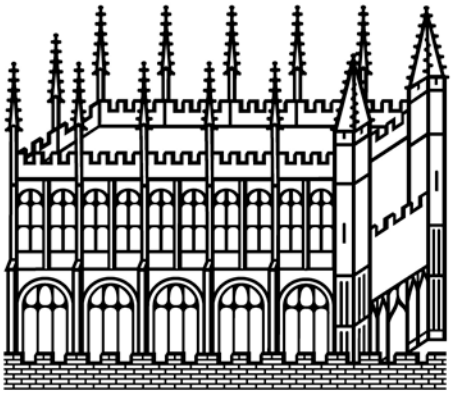

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STORY OF THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

By

ROBERT CHAMBERS L.L.D.

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ABBOTSFORD.

STORY OF THE LIFE

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT

BY

ROBERT CHAMBERS, LL.D.

REVISED, WITH ADDITIONS, INCLUDING THE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED
LONDON AND EDINBURGH
1894

'If it should ever fall to the lot of youth to peruse these pages, let such a reader remember that it is with the deepest regret that I recollect in my manhood the opportunities of learning which I neglected in my youth; that through every part of my literary career I have felt pinched and hampered by my own ignorance; and that I would at this moment give half the reputation I have had the good fortune to acquire, if by doing so I could rest the remaining part upon a sound foundation of learning and science.'
—*Autobiography of Scott* (1808). See page 46.

PREFACE.

THIS brief life of Sir Walter Scott, from the pen of Dr Robert Chambers, has been revised and supplemented, mainly by the addition of Scott's autobiography written at Ashestiel in 1808, which forms a charming and graphic record of his boyhood and early training. The boyhood and youth of Scott being treated with considerable fullness, the book will be found especially interesting by young people.

William and Robert Chambers lived in the era of the Waverley Novels, and it was a vivid recollection of the former, how frequently, as an apprentice bookseller, he had to visit Constable's in order to satisfy the insatiable demand for the early volumes of the series. Robert Chambers was fortunate in receiving the patronage and good offices of Scott, both in business and authorship, and the budget of material which the novelist gave him in aid of the *Traditions of Edinburgh* was a kindly and helpful act, of no small value to a budding author. Both brothers were also amongst the ten or twelve persons who went from Edinburgh to Abbotsford to be present at the funeral of the great novelist. It was natural, therefore, that they should make a study of Scott's career, and as young publishers engaged in building up a business in Edinburgh, take an object-lesson from the experiences of Ballantyne and Constable, who had gone before them.

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LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY—EARLY YEARS.

ASHESTIEL, *April* 26, 1808.

THE present age has discovered a desire, or rather a rage, for literary anecdote and private history, that may be well permitted to alarm one who has engaged in a certain degree the attention of the public. That I have had more than my own share of popularity, my contemporaries will be as ready to admit, as I am to confess that its measure has exceeded not only my hopes, but my merits, and even wishes. I may be therefore permitted, without an extraordinary degree of vanity, to take the precaution of recording a few leading circumstances (they do not merit the name of events) of a very quiet and uniform life—that, should my literary reputation survive my temporal existence, the public may know from good authority all that they are entitled to know of an individual who has contributed to their amusement.

From the lives of some poets a most important moral lesson may doubtless be derived, and few sermons can be read with so much profit as the Memoirs of Burns, of

Chatterton, or of Savage. Were I conscious of anything peculiar in my own moral character which could render such development necessary or useful, I would as readily consent to it as I would bequeath my body to dissection, if the operation could tend to point out the nature and the means of curing any peculiar malady. But as my habits of thinking and acting, as well as my rank in society, were fixed long before I had attained, or even pretended to, any poetical reputation, and as it produced, when acquired, no remarkable change upon either, it is hardly to be expected that much information can be derived from minutely investigating frailties, follies, or vices, not very different in number or degree from those of other men in my situation. [I do not mean to say that my success in literature has not led me to mix familiarly in society much above my birth and original pretensions, since I have been readily received in the first circles in Britain. But there is a certain intuitive knowledge of the world to which most well-educated Scotchmen are early trained, that prevents them from being much dazzled by this species of elevation. A man who to good-nature adds the general rudiments of good breeding, provided he rest contented with a simple and unaffected manner of behaving and expressing himself, will never be ridiculous in the best society, and so far as his talents and information permit, may be an agreeable part of the company. I have, therefore, never felt much elevated, nor did I experience any violent change in situation, by the passport which my poetical character afforded me into higher company than my birth warranted. —1826.] As I have not been blessed with the talents of Burns or Chatterton, I have been happily exempted from the influence of their violent passions, exasperated by the struggle of feelings which rose up against the unjust decrees

of fortune. Yet, although I cannot tell of difficulties vanquished and distance of rank annihilated by the strength of genius, those who shall hereafter read this little Memoir may find in it some hints to be improved, for the regulation of their own minds or the training those of others.

Every Scottish man has a pedigree. It is a national prerogative as unalienable as his pride and his poverty. My birth was neither distinguished nor sordid. According to the prejudices of my country, it was esteemed *gentle*, as I was connected, though remotely, with ancient families both by my father's and mother's side. My father's grandfather was Walter Scott, well known in Teviotdale by the surname of *Beardie*. He was the second son of Walter Scott, first Laird of Raeburn, who was third son of Sir William Scott, and the grandson of Walter Scott, commonly called in tradition *Auld Watt*, of Harden. I am therefore lineally descended from that ancient chieftain, whose name I have made to ring in many a ditty, and from his fair dame, the Flower of Yarrow—no bad genealogy for a Border minstrel. *Beardie*, my great-grandfather aforesaid, derived his cognomen from a venerable beard, which he wore unblemished by razor or scissors, in token of his regret for the banished dynasty of Stuart. It would have been well that his zeal had stopped there. But he took arms, and intrigued in their cause, until he lost all he had in the world, and, as I have heard, ran a narrow risk of being hanged, had it not been for the interference of Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth.

Beardie's elder brother, William Scott of Raeburn, my great-granduncle, was killed about the age of twenty-one, in a duel with Pringle of Crichton, grandfather of the present Mark Pringle of Clifton. They fought with swords, as was the fashion of the time, in a field near

Selkirk, called from the catastrophe the *Raeburn Meadow-spot.* Pringle fled from Scotland to Spain, and was long a captive and slave in Barbary. *Beardie* became, of course, *Tutor of Raeburn*, as the old Scottish phrase called him, that is, guardian to his infant nephew, father of the present Walter Scott of Raeburn. He also managed the estates of Makerstoun, being nearly related to that family by his mother, Barbara MacDougal. I suppose he had some allowance for his care in either case, and subsisted upon that and the fortune which he had by his wife, a Miss Campbell of Silvercraigs, in the west, through which connection my father used to *call cousin*, as they say, with the Campbells of Blythswood. Beardie was a man of some learning, and a friend of Dr Pitcairn, to whom his politics probably made him acceptable. They had a Tory or Jacobite club in Edinburgh, in which the conversation is said to have been maintained in Latin. Old Beardie died in a house, still standing, at the north-east entrance to the churchyard of Kelso.

He left three sons. The eldest, Walter, had a family, of which any that now remain have been long settled in America: the male heirs are long since extinct. The third was William, father of James Scott, well known in India as one of the original settlers of Prince of Wales's Island: he had, besides, a numerous family both of sons and daughters, and died at Lasswade, in Midlothian.

The second, Robert Scott, was my grandfather. He was originally bred to the sea; but, being shipwrecked near Dundee in his trial voyage, he took such a sincere dislike to that element that he could not be persuaded to a second attempt. This occasioned a quarrel between him and his father, who left him to shift for himself. Robert was one of those active spirits to whom this was no misfortune.

He turned Whig upon the spot, and fairly abjured his father's politics and his learned poverty. His chief and relative, Mr Scott of Harden, gave him a lease of the farm of Sandyknowe, comprehending the rocks in the centre of which Smailholm or Sandyknowe Tower is situated. He took for his shepherd an old man, called Hogg, who willingly lent him, out of respect to his family, his whole savings, about £30, to stock the new farm. With this sum, which it seems was at the time sufficient for the purpose, the master and servant set off to purchase a stock of sheep at Whitsun-Tryste, a fair held on a hill near Wooler in Northumberland. The old shepherd went carefully from drove to drove, till he found a *hirsel* likely to answer their purpose, and then returned to tell his master to come up and conclude the bargain. But what was his surprise to see him galloping a mettled hunter about the race-course, and to find he had expended the whole stock in this extraordinary purchase !—Moses's bargain of green spectacles did not strike more dismay into the Vicar of Wakefield's family than my grandfather's rashness into the poor old shepherd. The thing, however, was irretrievable, and they returned without the sheep.

In the course of a few days, however, my grandfather, who was one of the best horsemen of his time, attended John Scott of Harden's hounds on this same horse, and displayed him to such advantage that he sold him for double the original price. The farm was now stocked in earnest ; and the rest of my grandfather's career was that of successful industry. He was one of the first who were active in the cattle trade, afterwards carried to such extent between the Highlands of Scotland and the leading counties in England, and by his droving transactions acquired a considerable sum of money. He was a man of middle

stature, extremely active, quick, keen, and fiery in his temper, stubbornly honest, and so distinguished for his skill in country matters, that he was the general referee in all points of dispute which occurred in the neighbourhood. His birth being admitted as *gentle*, gave him access to the best society in the country, and his dexterity in country sports, particularly hunting, made him an acceptable companion in the field as well as at the table.*

Robert Scott, of Sandyknowe, married in 1728 Barbara Haliburton, daughter of Thomas Haliburton, of Newmains, an ancient and respectable family in Berwickshire. Among other patrimonial possessions, they enjoyed the part of Dryburgh, now the property of the Earl of Buchan, comprehending the ruins of the Abbey. My granduncle, Robert Haliburton, having no male heirs, this estate, as well as the representation of the family, would have devolved upon my father, and, indeed, old Newmains had settled it upon him; but this was prevented by the misfortunes of my granduncle, a weak, silly man, who engaged in trade, for which he had neither stock nor talents, and became bankrupt. The ancient patrimony was sold for a trifle (about £3000), and my father, who might have purchased it with ease, was dissuaded by my grandfather, who at that time believed a more advantageous purchase might have been made of some lands which Raeburn thought of selling. And thus we have nothing left of Dryburgh, although my father's maternal inheritance, but the right of stretching our bones where mine may perhaps be laid ere any eye but my own glances over these pages.

Walter Scott, my father, was born in 1729, and educated

* The present Lord Haddington, and other gentlemen conversant with the south country, remember my grandfather well. He was a fine alert figure, and wore a jockey cap over his gray hair.—[1826.]

to the profession of a Writer to the Signet. He was the eldest of a large family, several of whom I shall have occasion to mention with a tribute of sincere gratitude. My father was a singular instance of a man rising to eminence in a profession for which nature had in some degree unfitted him. He had indeed a turn for labour, and a pleasure in analysing the abstruse feudal doctrines connected with conveyancing, which would probably have rendered him unrivalled in the line of a special pleader, had there been such a profession in Scotland; but in the actual business of the profession which he embraced, in that sharp and intuitive perception which is necessary in driving bargains for himself and others, in availing himself of the wants, necessities, caprices, and follies of some, and guarding against the knavery and malice of others, Uncle Toby himself could not have conducted himself with more simplicity than my father. Most attorneys have been suspected, more or less justly, of making their own fortune at the expense of their clients: my father's fate was to vindicate his calling from the stain in one instance, for in many cases his clients contrived to ease him of considerable sums.

Many worshipful and be-knighted names occur to my memory, who did him the honour to run in his debt to the amount of thousands, and to pay him with a lawsuit, or a commission of bankruptcy, as the case happened. But they are gone to a different accounting, and it would be ungenerous to visit their disgrace upon their descendants. My father was wont also to give openings to those who were pleased to take them, to pick a quarrel with him. He had a zeal for his clients which was almost ludicrous; far from coldly discharging the duties of his employment towards them, he thought for them, felt for their honour

as for his own, and rather risked disobliging them than neglecting anything to which he conceived their duty bound them. If there was an old mother or aunt to be maintained, he was, I am afraid, too apt to administer to their necessities from what the young heir had destined exclusively to his pleasures. This ready discharge of obligations which the Civilians tell us are only natural and not legal, did not, I fear, recommend him to his employers. Yet his practice was, at one period of his life, very extensive. He understood his business theoretically, and was early introduced to it by a partnership with George Chalmers, Writer to the Signet, under whom he had served his apprenticeship.

