romance of Rokeby was finished. Though it had been long in hand, the MS. sent to the printer bears abundant evidence of its being the *prima cura*: three cantos at least reached Ballantyne through the Melrose post — written on paper of various sorts and sizes — full of blots and interlineations — the closing couplets of a despatch now and then encircling the page, and mutilated by the breaking of the seal.

According to the recollection of Mr. Cadell, though James Ballantyne read the poem, as the sheets were advancing through the press, to his usual circle of literary *dilettanti*, their whispers were far from exciting in Edinburgh such an intensity of expectation as had been witnessed in the case of *The Lady of the Lake*. He adds, however, that it was looked for with undiminished anxiety in the south. “Send me *Rokeby*,” Byron writes to Murray on seeing it advertised, — “Who the devil is he? No matter — he has good connexions, and will be well introduced.”* Such, I suppose, was the general feeling in London. I well remember, being in those days a young student at Oxford, how the booksellers’ shops there were beleaguered for the earliest copies, and how he that had been so fortunate as to secure one, was followed to his chambers by a tribe of friends, all as eager to hear it read as ever horse-jockeys were to see the conclusion of a match at Newmarket; and indeed not a few of those enthusiastic academics had bets depending on the issue of the struggle, which they considered the elder favourite as making, to keep his own ground against the fiery rivalry of Childe Harold.

* Byron’s Life and Works, vol. ii. p. 169.

The poem was published a day or two before Scott returned to Edinburgh from Abbotsford, between which place and Mertoun he had divided his Christmas vacation. On the 9th and 10th of January 1813, he thus addresses his friends at Sunninghill and Hampstead:—

“ *To George Ellis, Esq.,*

“ My Dear Ellis, — I am sure you will place it to anything rather than want of kindness that I have been so long silent — so very long, indeed, that I am not quite sure whether the fault is on my side or yours — but, be it what it may, it can never, I am sure, be laid to forgetfulness in either. This comes to train you on to the merciful reception of a Tale of the Civil Wars; not political, however, but merely a pseudo-romance of pseudo-chivalry. I have converted a lusty buccanier into a hero with some effect; but the worst of all my undertakings is, that my rogue always, in despite of me, turns out my hero. I know not how this should be. I am myself, as Hamlet says, ‘indifferent honest;’ and my father, though an attorney (as you will call him), was one of the most honest men, as well as gentlemanlike, that ever breathed. I am sure I can bear witness to that — for if he had at all *smacked*, or *grown to*, like the son of Lancelot Gobbo, he might have left us all as rich as Cræsus, besides having the pleasure of taking a fine primrose path himself, instead of squeezing himself through a tight gate and up a steep ascent, and leaving us the decent competence of an honest man’s children. As to our more ancient pedigree, I should be loath to vouch for them. My grandfather was a horse-jockey and cattle-dealer, and made a fortune; my great-grandfather a Jacobite and traitor (as the times called him), and lost one; and after him intervened one or two half-starved lairds, who rode a lean horse, and were followed by leaner greyhounds; gathered with difficulty a hundred pounds from a hundred tenants; fought duels; cocked their hats, — and called themselves gentlemen. Then

we come to the old Border times, cattle-driving, halters, and so forth, for which, in the matter of honesty, very little I suppose can be said — at least in modern acceptation of the word. Upon the whole, I am inclined to think it is owing to the earlier part of this inauspicious generation that I uniformly find myself in the same scrape in my fables, and that, in spite of the most obstinate determination to the contrary, the greatest rogue in my canvass always stands out as the most conspicuous and prominent figure. All this will be a riddle to you, unless you have received a certain packet, which the Ballantynes were to have sent under Freeling's or Croker's cover, so soon as they could get a copy done up.

“And now let me congratulate you upon the renovated vigour of your fine old friends the Russians. By the Lord, sir! it is most famous this campaign of theirs. I was not one of the very sanguine persons who anticipated the actual capture of Buonaparte — a hope which rather proceeded from the ignorance of those who cannot conceive that military movements, upon a large scale, admit of such a force being accumulated upon any particular point as may, by abandonment of other considerations, always ensure the escape of an individual. But I had no hope, in my time, of seeing the dry bones of the Continent so warm with life again, as this revivification of the Russians proves them to be. I look anxiously for the effect of these great events on Prussia, and even upon Saxony; for I think Boney will hardly trust himself again in Germany, now that he has been plainly shown, both in Spain and Russia, that protracted stubborn unaccommodating resistance will foil those grand exertions in the long-run. All laud be to Lord Wellington, who first taught that great lesson.

“Charlotte is with me just now at this little scrub habitation, where we weary ourselves all day in looking at our projected improvements, and then slumber over the fire, I pretending to read, and she to work trout-nets, or cabbage-nets, or some such article. What is Canning about? Is there any chance of our getting him in? Surely Ministers cannot hope

to do without him. Believe me, Dear Ellis, ever truly
yours,
W. SCOTT."

"Abbotsford, 9th January 1813."

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Abbotsford, January 10, 1813.

"Your kind encouragement, my dear friend, has given me spirits to complete the lumbering quarto, which I hope has reached you by this time. I have gone on with my story *forth right*, without troubling myself excessively about the development of the plot and other critical matters —

'But shall we go mourn for that, my dear?
The pale moon shines by night;
And when we wander here and there,
We then do go most right.'

I hope you will like Bertram to the end; he is a Caravaggio sketch, which, I may acknowledge to you — but tell it not in Gath — I rather pique myself upon; and he is within the keeping of Nature, though critics will say to the contrary. It may be difficult to fancy that any one should take a sort of pleasure in bringing out such a character, but I suppose it is partly owing to bad reading, and ill-directed reading, when I was young. No sooner had I corrected the last sheet of *Rokeby*, than I escaped to this Patmos as blythe as bird on tree, and have been ever since most decidedly idle — that is to say, with busy idleness. I have been banking, and securing, and dyking against the river, and planting willows, and aspens, and weeping-birches, around my new old well, which I think I told you I had constructed last summer. I have now laid the foundations of a famous background of copse, with pendant trees in front; and I have only to beg a few years to see how my colours will come out of the canvass. Alas! who can promise that? But somebody will take my place — and enjoy them, whether I do or no. My old friend, and pastor, Principal Robertson (the historian), when he was not expected to survive many weeks, still watched the setting of the blossom

upon some fruit-trees in the garden with as much interest as if it was possible he could have seen the fruit come to maturity, and moralized on his own conduct, by observing that we act upon the same inconsistent motive throughout life. It is well we do so for those that are to come after us. I could almost dislike the man who refuses to plant walnut-trees, because they do not bear fruit till the second generation; and so — many thanks to our ancestors, and much joy to our successors, and truce to my fine and very new strain of morality. Yours ever,
 “W. S.”

The following letter lets us completely behind the scenes at the publication of *Rokeby*. The “horrid story” it alludes to was that of a young woman found murdered on New Year’s Day in the highway between Greta Bridge and Barnard Castle — a crime, the perpetrator of which was never discovered. The account of a parallel atrocity in Galloway, and the mode of its detection, will show the reader from what source Scott drew one of the most striking incidents in his *Guy Mannerling*: —

“*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

“Edinburgh, 12th January 1813.

“Dear Morritt, — Yours I have just received in mine office at the Register-House, which will excuse this queer sheet of paper. The publication of *Rokeby* was delayed till Monday, to give the London publishers a fair start. My copies, that is, my friends’, were all to be got off about Friday or Saturday; but yours may have been a little later, as it was to be what they call a picked one. I will call at Ballantyne’s as I return from this place, and close the letter with such news as I can get about it there. The book has gone off here very bobbishly, for the impression of 3000 and upwards is within two or three score of being exhausted, and the demand for these continuing faster than they can be boarded. I am heartily glad of this, for

now I have nothing to fear but a bankruptcy in the Gazette of Parnassus; but the loss of five or six thousand pounds to my good friends and school-companions would have afflicted me very much. I wish we could whistle you here to-day. Ballantyne always gives a christening dinner, at which the Duke of Buccleuch, and a great many of my friends, are formally feasted. He has always the best singing that can be heard in Edinburgh, and we have usually a very pleasant party, at which your health as patron and proprietor of Rokeby will be faithfully and honourably remembered.

“Your horrid story reminds me of one in Galloway, where the perpetrator of a similar enormity on a poor idiot girl, was discovered by means of the print of his foot which he left upon the clay floor of the cottage in the death-struggle. It pleased Heaven (for nothing short of a miracle could have done it) to enlighten the understanding of an old ram-headed sheriff, who was usually nick-named Leather-head. The steps which he took to discover the murderer were most sagacious. As the poor girl was pregnant (for it was not a case of violation), it was pretty clear that her paramour had done the deed, and equally so that he must be a native of the district. The sheriff caused the minister to advertise from the pulpit that the girl would be buried on a particular day, and that all persons in the neighbourhood were invited to attend the funeral, to show their detestation of such an enormous crime, as well as to evince their own innocence. This was sure to bring the murderer to the funeral. When the people were assembled in the kirk, the doors were locked by the sheriff’s order, and the shoes of all the men were examined; that of the murderer was detected by the measure of the foot, tread, &c., and a peculiarity in the mode in which the sole of one of them had been patched. The remainder of the curious chain of evidence upon which he was convicted will suit best with twilight, or a blinking candle, being too long for a letter. The fellow bore a most excellent character, and had committed this crime for no other reason that could be alleged, than that, having been led accidentally into an intrigue with this poor wretch, his pride

revolted at the ridicule which was likely to attend the discovery.

“ On calling at Ballantyne’s, I find, as I had anticipated, that your copy, being of royal size, requires some particular nicety in hot-pressing. It will be sent by the Carlisle mail *quam primum*. — Ever yours,
WALTER SCOTT.”

“ P. S. — Love to Mrs. Morritt. John Ballantyne says he has just about eighty copies left, out of 3250, this being the second day of publication, and the book a two-guinea one.”

It will surprise no one to hear that Mr. Morritt assured his friend he considered *Rokeby* as the best of all his poems. The admirable, perhaps the unique fidelity of the local descriptions, might alone have swayed, for I will not say it perverted, the judgment of the lord of that beautiful and thenceforth classical domain; and, indeed, I must admit that I never understood or appreciated half the charm of this poem until I had become familiar with its scenery. But Scott himself had not designed to rest his strength on these descriptions. He said to James Ballantyne while the work was in progress (September 2), “ I hope the thing will do, chiefly because the world will not expect from *me* a poem of which the interest turns upon *character* ;” and in another letter (October 28, 1812), “ I think you will see the same sort of difference taken in all my former poems, — of which I would say, if it is fair for me to say anything, that the force in the *Lay* is thrown on style — in *Marmion*, on description — and in the *Lady of the Lake*, on incident.”* I sus-

* Several letters to Ballantyne on the same subject are quoted in the notes to the last edition of *Rokeby*. See *Scott’s Poetical Works*, 1841, p. 285; and especially the note on p. 346, from which it appears that the closing stanza was added, in deference to Ballantyne and Erskine, though the author retained his own opinion that “ it spoiled one effect without producing another.”

pect some of these distinctions may have been matters of after-thought; but as to Rokeby there can be no mistake. His own original conceptions of some of its principal characters have been explained in letters already cited; and I believe no one who compares the poem with his novels will doubt that, had he undertaken their portraiture in prose, they would have come forth with effect hardly inferior to any of all the groups he ever created. As it is, I question whether even in his prose there is anything more exquisitely wrought out, as well as fancied, than the whole contrast of the two rivals for the love of the heroine in Rokeby; and that heroine herself, too, has a very particular interest attached to her. Writing to Miss Edgeworth five years after this time (10th March 1818), he says, "I have not read one of my poems since they were printed, excepting last year the *Lady of the Lake*, which I liked better than I expected, but not well enough to induce me to go through the rest — so I may truly say with *Macbeth* —

‘I am afraid to think of what I’ve done —
Look on’t again I dare not.’

“This much of *Matilda* I recollect — (for that is not so easily forgotten) — that she was attempted for the existing person of a lady who is now no more, so that I am particularly flattered with your distinguishing it from the others, which are in general mere shadows.” I can have no doubt that the lady he here alludes to, was the object of his own unfortunate first love; and as little, that in the romantic generosity, both of the youthful poet who fails to win her higher favour, and of his chivalrous competitor, we have before us something more than “a mere shadow.”

In spite of these graceful characters, the inimitable scenery on which they are presented, and the splendid vivacity and thrilling interest of several chapters in the story — such as the opening interview of Bertram and Wycliff — the flight up the cliff on the Greta — the first entrance of the cave at Brignall — the firing of Rokeby Castle — and the catastrophe in Eglstone Abbey; — in spite certainly of exquisitely happy lines profusely scattered throughout the whole composition, and of some detached images — that of the setting of the tropical sun,* for example — which were never surpassed by any poet; in spite of all these merits, the immediate success of Rokeby was greatly inferior to that of the Lady of the Lake; nor has it ever since been so much a favourite with the public at large as any other of his poetical romances. He ascribes this failure, in his Introduction of 1830, partly to the radically unpoetical character of the Round-heads; but surely their character has its poetical side also, had his prejudices allowed him to enter upon its study with impartial sympathy; and I doubt not, Mr. Morritt suggested the difficulty on this score, when the outline of the story was as yet undetermined, from consideration rather of the poet's peculiar feelings, and pow-

* "My noontide, India may declare;
Like her fierce sun, I fired the air!
Like him, to wood and cave bid fly
Her natives, from mine angry eye;
And now, my race of terror run,
Mine be the eve of tropic sun!
No pale gradations quench his ray,
No twilight dews his wrath allay;
With disk like battle-target red,
He rushes to his burning bed.
Dyes the wide wave with bloody light,
Then sinks at once — and all is night." — *Canto vi.* 21.

ers as hitherto exhibited, than of the subject absolutely. Partly he blames the satiety of the public ear, which had had so much of his rhythm, not only from himself, but from dozens of mocking-birds, male and female, all more or less applauded in their day, and now all equally forgotten.* This circumstance, too, had probably no slender effect; the more that, in defiance of all the hints of his friends, he now, in his narrative, repeated (with more negligence) the uniform octosyllabic couplets of the *Lady of the Lake*, instead of recurring to the more varied cadence of the *Lay* or *Marmion*. It is fair to add that, among the London circles at least, some sarcastic flings in Mr. Moore's "Twopenny Post Bag" must have had an unfavourable influence on this occasion.† But the cause of failure which the poet himself places last, was

* "Scott found peculiar favour and imitation among the fair sex. There was Miss Holford, and Miss Mitford, and Miss Francis; but, with the greatest respect be it spoken, none of his imitators did much honour to the original except Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, until the appearance of 'The Bridal of Triermain' and 'Harold the Dauntless,' which, in the opinion of some, equalled if not surpassed him; and, lo! after three or four years they turned out to be the master's own composition." — BYRON, vol. xv. p. 96.

† See, for instance, the Epistle of Lady Corke — or that of Messrs. Lackington, booksellers, to one of their dandy authors —

"Should you feel any touch of *poetical* glow,
 We've a scheme to suggest — Mr. Scott, you must know
 (Who, we're sorry to say it, now works for the *Row*),
 Having quitted the Borders to seek new renown,
 Is coming by long Quarto stages to town,
 And beginning with Rokeby (the job's sure to pay),
 Means to do all the gentlemen's seats on the way.
 Now the scheme is, though none of our hackneys can beat him,
 To start a new Poet through Highgate to meet him;
 Who by means of quick proofs — no revises — long coaches —
 May do a few Villas before Scott approaches;
 Indeed if our Pegasus be not curst shabby,
 He'll reach without foundering, at least Woburn-Abbey," &c.

unquestionably the main one. The deeper and darker passion of Childe Harold, the audacity of its morbid voluptuousness, and the melancholy majesty of the numbers in which it defied the world, had taken the general imagination by storm ; and Rokeby, with many beauties and some sublimities, was pitched, as a whole, on a key which seemed tame in the comparison.

I have already adverted to the fact that Scott felt it a relief, not a fatigue, to compose the Bridal of Triermain *pari passu* with Rokeby. In answer, for example, to one of James Ballantyne's letters, urging accelerated speed with the weightier romance, he says, "I fully share in your anxiety to get forward the grand work ; but, I assure you, I feel the more confidence from coquetting with the guerilla."

The quarto of Rokeby was followed, within two months, by the small volume which had been designed for a twin-birth ; — the MS. had been transcribed by one of the Ballantynes themselves, in order to guard against any indiscretion of the press-people ; and the mystification, aided and abetted by Erskine, in no small degree heightened the interest of its reception. Except Mr. Morritt, Scott had, so far as I am aware, no English confidant upon this occasion. Whether any of his daily companions in the Parliament House were in the secret, I have never heard ; but I can scarcely believe that any of those intimate friends, who had known him and Erskine from their youth upwards, could have for a moment believed the latter capable either of the invention or the execution of this airy and fascinating romance in little. Mr. Jeffrey, for whom chiefly "the trap had been set," was far too sagacious to be caught in it ; but, as it happened, he made a voyage that year to America,

and thus lost the opportunity of immediately expressing his opinion either of Rokeby or of the *Bridal of Triermain*. The writer in the *Quarterly Review* (July 1813) seems to have been completely deceived. "We have already spoken of it," says the critic, "as an imitation of Mr. Scott's style of composition ; and if we are compelled to make the general approbation more precise and specific, we would say, that if it be inferior in vigour to some of his productions, it equals or surpasses them in elegance and beauty ; that it is more uniformly tender, and far less infected with the unnatural prodigies and coarseness of the earlier romances. In estimating its merits, however, we should forget that it is offered as an imitation. The diction undoubtedly reminds us of a rhythm and cadence we have heard before ; but the sentiments, descriptions, and characters, have qualities that are native and unborrowed."

If this writer was, as I suppose, Ellis, he probably considered it as a thing impossible that Scott should have engaged in such a scheme without giving him a hint of it ; but to have admitted into the secret any one who was likely to criticise the piece, would have been to sacrifice the very object of the device. Erskine's own suggestion, that "perhaps a quizzical review might be got up," led, I believe, to nothing more important than a paragraph in one of the Edinburgh newspapers. He may be pardoned for having been not a little flattered to find it generally considered as not impossible that he should have written such a poem ; and I have heard James Ballantyne say, that nothing could be more amusing than the style of his coquetting on the subject while it was yet fresh ; but when this first excitement was over, his natural feeling of what was due to himself, as well as to his

friend, dictated many a remonstrance; and, though he ultimately acquiesced in permitting another minor romance to be put forth in the same manner, he did so reluctantly, and was far from acting his part so well.

Scott says, in the Introduction to the *Lord of the Isles*, "As Mr. Erskine was more than suspected of a taste for poetry, and as I took care, in several places, to mix something that might resemble (as far as was in my power) my friend's feeling and manner, the train easily caught, and two large editions were sold." Among the passages to which he here alludes, are no doubt those in which the character of the minstrel Arthur is shaded with the colourings of an almost effeminate gentleness. Yet, in the midst of them, the "mighty minstrel" himself, from time to time, escapes; as, for instance, where the lover bids Lucy, in that exquisite picture of crossing a mountain stream, trust to his "stalwart arm" —

"Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear."

Nor can I pass the compliment to Scott's own fair patroness, where Lucy's admirer is made to confess, with some momentary lapse of gallantry, that he

"Ne'er won — best meed to minstrel true —
One favouring smile from fair Buccleuch;

nor the burst of genuine Borderism, —

"Bewcastle now must keep the hold,
Spier-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, above all, the choice of the scenery, both of the Introductions and of the story itself, reveals the early and treasured predilections of the poet. For who that remembers the circumstances of his first visit to the vale of St. John, but must see throughout the impress of his own real romance? I own I am not without a suspicion that, in one passage, which always seemed to me a blot upon the composition — that in which Arthur derides the military coxcombers of his rival —

“ Who comes in foreign trashery
Of tinkling chain and spur,
A walking haberdashery
Of feathers, lace, and fur;
In Rowley’s antiquated phrase,
Horse-milliner of modern days ” —

there is a sly reference to the incidents of a certain ball, of August 1797, at the Gilsland Spa.*

Among the more prominent Erskinisms, are the eulogistic mention of Glasgow, the scene of Erskine’s education; and the lines on Collins — a supplement to whose Ode on the Highland Superstitions is, as far as I know, the only specimen that ever was published of Erskine’s verse.†

As a whole, the Bridal of Triermaln appears to me as characteristic of Scott as any of his larger poems. His genius pervades and animates it beneath a thin and playful veil, which perhaps adds as much of grace as it takes away of splendour. As Wordsworth says of the eclipse on the lake of Lugano —

“ ’Tis sunlight sheathed and gently charmed; ”

* See *ante*, vol. i. p. 366.

† It is included in the *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. i. p. 270.

and I think there is at once a lightness and a polish of versification beyond what he has elsewhere attained. If it be a miniature, it is such a one as a Cooper might have hung fearlessly beside the masterpieces of Vandyke.

The Introductions contain some of the most exquisite passages he ever produced; but their general effect has always struck me as unfortunate. No art can reconcile us to contemptuous satire of the merest frivolities of modern life — some of them already, in twenty years, grown obsolete — interlaid between such bright visions of the old world of romance, when

“Strength was gigantic, valour high,
And wisdom soared beyond the sky,
And beauty had such matchless beam
As lights not now a lover’s dream.”

The fall is grievous, from the hoary minstrel of Newark, and his feverish tears on Killiecrankie, to a pathetic swain, who can stoop to denounce as objects of his jealousy —

“The landaulet and four blood bays —
The Hessian boot and pantaloons.”

Before *Triermain* came out, Scott had taken wing for *Abbotsford*; and indeed he seems to have so contrived it in his earlier period, that he should not be in Edinburgh when any unavowed work of his was published; whereas, from the first, in the case of books that bore his name on the title-page, he walked as usual to the Parliament House, and bore all the buzz and tattle of friends and acquaintance with an air of good-humoured equanimity, or rather total apparent indifference. The following letter, which contains some curious matter of more kinds

than one, was written partly in town and partly in the country :—

“ To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.

“ Edinburgh, March 13, 1813.

“ My Dearest Friend, — The pinasters have arrived safe, and I can hardly regret, while I am so much flattered by, the trouble you have had in collecting them. I have got some wild larch trees from Loch Katrine, and both are to be planted next week, when, God willing, I shall be at Abbotsford to superintend the operation. I have got a little corner of ground laid out for a nursery, where I shall rear them carefully till they are old enough to be set forth to push their fortune on the banks of Tweed. — What I shall finally make of this villa-work I don't know, but in the meantime it is very entertaining. I shall have to resist very flattering invitations this season; for I have received hints, from more quarters than one, that my bow would be acceptable at Carlton House in case I should be in London, which is very flattering, especially as there were some prejudices to be got over in that quarter. I should be in some danger of giving new offence, too; for, although I utterly disapprove of the present rash and ill-advised course of the princess, yet, as she always was most kind and civil to me, I certainly could not, as a gentleman, decline obeying any commands she might give me to wait upon her, especially in her present adversity. So, though I do not affect to say I should be sorry to take an opportunity of peeping at the splendours of royalty, prudence and economy will keep me quietly at home till another day. My great amusement here this some time past has been going almost nightly to see John Kemble, who certainly is a great artist. It is a pity he shows too much of his machinery. I wish he could be double-capped, as they say of watches; — but the fault of too much study certainly does not belong to many of his tribe. He is, I think, very great in those parts especially where character is tinged by some acquired and systematic habits, like those of the Stoic

philosophy in Cato and Brutus, or of misanthropy in Penraddock; but sudden turns and natural bursts of passion are not his forte. I saw him play Sir Giles Overreach (the Richard III. of middling life) last night; but he came not within a hundred miles of Cooke, whose terrible visage, and short, abrupt, and savage utterance, gave a reality almost to that extraordinary scene in which he boasts of his own successful villainy to a nobleman of worth and honour, of whose alliance he is ambitious. Cooke contrived somehow to impress upon the audience the idea of such a monster of enormity as had learned to pique himself even upon his own atrocious character. But Kemble was too handsome, too plausible, and too smooth, to admit its being probable that he should be blind to the unfavourable impression which these extraordinary vaunts are likely to make on the person whom he is so anxious to conciliate.

“ Abbotsford, 21st March.