His person and face were uncommonly handsome, with an expression of sweetness of temper, which was not fallacious; his manners were rather formal, but full of genuine kindness, especially when exercising the duties of hospitality. His general habits were not only temperate, but severely abstemious; but upon a festival occasion there were few whom a moderate glass of wine exhilarated to such a lively degree. His religion, in which he was devoutly sincere, was Calvinism of the strictest kind, and his favourite study related to Church history. I suspect the good old man was often engaged with Knox and Spottiswoode's folios, when, immured in his solitary room, he was supposed to be immersed in professional researches. In his political principles, he was a steady friend to freedom, with a bias, however, to the monarchical part of our constitution, which he considered as peculiarly exposed to danger during the later years of his life. He had much of ancient Scottish prejudice respecting the forms of marriages, funerals, christenings, and so forth, and was always vexed at any neglect of etiquette upon such

occasions. As his education had not been upon an enlarged plan, it could not be expected that he should be an enlightened scholar, but he had not passed through a busy life without observation, and his remarks upon times and manners often exhibited strong traits of practical though untaught philosophy. Let me conclude this sketch, which I am unconscious of having overcharged, with a few lines written by the late Mrs Cockburn* upon the subject. They made one among a set of poetical characters which were given as toasts among a few friends, and we must hold them to contain a striking likeness, since the original was recognised as soon as they were read aloud.

To a thing that 's uncommon—
A youth of discretion,
Who, though vastly handsome,
Despises flirtation;
To the friend in affliction,
The heart of affection,
Who may hear the last trump
Without dread of detection.

In [April 1758] my father married Anne Rutherford, eldest daughter of Dr John Rutherford, professor of medicine in the university of Edinburgh. He was one of those pupils of Boerhaave to whom the school of medicine in our northern metropolis owes its rise, and a man distinguished for professional talent, for lively wit, and for literary acquirements. Dr Rutherford was twice married. His first wife, of whom my mother is the sole surviving child, was a daughter of Sir John Swinton of

* Mrs Cockburn (born Miss Rutherford of Fairnilee) was the authoress of the beautiful song—

'I 've seen the smiling
Of fortune beguiling.'—[1826.]

Swinton, a family which produced many distinguished warriors during the middle ages, and which, for antiquity and honourable alliances, may rank with any in Britain. My grandfather's second wife was Miss Mackay, by whom he had a second family, of whom are now (1808) alive, Dr Daniel Rutherford, professor of botany in the university of Edinburgh, and Misses Janet and Christian Rutherford, amiable and accomplished women.

My father and mother had a very numerous family, no fewer, I believe, than twelve children, of whom many were highly promising, though only five survived very early youth. My eldest brother—that is, the eldest whom I remember to have seen—was Robert Scott, so called after my uncle, of whom I shall have much to say hereafter. He was bred in the king's service under Admiral (then Captain) William Dickson, and was in most of Rodney's battles. His temper was bold and haughty, and to me was often checkered with what I felt to be capricious tyranny. In other respects I loved him much, for he had a strong turn for literature, read poetry with taste and judgment, and composed verses himself which had gained him great applause among his messmates.

Robert sung agreeably—a virtue which was never seen in me—understood the mechanical arts, and, when in good humour, could regale us with many a tale of bold adventure and narrow escapes. When in bad humour, however, he gave us a practical taste of what was then man-of-war's discipline, and kicked and cuffed without mercy. I have often thought how he might have distinguished himself had he continued in the navy until the present times, so glorious for nautical exploit. But the Peace of Paris cut off all hopes of promotion for those who had not great interest; and some disgust which his proud spirit had

taken at harsh usage from a superior officer combined to throw poor Robert into the East India Company's service, for which his habits were ill adapted. He made two voyages to the East, and died a victim to the climate.

John Scott, my second brother, is about three years older than me. He addicted himself to the military service, and is now brevet-major in the 73d Regiment. [He died in 1816.]

I had an only sister, Anne Scott, who seemed to be from her cradle the butt for mischance to shoot arrows at. Her childhood was marked by perilous escapes from the most extraordinary accidents. Among others, I remember an iron-railed door leading into the area in the centre of George Square being closed by the wind, while her fingers were betwixt the hasp and staple. Her hand was thus locked in, and must have been smashed to pieces, had not the bones of her fingers been remarkably slight and thin. As it was, the hand was cruelly mangled. On another occasion she was nearly drowned in a pond, or old quarry-hole, in what was then called Brown's Park, on the south side of the square. But the most unfortunate accident, and which, though it happened while she was only six years old, proved the remote cause of her death, was her cap accidentally taking fire. The child was alone in the room, and before assistance could be obtained her head was dreadfully scorched. After a lingering and dangerous illness, she recovered—but never to enjoy perfect health. The slightest cold occasioned swellings in her face, and other indications of a delicate constitution. At length [in 1801] poor Anne was taken ill, and died after a very short interval. Her temper, like that of her brothers, was peculiar, and in her, perhaps, it showed more odd, from the habits of indulgence which her nervous illnesses had

formed. But she was at heart an affectionate and kind girl, neither void of talent nor of feeling, though living in an ideal world which she had framed to herself by the force of imagination. Anne was my junior by about a year.

A year lower in the list was my brother Thomas Scott, who is still alive. [Scott wrote of him in 1826: Poor Tom, a man of infinite humour and excellent parts, pursued for some time my father's profession; but he was unfortunate, from engaging in speculations respecting farms and matters out of the line of his proper business. He afterwards became paymaster of the 70th Regiment, and died in Canada. Tom married Elizabeth, a daughter of the family of M'Culloch of Ardwell, an ancient Galwegian stock, by whom he left a son, Walter Scott, now second lieutenant of engineers in the East India Company's service, Bombay, and three daughters—Jessie, married to Lieutenant-colonel Huxley; 2, Anne; 3, Eliza—the last two still unmarried.]

Last, and most unfortunate of our family, was my youngest brother Daniel. With the same aversion to labour, or rather, I should say, the same determined indolence that marked us all, he had neither the vivacity of intellect which supplies the want of diligence, nor the pride which renders the most detested labour better than dependence or contempt. His career was as unfortunate as might be augured from such an unhappy combination, and after various unsuccessful attempts to establish himself in life, he died on his return from the West Indies, in [July 1806].

Having premised so much of my family, I return to my own story. I was born, as I believe, on the 15th August 1771, in a house belonging to my father, at the head of the College Wynd. It was pulled down, with others, to make

room for the northern front of the new College. I was an uncommonly healthy child, but had nearly died in consequence of my first nurse being ill of a consumption, a circumstance which she chose to conceal, though to do so was murder to both herself and me. She went privately to consult Dr Black, the celebrated professor of chemistry, who put my father on his guard. The woman was dismissed, and I was consigned to a healthy peasant, who is still alive to boast of her *laddie* being what she calls *a grand gentleman.* [She died in 1810.] I showed every sign of health and strength until I was about eighteen months old. One night, I have often been told, I showed great reluctance to be caught and put to bed, and after being chased about the room, was apprehended and consigned to my dormitory with some difficulty. It was the last time I was to show such personal agility. In the morning I was discovered to be affected with the fever which often accompanies the cutting of large teeth. It held me three days. On the fourth, when they went to bathe me as usual, they discovered that I had lost the power of my right leg. My grandfather, an excellent anatomist as well as physician, the late worthy Alexander Wood, and many others of the most respectable of the Faculty, were consulted. There appeared to be no dislocation or sprain; blisters and other topical remedies were applied in vain. When the efforts of regular physicians had been exhausted without the slightest success, my anxious parents, during the course of many years, eagerly grasped at every prospect of cure which was held out by the promise of empirics, or of ancient ladies or gentlemen who conceived themselves entitled to recommend various remedies, some of which were of a nature sufficiently singular. But the advice of my grandfather, Dr Rutherford, that I should be sent

to reside in the country, to give the chance of natural exertion, excited by free air and liberty, was first resorted to, and before I have the recollection of the slightest event, I was, agreeably to this friendly counsel, an inmate in the farmhouse of Sandyknowe.

An odd incident is worth recording. It seems my mother had sent a maid to take charge of me, that I might be no inconvenience in the family. But the damsel sent on that important mission had left her heart behind her, in the keeping of some wild fellow, it is likely, who had said more to her than he was like to make good. She became extremely desirous to return to Edinburgh, and as my mother made a point of her remaining where she was, she contracted a sort of hatred at poor me, as the cause of her being detained at Sandyknowe. This rose, I suppose, to a sort of delirious affection, for she confessed to old Alison Wilson, the housekeeper, that she had carried me up to the Craigs, meaning under a strong temptation of the Devil, to cut my throat with her scissors, and bury me in the moss. Alison instantly took possession of my person, and took care that her confidante should not be subject to any farther temptation so far as I was concerned. She was dismissed, of course, and I have heard became afterwards a lunatic.

It is here at Sandyknowe, in the residence of my paternal grandfather, already mentioned, that I have the first consciousness of existence; and I recollect distinctly that my situation and appearance were a little whimsical. Among the odd remedies recurred to, to aid my lameness, some one had recommended that so often as a sheep was killed for the use of the family, I should be stripped and swathed up in the skin, warm as it was flayed from the carcass of the animal. In this Tartar-like habiliment I

well remember lying upon the floor of the little parlour in the farmhouse, while my grandfather, a venerable old man with white hair, used every excitement to make me try to crawl. I also distinctly remember the late Sir George MacDougal of Makerstoun, father of the present Sir Henry Hay MacDougal, joining in this kindly attempt. He was a relation of ours, and I still recollect him in his old-fashioned military habit—he had been colonel of the Greys—with a small cocked hat, deeply laced, an embroidered scarlet waistcoat, and a light-coloured coat, with milk-white locks tied in a military fashion, kneeling on the ground before me, and dragging his watch along the carpet to induce me to follow it. The benevolent old soldier and the infant wrapped in his sheepskin would have afforded an odd group to uninterested spectators. This must have happened about my third year, for Sir George MacDougal and my grandfather both died shortly after that period.

My grandmother continued for some years to take charge of the farm, assisted by my father's second brother, Mr Thomas Scott, who resided at Crailing, as factor or land-steward for Mr Scott of Danesfield, then proprietor of that estate. This was during the heat of the American War, and I remember being as anxious on my uncle's weekly visits—for we heard news at no other time—to hear of the defeat of Washington, as if I had had some deep and personal cause of antipathy to him. I know not how this was combined with a very strong prejudice in favour of the Stuart family, which I had originally imbibed from the songs and tales of the Jacobites. This latter political propensity was deeply confirmed by the stories told in my hearing of the cruelties exercised in the executions at Carlisle, and in the Highlands, after the battle of Culloden. One or two of our own distant relations had fallen on that

occasion, and I remember detesting the name of Cumberland with more than infant hatred. Mr Curle, farmer at Yetbyre, husband of one of my aunts, had been present at their execution; and it was probably from him that I first heard those tragic tales which made so great an impression on me. The local information, which I conceive had some share in forming my future taste and pursuits, I derived from the old songs and tales which then formed the amusement of a retired country family. My grandmother, in whose youth the old Border depredations were matter of recent tradition, used to tell me many a tale of Watt of Harden, Wight Willie of Aikwood, Jamie Tellfer of the fair Dodhead, and other heroes—merry-men all of the persuasion and calling of Robin Hood and Little John. A more recent hero, but not of less note, was the celebrated *Deil of Littledean*, whom she well remembered, as he had married her mother's sister. Of this extraordinary person I learned many a story, grave and gay, comic and warlike. Two or three old books which lay in the window-seat were explored for my amusement in the tedious winter days. Automathes and Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany* were my favourites, although at a later period an odd volume of Josephus's *Wars of the Jews* divided my partiality.

My kind and affectionate aunt, Miss Janet Scott, whose memory will ever be dear to me, used to read these works to me with admirable patience, until I could repeat long passages by heart. The ballad of 'Hardyknute' I was early master of, to the great annoyance of almost our only visitor, the worthy clergyman of the parish, Dr Duncan, who had not patience to have a sober chat interrupted by my shouting forth this ditty. Methinks I now see his tall thin emaciated figure, his legs cased in clasped gambadoes, and his face of a length that would have rivalled the Knight of

La Mancha's, and hear him exclaiming: 'One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is.' With this little acidity, which was natural to him, he was a most excellent and benevolent man, a gentleman in every feeling, and altogether different from those of his order who cringe at the tables of the gentry, or domineer and riot at those of the yeomanry. In his youth he had been chaplain in the family of Lord Marchmont—had seen Pope—and could talk familiarly of many characters who had survived the Augustan age of Queen Anne. Though valetudinary, he lived to be nearly ninety, and to welcome to Scotland his son, Colonel William Duncan, who, with the highest character for military and civil merit, had made a considerable fortune in India. In [1795], a few days before his death, I paid him a visit, to inquire after his health. I found him emaciated to the last degree, wrapped in a tartan nightgown, and employed with all the activity of health and youth in correcting a History of the Revolution, which he intended should be given to the public when he was no more. He read me several passages with a voice naturally strong, and which the feelings of an author then raised above the depression of age and declining health. I begged him to spare this fatigue, which could not but injure his health. His answer was remarkable. 'I know,' he said, 'that I cannot survive a fortnight—and what signifies an exertion that can at worst only accelerate my death a few days?' I marvelled at the composure of this reply, for his appearance sufficiently vouched the truth of his prophecy, and rode home to my uncle's—then my abode—musing what there could be in the spirit of authorship that could inspire its votaries with the courage of martyrs. He died within less than the period he assigned —with which event I close my digression.