“ This letter, begun in Edinburgh, is to take wing from Abbotsford. John Winnos (now John Winnos is the sub-oracle of Abbotsford, the principal being Tom Purdie) — John Winnos pronounces that the pinaster seed ought to be raised at first on a hot-bed, and thence transplanted to a nursery; so to a hot-bed they have been carefully consigned, the upper oracle not objecting, in respect his talent lies in catching a salmon, or finding a hare sitting — on which occasions (being a very complete Scrub) he solemnly exchanges his working jacket for an old green one of mine, and takes the air of one of Robin Hood's followers. His more serious employments are ploughing, harrowing, and overseeing all my premises; being a complete jack-of-all-trades, from the carpenter to the shepherd, nothing comes strange to him; and being extremely honest, and somewhat of a humourist, he is quite my right hand. I cannot help singing his praises at this moment, because I have so many odd and out-of-the-way things to do, that I believe the conscience of many of our jog-trot countrymen would revolt at being made my instrument in sacrificing good corn-land to

the visions of Mr. Price's theory. Mr. Pinkerton, the historian, has a play coming out at Edinburgh; it is by no means bad poetry, yet I think it will not be popular; the people come and go, and speak very notable things in good blank verse, but there is no very strong interest excited; the plot also is disagreeable, and liable to the objections (though in a less degree) which have been urged against the *Mysterious Mother*; it is to be acted on Wednesday; I will let you know its fate. P., with whom I am in good habits, showed the MS., but I referred him, with such praise as I could conscientiously bestow, to the players and the public. I don't know why one should take the task of damning a man's play out of the hands of the proper tribunal. Adieu, my dear friend. I have scarce room for love to Miss, Mrs., and Dr. B. W. SCOTT."

To this I add a letter to Lady Louisa Stuart, who had sent him a copy of these lines, found by Lady Douglas on the back of a tattered bank-note —

"Farewell, my note, and wheresoe'er ye wend,
Shun gaudy scenes, and be the poor man's friend.
You've left a poor one; go to one as poor,
And drive despair and hunger from his door."

It appears that these noble friends had adopted, or feigned to adopt, the belief that the *Bridal of Triermain* was a production of Mr. R. P. Gillies — who had about this time published an imitation of Lord Byron's *Roman*, under the title of "*Childe Alarique*."

"*To the Lady Louisa Stuart, Bothwell Castle.*

"Abbotsford, 28th April 1813.

"Dear Lady Louisa, — Nothing can give me more pleasure than to hear from you, because it is both a most acceptable favour to me, and also a sign that your own spirits are recovering their tone. Ladies are, I think, very fortunate in having a resource in work at a time when the mind rejects intellectual

amusement. Men have no resource but striding up and down the room, like a bird that beats itself to pieces against the bars of its cage; - whereas needle-work is a sort of sedative, too mechanical to worry the mind by distracting it from the points on which its musings turn, yet gradually assisting it in regaining steadiness and composure; for so curiously are our bodies and minds linked together, that the regular and constant employment of the former on any process, however dull and uniform, has the effect of tranquillizing, where it cannot disarm, the feelings of the other. I am very much pleased with the lines on the guinea note, and if Lady Douglas does not object, I would willingly mention the circumstance in the Edinburgh Annual Register. I think it will give the author great delight to know that his lines had attracted attention, and *had* sent the paper on which they were recorded, 'heaven-directed, to the poor.' Of course I would mention no names. There was, as your Ladyship may remember, some years since, a most audacious and determined murder committed on a porter belonging to the British Linen Company's Bank at Leith, who was stabbed to the heart in broad daylight, and robbed of a large sum in notes.* If ever this crime comes to light, it will be through the circumstance of an idle young fellow having written part of a playhouse song on one of the notes, which, however, has as yet never appeared in circulation.

"I am very glad you like *Rokeby*, which is nearly out of fashion and memory with me. It has been wonderfully popular, about ten thousand copies having walked off already, in about three months, and the demand continuing faster than it can be supplied. As to my imitator, the Knight of Triermain, I will endeavour to convey to Mr. Gillies (*puisque Gillies il est*) your Ladyship's very just strictures on the Introduction to the second Canto. But if he takes the opinion of a hacked old author like myself, he will content himself with avoiding such bevues in future, without attempting to mend those which

* This murder, perpetrated in November 1806, remains a mystery in 1841. The porter's name was Begbie.

are already made. There is an ominous old proverb which says, *confess and be hanged*; and truly if an author acknowledges his own blunders, I do not know who he can expect to stand by him; whereas, let him confess nothing, and he will always find some injudicious admirers to vindicate even his faults. So that I think after publication the effect of criticism should be prospective, in which point of view I dare say Mr. G. will take your friendly hint, especially as it is confirmed by that of the best judges who have read the poem. — Here is beautiful weather for April! an absolute snow-storm mortifying me to the core by retarding the growth of all my young trees and shrubs. — Charlotte begs to be most respectfully remembered to your Ladyship and Lady D. We are realizing the nursery tale of the man and his wife who lived in a vinegar bottle, for our only sitting-room is just twelve feet square, and my Eve alleges that I am too big for our paradise. To make amends, I have created a tolerable garden, occupying about an English acre, which I begin to be very fond of. When one passes forty, an addition to the quiet occupations of life becomes of real value, for I do not hunt and fish with quite the relish I did ten years ago. Adieu, my dear Lady Louisa, and all good attend you.

WALTER SCOTT."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Affairs of John Ballantyne and Co. — Causes of their Derangement — Letters of Scott to his Partners — Negotiation for Relief with Messrs. Constable — New Purchase of Land at Abbotsford — Embarrassments continued — John Ballantyne's Expresses — Drumlanrig, Penrith, &c. — Scott's Meeting with the Marquis of Abercorn at Longtown — His Application to the Duke of Buccleuch — Offer of the Poet-Laureateship — considered — and declined — Address of the City of Edinburgh to the Prince-Regent — its Reception — Civic Honours conferred on Scott — Question of Taxation on Literary Income — Letters to Mr. Morritt, Mr. Southey, Mr. Richardson, Mr. Crabbe, Miss Baillie, and Lord Byron.

1813.

ABOUT a month after the publication of the *Bridal of Triermain*, the affairs of Messrs. Ballantyne, which had never apparently been in good order since the establishment of the bookselling firm, became so embarrassed as to call for Scott's most anxious efforts to disentangle them. Indeed, it is clear that there had existed some very serious perplexity in the course of the preceding autumn; for Scott writes to John Ballantyne, while *Rokeby* was in progress (August 11, 1812) — "I have a letter from James, very anxious about your health and state of spirits. If you suffer the present inconveniences

to depress you too much, you are wrong; and if you conceal any part of them, are very unjust to us all. I am always ready to make any sacrifices to do justice to engagements, and would rather sell anything, or everything, than be less than true men to the world."

I have already, perhaps, said enough to account for the general want of success in this publishing adventure; but Mr. James Ballantyne sums up the case so briefly in his death-bed paper, that I may here quote his words. "My brother," he says, "though an active and pushing, was not a cautious bookseller, and the large sums received never formed an addition to stock. In fact, they were all expended by the partners, who, being then young and sanguine men, not unwillingly adopted my brother's hasty results. By May 1813, in a word, the absolute throwing away of our own most valuable publications, and the rash adoption of some injudicious speculations of Mr. Scott, had introduced such losses and embarrassments, that after a very careful consideration, Mr. Scott determined to dissolve the concern." He adds, — "This became a matter of less difficulty, because time had in a great measure worn away the differences between Mr. Scott and Mr. Constable, and Mr. Hunter was now out of Constable's concern.* A peace, therefore, was speedily made up, and the old habits of intercourse were restored."

How reluctantly Scott had made up his mind to open such a negotiation with Constable, as involved a complete exposure of the mismanagement of John Ballantyne's business as a publisher, will appear from a letter dated about the Christmas of 1812, in which he says to James, who had proposed asking Constable to take a share both in

* Mr. Hunter died in March 1812.

Rokeby and in the Annual Register, "You must be aware, that in stating the objections which occur to me to taking in Constable, I think they ought to give way either to absolute necessity or to very strong grounds of advantage. But I *am* persuaded nothing ultimately good can be expected from any connexion with that house, unless for those who have a mind to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. We will talk the matter coolly over, and in the meanwhile, perhaps you could see W. Erskine, and learn what impression this odd union is like to make among your friends. Erskine is sound-headed, and quite to be trusted with *your whole story*. I must own I can hardly think the purchase of the Register is equal to the loss of credit and character which your surrender will be conceived to infer." At the time when he wrote this, Scott no doubt anticipated that Rokeby would have success not less decisive than the Lady of the Lake; but in this expectation — though 10,000 copies in three months would have seemed to any other author a triumphant sale — he had been disappointed. And meanwhile the difficulties of the firm accumulating from week to week, had reached, by the middle of May, a point which rendered it absolutely necessary for him to conquer all his scruples.

Mr. Cadell, then Constable's partner, says in his *Memoranda*, — "Prior to this time the reputation of John Ballantyne and Co. had been decidedly on the decline. It was notorious in the trade that their general speculations had been unsuccessful; they were known to be grievously in want of money. These rumours were realized to the full by an application which Messrs. B. made to Mr. Constable in May 1813, for pecuniary aid, accompanied by an offer of some of the books they had

published since 1809, as a purchase, along with various shares in Mr. Scott's own poems. Their difficulties were admitted, and the negotiation was pressed urgently; so much so, that a pledge was given, that if the terms asked were acceded to, John Ballantyne and Co. would endeavour to wind up their concerns, and cease as soon as possible to be publishers." Mr. Cadell adds — "I need hardly remind you that this was a period of very great general difficulty in the money market. It was the crisis of the war. The public expenditure had reached an enormous height; and even the most prosperous mercantile houses were often pinched to sustain their credit. It may easily, therefore, be supposed that the Messrs. Ballantyne had during many months besieged every banker's door in Edinburgh, and that their agents had done the like in London."

The most important of the requests which the labouring house made to Constable was, that he should forthwith take entirely to himself the stock, copyright, and future management of the Edinburgh Annual Register. Upon examining the state of this book, however, Constable found that the loss on it had never been less than £1000 per annum, and he therefore declined that matter for the present. He promised, however, to consider seriously the means he might have of ultimately relieving them from the pressure of the Register, and, in the mean time, offered to take 300 sets of the stock on hand. The other purchases he finally made on the 18th of May, were considerable portions of Weber's unhappy Beaumont and Fletcher — of an edition of De Foe's novels in twelve volumes — of a collection entitled Tales of the East in three large volumes, 8vo, double-columned — and of another in one volume, called Popular Tales —

about 800 copies of the *Vision of Don Roderick* — and a fourth of the remaining copyright of *Rokeby*, price £700. The immediate accommodation thus received amounted to £2000; and Scott, who had personally conducted the latter part of the negotiation, writes thus to his junior partner, who had gone a week or two earlier to London in quest of some similar assistance there: —

“ *To Mr. John Ballantyne, care of Messrs. Longman & Co., London.*

“ *Printing-Office, May 18th, 1813.*

“ Dear John, — After many *offs* and *ons*, and as many *projets* and *contre-projets* as the treaty of Amiens, I have at length concluded a treaty with Constable, in which I am sensible he has gained a great advantage; * but what could I do amidst the disorder and pressure of so many demands? The arrival of your long-dated bills decided my giving in, for what could James or I do with them? I trust this sacrifice has cleared our way, but many rubs remain; nor am I, after these hard skirmishes, so able to meet them by my proper credit. Constable, however, will be a zealous ally; and for the first time these many weeks I shall lay my head on a quiet pillow, for now I do think that, by our joint exertions, we shall get well through the storm, save Beaumont from depreciation, get a partner in our heavy concerns, reef our topsails, and move on securely under an easy sail. And if, on the one hand, I have sold my gold too cheap, I have, on the other, turned my lead to gold. Brewster † and Singers ‡ are the only heavy

* “ These and after purchases of books from the stock of J. Ballantyne and Co. were resold to the trade by Constable’s firm, at less than one half and one third of the prices at which they were thus obtained.” — *Note from Mr. R. Cadell.*

† Dr. Brewster’s edition of *Ferguson’s Astronomy*, 2 vols. 8vo, with plates, 4to, Edin. 1811. 36s.

‡ Dr. Singers’ *General View of the County of Dumfries*, 8vo, Edin. 1812. 18s.

things to which I have not given a blue eye. Had your news of Cadell's sale* reached us here, I could not have harpooned my grampus so deeply as I have done, as nothing but Rokeby would have barbed the hook.

“ Adieu, my dear John. I have the most sincere regard for you, and you may depend on my considering your interest with quite as much attention as my own. If I have ever expressed myself with irritation in speaking of this business, you must impute it to the sudden, extensive, and unexpected embarrassments in which I found myself involved all at once. If to your real goodness of heart and integrity, and to the quickness and acuteness of your talents, you added habits of more universal circumspection, and, above all, the courage to tell disagreeable truths to those whom you hold in regard, I pronounce that the world never held such a man of business. These it must be your study to add to your other good qualities. Meantime, as some one says to Swift, I love you with all your failings. Pray make an effort and love me with all mine. Yours truly,

W. S.”

Three days afterwards, Scott resumes the subject as follows : —

“ *To Mr. John Ballantyne, London.*

“ Edinburgh, 21st May 1813.

“ Dear John, — Let it never escape your recollection, that shutting your own eyes, or blinding those of your friends, upon the actual state of business, is the high road to ruin. Meanwhile, we have recovered our legs for a week or two. Constable will, I think, come in to the Register. He is most anxious to maintain the printing-office; he sees most truly that the more we print the less we publish; and for the same reason he will, I think, help us off with our heavy quire-stock.

“ I was aware of the distinction between the *state* and the *calendar* as to the latter including the printing-office bills, and

* A trade sale of Messrs. Cadell and Davies in the Strand.

I summed and docked them (they are marked with red ink), but there is still a difference of £2000 and upwards on the calendar against the business. I sometimes fear that, between the long dates of your bills, and the tardy settlements of the Edinburgh trade, some difficulties will occur even in June; and July I always regard with deep anxiety. As for loss, if I get out without public exposure, I shall not greatly regard the rest. Radcliffe the physician said, when he lost £2000 on the South-Sea scheme, it was only going up 2000 pair of stairs; I say, it is only writing 2000 couplets, and the account is balanced. More of this hereafter. Yours truly, W. SCOTT.

“ P. S. — James has behaved very well during this whole transaction, and has been most steadily attentive to business. I am convinced that the more he works the better his health will be. One or other of you will need to be constantly in the printing-office henceforward — it is the sheet-anchor.”

The allusion in this *postscript* to James Ballantyne's health reminds me that Scott's letters to himself are full of hints on that subject, even from a very early period of their connexion; and these hints are all to the same effect. James was a man of lazy habits, and not a little addicted to the more solid, and perhaps more dangerous, part of the indulgencies of the table. One letter (dated Ashestiel, 1810) will be a sufficient specimen: —

“ *To Mr. James Ballantyne.*

“ My Dear James, — I am very sorry for the state of your health, and should be still more so, were I not certain that I can prescribe for you as well as any physician in Edinburgh. You have naturally an athletic constitution and a hearty stomach, and these agree very ill with a sedentary life and the habits of indolence which it brings on. Your stomach thus gets weak; and from those complaints of all others arise most certainly flatulence, hypochondria, and all the train of un-

pleasant feelings connected with indigestion. We all know the horrible sensation of the nightmare arises from the same cause which gives those waking nightmares commonly called the blue devils. You must positively put yourself on a regimen as to eating, not for a month or two, but for a year at least, and take regular exercise — and my life for yours. I know this by myself, for if I were to eat and drink in town as I do here, it would soon finish me, and yet I am sensible I live too genially in Edinburgh as it is. Yours very truly,

“ W. SCOTT.”

Among Scott's early pets at Abbotsford there was a huge raven, whose powers of speech were remarkable, far beyond any parrot's that he had ever met with ; and who died in consequence of an excess of the kind to which James Ballantyne was addicted. Thenceforth, Scott often repeated to his old friend, and occasionally scribbled by way of postscript to his notes on business —

“ When you are craving,
Remember the Raven.”

Sometimes the formula is varied to —

“ When you've dined half,
Think on poor Ralph !”

His preachments of regularity in book-keeping to John, and of abstinence from good cheer to James Ballantyne, were equally vain ; but on the other hand it must be allowed that they had some reason for displeasure — (the more felt, because they durst not, like him, express their feelings)* — when they found that scarcely had these

* Since this work was first published, I have been compelled to examine very minutely the details of Scott's connexion with the Ballantynes, and one result is, that both James and John had trespassed so largely, for their private purposes, on the funds of the Companies, that,

“hard skirmishes” terminated in the bargain of May 18th, before Scott was preparing fresh embarrassments for himself, by commencing a negotiation for a considerable addition to his property at Abbotsford. As early as the 20th of June he writes to Constable as being already aware of this matter, and alleges his anxiety “to close at once with a very capricious person,” as the only reason that could have induced him to make up his mind to sell the whole copyright of an as yet unwritten poem, to be entitled “The Nameless Glen.” This copyright he then offered to dispose of to Constable for £5000; adding, “this is considerably less in proportion than I have already made on the share of Rokeby sold to yourself, and surely that is no unfair admeasurement.” A long correspondence ensued, in the course of which Scott mentions “the Lord of the Isles,” as a title which had suggested itself to him in place of “the Nameless Glen;” but as the negotiation did not succeed, I may pass its details. The new property which Scott was so eager to acquire, was that hilly tract stretching from the old Roman road near Turn-again towards the Cauldshiels Loch: a then desolate and naked mountain-mere, which he likens, in a letter of this summer (to Lady Louisa Stuart), to the Lake of the Genie and the Fisherman in the Arabian Tale. To obtain this lake at one extremity of his estate, as a contrast to the Tweed at the other, was a prospect for which hardly any sacrifice would have appeared too much; and he contrived to gratify his wishes in the course of that July, to which he had spoken of

Scott being, as their letters distinctly state, the only “monied partner;” and his over-advances of capital having been very extensive, any inquiry on their part as to his uncommercial expenditure must have been entirely out of the question. To avoid misrepresentation, however, I leave my text as it was. — [1839.]

himself in May as looking forward “with the deepest anxiety.”

Nor was he, I must add, more able to control some of his minor tastes. I find him writing to Mr. Terry, on the 20th of June, about “that splendid lot of ancient armour, advertised by Winstanley,” a celebrated auctioneer in London, of which he had the strongest fancy to make his spoil, though he was at a loss to know where it should be placed when it reached Abbotsford; and on the 2d of July, this acquisition also having been settled, he says to the same correspondent — “I have written to Mr. Winstanley. My bargain with Constable was otherwise arranged, but Little John is to find the needful article, and I shall take care of Mr. Winstanley’s interest, who has behaved too handsomely in this matter to be trusted to the mercy of our little friend the Picaroon, who is, notwithstanding his many excellent qualities, a little on the score of old Gobbo — doth somewhat smack — somewhat grow to.* We shall be at Abbotsford on the 12th, and hope soon to see you there. I am fitting up a small room above *Peter-house*, where an unceremonious bachelor may consent to do penance, though the place is a cock-loft, and the access that which leads many a bold fellow to his last nap — a ladder.” † And a few weeks later, he says, in the same sort, to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Thomas Scott — “In despite of these hard times, which affect my patrons the booksellers very much, I am

* *Merchant of Venice*, Act II. Scene 2.

† The court of offices, built on the *haugh* at Abbotsford in 1812, included a house for the faithful coachman, Peter Mathieson. One of Scott’s Cantabrigian friends, Mr. W. S. Rose, gave the whole pile soon afterwards the name, which it retained to the end, of *Peter-House*. The loft at Peter-House continued to be occupied by occasional bachelor guests until the existing mansion was completed.

success of plans, but I do and must hold you responsible for giving me, in distinct and plain terms, your opinion as to any difficulties which may occur, and that in such time that I may make arrangements to obviate them if possible.

“Of course if anything has gone wrong you will come out here to-morrow. But if, as I hope and trust, the cash arrived safe, you will write to me, under cover to the Duke of Buccleuch, Drumlanrig Castle, Dumfries-shire. I shall set out for that place on Monday morning early. W. S.”

“*To Mr. James Ballantyne.*

“Abbotsford, 25th July 1813.

“Dear James, — I address the following jobation for John to you, that you may see whether I do not well to be angry, and enforce upon him the necessity of constantly writing his fears as well as his hopes. You should rub him often on this point, for his recollection becomes rusty the instant I leave town and am not in the way to rack him with constant questions. I hope the presses are doing well, and that you are quite stout again. Yours truly, W. S.”

(ENCLOSURE.)

“*To Mr. John Ballantyne.*

“My Good Friend John, — The post brings me no letter from you, which I am much surprised at, as you must suppose me anxious to learn that your express arrived. I think he must have reached you before post-hours, and James or you *might* have found a minute to say so in a single line. I once more request that you will be a business-like correspondent, and state your provisions for every week prospectively. I do not expect you to *warrant them*, which you rather perversely seem to insist is my wish, but I do want to be aware of their nature and extent, that I may provide against the possibility of miscarriage. The calendar, to which you refer me, tells me what sums are due, but cannot tell your shifts to pay them,

which are naturally altering with circumstances, and of which alterations I request to have due notice. You say you *could not suppose* Sir W. Forbes would have refused the long dated bills; but that you *had* such an apprehension is clear, both because in the calendar these bills were rated two months lower, and because, three days before, you wrote me an enigmatical expression of your apprehensions, instead of saying plainly there was a chance of your wanting £350, when I would have sent you an order to be used conditionally.

“All I desire is unlimited confidence and frequent correspondence, and that you will give me weekly at least the fullest anticipation of your resources, and the probability of their being effectual. I may be disappointed in my own, of which you shall have equally timeous notice. Omit no exertions to procure the use of money, even for a month or six weeks, for time is most precious. The large balance due in January from the trade, and individuals, which I cannot reckon at less than £4000, will put us finally to rights; and it will be a shame to founder within sight of harbour. The greatest risk we run is from such ill-considered despatches as those of Friday. Suppose that I had gone to Drumlanrig — suppose the poney had set up — suppose a thousand things — and we were ruined for want of your telling your apprehensions in due time. Do not plague yourself to vindicate this sort of management; but if you have escaped the consequences (as to which you have left me uncertain), thank God, and act more cautiously another time. It was quite the same to me on what day I sent that draft; indeed it must have been so if I had the money in my cash account, and if I had not, the more time given me to provide it the better.

“Now, do not affect to suppose that my displeasure arises from your not having done your utmost to realize funds, and that utmost having failed. It is one mode, to be sure, of exculpation, to suppose one's self accused of something they are not charged with, and then to make a querulous or indignant defence, and complain of the injustice of the accuser. The head and front of your offending is precisely your not writing

explicitly, and I request this may not happen again. It is your fault, and I believe arises either from an ill-judged idea of smoothing matters to me — as if I were not behind the curtain — or a general reluctance to allow that any danger is near, until it is almost unparriable. I shall be very sorry if anything I have said gives you pain; but the matter is too serious for all of us, to be passed over without giving you my explicit sentiments. To-morrow I set out for Drumlanrig, and shall not hear from you till Tuesday or Wednesday. Make yourself master of the post-town — Thornhill, probably, or Sanquhar. As Sir W. F. & Co. have cash to meet my order, nothing, I think, can have gone wrong, unless the boy perished by the way. Therefore, in faith and hope, and — that I may lack none of the Christian virtues — in charity with your dilatory worship, I remain very truly yours, W. S.”

Scott proceeded, accordingly, to join a gay and festive circle, whom the Duke of Buccleuch had assembled about him on first taking possession of the magnificent Castle of Drumlanrig, in Nithsdale, the principal messuage of the dukedom of Queensberry, which had recently lapsed into his family. But, *post equitem sedet atra cura* — another of John Ballantyne’s unwelcome missives, rendered necessary by a neglect of precisely the same kind as before, reached him in the midst of this scene of rejoicing. On the 31st, he again writes: —

“ To Mr. John Ballantyne, Bookseller, Edinburgh.

“ Drumlanrig, Friday.

“ Dear John, — I enclose the order. Unfortunately, the Drumlanrig post only goes thrice a-week; but the Marquis of Queensberry, who carries this to Dumfries, has promised that the guard of the mail-coach shall deliver it by five to-morrow. I was less anxious, as your note said you could clear this month. It is a cruel thing, that no State you furnish excludes

the arising of such unexpected claims as this for the taxes on the printing-office. What unhappy management, to suffer them to run ahead in such a manner!—but it is in vain to complain. Were it not for your strange concealments, I should anticipate no difficulty in winding up these matters. But who can reckon upon a State where claims are kept out of view until they are in the hands of a *writer*? If you have no time to say that *this* comes safe to hand, I suppose James may favour me so far.