I was in my fourth year when my father was advised that the Bath waters might be of some advantage to my lameness. My affectionate aunt, although such a journey promised to a person of her retired habits anything but pleasure or amusement, undertook as readily to accompany me to the wells of Bladud, as if she had expected all the delight that ever the prospect of a watering-place held out to its most impatient visitants. My health was by this time a good deal confirmed by the country air, and the influence of that imperceptible and unfatiguing exercise to which the good sense of my grandfather had subjected me; for when the day was fine, I was usually carried out and laid down beside the old shepherd, among the crags or rocks round which he fed his sheep. The impatience of a child soon inclined me to struggle with my infirmity, and I began by degrees to stand, to walk, and to run. Although the limb affected was much shrunk and contracted, my general health, which was of more importance, was much strengthened by being frequently in the open air, and, in a word, I, who in a city had probably been condemned to hopeless and helpless decrepitude, was now a healthy, high-spirited, and, my lameness apart, a sturdy child—*non sine diis animosus infans.*

We went to London by sea, and it may gratify the curiosity of minute biographers to learn that our voyage was performed in the *Duchess of Buccleuch*, Captain Beatson, master. At London we made a short stay, and saw some of the common shows exhibited to strangers. When, twenty-five years afterwards, I visited the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, I was astonished to find how accurate my recollections of these celebrated places of visitation proved to be, and I have ever since trusted more implicitly to my juvenile reminiscences. At Bath, where

I lived about a year, I went through all the usual discipline of the pump-room and baths, but I believe without the least advantage to my lameness. During my residence at Bath, I acquired the rudiments of reading at a day-school, kept by an old dame near our lodgings, and I had never a more regular teacher, although I think I did not attend her a quarter of a year. An occasional lesson from my aunt supplied the rest. Afterwards, when grown a big boy, I had a few lessons from Mr Stalker, of Edinburgh, and finally from the Rev. Mr Clure. But I never acquired a just pronunciation, nor could I read with much propriety.

In other respects my residence at Bath is marked by very pleasing recollections. The venerable John Home, author of *Douglas*, was then at the watering-place, and paid much attention to my aunt and to me. His wife, who has survived him, was then an invalid, and used to take the air in her carriage on the Downs, when I was often invited to accompany her. But the most delightful recollections of Bath are dated after the arrival of my uncle, Captain Robert Scott, who introduced me to all the little amusements which suited my age.

The other circumstances I recollect of my residence in Bath are but trifling, yet I never recall them without a feeling of pleasure. The beauties of the parade—which of them I know not—with the river Avon winding around it, and the lowing of the cattle from the opposite hills, are warm in my recollection, and are only rivalled by the splendours of a toy-shop somewhere near the Orange Grove. I had acquired, I know not by what means, a kind of superstitious terror for statuary of all kinds. No ancient Iconoclast or modern Calvinist could have looked on the outside of the abbey church—if I mistake not, the principal church at Bath is so called—with more horror than the

image of Jacob's Ladder, with all its angels, presented to my infant eye. My uncle effectually combated my terrors, and formally introduced me to a statue of Neptune, which perhaps still keeps guard at the side of the Avon, where a pleasure boat crosses to Spring Gardens.

After being a year at Bath, I returned first to Edinburgh, and afterwards for a season to Sandyknowe; and thus the time whiled away till about my eighth year, when it was thought sea-bathing might be of service to my lameness.

For this purpose, still under my aunt's protection, I remained some weeks at Prestonpans, a circumstance not worth mentioning, excepting to record my juvenile intimacy with an old military veteran, Dalgetty by name, who had pitched his tent in that little village, after all his campaigns subsisting upon an ensign's half-pay, though called by courtesy a captain. As this old gentleman, who had been in all the German wars, found very few to listen to his tales of military feats, he formed a sort of alliance with me, and I used invariably to attend him for the pleasure of hearing those communications. Sometimes our conversation turned on the American War, which was then raging. It was about the time of Burgoyne's unfortunate expedition, to which my captain and I augured different conclusions. Somebody had showed me a map of North America, and, struck with the rugged appearance of the country, and the quantity of lakes, I expressed some doubts on the subject of the general's arriving safely at the end of his journey, which were very indignantly refuted by the captain. The news of the Saratoga disaster, while it gave me a little triumph, rather shook my intimacy with the veteran. [Besides this veteran, I found another ally at Prestonpans, in the person of George Constable, an old

friend of my father's, educated to the law, but retired upon his independent property, and generally residing near Dundee. He had many of those peculiarities of temper which long afterwards I tried to develop in the character of Jonathan Oldbuck. It is very odd, that though I am unconscious of anything in which I strictly copied the *manners* of my old friend, the resemblance was nevertheless detected by George Chalmers, Esq., solicitor, London, an old friend both of my father and Mr Constable, and who affirmed to my late friend, Lord Kinedder, that I must needs be the author of the *Antiquary*, since he recognised the portrait of George Constable. But my friend George was not so decided an enemy to womanhood as his representative Monkbarns. On the contrary, I rather suspect that he had a *tendresse* for my Aunt Jenny, who even then was a most beautiful woman, though somewhat advanced in life. To the close of her life she had the finest eyes and teeth I ever saw, and though she could be sufficiently sharp when she had a mind, her general behaviour was genteel and ladylike. However this might be, I derived a great deal of curious information from George Constable, both at this early period and afterwards. He was constantly philandering about my aunt, and of course very kind to me. He was the first person who told me about Falstaff and Hotspur, and other characters in Shakespeare. What idea I annexed to them I know not, but I must have annexed some, for I remember quite well being interested on the subject. Indeed, I rather suspect that children derive impulses of a powerful and important kind in hearing things which they cannot entirely comprehend; and therefore, that to write *down* to children's understanding is a mistake: set them on the scent, and let them puzzle it out. To return to George Constable, I knew

him well at a much later period. He used always to dine at my father's house of a Sunday, and was authorised to turn the conversation out of the austere and Calvinistic tone, which it usually maintained on that day, upon subjects of history or auld langsyne. He remembered the Forty-five, and told many excellent stories, all with a strong dash of peculiar caustic humour.]

From Prestonpans I was transported back to my father's house in George Square, which continued to be my most established place of residence until my marriage in 1797. I felt the change from being a single indulged brat, to becoming a member of a large family, very severely; for under the gentle government of my kind grandmother, who was meekness itself, and of my aunt, who, though of a higher temper, was exceedingly attached to me, I had acquired a degree of license which could not be permitted in a large family. I had sense enough, however, to bend my temper to my new circumstances; but such was the agony which I internally experienced, that I have guarded against nothing more in the education of my own family than against their acquiring habits of self-willed caprice and domination. I found much consolation during this period of mortification in the partiality of my mother. She joined to a light and happy temper of mind a strong turn to study poetry and works of imagination. She was sincerely devout, but her religion was, as became her sex, of a cast less austere than my father's. Still, the discipline of the Presbyterian Sabbath was severely strict, and I think injudiciously so. Although Bunyan's *Pilgrim*, Gessner's *Death of Abel*, Rowe's Letters, and one or two other books, which, for that reason, I still have a favour for, were admitted to relieve the gloom of one dull sermon succeeding to another, there was far too much tedium

annexed to the duties of the day; and in the end it did none of us any good.

My week-day tasks were more agreeable. My lameness and my solitary habits had made me a tolerable reader, and my hours of leisure were usually spent in reading aloud to my mother Pope's translation of Homer, which, except a few traditionary ballads, and the songs in Allan Ramsay's *Evergreen*, was the first poetry which I perused. My mother had good natural taste and great feeling: she used to make me pause upon those passages which expressed generous and worthy sentiments, and if she could not divert me from those which were descriptive of battle and tumult, she contrived at least to divide my attention between them. My own enthusiasm, however, was chiefly awakened by the wonderful and the terrible—the common taste of children, but in which I have remained a child even unto this day. I got by heart, not as a task, but almost without intending it, the passages with which I was most pleased, and used to recite them aloud, both when alone and to others—more willingly, however, in my hours of solitude, for I had observed some auditors smile, and I dreaded ridicule at that time of life more than I have ever done since.

In [1779] I was sent to the second class of the Grammar School, or High School of Edinburgh, then taught by Mr Luke Fraser, a good Latin scholar and a very worthy man. Though I had received, with my brothers, in private, lessons of Latin from Mr James French, now a minister of the Kirk of Scotland, I was nevertheless rather behind the class in which I was placed both in years and in progress. This was a real disadvantage, and one to which a boy of lively temper and talents ought to be as little exposed as one who might be less expected to make up

his leeway, as it is called. The situation has the unfortunate effect of reconciling a boy of the former character —which in a posthumous work I may claim for my own— to holding a subordinate station among his class-fellows, to which he would otherwise affix disgrace. There is also, from the constitution of the High School, a certain danger not sufficiently attended to. The boys take precedence in their *places*, as they are called, according to their merit, and it requires a long while, in general, before even a clever boy, if he falls behind the class, or is put into one for which he is not quite ready, can force his way to the situation which his abilities really entitle him to hold. But, in the meanwhile, he is necessarily led to be the associate and companion of those inferior spirits with whom he is placed; for the system of precedence, though it does not limit the general intercourse among the boys, has nevertheless the effect of throwing them into clubs and coteries, according to the vicinity of the seats they hold. A boy of good talents, therefore, placed, even for a time, among his inferiors, especially if they be also his elders, learns to participate in their pursuits and objects of ambition, which are usually very distinct from the acquisition of learning; and it will be well if he does not also imitate them in that indifference which is contented with bustling over a lesson, so as to avoid punishment, without affecting superiority, or aiming at reward. It was probably owing to this circumstance that, although at a more advanced period of life I have enjoyed considerable facility in acquiring languages, I did not make any great figure at the High School—or, at least, any exertions which I made were desultory and little to be depended on.

Our class contained some very excellent scholars. The first *Dux* was James Buchan, who retained his honoured

place, almost without a day's interval, all the while we were at the High School. He was afterwards at the head of the medical staff in Egypt, and in exposing himself to the plague infection, by attending the hospitals there, displayed the same well-regulated and gentle, yet determined perseverance which placed him most worthily at the head of his schoolfellows, while many lads of livelier parts and dispositions held an inferior station. The next best scholars (*sed longo intervallo*) were my friend David Douglas, the heir and *élève* of the celebrated Adam Smith, and James Hope, now a Writer to the Signet, both since well known and distinguished in their department of the law. As for myself, I glanced like a meteor from one end of the class to the other, and commonly disgusted my kind master as much by negligence and frivolity, as I occasionally pleased him by flashes of intellect and talent. Among my companions, my good-nature and a flow of ready imagination rendered me very popular. Boys are uncommonly just in their feelings, and at least equally generous. My lameness, and the efforts which I made to supply that disadvantage, by making up in address what I wanted in activity, engaged the latter principle in my favour; and in the winter play-hours, when hard exercise was impossible, my tales used to assemble an admiring audience round Luckie Brown's fireside, and happy was he that could sit next to the inexhaustible narrator. I was also, though often negligent of my own task, always ready to assist my friends, and hence I had a little party of staunch partisans and adherents, stout of hand and heart, though somewhat dull of head, the very tools for raising a hero to eminence. So, on the whole, I made a brighter figure in the *yards* than in the *class*.

CHAPTER II.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY—*continued.*

LIFE AT HIGH SCHOOL—COMPLETION OF LEGAL STUDIES.

MY father did not trust our education solely to our High School lessons. We had a tutor at home, a young man of excellent disposition, and a laborious student. He was bred to the Kirk, but unfortunately took such a very strong turn to fanaticism, that he afterwards resigned an excellent living in a seaport town, merely because he could not persuade the mariners of the guilt of setting sail of a Sabbath, in which, by the bye, he was less likely to be successful, as, *cæteris paribus*, sailors, from an opinion that it is a fortunate omen, always chose to weigh anchor on that day. The calibre of this young man's understanding may be judged of by this anecdote; but in other respects he was a faithful and active instructor; and from him chiefly I learned writing and arithmetic. I repeated to him my French lessons, and studied with him my themes in the classics, but not classically. I also acquired, by disputing with him—for this he readily permitted—some knowledge of school divinity and Church history, and a great acquaintance in particular with the old books describing the early history of the Church of Scotland, the wars and sufferings of the Covenanters, and so forth. I, with a head on fire for chivalry, was a Cavalier, my friend was a Roundhead; I was a Tory,

and he was a Whig. I hated Presbyterians, and admired Montrose with his victorious Highlanders; he liked the Presbyterian Ulysses, the dark politic Argyll; so that we never wanted subjects of dispute, but our disputes were always amicable. In all these tenets there was no real conviction on my part, arising out of acquaintance with the views or principles of either party; nor had my antagonist address enough to turn the debate on such topics. I took up my politics at that period as King Charles II. did his religion, from an idea that the Cavalier creed was the more gentlemanlike persuasion of the two.

After having been three years under Mr Fraser, our class was, in the usual routine of the school, turned over to Dr Adam, the Rector. It was from this respectable man that I first learned the value of the knowledge I had hitherto considered only as a burdensome task. It was the fashion to remain two years at his class, where we read Cæsar, and Livy, and Sallust, in prose; Virgil, Horace, and Terence, in verse. I had by this time mastered, in some degree, the difficulties of the language, and began to be sensible of its beauties. This was really gathering grapes from thistles; nor shall I soon forget the swelling of my little pride when the Rector pronounced, that though many of my schoolfellows understood the Latin better, *Gualterus Scott* was behind few in following and enjoying the author's meaning. Thus encouraged, I distinguished myself by some attempts at poetical versions from Horace and Virgil. Dr Adam used to invite his scholars to such essays, but never made them tasks. I gained some distinction upon these occasions, and the Rector in future took much notice of me, and his judicious mixture of censure and praise went far to counterbalance my habits of indolence and inattention. I saw I was

expected to do well, and I was piqued in honour to vindicate my master's favourable opinion.

I climbed, therefore, to the first form; and, though I never made a first-rate Latinist, my schoolfellows, and what was of more consequence, I myself, considered that I had a character for learning to maintain. Dr Adam, to whom I owed so much, never failed to remind me of my obligations when I had made some figure in the literary world. He was, indeed, deeply imbued with that fortunate vanity which alone could induce a man who has arms to pare and burn a muir to submit to the yet more toilsome task of cultivating youth. As Catholics confide in the imputed righteousness of their saints, so did the good old doctor plume himself upon the success of his scholars in life, all of which he never failed, and often justly, to claim as the creation, or at least the fruits, of his early instructions. He remembered the fate of every boy at his school during the fifty years he had superintended it, and always traced their success or misfortunes entirely to their attention or negligence when under his care. His 'noisy mansion,' which to others would have been a melancholy bedlam, was the pride of his heart; and the only fatigues he felt, amidst din and tumult, and the necessity of reading themes, hearing lessons, and maintaining some degree of order at the same time, were relieved by comparing himself to Cæsar, who could dictate to three secretaries at once; so ready is vanity to lighten the labours of duty.

It is a pity that a man so learned, so admirably adapted for his station, so useful, so simple, so easily contented, should have had other subjects of mortification. But the magistrates of Edinburgh, not knowing the treasure they possessed in Dr Adam, encouraged a savage fellow, called Nicol, one of the under-masters, in insulting his person

and authority. This man was an excellent classical scholar, and an admirable convivial humorist—which latter quality recommended him to the friendship of Burns—but worthless, drunken, and inhumanly cruel to the boys under his charge. He carried his feud against the Rector within an inch of assassination, for he waylaid and knocked him down in the dark. The favour which this worthless rival obtained in the town-council led to other consequences, which for some time clouded poor Adam's happiness and fair fame. When the French Revolution broke out, and parties ran high in approving or condemning it, the doctor incautiously joined the former. This was very natural, for as all his ideas of existing governments were derived from his experience of the town-council of Edinburgh, it must be admitted they scarce brooked comparison with the free states of Rome and Greece, from which he borrowed his opinions concerning republics. His want of caution in speaking on the political topics of the day lost him the respect of the boys, most of whom were accustomed to hear very different opinions on those matters in the bosom of their families. This, however—which was long after my time—passed away with other heats of the period, and the doctor continued his labours till about a year since, when he was struck with palsy while teaching his class. He survived a few days, but becoming delirious before his dissolution, conceived he was still in school, and after some expressions of applause or censure, he said, 'But it grows dark—the boys may dismiss'—and instantly expired.

From Dr Adam's class I should, according to the usual routine, have proceeded immediately to college. But, fortunately, I was not yet to lose by a total dismission from constraint, the acquaintance with the Latin which I had

acquired. My health had become rather delicate from rapid growth, and my father was easily persuaded to allow me to spend half a year at Kelso with my kind aunt, Miss Janet Scott, whose inmate I again became. It was hardly worth mentioning that I frequently visited her during our short vacations.

At this time she resided in a small house, situated very pleasantly in a large garden, to the eastward of the churchyard of Kelso, which extended down to the Tweed. It was then my father's property, from whom it was afterwards purchased by my uncle. My grandmother was now dead, and my aunt's only companion, besides an old maid-servant, was my cousin, Miss Barbara Scott, now Mrs Meik. My time was here left entirely to my own disposal, excepting for about four hours in the day, when I was expected to attend the grammar-school of the village. The teacher at that time was Mr Lancelot Whale, an excellent classical scholar, a humorist, and a worthy man. He had a supreme antipathy to the puns which his very uncommon name frequently gave rise to; insomuch, that he made his son spell the word *Wale*, which only occasioned the young man being nicknamed *the Prince of Wales* by the military mess to which he belonged. As for Whale, senior, the least allusion to Jonah, or the terming him an odd fish, or any similar quibble, was sure to put him beside himself. In point of knowledge and taste, he was far too good for the situation he held, which only required that he should give his scholars a rough foundation in the Latin language. My time with him, though short, was spent greatly to my advantage and his gratification. He was glad to escape to Persius and Tacitus from the eternal Rudiments and Cornelius Nepos; and as perusing these authors with one who began to understand them was to him a labour of love,

I made considerable progress under his instructions. I suspect, indeed, that some of the time dedicated to me was withdrawn from the instruction of his more regular scholars; but I was as grateful as I could. I acted as usher, and heard the inferior classes, and I spouted the speech of Galgacus at the public examination, which did not make the less impression on the audience that few of them probably understood one word of it.

In the meanwhile my acquaintance with English literature was gradually extending itself. In the intervals of my school hours I had always perused with avidity such books of history or poetry or voyages and travels as chance presented to me—not forgetting the usual, or rather ten times the usual, quantity of fairy tales, Eastern stories, romances, &c. These studies were totally unregulated and undirected. My tutor thought it almost a sin to open a profane play or poem; and my mother, besides that she might be in some degree trammelled by the religious scruples which he suggested, had no longer the opportunity to hear me read poetry as formerly. I found, however, in her dressing-room—where I slept at one time—some odd volumes of Shakespeare, nor can I easily forget the rapture with which I sat up in my shirt reading them by the light of a fire in her apartment, until the bustle of the family rising from supper warned me it was time to creep back to my bed, where I was supposed to have been safely deposited since nine o'clock. Chance, however, threw in my way a poetical preceptor. This was no other than the excellent and benevolent Dr Blacklock, well known at that time as a literary character. I know not how I attracted his attention, and that of some of the young men who boarded in his family; but so it was that I became a frequent and favoured guest. The kind old man opened to me the stores

of his library, and through his recommendation I became intimate with Ossian and Spenser. I was delighted with both, yet I think chiefly with the latter poet.

The tawdry repetitions of the Ossianic phraseology disgusted me rather sooner than might have been expected from my age. But Spenser I could have read for ever. Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense, and I was delighted to find myself in such society. As I had always a wonderful facility in retaining in my memory whatever verses pleased me, the quantity of Spenser's stanzas which I could repeat was really marvellous. But this memory of mine was a very fickle ally, and has through my whole life acted merely upon its own capricious motion, and might have enabled me to adopt old Beattie of Meikledale's answer when complimented by a certain reverend divine on the strength of the same faculty: 'No, sir,' answered the old Borderer, 'I have no command of my memory. It only retains what hits my fancy, and probably, sir, if you were to preach to me for two hours, I would not be able when you finished to remember a word you had been saying.' My memory was precisely of the same kind: it seldom failed to preserve most tenaciously a favourite passage of poetry, a playhouse ditty, or, above all, a Border-raid ballad; but names, dates, and the other technicalities of history escaped me in a most melancholy degree. The philosophy of history, a much more important subject, was also a sealed book at this period of my life; but I gradually assembled much of what was striking and picturesque in historical narrative; and when, in riper years, I attended more to the deduction of general principles, I was furnished with a powerful host of examples in illustration of them.

I left the High School, therefore, with a great quantity of general information, ill arranged, indeed, and collected without system, yet deeply impressed upon my mind; readily assorted by my power of connection and memory, and gilded, if I may be permitted to say so, by a vivid and active imagination. If my studies were not under any direction at Edinburgh, in the country, it may be well imagined, they were less so. A respectable subscription library, a circulating library of ancient standing, and some private book-shelves, were open to my random perusal, and I waded into the stream like a blind man into a ford, without the power of searching my way, unless by groping for it. My appetite for books was as ample and indiscriminating as it was indefatigable, and I since have had too frequently reason to repent that few ever read so much, and to so little purpose.

Among the valuable acquisitions I made about this time was an acquaintance with Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, through the flat medium of Mr Hoole's translation. But above all, I first became acquainted with Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*. As I had been from infancy devoted to legendary lore of this nature, and only reluctantly withdrew my attention, from the scarcity of materials and the rudeness of those which I possessed, it may be imagined, but cannot be described, with what delight I saw pieces of the same kind which had amused my childhood, and considered as the subject of sober research, grave commentary, and apt illustration, by an editor who showed his poetical genius was capable of emulating the best qualities of what his pious labour preserved. I remember well the spot where I read these volumes for the first time. It was beneath a huge platanus-tree, in the ruins of what had been intended for an old-fashioned arbour in the *garden*

I have mentioned. The summer day sped onward so fast, that notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my schoolfellows, and all who would hearken to me, with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy. The first time, too, I could scrape a few shillings together, which were not common occurrences with me, I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved volumes, nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm. About this period also I became acquainted with the works of Richardson, and those of Mackenzie—whom in later years I became entitled to call my friend—with Fielding, Smollett, and some others of our best novelists.

To this period also I can trace distinctly the awaking of that delightful feeling for the beauties of natural objects which has never since deserted me. The neighbourhood of Kelso, the most beautiful, if not the most romantic village in Scotland, is eminently calculated to awaken these ideas. It presents objects, not only grand in themselves, but venerable from their association. The meeting of two superb rivers, the Tweed and the Teviot, both renowned in song, the ruins of an ancient abbey, the more distant vestiges of Roxburgh Castle, the modern mansion of Fleurs, which is so situated as to combine the ideas of ancient baronial grandeur with those of modern taste, are in themselves objects of the first class; yet are so mixed, united, and melted among a thousand other beauties of a less prominent description, that they harmonise into one general picture, and please rather by unison than by concord. I believe I have written unintelligibly upon this

subject, but it is fitter for the pencil than the pen. The romantic feelings which I have described as predominating in my mind, naturally rested upon and associated themselves with these grand features of the landscape around me; and the historical incidents or traditional legends connected with many of them, gave to my admiration a sort of intense impression of reverence, which at times made my heart feel too big for its bosom. From this time the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins, or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion, which, if circumstances had permitted, I would willingly have gratified by travelling over half the globe.

I was recalled to Edinburgh about the time when the College meets, and put at once to the Humanity class, under Mr Hill, and the first Greek class, taught by Mr Dalzell. The former held the reins of discipline very loosely, and though beloved by his students—for he was a good-natured man, as well as a good scholar—he had not the art of exciting our attention as well as liking. This was a dangerous character with whom to trust one who relished labour as little as I did, and amid the riot of his class I speedily lost much of what I had learned under Adam and Whale. At the Greek class I might have made a better figure, for Professor Dalzell maintained a great deal of authority, and was not only himself an admirable scholar, but was always deeply interested in the progress of his students. But here lay the villainy. Almost all my companions who had left the High School at the same time with myself, had acquired a smattering of Greek before they came to College. I, alas! had none; and finding myself far inferior to all my fellow-students, I could hit upon no better mode of vindicating my equality than by professing

my contempt for the language, and my resolution not to learn it. A youth who died early, himself an excellent Greek scholar, saw my negligence and folly with pain, instead of contempt. He came to call on me in George Square, and pointed out in the strongest terms the silliness of the conduct I had adopted, told me I was distinguished by the name of the *Greek Blockhead*, and exhorted me to redeem my reputation while it was called to-day. My stubborn pride received this advice with sulky civility; the birth of my Mentor—whose name was Archibald, the son of an innkeeper—did not, as I thought in my folly, authorise him to intrude upon me his advice.

The other was not sharp-sighted, or his consciousness of a generous intention overcame his resentment. He offered me his daily and nightly assistance, and pledged himself to bring me forward with the foremost of my class. I felt some twinges of conscience, but they were unable to prevail over my pride and self-conceit. The poor lad left me more in sorrow than in anger, nor did we ever meet again. All hopes of my progress in the Greek were now over; insomuch that when we were required to write essays on the authors we had studied, I had the audacity to produce a composition in which I weighed Homer against Ariosto, and pronounced him wanting in the balance. I supported this heresy by a profusion of bad reading and flimsy argument. The wrath of the Professor was extreme, while at the same time he could not suppress his surprise at the quantity of out-of-the-way knowledge which I displayed. He pronounced upon me the severe sentence—that dunce I was, and dunce was to remain—which, however, my excellent and learned friend lived to revoke.