Yours truly, W. S.

“ Let the guard be rewarded.

“ Let me know exactly what you *can* do and *hope* to do for next month; for it signifies nothing raising money for you, unless I see it is to be of real service. Observe, I make you responsible for nothing but a fair statement.* The guard is known to the Marquis, who has good-naturedly promised to give him this letter with his own hand; so it must reach you in time, though probably past five on Saturday.”

Another similar application reached Scott the day after the guard delivered his packet. He writes thus, in reply:—

“ *To Mr. John Ballantyne.*

“ Drumlanrig, Sunday.

“ Dear John,—I trust you got my letter yesterday by five, with the draft enclosed. I return your draft accepted. On Wednesday I think of leaving this place, where, but for these damned affairs, I should have been very happy. W. S.”

Scott had been for some time under an engagement to meet the Marquis of Abercorn at Carlisle, in the first week of August, for the transaction of some business con-

* John Ballantyne had embarked no capital—not a shilling—in the business; and was bound by the contract to limit himself to an allowance of £300 a-year, in consideration of his *management*, until there should be an overplus of profits!—[1839.]

nected with his brother Thomas's late administration of that nobleman's Scottish affairs; and he had designed to pass from Drumlanrig to Carlisle for this purpose, without going back to Abbotsford. In consequence of these repeated harassments, however, he so far altered his plans as to cut short his stay at Drumlanrig, and turn homewards for two or three days, where James Ballantyne met him with such a statement as in some measure relieved his mind.

He then proceeded to fulfil his engagement with Lord Abercorn, whom he encountered travelling in a rather peculiar style between Carlisle and Longtown. The ladies of the family and the household occupied four or five carriages, all drawn by the Marquis's own horses, while the noble Lord himself brought up the rear, mounted on horseback, and decorated with the ribbon of the order of the Garter. On meeting the cavalcade, Scott turned with them, and he was not a little amused when they reached the village of Longtown, which he had ridden through an hour or two before, with the preparations which he found there made for the dinner of the party. The Marquis's major-domo and cook had arrived there at an early hour in the morning, and everything was now arranged for his reception in the paltry little public-house, as nearly as possible in the style usual in his own lordly mansions. The ducks and geese that had been dabbling three or four hours ago in the village-pond were now ready to make their appearance under numberless disguises as *entrées*; a regular bill-of-fare flanked the noble Marquis's allotted cover; every huckaback towel in the place had been pressed to do service as a napkin; and, that nothing might be wanting to the mimicry of splendour, the landlady's poor remnants of

crochery and pewter had been furbished up, and mustered in solemn order on a crazy old beauffet, which was to represent a sideboard worthy of Lucullus. I think it worth while to preserve this anecdote, which Scott delighted in telling, as perhaps the last relic of a style of manners now passed away, and never likely to be revived among us.

Having despatched this dinner and his business, Scott again turned southwards, intending to spend a few days with Mr. Morrith at Rokeby; but on reaching Penrith, the landlord there, who was his old acquaintance (Mr. Buchanan), placed a letter in his hands: *ecce iterum* — it was once more a cry of distress from John Ballantyne. He thus answered it: —

“ *To Mr. John Ballantyne.*

“ Penrith, Aug. 10, 1813.

“ Dear John, — I enclose you an order for £350. I shall remain at Rokeby until Saturday or Sunday, and be at Abbotsford on Wednesday at latest.

“ I hope the printing-office is going on well. I fear, from the state of accmpts between the companies, restrictions on the management and expense will be unavoidable, which may trench upon James's comforts. I cannot observe hitherto that the printing-office is paying off, but rather adding to its embarrassments; and it cannot be thought that I have either means or inclination to support a losing concern at the rate of £200 a-month. If James could find a monied partner, an active man who understood the commercial part of the business, and would superintend the conduct of the cash, it might be the best for all parties; for I really am not adequate to the fatigue of mind which these affairs occasion me, though I must do the best to struggle through them. Believe me yours, &c.

“ W. S.”

At Brough he encountered a messenger who brought him such a painful account of Mrs. Morrith's health, that he abandoned his intention of proceeding to Rokeby; and, indeed, it was much better that he should be at Abbotsford again as soon as possible, for his correspondence shows a continued succession, during the three or four ensuing weeks, of the same annoyances that had pursued him to Drumlanrig and to Penrith. By his desire, the Ballantynes had, it would seem, before the middle of August, laid a statement of their affairs before Constable. Though the statement was not so clear and full as Scott had wished it to be, Constable, on considering it, at once assured them, that to go on raising money in driblets would never effectually relieve them; that, in short, one or both of the companies must stop, unless Mr. Scott could find means to lay his hand, without farther delay, on at least £4000; and I gather that, by way of inducing Constable himself to come forward with part at least of this supply, John Ballantyne again announced his intention of forthwith abandoning the bookselling business altogether, and making an effort to establish himself — on a plan which Constable had shortly before suggested — as an auctioneer in Edinburgh. The following letters need no comment: —

“ To Mr. John Ballantyne.

“ Abbotsford, Aug. 16, 1813.

“ Dear John, — I am quite satisfied it is impossible for J. B. and Co. to continue business longer than is absolutely necessary for the sale of stock and extrication of their affairs. The fatal injury which their credit has sustained, as well as your adopting a profession in which I sincerely hope you will be more fortunate, renders the closing of the bookselling business inevitable. With regard to the printing, it is my intention to

retire from that also, so soon as I can possibly do so with safety to myself, and with the regard I shall always entertain for James's interest. Whatever loss I may sustain will be preferable to the life I have lately led, when I seem surrounded by a sort of magic circle, which neither permits me to remain at home in peace, nor to stir abroad with pleasure. Your first exertion as an auctioneer may probably be on 'that distinguished, select, and inimitable collection of books, made by an amateur of this city retiring from business.' I do not feel either health or confidence in my own powers sufficient to authorize me to take a long price for a new poem, until these affairs shall have been in some measure digested. This idea has been long running in my head, but the late fatalities which have attended this business have quite decided my resolution. I will write to James to-morrow, being at present annoyed with a severe headache. Yours truly,
W. SCOTT."

Were I to transcribe all the letters to which these troubles gave rise, I should fill a volume before I had reached the end of another twelvemonth. The two next I shall quote are dated on the same day (the 24th August), which may, in consequence of the answer the second of them received, be set down as determining the *crisis* of 1813.

"To Mr. James Ballantyne.

"Abbotsford, 24th August 1813.

"Dear James, — Mr. Constable's advice is, as I have always found it, sound, sensible, and friendly — and I shall be guided by it. But I have no wealthy friend who would join in security with me to such an extent; and to apply in quarters where I might be refused, would ensure disclosure. I conclude John has shown Mr. C. the state of the affairs; if not, I would wish him to do so directly. If the proposed accommodation could be granted to the firm on my personally joining in the security, the whole matter would be quite safe, for I have to receive in

the course of the winter some large sums from my father's estate.* Besides which, I shall certainly be able to go to press in November with a new poem; or, if Mr. Constable's additional security would please the bankers better, I could ensure Mr. C. against the possibility of loss, by assigning the copyrights, together with that of the new poem, or even my library, in his relief. In fact, if he looks into the affairs, he will I think see that there is no prospect of any eventual loss to the creditors, though I may be a loser myself. My property here is unincumbered; so is my house in Castle Street; and I have no debts out of my own family, excepting a part of the price of Abbotsford, which I am to retain for four years. So that, literally, I have no claims upon me unless those arising out of this business;

Clerkship,	£1300	}	and when it is considered that my income is above £2000 a-year, even if the printing-office pays nothing, I should hope no one can possibly be a loser by me. I am sure I would strip myself
Sheriffdom,	300		
Mrs. Scott,	200		
Interest,	100		
Somers, (say)	200		
	£2100		

my shirt rather than it should be the case; and my only reason for wishing to stop the concern was to do open justice to all persons. It must have been a bitter pill to me. I can more confidently expect some aid from Mr. Constable, or from Longman's house, because they can look into the concern and satisfy themselves how little chance there is of their being losers, which others cannot do. Perhaps between them they might manage to assist us with the credit necessary, and go on in winding up the concern by occasional acceptances.

“An odd thing has happened. I have a letter, by order of the Prince Regent, offering me the laureateship in the most flattering terms. Were I my own man, as you call it, I would refuse this offer (with all gratitude); but, as I am situated, £300 or £400 a-year is not to be sneezed at upon a point of poetical honour — and it makes me a better man to that extent. I have not yet written, however. I will say little about

* He probably alludes to the final settlement of accounts with the Marquis of Abercorn.

Constable's handsome behaviour, but shall not forget it. It is needless to say I shall wish him to be consulted in every step that is taken. If I should lose all I advanced to this business, I should be less vexed than I am at this moment. I am very busy with Swift at present, but shall certainly come to town if it is thought necessary; but I should first wish Mr. Constable to look into the affairs to the bottom. Since I have personally superintended them, they have been winding up very fast, and we are now almost within sight of harbour. I will also own it was partly ill-humour at John's blunder last week that made me think of throwing things up. Yours truly, W. S."

After writing and despatching this letter, an idea occurred to Scott that there was a quarter, not hitherto alluded to in any of these anxious epistles, from which he might consider himself as entitled to ask assistance, not only with little, if any, chance of a refusal, but (owing to particular circumstances) without incurring any very painful sense of obligation. On the 25th he says to John Ballantyne —

"After some meditation, last night, it occurred to me I had some title to ask the Duke of Buccleuch's guarantee to a cash-account for £4000, as Constable proposes. I have written to him accordingly, and have very little doubt that he will be my surety. If this cash-account be in view, Mr. Constable will certainly *assist us* until the necessary writings are made out — I beg your pardon — I dare say I am very stupid; but very often you don't consider that I can't follow details which would be quite obvious to a man of business; — for instance, you tell me daily, 'that *if* the sums I count upon *are* forthcoming, the results must be as I suppose.' But — in a week — the scene is changed, and all I can do, and more, is inadequate to bring about these results. I protest I don't know if at this moment £4000 *will* clear us out. After all, you are vexed, and so am I; and it is needless to wrangle who has a right to be angry. Commend me to James. Yours truly, W. S."

Having explained to the Duke of Buccleuch the position in which he stood — obliged either to procure some guarantee which would enable him to raise £4000, or to sell abruptly all his remaining interest in the copyright of his works ; and repeated the statement of his personal property and income, as given in the preceding letter to James Ballantyne — Scott says to his noble friend : —

“ I am not asking nor desiring any loan from your Grace, but merely the honour of your sanction to my credit as a good man for £4000 ; and the motive of your Grace’s interference would be sufficiently obvious to the London Shylocks, as your constant kindness and protection is no secret to the world. Will your Grace consider whether you can do what I propose, in conscience and safety, and favour me with your answer ? — I have a very flattering offer from the Prince Regent, of his own free motion, to make me poet-laureate ; I am very much embarrassed by it. I am, on the one hand, afraid of giving offence where no one would willingly offend, and perhaps losing an opportunity of smoothing the way to my youngsters through life ; on the other hand, the office is a ridiculous one, somehow or other — they and I should be well quizzed, — yet that I should not mind. My real feeling of reluctance lies deeper — it is, that favoured as I have been by the public, I should be considered, with some justice, I fear, as engrossing a petty emolument which might do real service to some poorer brother of the Muses. I shall be most anxious to have your Grace’s advice on this subject. There seems something churlish, and perhaps conceited, in repelling a favour so handsomely offered on the part of the Sovereign’s representative ; and on the other hand, I feel much disposed to shake myself free from it. I should make but a bad courtier, and an ode-maker is described by Pope as a poet out of his way or out of his senses. I will find some excuse for protracting my reply till I can have the advantage of your Grace’s opinion ; and remain, in the mean time, very truly, your obliged and grateful

WALTER SCOTT.

“P. S. — I trust your Grace will not suppose me capable of making such a request as the enclosed, upon any idle or unnecessary speculation ; but, as I stand situated, it is a matter of deep interest to me to prevent these copyrights from being disposed of either hastily or at under prices. I could have half the booksellers in London for my sureties, on a hint of a new poem ; but bankers do not like people in trade, and my brains are not ready to spin another web. So your Grace must take me under your princely care, as in the days of lang syne ; and I think I can say, upon the sincerity of an honest man, there is not the most distant chance of your having any trouble or expense through my means.”

The Duke's answer was in all respects such as might have been looked for from the generous kindness and manly sense of his charcter.