Meanwhile, as if to eradicate my slightest tincture of Greek, I fell ill during the middle of Mr Dalzell's second

class, and migrated a second time to Kelso, where I again continued a long time reading what and how I pleased, and of course reading nothing but what afforded me immediate entertainment. The only thing which saved my mind from utter dissipation was that turn for historical pursuit, which never abandoned me even at the idlest period. I had forsworn the Latin classics for no reason I know of, unless because they were akin to the Greek, but the occasional perusal of Buchanan's *History*, that of Matthew Paris, and other monkish chronicles, kept up a kind of familiarity with the language even in its rudest state. But I forgot the very letters of the Greek alphabet; a loss never to be repaired, considering what that language is, and who they were who employed it in their compositions.

About this period, or soon afterwards, my father judged it proper I should study mathematics, a study upon which I entered with all the ardour of novelty. My tutor was an aged person, Dr MacFait, who had in his time been distinguished as a teacher of this science. Age, however, and some domestic inconveniences, had diminished his pupils, and lessened his authority amongst the few who remained. I think that had I been more fortunately placed for instruction, or had I had the spur of emulation, I might have made some progress in this science, of which under the circumstances I have mentioned I only acquired a very superficial smattering.

In other studies I was rather more fortunate: I made some progress in ethics under Professor John Bruce, and was selected as one of his students whose progress he approved, to read an essay before Principal Robertson. I was further instructed in Moral Philosophy at the class of Mr Dugald Stewart, whose striking and impressive eloquence riveted the attention even of the most volatile student.

To sum up my academical studies, I attended the class of History, then taught by the present Lord Woodhouselee, and, as far as I remember, no others, excepting those of the Civil and Municipal Law. So that, if my learning be flimsy and inaccurate, the reader must have some compassion even for an idle workman, who had so narrow a foundation to build upon. If, however, it should ever fall to the lot of youth to peruse these pages, let such a reader remember that it is with the deepest regret that I recollect in my manhood the opportunities of learning which I neglected in my youth; that through every part of my literary career I have felt pinched and hampered by my own ignorance; and that I would at this moment give half the reputation I have had the good fortune to acquire, if by doing so I could rest the remaining part upon a sound foundation of learning and science.

I imagine my father's reason for sending me to so few classes in the College, was a desire that I should apply myself particularly to my legal studies. He had not determined whether I should fill the situation of an Advocate or a Writer; but judiciously considering the technical knowledge of the latter to be useful at least, if not essential, to a barrister, he resolved I should serve the ordinary apprenticeship of five years to his own profession. I accordingly entered into indentures with my father about 1785-6, and entered upon the dry and barren wilderness of forms and conveyances.

I cannot reproach myself with being entirely an idle apprentice—far less, as the reader might reasonably have expected:

> A clerk foredoom'd my father's soul to cross.

The drudgery, indeed, of the office I disliked, and the

confinement I altogether detested; but I loved my father, and I felt the rational pride and pleasure of rendering myself useful to him. I was ambitious also; and among my companions in labour the only way to gratify ambition was to labour hard and well. Other circumstances reconciled me in some measure to the confinement. The allowance for copy-money furnished a little fund for the *menus plaisirs* of the circulating library and the theatre; and this was no trifling incentive to labour. When actually at the oar, no man could pull it harder than I, and I remember writing upwards of 120 folio pages with no interval either for food or rest. Again, the hours of attendance on the office were lightened by the power of choosing my own books and reading them in my own way, which often consisted in beginning at the middle or the end of a volume. A deceased friend, who was a fellow-apprentice with me, used often to express his surprise that, after such a hop-step-and-jump perusal, I knew as much of the book as he had been able to acquire from reading it in the usual manner. My desk usually contained a store of most miscellaneous volumes, especially works of fiction of every kind, which were my supreme delight. I might except novels, unless those of the better and higher class, for though I read many of them, yet it was with more selection than might have been expected. The whole Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy tribe I abhorred, and it required the art of Burney, or the feeling of Mackenzie, to fix my attention upon a domestic tale. But all that was adventurous and romantic I devoured without much discrimination, and I really believe I have read as much nonsense of this class as any man now living. Everything which touched on knight-errantry was particularly acceptable to me, and I soon attempted to imitate what I so

greatly admired. My efforts, however, were in the manner of the tale-teller, not of the bard.

My greatest intimate, from the days of my schooltide, was Mr John Irving, now a Writer to the Signet. We lived near each other, and by joint agreement were wont, each of us, to compose a romance for the other's amusement. These legends, in which the martial and the miraculous always predominated, we rehearsed to each other during our walks, which were usually directed to the most solitary spots about Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. We naturally sought seclusion, for we were conscious no small degree of ridicule would have attended our amusement, if the nature of it had become known. Whole holidays were spent in this singular pastime, which continued for two or three years, and had, I believe, no small effect in directing the turn of my imagination to the chivalrous and romantic in poetry and prose.

Meanwhile, the translations of Mr Hoole having made me acquainted with Tasso and Ariosto, I learned from his notes on the latter that the Italian language contained a fund of romantic lore. A part of my earnings was dedicated to an Italian class which I attended twice a week, and rapidly acquired some proficiency. I had previously renewed and extended my knowledge of the French language, from the same principle of romantic research. Tressan's romances, the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, and *Bibliothèque de Romans*, were already familiar to me, and I now acquired similar intimacy with the works of Dante, Boiardo, Pulci, and other eminent Italian authors. I fastened also, like a tiger, upon every collection of old songs or romances which chance threw in my way, or which my scrutiny was able to discover on the dusty shelves of John Sibbald's circulating library in the Parliament Square. This collection, now

dismantled and dispersed, contained at that time many rare and curious works, seldom found in such a collection. Mr Sibbald, himself a man of rough manners but of some taste and judgment, cultivated music and poetry, and in his shop I had a distant view of some literary characters, besides the privilege of ransacking the stores of old French and Italian books, which were in little demand among the bulk of his subscribers. Here I saw the unfortunate Andrew Macdonald, author of *Vimonda;* and here, too, I saw at a distance, the boast of Scotland, Robert Burns. Of the latter I shall presently have occasion to speak more fully.

I am inadvertently led to confound dates while I talk of this remote period, for, as I have no notes, it is impossible for me to remember with accuracy the progress of studies, if they deserve the name, so irregular and miscellaneous. But about the second year of my apprenticeship, my health, which, from rapid growth and other causes, had been hitherto rather uncertain and delicate, was affected by the breaking of a blood-vessel. The regimen I had to undergo on this occasion was far from agreeable. It was spring, and the weather raw and cold, yet I was confined to bed with a single blanket, and bled and blistered till I scarcely had a pulse left. I had all the appetite of a growing boy, but was prohibited any sustenance beyond what was absolutely necessary for the support of nature, and that in vegetables alone. Above all, with a considerable disposition to talk, I was not permitted to open my lips without one or two old ladies who watched my couch being ready at once to souse upon me, 'imposing silence with a stilly sound.' My only refuge was reading and playing at chess. To the romances and poetry which I chiefly delighted in, I had always added the study of history, especially as connected

with military events. I was encouraged in this latter study by a tolerable acquaintance with geography, and by the opportunities I had enjoyed while with Mr MacFait to learn the meaning of the more ordinary terms of fortification.

While, therefore, I lay in this dreary and silent solitude, I fell upon the resource of illustrating the battles I read of by the childish expedient of arranging shells, and seeds, and pebbles, so as to represent encountering armies. Diminutive cross-bows were contrived to mimic artillery, and with the assistance of a friendly carpenter, I contrived to model a fortress, which, like that of Uncle Toby, represented whatever place happened to be uppermost in my imagination. I fought my way thus through Vertot's *Knights of Malta*—a book which, as it hovered between history and romance, was exceedingly dear to me; and Orme's interesting and beautiful *History of Indostan*, whose copious plans, aided by the clear and luminous explanations of the author, rendered my imitative amusement peculiarly easy. Other moments of these weary weeks were spent in looking at the Meadow Walks, by assistance of a combination of mirrors so arranged that, while lying in bed, I could see the troops march out to exercise, or any other incident which occurred on that promenade.

After one or two relapses, my constitution recovered the injury it had sustained, though for several months afterwards I was restricted to a severe vegetable diet. And I must say, in passing, that though I gained health under this necessary restriction, yet it was far from being agreeable to me, and I was affected whilst under its influence with a nervousness which I never felt before or since. A disposition to start upon slight alarms—a want of decision in feeling and acting, which has not usually been my failing—an acute sensibility to trifling inconveniences—

and an unnecessary apprehension of contingent misfortunes, rise to my memory as connected with my vegetable diet, although they may very possibly have been entirely the result of the disorder and not of the cure. Be this as it may, with this illness I bade farewell both to disease and medicine, for since that time, till the hour I am now writing, I have enjoyed a state of the most robust health, having only had to complain of occasional headaches or stomachic affections, when I have been long without taking exercise or have lived too convivially—the latter having been occasionally, though not habitually, the error of my youth, as the former has been of my advanced life.

My frame gradually became hardened with my constitution, and being both tall and muscular, I was rather disfigured than disabled by my lameness. This personal disadvantage did not prevent me from taking much exercise on horseback, and making long journeys on foot, in the course of which I often walked from twenty to thirty miles a day. A distinct instance occurs to me. I remember walking with poor James Ramsay, my fellow-apprentice, now no more, and two other friends to breakfast at Prestonpans. We spent the forenoon in visiting the ruins at Seton, and the field of battle at Preston—dined at Prestonpans on *tiled haddocks* very sumptuously—and returned in the evening. This could not be less than thirty miles, nor do I remember being at all fatigued upon the occasion.

These excursions on foot or horseback formed by far my most favourite amusement. I have all my life delighted in travelling, though I have never enjoyed that pleasure upon a large scale. It was a propensity which I sometimes indulged so unduly as to alarm and vex my parents. Wood, water, wilderness itself had an inexpressible charm

for me, and I had a dreamy way of going much farther than I intended, so that unconsciously my return was protracted, and my parents had sometimes serious cause of uneasiness. For example, I once set out with Mr George Abercromby—the son of the immortal General—Mr William Clerk, and some others, to fish in the lake above Howgate, and the stream which descends from it into the Esk. We breakfasted at Howgate, and fished the whole day; and while we were on our return next morning I was easily seduced by William Clerk, then a great intimate, to visit Penicuik House, the seat of his family. Here he and John Irving, and I for their sake, were overwhelmed with kindness by the late Sir John Clerk and his lady, the present Dowager Lady Clerk. The pleasure of looking at fine pictures, the beauty of the place, and the flattering hospitality of the owners, drowned all recollection of home for a day or two. Meanwhile our companions, who had walked on without being aware of our digression, returned to Edinburgh without us, and excited no small alarm in my father's household. At length, however, they became accustomed to my escapades. My father used to protest to me on such occasions that he thought I was born to be a strolling pedlar, and though the prediction was intended to mortify my conceit, I am not sure that I altogether disliked it. I was now familiar with Shakespeare, and thought of Autolycus's song:

> Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
> And merrily hent the stile-a:
> A merry heart goes all the day,
> Your sad tires in a mile-a.

My principal object in these excursions was the pleasure of seeing romantic scenery, or what afforded me at least equal pleasure, the places which had been distinguished by

remarkable historical events. The delight with which I regarded the former of course had general approbation, but I often found it difficult to procure sympathy with the interest I felt in the latter. Yet to me the wandering over the field of Bannockburn was the source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling Castle. I do not by any means infer that I was dead to the feeling of picturesque scenery; on the contrary, few delighted more in its general effect. But I was unable with the eye of a painter to dissect the various parts of the scene to comprehend how one bore upon the other, to estimate the effect which various features of the view had in producing its leading and general effect. I have never, indeed, been capable of doing this with precision or nicety, though my latter studies have led me to amend and arrange my original ideas upon the subject. Even the humble ambition, which I long cherished, of making sketches of those places which interested me, from a defect of eye or of hand was totally ineffectual. After long study and many efforts, I was unable to apply the elements of perspective or of shade to the scene before me, and was obliged to relinquish in despair an art which I was most anxious to practise. But show me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St Andrews, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St Andrews to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep. I mention this to show the distinction between a

sense of the picturesque in action and in scenery. If I have since been able in poetry to trace with some success the principles of the latter, it has always been with reference to its general and leading features, or under some alliance with moral feeling; and even this proficiency has cost me study. Meanwhile, I endeavoured to make amends for my ignorance of drawing by adopting a sort of technical memory respecting the scenes I visited. Wherever I went, I cut a piece of a branch from a tree: these constituted what I called my log-book; and I intended to have a set of chess-men out of them, each having reference to the place where it was cut—as the kings from Falkland and Holyrood; the queens from Queen Mary's yew-tree at Crookston; the bishops from abbeys or episcopal palaces; the knights from baronial residences; the rooks from royal fortresses; and the pawns generally from places worthy of historical note. But this whimsical design I never carried into execution.

With music it was even worse than with painting. My mother was anxious we should at least learn psalmody; but the incurable defects of my voice and ear soon drove my teacher to despair. It is only by long practice that I have acquired the power of selecting or distinguishing melodies; and although now few things delight or affect me more than a simple tune sung with feeling, yet I am sensible that even this pitch of musical taste has only been gained by attention and habit, and, as it were, by my feeling of the words being associated with the tune. I have therefore been usually unsuccessful in composing words to a tune, although my friend Dr Clarke and other musical composers have sometimes been able to make a happy union between their music and my poetry.

In other points, however, I began to make some amends

for the irregularity of my education. It is well known that in Edinburgh one great spur to emulation among youthful students is in those associations called *literary societies*, formed not only for the purpose of debate, but of composition. These undoubtedly have some disadvantages, where a bold, petulant, and disputatious temper happens to be combined with considerable information and talent. Still, however, in order to such a person being actually spoiled by his mixing in such debates, his talents must be of a very rare nature, or his effrontery must be proof to every species of assault; for there is generally, in a well-selected society of this nature, talent sufficient to meet the forwardest, and satire enough to penetrate the most undaunted. I am particularly obliged to this sort of club for introducing me about my seventeenth year into the society which at one time I had entirely dropped; for from the time of my illness at college I had had little or no intercourse with any of my class companions, one or two only excepted. Now, however, about 1788, I began to feel and take my ground in society. A ready wit, a good deal of enthusiasm, and a perception that soon ripened into tact and observation of character, rendered me an acceptable companion to many young men whose acquisitions in philosophy and science were infinitely superior to anything I could boast.

In the business of these societies—for I was a member of more than one successively—I cannot boast of having made any great figure. I never was a good speaker unless upon some subject which strongly animated my feelings; and, as I was totally unaccustomed to composition, as well as to the art of generalising my ideas upon any subject, my literary essays were but very poor work. I never attempted them unless when compelled to do so by the regulations of

the society, and then I was like the Lord of Castle Rackrent, who was obliged to cut down a tree to get a few fagots to boil the kettle; for the quantity of ponderous and miscellaneous knowledge which I really possessed on many subjects was not easily condensed, or brought to bear upon the object I wished particularly to become master of. Yet there occurred opportunities when this odd lumber of my brain, especially that which was connected with the recondite parts of history, did me, as Hamlet says, 'yeoman's service.' My memory of events was like one of the large, old-fashioned stone cannons of the Turks—very difficult to load well and discharge, but making a powerful effect when by good chance any object did come within range of its shot. Such fortunate opportunities of exploding with effect maintained my literary character among my companions, with whom I soon met with great indulgence and regard. The persons with whom I chiefly lived at this period of my youth were William Clerk, already mentioned; James Edmonstoune of Newton; George Abercromby; Adam Ferguson, son of the celebrated Professor Ferguson, and who combined the lightest and most airy temper with the best and kindest disposition; John Irving, already mentioned; the Honourable Thomas Douglas, now Earl of Selkirk; David Boyle; and two or three others, who sometimes plunged deeply into politics and metaphysics, and not unfrequently 'doffed the world aside, and bid it pass.'

Looking back on these times, I cannot applaud in all respects the way in which our days were spent. There was too much idleness, and sometimes too much conviviality; but our hearts were warm, our minds honourably bent on knowledge and literary distinction; and if I, certainly the least informed of the party, may be permitted

to bear witness, we were not without the fair and creditable means of attaining the distinction to which we aspired. In this society I was naturally led to correct my former useless course of reading; for—feeling myself greatly inferior to my companions in metaphysical philosophy and other branches of regular study—I laboured, not without some success, to acquire at least such a portion of knowledge as might enable me to maintain my rank in conversation. In this I succeeded pretty well; but unfortunately then, as often since through my life, I incurred the deserved ridicule of my friends from the superficial nature of my acquisitions, which being, in the mercantile phrase, *got up* for society, very often proved flimsy in the texture; and thus the gifts of an uncommonly retentive memory and acute powers of perception were sometimes detrimental to their possessor, by encouraging him to a presumptuous reliance upon them.

Amidst these studies, and in this society, the time of my apprenticeship elapsed; and in 1790, or thereabouts, it became necessary that I should seriously consider to which department of the law I was to attach myself. My father behaved with the most parental kindness. He offered, if I preferred his own profession, immediately to take me into partnership with him, which, though his business was much diminished, still afforded me an immediate prospect of a handsome independence. But he did not disguise his wish that I should relinquish this situation to my younger brother, and embrace the more ambitious profession of the bar. I had little hesitation in making my choice, for I was never very fond of money; and in no other particular do the professions admit of a comparison. Besides, I knew and felt the inconveniences attached to that of a Writer; and I thought—like a young man—many of them were

ingenio haud subeunda meo. The appearance of personal dependence which that profession requires was disagreeable to me; the sort of connection between the client and the attorney seemed to render the latter more subservient than was quite agreeable to my nature; and, besides, I had seen many sad examples while overlooking my father's business, that the utmost exertions and the best-meant services do not secure the *man of business*, as he is called, from great loss, and most ungracious treatment on the part of his employers. The bar, though I was conscious of my deficiencies as a public speaker, was the line of ambition and liberty; it was that also for which most of my contemporary friends were destined. And, lastly, although I would willingly have relieved my father of the labours of his business, yet I saw plainly we could not have agreed on some particulars if we had attempted to conduct it together, and that I should disappoint his expectations if I did not turn to the bar. So to that object my studies were directed with great ardour and perseverance during the years 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792.

In the usual course of study, the Roman or Civil Law was the first object of my attention—the second, the Municipal Law of Scotland. In the course of reading on both subjects, I had the advantage of studying in conjunction with my friend William Clerk, a man of the most acute intellects and powerful apprehension, and who, should he ever shake loose the fetters of indolence by which he has been hitherto trammelled, cannot fail to be distinguished in the highest degree. We attended the regular classes of both laws in the university of Edinburgh. The Civil Law chair, now worthily filled by Mr Alexander Irving, might at that time be considered as in *abeyance*, since the person by whom it was occupied had never been fit for the

situation, and was then almost in a state of dotage. But the Scotch Law lectures were those of Mr David Hume, who still continues to occupy that situation with as much honour to himself as advantage to his country. I copied over his lectures twice with my own hand, from notes taken in the class, and when I have had occasion to consult them, I can never sufficiently admire the penetration and clearness of conception which were necessary to the arrangement of the fabric of law, formed originally under the strictest influence of feudal principles, and innovated, altered, and broken in upon by the change of times, of habits, and of manners, until it resembles some ancient castle, partly entire, partly ruinous, partly dilapidated, patched and altered during the succession of ages by a thousand additions and combinations, yet still exhibiting, with the marks of its antiquity, symptoms of the skill and wisdom of its founders, and capable of being analysed and made the subject of a methodical plan by an architect who can understand the various styles of the different ages in which it was subjected to alteration. Such an architect has Mr Hume been to the law of Scotland, neither wandering into fanciful and abstruse disquisitions, which are the more proper subject of the antiquary, nor satisfied with presenting to his pupils a dry and undigested detail of the laws in their present state, but combining the past state of our legal enactments with the present, and tracing clearly and judiciously the changes which took place, and the causes which led to them.

Under these auspices I commenced my legal studies. A little parlour was assigned me in my father's house, which was spacious and convenient, and I took the exclusive possession of my new realms with all the feelings of novelty and liberty. Let me do justice to the only years

of my life in which I applied to learning with stern, steady, and undeviating industry. The rule of my friend Clerk and myself was, that we should mutually qualify ourselves for undergoing an examination upon certain points of law every morning in the week, Sundays excepted. This was at first to have taken place alternately at each other's houses, but we soon discovered that my friend's resolution was inadequate to severing him from his couch at the early hour fixed for this exercitation. Accordingly I agreed to go every morning to his house, which, being at the extremity of Princes Street, New Town, was a walk of two miles. With great punctuality, however, I beat him up to his task every morning before seven o'clock, and in the course of two summers, we went, by way of question and answer, through the whole of Heineccius's *Analysis of the Institutes and Pandects*, as well as through the smaller copy of Erskine's *Institutes of the Law of Scotland*. This course of study enabled us to pass with credit the usual trials, which, by the regulations of the Faculty of Advocates, must be undergone by every candidate for admission into their body. My friend William Clerk and I passed these ordeals on the same days—namely, the Civil Law trial on the [30th June 1791], and the Scots Law trial on the [6th July 1792]. On the [11th July 1792] we both assumed the gown with all its duties and honours.

My progress in life during these two or three years had been gradually enlarging my acquaintance, and facilitating my entrance into good company. My father and mother, already advanced in life, saw little society at home, excepting that of near relations, or upon particular occasions, so that I was left to form connections in a great measure for myself. It is not difficult for a youth with a real desire to please and be pleased, to make his way into

good society in Edinburgh—or indeed anywhere—and my family connections, if they did not greatly further, had nothing to embarrass my progress. I was a gentleman, and so welcome anywhere, if so be I could behave myself, as Tony Lumpkin says, 'in a concatenation accordingly.'

[To the everlasting regret of the reader, Scott dropped the story of his life at this point. In the next chapter begins the consecutive narrative of his life from the pen of Dr Robert Chambers.]

CHAPTER III.

ANCESTRY AND ANECDOTES OF EARLY YEARS— THE LAND OF SCOTT.

WALTER SCOTT derived his origin from a family which was conspicuous in the rude and warlike times of the Scottish Border; but his father, as befitted a peaceable age, had devoted himself to legal business in Edinburgh: he was what is called in Scotland a *Writer to the Signet*, or practitioner of the highest grade next to the barristers. The mother of the novelist was daughter to an eminent medical professor of the Edinburgh University, Dr Rutherford. Simple worth and good manners alone distinguished this couple, whose lot it was to have six children that survived infancy, of whom the subject of this notice was the third. He was born in Edinburgh on the 15th August 1771. A fever in infancy being attended with an effect fatal to the use of his right limb, he was sent to be brought up at the farmhouse of his paternal grandfather, that free exercise in the open air might have a chance of

working his cure by the recovery of the constitution. This new situation was romantic. Five or six miles from Kelso, and overlooking the course of the Tweed, is a little upland district, where the rocks push through a meagre soil, the highest being crowned by one of those tall narrow fortalices, once required by a warlike population on the Borders, but now almost all dismantled. Here was placed the retreat of the future poet. Decent and venerable relatives around the old-fashioned fireside; the affairs of a pastoral farm out of doors; an extensive tract of beautiful country presented to the eye, and the rocks and turrets of Smailholm Tower to ramble amongst—it was upon these things that the mind of Scott awoke from the sleep of infancy. For a long time he could at the most crawl about the house and its neighbourhood; but the intellect was early active. He listened with deep interest to the stories which his relatives had to tell of the *old riding times* of the Border history, as well as to their recollections of the romantic war of 1745; and, learning to read beside the knee of a kind aunt, he quickly seized upon such specimens of poetry and history as were within his reach—Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, to wit, and Josephus's *Wars of the Jews*.

'He says,' writes Lockhart, 'that his consciousness of existence dated from Sandyknowe; and how deep and indelible was the impression which its romantic localities had left on his imagination, I need not remind the readers of *Marmion* and the *Eve of St John*.

'There are still living in that neighbourhood two old women, who were in the domestic service of Sandyknowe, when the lame child was brought thither in the third year of his age. One of them, Tibby Hunter, remembers his coming well; and that "he was a sweet-tempered bairn,

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

a darling with all about the house. The young ewemilkers delighted," she says, "to carry him about on their backs among the crags; and he was very gleg (quick) at the uptake, and soon kenned every sheep and lamb by head-mark as well as any of them." His great pleasure, however, was in the society of the "aged hind," recorded in the epistle to Erskine. "Auld Sandy Ormistoun," called, from the most dignified part of his function, "the Cow-bailie," had the chief superintendence of the flocks that browsed upon "the velvet tufts of loveliest green." If the child saw him in the morning, he could not be satisfied unless the old man would set him astride on his shoulder, and take him to keep him company as he lay watching his charge.

> Here was poetic impulse given
> By the green hill and clear blue heaven.

The Cow-bailie blew a particular note on his whistle, which signified to the maid-servants in the house below when the little boy wished to be carried home again. He told his friend, Mr Skene of Rubislaw, when spending a summer day in his old age among these well-remembered crags, that he delighted to roll about on the grass all day long in the midst of the flock, and that "the sort of fellowship he thus formed with the sheep and lambs had impressed his mind with a degree of affectionate feeling towards them which had lasted throughout life." There is a story of his having been forgotten one day among the knolls when a thunder-storm came on; and his aunt, suddenly recollecting his situation, and running out to bring him home, is said to have found him lying on his back, clapping his hands at the lightning, and crying out "Bonny, bonny!" at every flash.