“ *To Walter Scott, Esq., Abbotsford.*

“ Drumlanrig Castle, August 28th, 1813.

“ My Dear Sir, — I received yesterday your letter of the 24th. I shall with pleasure comply with your request of guaranteeing the £4000. You must, however, furnish me with the form of a letter to this effect, as I am completely ignorant of transactions of this nature.

“ I am never willing to *offer* advice, but when my opinion is asked by a friend I am ready to give it. As to the offer of his Royal Highness to appoint you laureate, I shall frankly say that I should be mortified to see you hold a situation which, by the general concurrence of the world, is stamped ridiculous. There is no good reason why this should be so ; but so it is. *Walter Scott, Poet Laureate*, ceases to be the Walter Scott of the *Lay*, *Marmion*, &c. Any future poem of yours would not come forward with the same probability of a successful reception. The poet laureate would stick to you and your productions like a piece of *court plaster*. Your muse has hitherto been independent — don't put her into harness. We know

how lightly she trots along when left to her natural paces, but do not try driving. I would write frankly and openly to his Royal Highness, but with respectful gratitude, for he *has* paid you a compliment. I would not fear to state that you had hitherto written when in poetic mood, but feared to trammel yourself with a fixed periodical exertion; and I cannot but conceive that His Royal Highness, who has much taste, will at once see the many objections which you must have to his proposal, but which you cannot write. Only think of being chaunted and recitativated by a parcel of hoarse and squeaking choristers on a birthday, for the edification of the bishops, pages, maids of honour, and gentlemen-pensioners! Oh horrible! thrice horrible! Yours sincerely, BUCCLEUCH, &c.”

The letter which first announced the Prince Regent's proposal, was from his Royal Highness's librarian, Dr. James Stanier Clarke; but before Scott answered it he had received a more formal notification from the late Marquis of Hertford, then Lord Chamberlain. I shall transcribe both these documents.

“ *To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

“ Pavilion, Brighton, August 18, 1813.

“ My Dear Sir, — Though I have never had the honour of being introduced to you, you have frequently been pleased to convey to me very kind and flattering messages, * and I trust, therefore, you will allow me, without any further ceremony, to say — That I took an early opportunity this morning of seeing the Prince Regent, who arrived here late yesterday; and I then delivered to his Royal Highness my earnest wish and anxious desire that the vacant situation of poet laureate might be conferred on you. The Prince replied, ‘ that you had

* The Royal Librarian had forwarded to Scott presentation copies of his successive publications — *The Progress of Maritime Discovery — Falconer's Shipwreck, with a Life of the Author — Naufragia — A Life of Nelson*, in two quarto volumes, &c. &c. &c.

already been written to, and that if you wished it, everything would be settled as I could desire.'

"I hope, therefore, I may be allowed to congratulate you on this event. You are the man to whom it ought first to have been offered, and it gave me sincere pleasure to find that those sentiments of high approbation which my Royal Master had so often expressed towards you in private, were now so openly and honourably displayed in public. Have the goodness, dear sir, to receive this intrusive letter with your accustomed courtesy, and believe me, yours very sincerely,
J. S. CLARKE,
Librarian to H. R. H. the Prince Regent."

"To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.

"Ragley, 31st August 1813.

"Sir, — I thought it my duty to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, to express to him my humble opinion that I could not make so creditable a choice as in your person for the office, now vacant, of poet laureate. I am now authorized to offer it to you, which I would have taken an earlier opportunity of doing, but that, till this morning, I have had no occasion of seeing his Royal Highness since Mr. Pye's death. I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient, humble servant,
INGRAM HERTFORD."

The following letters conclude this matter :—

"To the Most Noble the Marquis of Hertford, &c. &c. Ragley, Warwickshire.

"Abbotsford, 4th Sept.

"My Lord, — I am this day honoured with your Lordship's letter of the 31st August, tendering for my acceptance the situation of poet laureate in the Royal Household. I shall always think it the highest honour of my life to have been the object of the good opinion implied in your Lordship's recommendation, and in the gracious acquiescence of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent. I humbly trust I shall not forfeit

sentiments so highly valued, although I find myself under the necessity of declining, with every acknowledgment of respect and gratitude, a situation above my deserts, and offered to me in a manner so very flattering. The duties attached to the office of poet laureate are not indeed very formidable, if judged of by the manner in which they have sometimes been discharged. But an individual selected from the literary characters of Britain, upon the honourable principle expressed in your Lordship's letter, ought not, in justice to your Lordship, to his own reputation, but above all to his Royal Highness, to accept of the office, unless he were conscious of the power of filling it respectably, and attaining to excellence in the execution of the tasks which it imposes. This confidence I am so far from possessing, that, on the contrary, with all the advantages which do now, and I trust ever will, present themselves to the poet whose task it may be to commemorate the events of his Royal Highness's administration, I am certain I should feel myself inadequate to the fitting discharge of the regularly recurring duty of periodical composition, and should thus at once disappoint the expectation of the public, and, what would give me still more pain, discredit the nomination of his Royal Highness.

“Will your Lordship permit me to add, that though far from being wealthy, I already hold two official situations in the line of my profession, which afford a respectable income. It becomes me, therefore, to avoid the appearance of engrossing one of the few appointments which seem specially adapted for the provision of those whose lives have been dedicated exclusively to literature, and who too often derive from their labours more credit than emolument.

“Nothing could give me greater pain than being thought ungrateful to his Royal Highness's goodness, or insensible to the honourable distinction his undeserved condescension has been pleased to bestow upon me. I have to trust to your Lordship's kindness for laying at the feet of his Royal Highness, in the way most proper and respectful, my humble, grateful, and dutiful thanks, with these reasons for declining a situ-

ation which, though every way superior to my deserts, I should chiefly have valued as a mark of his Royal Highness's approbation.

“For your Lordship's unmerited goodness, as well as for the trouble you have had upon this occasion, I can only offer you my respectful thanks, and entreat that you will be pleased to believe me, my Lord Marquis, your Lordship's much obliged and much honoured humble servant, WALTER SCOTT.”

“*To His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, &c. Drumlanrig Castle.*

“Abbotsford, Sept. 5, 1813.

“My Dear Lord Duke, — Good advice is easily followed when it jumps with our own sentiments and inclinations. I no sooner found mine fortified by your Grace's opinion than I wrote to Lord Hertford, declining the laurel in the most civil way I could imagine. I also wrote to the Prince's librarian, who had made himself active on the occasion, dilating, at somewhat more length than I thought respectful to the Lord Chamberlain, my reasons for declining the intended honour. My wife has made a copy of the last letter, which I enclose for your Grace's perusal: there is no occasion either to preserve or return it — but I am desirous you should know what I have put my apology upon, for I may reckon on its being misrepresented. I certainly should never have survived the recitative described by your Grace: it is a part of the etiquette I was quite unprepared for, and should have sunk under it. It is curious enough that Drumlanrig should always have been the refuge of bards who decline court promotion. Gay, I think, refused to be a gentleman-usher, or some such post; * and I am

* Poor Gay — “In wit a man, simplicity a child,” — was insulted, on the accession of George II., by the offer of a gentleman-ushership to one of the royal infants. His prose and verse largely celebrate his obligations to Charles third Duke of Queensberry, and the charming Lady Catharine Hyde, his Duchess — under whose roof the poet spent the latter years of his life.

determined to abide by my post of Grand Ecuyer Trenchant of the Chateau, varied for that of tale-teller of an evening.

“I will send your Grace a copy of the letter of guarantee when I receive it from London. By an arrangement with Longman and Co., the great booksellers in Paternoster-row, I am about to be enabled to place their security, as well as my own, between your Grace and the possibility of hazard. But your kind readiness to forward a transaction which is of such great importance both to my fortune and comfort, can never be forgotten — although it can scarce make me more than I have always been, my dear Lord, your Grace’s much obliged and truly faithful
WALTER SCOTT.”

(COPY — ENCLOSURE.)

“To the Rev. J. S. Clarke, &c. &c. &c. Pavilion, Brighton.

“Abbotsford, 4th September 1813.

“Sir, — On my return to this cottage, after a short excursion, I was at once surprised and deeply interested by the receipt of your letter. I shall always consider it as the proudest incident of my life that his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, whose taste in literature is so highly distinguished, should have thought of naming me to the situation of poet-laureate. I feel, therefore, no small embarrassment lest I should incur the suspicion of churlish ingratitude in declining an appointment in every point of view so far above my deserts, but which I should chiefly have valued as conferred by the unsolicited generosity of his Royal Highness, and as entitling me to the distinction of terming myself an immediate servant of his Majesty. But I have to trust to your goodness in representing to his Royal Highness, with my most grateful, humble, and dutiful acknowledgments, the circumstances which compel me to decline the honour which his undeserved favour has proposed for me. The poetical pieces I have hitherto composed have uniformly been the hasty production of impulses, which I must term fortunate, since they have attracted his Royal Highness’s notice and approbation. But I strongly fear, or

rather am absolutely certain, that I should feel myself unable to justify, in the eye of the public, the choice of his Royal Highness, by a fitting discharge of the duties of an office which requires stated and periodical exertion. And although I am conscious how much this difficulty is lessened under the government of his Royal Highness, marked by paternal wisdom at home and successes abroad which seem to promise the liberation of Europe, I still feel that the necessity of a regular commemoration would trammel my powers of composition at the very time when it would be equally my pride and duty to tax them to the uttermost. There is another circumstance which weighs deeply in my mind while forming my present resolution. I have already the honour to hold two appointments under Government, not usually conjoined, and which afford an income, far indeed from wealth, but amounting to decent independence. I fear, therefore, that in accepting one of the few situations which our establishment holds forth as the peculiar provision of literary men, I might be justly censured as availing myself of his Royal Highness's partiality to engross more than my share of the public revenue, to the prejudice of competitors equally meritorious at least, and otherwise unprovided for; and as this calculation will be made by thousands who know that I have reaped great advantages by the favour of the public, without being aware of the losses which it has been my misfortune to sustain, I may fairly reckon that it will terminate even more to my prejudice than if they had the means of judging accurately of my real circumstances. I have thus far, sir, frankly exposed to you, for his Royal Highness's favourable consideration, the feelings which induce me to decline an appointment offered in a manner so highly calculated to gratify, I will not say my vanity only, but my sincere feelings of devoted attachment to the crown and constitution of my country, and to the person of his Royal Highness, by whom its government has been so worthily administered. No consideration on earth would give me so much pain as the idea of my real feelings being misconstrued on this occasion, or that I should be supposed stupid

enough not to estimate the value of his Royal Highness's avour, or so ungrateful as not to feel it as I ought. And you will relieve me from great anxiety if you will have the goodness to let me know if his Royal Highness is pleased to receive favourably my humble and grateful apology.

"I cannot conclude without expressing my sense of your kindness and of the trouble you have had upon this account, and I request you will believe me, sir, your obliged humble servant,
WALTER SCOTT."

"To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.

"Abbotsford, 4th September 1813.

"My Dear Southey,— On my return here I found, to my no small surprise, a letter tendering me the laurel vacant by the death of the poetical Pye. I have declined the appointment, as being incompetent to the task of annual commemoration; but chiefly as being provided for in my professional department, and unwilling to incur the censure of engrossing the emolument attached to one of the few appointments which seems proper to be filled by a man of literature who has no other views in life. Will you forgive me, my dear friend, if I own I had you in my recollection. I have given Croker the hint, and otherwise endeavoured to throw the office into your option. I am uncertain if you will like it, for the laurel has certainly been tarnished by some of its wearers, and, as at present managed, its duties are inconvenient and somewhat liable to ridicule. But the latter matter might be amended, as I think the Regent's good sense would lead him to lay aside these regular commemorations; and as to the former point, it has been worn by Dryden of old, and by Warton in modern days. If you quote my own refusal against me, I reply—first, I have been luckier than you in holding two offices not usually conjoined; secondly, I did not refuse it from any foolish prejudice against the situation, otherwise how durst I mention it to you, my elder brother in the muse?—but from a sort of internal hope that they would give it to you, upon whom it would

be so much more worthily conferred. For I am not such an ass as not to know that you are my better in poetry, though I have had, probably but for a time, the tide of popularity in my favour. I have not time to add ten thousand other reasons, but I only wished to tell you how the matter was, and to beg you to think before you reject the offer which I flatter myself will be made to you. If I had not been, like Dogberry, a fellow with two gowns already, I should have jumped at it like a cock at a gooseberry. Ever yours most truly,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

Immediately after Mr. Croker received Scott's letter here alluded to, Mr. Southey was invited to accept the vacant laurel. But, as the birthday ode had been omitted since the illness of King George III., and the Regent had good sense and good taste enough to hold that ancient custom as “more honoured in the breach than the observance,” the whole fell completely into disuse.* The office was thus relieved from the burden of ridicule which had, in spite of many illustrious names, adhered to it; and though its emoluments did not in fact amount to more than a quarter of the sum at which Scott rated them when he declined it, they formed no unacceptable addition to Mr. Southey's income. Scott's answer to his brother poet's affectionate and grateful letter on the conclusion of this affair, is as follows:—

“*To R. Southey, Esq., Keswick.*”

“Edinburgh, November 13, 1813.”