'I find the following marginal note on his copy of Allan Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany* (edition 1724): "This book belonged to my grandfather, Robert Scott, and out of it I was taught 'Hardyknute' by heart before I could read the ballad myself. It was the first poem I ever learnt—the last I shall ever forget." According to Tibby Hunter, he was not particularly fond of his book, embracing every pretext for joining his friend the Cow-bailie out of doors; but "Miss Jenny was a grand hand at keeping him to the bit, and by degrees he came to read brawly." An early acquaintance of a higher class, Mrs Duncan, the wife of the present excellent minister of Mertoun, informs me that, though she was younger than Sir Walter, she has a dim remembrance of the interior of Sandyknowe: "Old Mrs Scott, sitting with her spinning-wheel, at one side of the fire, in a *clean clean* parlour; the grandfather, a good deal failed, in his elbow-chair opposite; and the little boy lying on the carpet, at the old man's feet, listening to the Bible, or whatever good book Miss Jenny was reading to them." Robert Scott died before his grandson was four years of age.

'Miss Jenny Scott must have been a woman of taste and acquirements very far above what could have been often found among Scotch ladies, of any but the highest class at least, in that day. In the winter of 1777, she and her charge spent some few weeks—not happy weeks, the Memoir hints them to have been—in George Square, Edinburgh; and it so happened, that during this little interval, Mr and Mrs Scott received in their domestic circle a guest capable of appreciating, and, fortunately for us, of recording in a very striking manner the remarkable development of young Walter's faculties. Mrs Cockburn, mentioned by him in his Memoir as the authoress of the modern "Flowers of the Forest," born a Rutherford, of

Fairnilee, in Selkirkshire, was distantly related to the poet's mother, with whom she had through life been in habits of intimate friendship. This accomplished woman was staying at Ravelston, in the vicinity of Edinburgh, a seat of the Keiths of Dunnottar, nearly related to Mrs Scott and to herself. With some of that family she spent an evening in George Square. She chanced to be writing next day to Dr Douglas, the well-known and much respected minister of her native parish, Galashiels; and her letter, of which the doctor's son has kindly given me a copy, contains the following passage:

> "Edinburgh, Saturday night, 15th of the gloomy month when the people of England hang and drown themselves.

. . . . "I last night supped in Mr Walter Scott's. He has the most extraordinary genius of a boy I ever saw. He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on: it was the description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm. He lifted his eyes and hands. 'There's the mast gone,' says he; 'crash it goes!—they will all perish!' After his agitation, he turns to me. 'That is too melancholy,' says he; 'I had better read you something more amusing.' I preferred a little chat, and asked his opinion of Milton and other books he was reading, which he gave me wonderfully. One of his observations was, 'How strange it is that Adam, just new come into the world, should know everything—that must be the poet's fancy,' says he. But when he was told he was created perfect by God, he instantly yielded. When taken to bed last night, he told his aunt he liked that lady. 'What lady?' says she. 'Why, Mrs Cockburn; for I think she is a virtuoso, like myself.' 'Dear Walter,' says Aunt Jenny, 'what is a virtuoso?' 'Don't ye know? Why, it's one who wishes and will know everything.'

"Now, sir, you will think this a very silly story. Pray, what age do you suppose this boy to be? Name it now, before I tell you. Why, twelve or fourteen. No such thing; he is not quite six years old. He has a lame leg, for which he was a year at Bath, and has acquired the perfect English accent, which he has not lost since he came, and he reads like a Garrick. You will allow this an uncommon exotic."

'Another lady, nearly connected with the Keiths of Ravelston, has a lively recollection of young Walter, when paying a visit much about the same period to his kind relation, the mistress of that picturesque old mansion, which furnished him in after days with many of the features of his Tully-Veolan, and whose venerable gardens, with their massive hedges of yew and holly, he always considered as the ideal of the art. The lady, whose letter I have now before me, says she distinctly remembers the sickly boy sitting at the gate of the house with his attendant, when a poor mendicant approached, old and woe-begone, to claim the charity which none asked for in vain at Ravelston. When the man was retiring, the servant remarked to Walter that he ought to be thankful to Providence for having placed him above the want and misery he had been contemplating. The child looked up with a half wistful, half incredulous expression—and said *Homer was a beggar!* "How do you know that?" said the other. "Why, don't you remember," answered the little virtuoso, "that

> Seven *Roman* cities strove for Homer dead,
> Through which the living Homer begged his bread?"

The lady smiled at the "*Roman* cities," but already—

> Each blank in faithless memory void
> The poet's glowing thought supplied.

'It was in this same year, 1777, that he spent some time at Prestonpans; made his first acquaintance with George Constable, the original of his Monkbarns; explored the field where Colonel Gardiner received his death-wound, under the learned guidance of Dalgetty; and marked the spot "where the grass grew long and green, distinguishing it from the rest of the field," above the grave of poor Balmawhapple.

'His Uncle Thomas had the management of the farm affairs at Sandyknowe, when Walter returned thither from Prestonpans; he was a kind-hearted man, and very fond of the child. Appearing on his return somewhat strengthened, his uncle promoted him from the Cow-bailie's shoulder to a dwarf of the Shetland race, not so large as many a Newfoundland dog. This creature walked freely into the house, and was regularly fed from the boy's hand. He soon learned to sit her well, and often alarmed Aunt Jenny by cantering over the rough places about the tower. In the evening of his life, when he had a grandchild afflicted with an infirmity akin to his own, he provided him with a little mare of the same breed, and gave her the name of *Marion*, in memory of this early favourite.'

It was his early residence at Smailholm Tower that imparted an intense affection for the southern part of Scotland, to which he finally adjourned. Some account of the district which he so dearly loved may here properly be given.

The district which this mighty genius has appropriated as his own, may be described as restricted in a great measure to the counties of Roxburgh and Selkirk, the former of which is the central part of the frontier or Border of Scotland, noted of old for the warlike character of its inhabitants, and even, till a comparatively late period,

for certain predatory habits, unlike anything that obtained at the same time, at least in the southern portion of Scotland. Though born in Edinburgh, Walter Scott was descended from Roxburghshire families, and was familiar in his early years with both the scenery and the inhabitants, and the history and traditions, of that romantic land. He was indeed fed with the legendary lore of the Borders as with a mother's milk; and it was this, no doubt, which gave his mind so remarkable a taste for the manners of the middle ages, to the exclusion of all sympathy for either the ideas of the ancient classics or the literature of modern manners. There was something additionally engaging to a mind like his in the poetical associations which have so long rendered this region the very Arcadia of Scotland. The Tweed, flowing majestically from one end of it to the other; the Teviot, a scarcely less noble tributary; with all the lesser streams connected with these two—the Jed, the Gala, the Ettrick, the Yarrow, and the Quair—had, from the revival of Scottish poetry, been sung by unnumbered bards, many of whose names have perished, like flowers, from the face of the earth which they adorned. From all these associations mingled together did the mind of this transcendent genius draw its first and its happiest inspiration.

The general character of this district of Scotland is pastoral. Here and there, along the banks of the streams, there are alluvial strips called *haughs*, all of which are finely cultivated; and the plough, in many places, has ascended the hill to a considerable height; but the land in general is a succession of pastoral eminences, which are either green to the top, or swathed in dusky heath, unless where a patch of young and green wood seeks to soften the climate and the soil. Much of the land still belongs to the

Duke of Buccleuch, and other descendants of noted Border chiefs, and it annually supplies much of what both clothes and feeds the British population. Being little intruded upon by manufactures, except in the towns of Hawick, Selkirk, and Galashiels, its population exhibit, in general, those primitive features of character which are so invariably found to characterise a pastoral people.

Starting at Kelso upon an excursion over this country, the traveller would soon reach Roxburgh—where the Teviot joins the Tweed—a place noted in early Scottish history for the importance of its town and castle, now alike swept away. Pursuing upwards the course of the Teviot, he would first be tempted aside into the sylvan valley of the Jed, on the banks of which stands the ancient and picturesque town of Jedburgh, and whose beauties have been rapturously described by Thomson, who spent many of his youngest and happiest years amidst its beautiful *braes*. Farther up, the Teviot is joined by the Ale, and, farther up still, by the Rule, a rivulet whose banks were once occupied almost exclusively by the warlike clans of Turnbull and Rutherford. Next is the Slitrig, and next the Borthwick; after which, the accessories of this mountain stream cease to be distinguished. Every stream has its valley; every valley has its particular class of inhabitants—its own tales, songs, and traditions; and when the traveller contrasts its noble hills and clear trotting *burnies* with the tame landscapes of 'merry England,' he is at no loss to see how the natives of a mountainous region come to distinguish their own country so much in poetical recollection, and behold it with such exclusive love.

There is one part of Roxburghshire which does not belong to the great vale of the Tweed, and yet is as essentially as any a part of the Land of Scott. This is

Liddesdale, or the vale of the Liddel, a stream which seeks the Solway, and forms part of the more westerly border. Nothing out of Spain could be more wild or lonely than this pastoral vale, which once harboured the predatory clans of Elliot and Armstrong, but is now occupied by a race of more than usually primitive sheep-farmers. It is absolutely overrun with song and legend, of which Sir Walter Scott reaped an ample harvest for his *Border Minstrelsy*, including the fine old ballads of 'Dick o' the Cow,' and 'Jock o' the Syde.'

CHAPTER IV.

EDUCATION—THE LAW APPRENTICE—MEETING WITH BURNS.

A VISIT to Bath, under the charge of his aunt, proved of no avail in healing the lameness, which, however, gradually gave way in the course of years, so as to terminate in only such a shortening of the limb as was remediable by the use of a walking-cane. The early schooling of Scott was rendered irregular by his bad health. He attended a little private school kept by one Leechman in Bristo Port, and after a little private tutoring, was fitted at seven years to commence the study of Latin in the High School of his native city.

This anecdote is believed to refer to the period of his attendance in Luke Fraser's class, High School. 'There was a boy,' he relates, 'in my class at school, who stood always at the top, nor could I with all my efforts supplant him. Day came after day, and still he kept his place, do what I would; till at length I observed that when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his

fingers at a particular button in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eyes, and in an evil moment it was removed with a knife. Great was my anxiety to know the success of my measure; and it succeeded too well. When the boy was again questioned, his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it; it was to be seen no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place; nor did he ever recover it, or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often in after life has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him; and often have I resolved to make him some reparation; but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him, for he filled some inferior office in one of the courts of law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow! I believe he is dead; he took early to drinking.'

Here is another anecdote of his boyhood. He and other boys, whose parents lived in or near George Square, formed a sort of company or regiment, and engaged in a kind of weekly warfare with some poor boys inhabiting the Cross-causeway, Bristo Street, and the Potterrow. One boy, thirteen or fourteen years of age, finely made, tall, blue-eyed, with long fair hair, was the principal leader amongst the poor boys. He was known as Green Breeks, because he wore a pair of old green livery trousers. This Green Breeks was struck over the head with a sword, in a fray, when the aristocratic party fled; the sword was thrown away, and strict secrecy was preserved. The wounded hero recovered, but would never disclose who had struck him down. Scott and his companions tried to open communications through a popular gingerbread baker, and offered him money. He declined the small sum offered,

saying he would not sell his blood, and he could only be prevailed upon to accept a pound of snuff for the use of an old woman with whom he lived.

Scott did not distinguish himself as a scholar, yet often surprised his instructors by the miscellaneous knowledge which he possessed, and now and then was acknowledged to display a sense of the beauties of the Latin authors such as is seldom seen in boys. In the rough amusements which went on out of school, his spirit enabled him to take a leading share, notwithstanding his lameness. He would help to man the Cowgate Port in a snow-ball match, and pass the 'Kittle Nine Steps' on the Castle Rock with the best of them. In the winter evenings, when out-of-door exercise was not attractive, he would gather his companions round him at the fireside, and entertain them with stories, real and imaginary, of which he seemed to have an endless store. Unluckily, his classical studies, neglected as they comparatively were, experienced an interruption from bad health, just as he was beginning to acquire some sense of their value. He was sent to live with his aunt at Kelso, that he might recover strength. There, indeed, he gave some attendance at a school kept by one Whale, where he first met with his future friend, Mr James Ballantyne; but this did not compensate the break of his High School course. It would, nevertheless, be difficult to say whether Scott was the worse or the better of the interruptions he experienced in school learning. He lost a certain kind of knowledge, it is true, but he gained another. The vacant time at his disposal he gave to general reading. History, travels, poetry, and prose fiction he devoured without discrimination, unless it were that he preferred imaginative literature to every other; and of all imaginative writers, was fondest of such as Spenser, whose

knights and ladies, and dragons and giants, he was never tired of contemplating. Any passage of a favourite poet which pleased him particularly was sure to remain on his memory, and thus he was able to astonish his friends with his poetical recitations. At the same time, he admits that solidly useful matters had a poor chance of being remembered. His sober-minded parents and other friends regarded these acquirements without pride or satisfaction; they marvelled at the thirst for reading and the powers of memory, but thought it all to little good purpose, and only excused it in consideration of the infirm health of the young prodigy. Scott himself lived to lament the indifference he showed to that regular mental discipline which is to be acquired at school, as may be seen in his *Autobiography* (page 46).