“I do not delay, my Dear Southey, to say my *gratulor*. Long may you live, as Paddy says, to rule over us, and to re-

* See the Preface to the third volume of the late Collective Edition of Mr. Southey's Poems, p. xii., where he corrects a trivial error I had fallen into in the first edition of these Memoirs, and adds, “Sir Walter's conduct was, as it always was, characteristically generous, and in the highest degree friendly.” — [1839.]

deem the crown of Spenser and of Dryden to its pristine dignity. I am only discontented with the extent of your royal revenue, which I thought had been £400, or £300 at the very least. Is there no getting rid of that iniquitous *modus*, and requiring the *butt* in kind? I would have you think of it; I know no man so well entitled to Xeres sack as yourself, though many bards would make a better figure at drinking it. I should think that in due time a memorial might get some relief in this part of the appointment—it should be at least £100 wet and £100 dry. When you have carried your point of discarding the ode, and my point of getting the sack, you will be exactly in the situation of Davy in the farce, who stipulates for more wages, less work, and the key of the ale-cellar.* I was greatly delighted with the circumstances of your investiture. It reminded me of the porters at Calais with Dr. Smollett's baggage, six of them seizing upon one small portmanteau, and bearing it in triumph to his lodgings. You see what it is to laugh at the superstitions of a gentleman-usher, as I think you do somewhere. 'The whirligig of time brings in his revenges.' †

"Adieu, my dear Southey; my best wishes attend all that you do, and my best congratulations every good that attends you—yea even this, the very least of Providence's mercies, as a poor clergyman said when pronouncing grace over a herring. I should like to know how the Prince received you; his address is said to be excellent, and his knowledge of literature far from despicable. What a change of fortune even since the short time when we met! The great work of retribution is now rolling onward to consummation, yet am I not fully satisfied—*pereat iste!*—there will be no permanent peace in Europe till Buonaparte sleeps with the tyrants of old. My best compliments attend Mrs. Southey and your family. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

To avoid returning to the affair of the laureateship, I

* Garrick's *Bon Ton, or High Life Above Stairs*.

† *Twelfth Night*, Act V. Scene 1.

have placed together such letters concerning it as appeared important. I regret to say that, had I adhered to the chronological order of Scott's correspondence, ten out of every twelve letters between the date of his application to the Duke of Buccleuch, and his removal to Edinburgh on the 12th of November, would have continued to tell the same story of pecuniary difficulty, urgent and almost daily applications for new advances to the Ballantynes, and endeavours, more or less successful, but in no case effectually so, to relieve the pressure on the book-selling firm by sales of its heavy stock to the great publishing houses of Edinburgh and London. Whatever success these endeavours met with, appears to have been due either directly or indirectly to Mr. Constable; who did a great deal more than prudence would have warranted, in taking on himself the results of its unhappy adventures,—and, by his sagacious advice, enabled the distressed partners to procure similar assistance at the hands of others, who did not partake his own feelings of personal kindness and sympathy. "I regret to learn," Scott writes to him on the 16th October, "that there is great danger of your exertions in our favour, which once promised so fairly, proving finally abortive, or at least being too tardy in their operation to work out our relief. If anything more can be honourably and properly done to avoid a most unpleasant shock, I shall be most willing to do it; if not—God's will be done! There will be enough of property, including my private fortune, to pay every claim; and I have not used prosperity so ill, as greatly to fear adversity. But these things we will talk over at meeting; meanwhile believe me, with a sincere sense of your kindness and friendly views, very truly yours, W. S."—I have no wish to quote more largely

from the letters which passed during this crisis between Scott and his partners. The pith and substance of his, to John Ballantyne at least, seems to be summed up in one brief *postscript*:—“For God’s sake treat me as a man, and not as a milch-cow!”

The difficulties of the Ballantynes were by this time well known throughout the commercial circles not only of Edinburgh, but of London; and a report of their actual bankruptcy, with the addition that Scott was engaged as their surety to the extent of £20,000, found its way to Mr. Morrith about the beginning of November. This dear friend wrote to him, in the utmost anxiety, and made liberal offers of assistance in case the catastrophe might still be averted; but the term of Martinmas, always a critical one in Scotland, had passed before this letter reached Edinburgh, and Scott’s answer will show symptoms of a clearing horizon. I think also there is one expression in it which could hardly have failed to convey to Mr. Morrith that his friend was involved, more deeply than he had ever acknowledged, in the concerns of the Messrs. Ballantyne.

“*To J. B. S. Morrith, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

“Edinburgh, 20th November 1813.

“I did not answer your very kind letter, my dear Morrith, until I could put your friendly heart to rest upon the report you have heard, which I could not do entirely until this term of Martinmas was passed. I have the pleasure to say that there is no truth whatever in the Ballantynes’ reported bankruptcy. They have had severe difficulties for the last four months to make their resources balance the demands upon them, and I, having the price of Rokeby, and other monies in their hands, have had considerable reason for apprehension, and no slight degree of plague and trouble. They have, how-

ever, been so well supported, that I have got out of hot water upon their account. They are winding up their bookselling concern with great regularity, and are to abide hereafter by the printing-office, which, with its stock, &c., will revert to them fairly.

“I have been able to redeem the offspring of my brain, and they are like to pay me like grateful children. This matter has set me a thinking about money more seriously than ever I did in my life, and I have begun by insuring my life for £4000, to secure some ready cash to my family should I slip girths suddenly. I think my other property, library, &c., may be worth about £12,000, and I have not much debt.

“Upon the whole, I see no prospect of any loss whatever. Although in the course of human events I may be disappointed, there certainly *can* be none to vex your kind and affectionate heart on my account. I am young, with a large official income, and if I lose anything now, I have gained a great deal in my day. I cannot tell you, and will not attempt to tell you, how much I was affected by your letter — so much, indeed, that for several days I could not make my mind up to express myself on the subject. Thank God! all real danger was yesterday put over — and I will write, in two or three days, a funny letter, without any of these vile cash matters, of which it may be said there is no living with them nor without them. Ever yours, most truly,
WALTER SCOTT.”

All these annoyances produced no change whatever in Scott's habits of literary industry. During these anxious months of September, October, and November, he kept feeding James Ballantyne's press, from day to day, both with the annotated text of the closing volumes of Swift's works, and with the MS. of his *Life of the Dean*. He had also proceeded to mature in his own mind the plan of the *Lord of the Isles*, and executed such a portion of the *First Canto* as gave him confidence to renew his negotiation with Constable for the sale of the whole, or

part of its copyright. It was, moreover, at this period, that, looking into an old cabinet in search of some fishing-tackle, his eye chanced to light once more on the Ashes-tiel fragment of *Waverley*. — He read over those introductory chapters — thought they had been undervalued — and determined to finish the story.

All this while, too, he had been subjected to those interruptions from idle strangers, which from the first to the last imposed so heavy a tax on his celebrity; and he no doubt received such guests with all his usual urbanity of attention. Yet I was not surprised to discover, among his hasty notes to the Ballantynes, several of tenour akin to the following specimens: —

“Sept. 2d, 1813.

“My temper is really worn to a hair’s breadth. The intruder of yesterday hung on me till twelve to-day. When I had just taken my pen, he was relieved, like a sentry leaving guard, by two other lounging visitors; and their post has now been supplied by some people on real business.”

Again —

“*Monday Evening.*

“Oh James! oh James! Two Irish dames
Oppress me very sore;
I groaning send one sheet I’ve penned—
For, hang them! there’s no more.”

A scrap of nearly the same date to his brother Thomas may be introduced, as belonging to the same state of feeling —

“Dear Tom, — I observe what you say as to Mr. * * * *; and as you may often be exposed to similar requests, which it would be difficult to parry, you can sign such letters of introduction as relate to persons whom you do not delight to honour

short, *T. Scott*; by which abridgement of your name I shall understand to limit my civilities.”

It is proper to mention, that, in the very agony of these perplexities, the unfortunate Maturin received from him a timely succour of £50, rendered doubly acceptable by the kind and judicious letter of advice in which it was enclosed; and I have before me ample evidence that his benevolence had been extended to other struggling brothers of the trade, even when he must often have had actual difficulty to meet the immediate expenditure of his own family. All this, however, will not surprise the reader.

Nor did his general correspondence suffer much interruption; and, as some relief after so many painful details, I shall close the narrative of this anxious year by a few specimens of his miscellaneous communications:—

“*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*”

“*Abbotsford, Sept. 12, 1813.*”

“My Dear Miss Baillie,—I have been a vile lazy correspondent, having been strolling about the country, and indeed a little way into England, for the greater part of July and August; in short, ‘aye skipping here and there,’ like the Tanner of Tamworth’s horse. Since I returned, I have had a gracious offer of the laurel on the part of the Prince Regent. You will not wonder that I have declined it, though with every expression of gratitude which such an unexpected compliment demanded. Indeed, it would be high imprudence in one having literary reputation to maintain, to accept of an offer which obliged him to produce a poetical exercise on a given theme twice a-year; and besides, as my loyalty to the royal family is very sincere, I would not wish to have it thought mercenary. The public has done its part by me very well, and so has Government: and I thought this little literary provision ought

to be bestowed on one who has made literature his sole profession. If the Regent means to make it respectable, he will abolish the foolish custom of the annual odes, which is a drudgery no person of talent could ever willingly encounter — or come clear off from, if he was so rash. And so, peace be with the laurel,

‘Profaned by Cibber and contemned by Gray.’

“I was for a fortnight at Drumlanrig, a grand old chateau, which has descended, by the death of the late Duke of Queensberry to the Duke of Buccleuch. It is really a most magnificent pile, and when embosomed amid the wide forest scenery, of which I have an infantine recollection, must have been very romantic. But old Q. made wild devastation among the noble trees, although some fine ones are still left, and a quantity of young shoots are, in despite of the want of every kind of attention, rushing up to supply the places of the fathers of the forest from whose stems they are springing. It will now I trust be in better hands, for the reparation of the castle goes hand in hand with the rebuilding of all the cottages, in which an aged race of pensioners of Duke Charles, and his pious wife, — ‘Kitty, blooming, young and gay,’ — have, during the last reign, been pining into rheumatisms and agues, in neglected poverty.

“All this is beautiful to witness : the indoor work does not please me so well, though I am aware that, to those who are to inhabit an old castle, it becomes often a matter of necessity to make alterations by which its tone and character are changed for the worse. Thus a noble gallery, which ran the whole length of the front, is converted into bedrooms — very comfortable, indeed, but not quite so magnificent ; and as grim a dungeon as ever knave or honest man was confined in, is in some danger of being humbled into a wine-cellar. It is almost impossible to draw your breath, when you recollect that this, so many feet under ground, and totally bereft of air and light, was built for the imprisonment of human beings, whether guilty, suspected, or merely unfortunate. Certainly, if our

frames are not so hardy, our hearts are softer than those of our forefathers, although probably a few years of domestic war, or feudal oppression, would bring us back to the same case-hardening both in body and sentiment.

“I meant to have gone to Rokeby, but was prevented by Mrs. Morritt being unwell, which I very much regret, as I know few people that deserve better health. I am very glad you have known them, and I pray you to keep up the acquaintance in winter. I am glad to see by this day’s paper that our friend Terry has made a favourable impression on his first appearance at Covent-Garden — he has got a very good engagement there for three years, at twelve guineas a-week, which is a handsome income. — This little place comes on as fast as can be reasonably hoped; and the pinasters are all above the ground, but cannot be planted out for twelve months. My kindest compliments — in which Mrs. Scott always joins — attend Miss Agnes, the Doctor, and his family. Ever, my dear friend, yours most faithfully,

“WALTER SCOTT.”

“*To Daniel Terry, Esq., London.*”

“Abbotsford, 20th October 1813.

“Dear Terry, — You will easily believe that I was greatly pleased to hear from you. I had already learned from *The Courier* (what I had anticipated too strongly to doubt for one instant) your favourable impression on the London public. I think nothing can be more judicious in the managers than to exercise the various powers you possess, in their various extents. A man of genius is apt to be limited to one single style, and to become per force a mannerist, merely because the public is not so just to its own amusement as to give him an opportunity of throwing himself into different lines; and doubtless the exercise of our talents in one unvaried course, by degrees renders them incapable of any other, as the over use of any one limb of our body gradually impoverishes the rest. I shall be anxious to hear that you have played *Malvolio*, which is, I think, one of your *coups-de-maitre*, and in which envy

itself cannot affect to trace an imitation. That same charge of imitation, by the way, is one of the surest scents upon which dunces are certain to open. Undoubtedly, if the same character is well performed by two individuals, their acting must bear a general resemblance — it could not be well performed by both were it otherwise. But this general resemblance, which arises from both following nature and their author, can as little be termed imitation as the river in Wales can be identified with that of Macedon. Never mind these dunder-heads, but go on your own way, and scorn to laugh on the right side of your mouth, to make a difference from some ancient comedian who, in the same part, always laughed on the left. Stick to the public — be uniform in your exertions to study even those characters which have little in them, and to give a grace which you cannot find in the author. Audiences are always grateful for this — or rather — for gratitude is as much out of the question in the Theatre, as Bernadotte says to Boney it is amongst sovereigns — or rather, the audience is gratified by receiving pleasure from a part which they had no expectation would afford them any. It is in this view that, had I been of your profession, and possessed talents, I think I should have liked often those parts with which my brethren quarrelled, and studied to give them an effect which their intrinsic merit did not entitle them to. I have some thoughts of being in town in spring (not resolutions by any means); and it will be an additional motive to witness your success, and to find you as comfortably established as your friends in Castle Street earnestly hope and trust you will be.

“The summer — an uncommon summer in beauty and serenity — has glided away from us at Abbotsford, amidst our usual petty cares and petty pleasures. The children’s garden is in apple-pie order, our own completely cropped and stocked, and all the trees flourishing like the green bay of the Psalmist. I have been so busy about our domestic arrangements, that I have not killed six hares this season. Besides, I have got a cargo of old armour, sufficient to excite a suspicion that I intend to mount a squadron of cuirassiers. I only want a place

for my armoury; and, thank God, I can wait for that, these being no times for building. And this brings me to the loss of poor Stark, with whom more genius has died than is left behind among the collected universality of Scottish architects. O Lord! — but what does it signify? — Earth was born to bear, and man to pay (that is, lords, nabobs, Glasgow traders, and those who have wherewithal) — so wherefore grumble at great castles and cottages, with which the taste of the latter contrives to load the back of Mother Terra? — I have no hobby-horsical commissions at present, unless if you meet the *Voyages of Captain Richard, or Robert Falconer*, in one volume — ‘cowheel, quoth Sancho’ — I mark them for my own. Mrs. Scott, Sophia, Anne, and the boys, unite in kind remembrances. Ever yours truly,

W. SCOTT.”

“*To the Right Hon. Lord Byron, 4 Bennet Street, St. James's, London.*

“Abbotsford, 6th Nov. 1813.

“My Dear Lord, — I was honoured with your Lordship's letter of the 27th September,* and have sincerely to regret that there is such a prospect of your leaving Britain, without my achieving your personal acquaintance. I heartily wish your Lordship had come down to Scotland this season, for I have never seen a finer, and you might have renewed all your old associations with Caledonia, and made such new ones as were likely to suit you. I dare promise you would have liked me well enough — for I have many properties of a Turk — never trouble myself about futurity — am as lazy as the day is long — delight in collecting silver-mounted pistols and ataghans, and go out of my own road for no one — all which I take to be attributes of your good Moslem. Moreover, I am somewhat an admirer of royalty, and in order to maintain this part of my creed, I shall take care never to be connected with a court, but stick to the *ignotum pro mirabili*.

* The letter in question has not been preserved in Scott's collection of correspondence. This leaves some allusions in the answer obscure.

“The author of the *Queen’s Wake* will be delighted with your approbation. He is a wonderful creature for his opportunities, which were far inferior to those of the generality of Scottish peasants. Burns, for instance — (not that their extent of talents is to be compared for an instant) — had an education not much worse than the sons of many gentlemen in Scotland. But poor Hogg literally could neither read nor write till a very late period of his life ; and when he first distinguished himself by his poetical talent, could neither spell nor write grammar. When I first knew him, he used to send me his poetry, and was both indignant and horrified when I pointed out to him parallel passages in authors whom he had never read, but whom all the world would have sworn he had copied. An evil fate has hitherto attended him, and baffled every attempt that has been made to place him in a road to independence. But I trust he may be more fortunate in future.

“I have not yet seen Southey in the *Gazette* as Laureate. He is a real poet, such as we read of in former times, with every atom of his soul and every moment of his time dedicated to literary pursuits, in which he differs from almost all those who have divided public attention with him. Your Lordship’s habits of society, for example, and my own professional and official avocations, must necessarily connect us much more with our respective classes in the usual routine of pleasure or business, than if we had not any other employment than *vacare musis*. But Southey’s ideas are all poetical, and his whole soul dedicated to the pursuit of literature. In this respect, as well as in many others, he is a most striking and interesting character.

“I am very much interested in all that concerns your *Giaour*, which is universally approved of among our mountains. I have heard no objection except by one or two geniuses, who run over poetry as a cat does over a harpsichord, and they affect to complain of obscurity. On the contrary, I hold every real lover of the art is obliged to you for condensing the narrative, by giving us only those striking scenes which you have shown to be so susceptible of poetic ornament, and leaving to

imagination the says I's and says he's, and all the minutiae of detail which might be proper in giving evidence before a court of justice. The truth is, I think poetry is most striking when the mirror can be held up to the reader, and the same kept constantly before his eyes; it requires most uncommon powers to support a direct and downright narration; nor can I remember many instances of its being successfully maintained even by our greatest bards.

“As to those who have done me the honour to take my rhapsodies for their model, I can only say they have exemplified the ancient adage, ‘one fool makes many;’ nor do I think I have yet had much reason to suppose I have given rise to anything of distinguished merit. The worst is, it draws on me letters and commendatory verses, to which my sad and sober thanks in humble prose are deemed a most unmeet and ungracious reply. Of this sort of plague your Lordship must ere now have had more than your share, but I think you can hardly have met with so original a request as concluded the letter of a bard I this morning received, who limited his demands to being placed in his due station on Parnassus — *and* invested with a post in the Edinburgh Custom House.

“What an awakening of dry bones seems to be taking place on the Continent! I could as soon have believed in the resurrection of the Romans as in that of the Prussians — yet it seems a real and active renovation of national spirit. It will certainly be strange enough if that tremendous pitcher, which has travelled to so many fountains, should be at length broken on the banks of the Saale; but from the highest to the lowest we are the fools of fortune. Your Lordship will probably recollect where the Oriental tale occurs, of a Sultan who consulted Solomon on the proper inscription for a signet-ring, requiring that the maxim which it conveyed should be at once proper for moderating the presumption of prosperity and tempering the pressure of adversity. The apophthegm supplied by the Jewish sage was, I think, admirably adapted for both purposes, being comprehended in the words ‘And this also shall pass away.’

“When your Lordship sees Rogers, will you remember me kindly to him? I hope to be in London next spring, and renew my acquaintance with my friends there. It will be an additional motive if I could flatter myself that your Lordship’s stay in the country will permit me the pleasure of waiting upon you. I am, with much respect and regard, your Lordship’s truly honoured and obliged humble servant,

“WALTER SCOTT.

“I go to Edinburgh next week, *multum gemens.*”

“*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*”

“Edinburgh, 10th Dec. 1813.

“Many thanks, my dear friend, for your kind token of remembrance, which I yesterday received. I ought to blush, if I had grace enough left, at my long and ungenerous silence: but what shall I say? The habit of procrastination, which had always more or less a dominion over me, does not relax its sway as I grow older and less willing to take up the pen. I have not written to dear Ellis this age, — yet there is not a day that I do not think of you and him, and one or two other friends in your southern land. I am very glad the whisky came safe: do not stint so laudable an admiration for the liquor of Caledonia, for I have plenty of right good and sound Highland Ferintosh, and I can always find an opportunity of sending you up a bottle.

“We are here almost mad with the redemption of Holland, which has an instant and gratifying effect on the trade of Leith, and indeed all along the east coast of Scotland. About £100,000 worth of various commodities, which had been dormant in cellars and warehouses, was sold the first day the news arrived, and Orange ribbons and *Orange Boven* was the order of the day among all ranks. It is a most miraculous revivification which it has been our fate to witness. Though of a tolerably sanguine temper, I had fairly adjourned all hopes and expectations of the kind till another generation: the same

power, however, that opened the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep, has been pleased to close them, and to cause his wind to blow upon the face of the waters, so that we may look out from the ark of our preservation, and behold the reappearance of the mountain crests, and old, beloved, and well-known landmarks, which we had deemed swallowed up for ever in the abyss: the dove with the olive branch would complete the simile, but of that I see little hope. Buonaparte is that desperate gambler, who will not rise while he has a stake left; and indeed, to be King of France would be a poor pettifoggish enterprise, after having been almost Emperor of the World. I think he will drive things on, till the fickle and impatient people over whom he rules get tired of him and shake him out of the saddle. Some circumstances seem to intimate his having become jealous of the Senate; and indeed anything like a representative body, however imperfectly constructed, becomes dangerous to a tottering tyranny. The sword displayed on both frontiers may, like that brandished across the road of Balaam, terrify even dumb and irrational subjection into utterance — but enough of politics, though now a more cheerful subject than they have been for many years past.

“I have had a strong temptation to go to the Continent this Christmas; and should certainly have done so, had I been sure of getting from Amsterdam to Frankfort, where, as I know Lord Aberdeen and Lord Cathcart, I might expect a welcome. But notwithstanding my earnest desire to see the allied armies cross the Rhine, which I suppose must be one of the grandest military spectacles in the world, I should like to know that the roads were tolerably secure, and the means of getting forward attainable. In spring, however, if no unfortunate change takes place, I trust to visit the camp of the allies, and see all the pomp and power and circumstance of war, which I have so often imagined, and sometimes attempted to embody in verse. — Johnnie Richardson is a good, honourable, kind-hearted little fellow as lives in the world, with a pretty taste for poetry, which he has wisely kept under subjection to the occupation

of drawing briefs and revising conveyances. It is a great good fortune to him to be in your neighbourhood, as he is an idolater of genius, and where could he offer up his worship so justly? And I am sure you will like him, for he is really ' officious, innocent, sincere.'* Terry, I hope, will get on well; he is industrious, and zealous for the honour of his art. Ventidius must have been an excellent part for him, hovering between tragedy and comedy, which is precisely what will suit him. We have a woful want of him here, both in public and private, for he was one of the most easy and quiet chimney-corner companions that I have had for these two or three years past.

" I am very glad if anything I have written to you could give pleasure to Miss Edgeworth, though I am sure it will fall very short of the respect which I have for her brilliant talents. I always write to you *à la volée*, and trust implicitly to your kindness and judgment upon all occasions where you may choose to communicate any part of my letters.† As to the taxing men, I must battle them as I can: they are worse than the great Emathian conqueror, who

' bade spare

The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground.' ‡

Your pinasters are coming up gallantly in the nursery-bed at Abbotsford. I trust to pay the whole establishment a Christmas visit, which will be, as Robinson Crusoe says of his glass of rum, ' to mine exceeding refreshment.' All Edinburgh have been on tiptoe to see Madame de Staël, but she is now not likely to honour us with a visit, at which I cannot prevail on myself to be very sorry; for as I tired of some of her works, I am afraid I should disgrace my taste by tiring of the authoress too. All my little people are very well, learning, with great

* Scott's old friend, Mr. John Richardson, had shortly before this time taken a house in Miss Baillie's neighbourhood, on Hampstead Heath.

† Miss Baillie had apologized to him for having sent an extract of one of his letters to her friend at Edgeworthstown.

‡ Milton — *Sonnet No. VIII.*