This acknowledgment refers more particularly to his subsequent career at the Edinburgh University, where, in the Latin class, he only lost what he had formerly acquired; while in the Greek he became stubborn, and refused to learn, so that the professor finally pronounced him a dunce; and he actually failed to impress even the letters of the alphabet upon his memory. The bursting of a blood-vessel in the lower bowels now laid him once more aside from even the appearance of learning, and he was again left to pursue his own course, first in his sick-chamber in his father's house, and afterwards at his uncle's residence at Kelso. He probably little lamented an illness which enabled him to cultivate still more deeply the society of the poets and romance-writers. Regaining strength, he was, in his fifteenth year, indentured as an apprentice to his father, who wished him to be his own successor in business. Respect for his parents and for the common duties of life, was always a strong feeling in Scott; he

therefore applied himself without a murmur to the desk in his father's office, though he acknowledges that the recess beneath was generally stuffed with his favourite books, from which, at intervals, he would 'snatch a fearful joy.' He even made his diligence in copying law-papers a means of gratifying his intellectual passions, often writing an unusual quantity, that with the result he might purchase some book or object of virtu which he wished to possess. It should be mentioned that the little room assigned to him on the kitchen-floor of his father's house in George Square was already made a kind of museum by his taste for curiosities, especially those of an antiquarian nature. He never was heard to grudge the years he had spent in his father's painstaking business: on the contrary, he recollected them with pleasure, for it was always a matter of pride with him to be a man of business as well as a man of letters. The discipline of the office gave him a number of little technical habits, which he never afterwards lost. He was, for instance, much of a formalist in the folding and disposal of papers. The writer of this narrative recollects folding a paper in a wrong fashion in his presence, when he instantly undid it, and showed, with a schoolmasterlike nicety, but with great good-humour, the proper way to perform this little piece of business.

When J. G. Lockhart was writing his brief biography of Burns, he received the following account of Scott's memorable interview with him: 'As for Burns' (he writes), 'I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum.* I was a lad of fifteen in 1786–87, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country,

the two sets that he most frequented. Mr Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word, otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on the one side, on the other his widow with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

> Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
> Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain;
> Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
> The big drops, mingling with the milk he drew,
> Gave the sad presage of his future years.
> The child of misery baptised in tears.

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of "The Justice of the Peace." I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

'His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity,

which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school—i.e., none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, and glowed—I say literally *glowed*—when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but—considering what literary emoluments have been since his day—the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

'I remember on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Fergusson, he talked of them with too much

humility as his models; there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.'

[The print here referred to, over which Scott saw Burns shed tears, was presented by Sir Adam Ferguson to Dr Robert Chambers. It is now in the museum of the Chambers Institution, Peebles.]

CHAPTER V.

ADVOCATE AND AUTHOR.

WHILE advancing to manhood, and during its first few years, Scott, besides keeping up his desultory system of reading, attended the meetings of a literary society composed of such youths as himself. A selection of these and of his early schoolfellows, became his ordinary companions. Amongst them was Adam Ferguson, son of the well-known professor of that name; another was William Clerk, son of Mr Clerk of Eldin, and afterwards a member of the Scottish bar. It was the pleasure of this group of young men to take frequent rambles in the country, visiting any ancient castle or other remarkable object within their reach.

'On one of his first long walks with William Clerk of Eldin and others of the same set,' says Lockhart, 'their pace being about four miles an hour, was found rather too much for Scott, and he offered to contract for three, which measure was thenceforth considered as the legal one. At this rate they often continued to wander from five in the morning till eight in the evening, halting for such refresh-

ment at mid-day as any village alehouse might afford. On many occasions, however, they had stretched so far into the country, that they were obliged to be absent from home all night; and though great was the alarm which the first occurrence of this sort created in George Square, the family soon got accustomed to such things, and little notice was taken even though Walter remained away for the better part of a week. I have heard him laugh heartily over the recollections of one protracted excursion, towards the close of which the party found themselves a long day's walk—thirty miles, I think—from Edinburgh, without a single sixpence left among them. "We were put to our shifts," said he; "but we asked every now and then at a cottage door for a drink of water; and one or two of the goodwives, observing our worn-out looks, brought forth milk in place of water—so with that, and hips and haws, we came in little the worse." His father met him with some impatient questions as to what he had been living on so long, for the old man well knew how scantily his pocket was supplied. "Pretty much like the young ravens," answered he. "I only wished I had been as good a player on the flute as poor George Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield.* If I had his art, I should like nothing better than to tramp like him from cottage to cottage over the world."—"I doubt," said the grave Clerk to the Signet, "I greatly doubt, sir, you were born for nae better than a *gangrel scrapegut.*" Some allusions to reproaches of this kind occur in the Memoir, and we find others in letters subsequent to his admission at the bar.'

Scott, notwithstanding his limp, walked as stoutly, and sustained fatigue as well, as any of them. Sometimes they would, according to the general habits of those days, resort to taverns for oysters and punch. Scott entered into such

indulgences without losing self-control; but he lived to think this ill-spent time, and said: 'Depend upon it, of all vices drinking is the most incompatible with greatness.' As to other follies equally besetting to youth, it is admitted by all his early friends that he was in a singular degree pure and blameless. His genial good-humour made him a favourite with his young friends, and they could not deny his possessing much out-of-the-way knowledge; yet it does not appear that they saw in him any intellectual superiority, or reason to expect the brilliant destiny which awaited him. The tendency of all testimony from those who knew him at this time is rather to set him down as one from whom nothing extraordinary was to be looked for in mature manhood.

We can easily see the grounds of this opinion. Scott had not been a good scholar. He showed none of the peculiarities of the young sonneteer, for poetry was not yet developed in his nature. Any advantage he possessed over others of his own standing lay in a kind of learning which seemed useless. It is not, then, surprising that he ranked only with ordinary youths, or perhaps a little below them. It is asserted, however, by James Ballantyne that there was a certain firmness of understanding in Scott, which enabled him to acquire an ascendency over some of his companions; giving him the power of allaying their quarrels by a few words, and disposing them to submit to him on many other occasions. Still, this must have looked like a quality of the common world, and especially unconnected with literary genius.

When Scott's apprenticeship expired, the father was willing to introduce him at once into a business which would have yielded a tolerable income; but the youth, stirred by ambition, preferred advancing to the bar, for

which his service in a writer's office was the reverse of a disqualification. Having therefore passed through the usual studies, he was admitted of the Faculty of Advocates, July 1792. This is a profession in which a young man usually spends a few years to little purpose, unless peculiar advantages in the way of patronage help him on. Scott does not appear to have done more for some sessions than pass creditably enough through certain routine duties which his father and others imposed upon him, and for which only moderate remuneration was made. He wanted the ready fluent address which is required for pleading, and his knowledge of law was not such as to attract business to him as a consulting counsel. While lingering out the first few idle years of professional life, he studied the German language and some of its modern writers. He also continued the same kind of antiquarian reading for which he had already become remarkable. Amongst other things giving a character to his mind, were certain annual journeys he made into the pastoral district of Liddesdale, where the castles of the old Border chiefs, and the legends of their exploits, were still rife. On these occasions, he was accompanied by an intelligent friend, Mr Robert Shortreed, long after sheriff-substitute at Jedburgh. No inns, and hardly any roads, were then in Liddesdale. The farmers were a simple race, knowing nothing of the outward world. So much was this the case, that one honest fellow, at whose house the travellers alighted to spend a night, was actually frightened at the idea of meeting an Edinburgh advocate. Willie o' Milburn, as this hero was called, at length took a careful survey of Scott round a corner of the stable, and getting somewhat reassured from the sight, said to Mr Shortreed: 'Weel, I's no a bit feared for him now; he's just a chield like ourselves, I think.' On these

excursions, Scott took down from old people anecdotes of the old rough times, and copies of the ballads in which the adventures of the Elliots and Armstrongs were recorded. Thus were laid the foundations of the collection which became in time the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.*

The friendship of Mr Edmonstone of Newton led him to visit those districts of Stirlingshire and lower Perthshire where he afterwards localised his *Lady of the Lake.* There he learned much of the more recent rough times of the Highlands, and even conversed with one gentleman who had had to do with Rob Roy. These things constituted the real education of Scott's mind, as far as his character as a literary man is concerned. One who well remembered young Walter Scott as seen in the Old Assembly Rooms, says, 'Young Walter Scott was a comely creature. He had outgrown the sallowness of early ill-health, and had a fresh brilliant complexion. His eyes were clear, open, and well set, with a changeful radiance, to which teeth of the most perfect regularity and whiteness lent their assistance, while the noble expanse and elevation of the brow gave to the whole aspect a dignity far above the charm of mere features. His smile was always delightful; and I can easily fancy the peculiar intermixture of tenderness and gravity with playful innocent hilarity and humour in the expression, as being well calculated to fix a fair lady's eye. His figure, excepting the blemish in one limb, must in those days have been eminently handsome; tall, much above the usual standard, it was cast in the very mould of a young Hercules, the head set on with singular grace, the throat and chest after the truest model of the antique, the hands delicately finished, the whole outline that of extraordinary vigour, without as yet a touch of clumsiness. When he had acquired a little facility of manner, his conversation must have been such as

could have dispensed with any exterior advantages, and certainly brought swift forgiveness for the one unkindness of nature.'

Overlooking some boyish efforts in verse, which he had long forgotten, Scott could not be said to have as yet attempted the vocation of a poet. He must be considered as somewhat singular in the tuneful list, as having written no poetry worthy of the name before his twenty-fifth year. The cause of this undoubtedly lay in the preponderance which circumstances had hitherto given to other portions of his well-poised character, his anxiety to be a successful man of business and a respected man of the world. It becomes, however, the more wonderful, as Scott, from early youth, had entertained a zealous affection for a young lady somewhat above his own rank in life, and who was well qualified to inspire a sonnet. At length, in 1796, the hearing a translation of Bürger's ballad of 'Lenore' roused him to a similar attempt, and he produced in one night a most spirited version of this remarkable production. It was appreciated highly by a few persons of sensibility, among whom was Jane Anne Cranstoun, afterwards Countess Purgstall. In October of the above-named year, he was induced to venture into print with his translation of 'Lenore,' joined to that of another of Bürger's ballads, 'The Wild Huntsman;' but the little volume entirely failed to attract public attention.

From his earliest thinking years, Scott had been of Tory leanings. Montrose, Claverhouse, and the heroes of the '15 and '45, were his favourites in Scottish history, by reason of the romantic circumstances with which they were connected. More retrospective at all times than prospective, he partook deeply in the zeal with which liberal politics were now discouraged in Britain. In April 1794—the time

when Robespierre was at his zenith in France—some Irish students produced a riot in the Edinburgh theatre by calling for revolutionary tunes. Scott and some other young zealots of the opposite side distinguished themselves much in the tumult; he himself was bound over to keep the peace, with three broken heads laid to his especial charge. In the early part of 1797, we find him exhibiting his political sentiments in a more laudable manner, by joining a troop of volunteer cavalry as their quarter-master, and writing a war-song for them. In the drills and other doings of this corps, he displayed an ardour which lay deep in his nature, and which had a strong affinity for military affairs. But this told in no discernible way on his future life. He was about this time subjected to a severe trial of spirit by the marriage of Miss Margaret Stuart Belches to William Forbes of Pitsligo. One Sunday, when about nineteen, he had met her coming out of Greyfriars Church, and offered her his umbrella to shun a shower of rain. He had cherished the hope of marriage with her, but this was now dashed to the ground. Even thirty years afterwards, he could not set down a few words about this lady in his journal without some agitation. His disappointment, by perhaps a natural reaction of feeling, led soon after to a change in his condition. Spending a few idle days at Gilsland Wells in Cumberland, he chanced there to meet a young lady of French extraction, but of English education, named Charlotte Margaret Carpenter. Possessing beauty and some little fortune, she suited Scott both as a poet and a man of the world, and little more than two months from the commencement of their acquaintance, they were united at Carlisle. He now commenced house-keeping in Edinburgh, where he had hitherto lived in his father's house.

We now see Scott as a young married man, spending the

winter in the bosom of a frugal but elegant society in Edinburgh, and the summer months in a retired cottage on the beautiful banks of the Esk at Lasswade; cultivating, as before, literary tastes, and storing his mind with his favourite kind of learning, but not as yet conscious of his active literary powers, or thinking of aught but the duties of his profession and the claims of his little family. Simple and manly in habits, good-humoured, and averse to disputation, full of delightful information, kind and obliging to all who came near him, yet possessed of a rectitude and solidity of understanding which never allowed him to be the fool of any of his feelings, it is no wonder that Walter Scott was a general favourite, or that he attracted the regard of several persons of rank, as the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Melville, and others.

It was through the kindness of the first of these noblemen that, in 1799, he obtained the appointment of sheriff of Selkirkshire, an office of light duty, with a salary of £300 per annum. Though anxious to attain professional reputation, to which literary notoriety is supposed to be adverse, he could not altogether refrain from the poetical exercises in which he had already broken ground. We therefore find him at this time translating and publishing a version of Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen*, a drama of such a romantic cast as harmonised entirely with his peculiar taste. He also was induced by Mr M. G. Lewis, the well-known author of *The Monk*, to write two or three ballads on supernatural themes for a collection which was to be entitled *Tales of Wonder*. *Goetz* appeared in February 1799, but met the fate of the former publication. When the *Tales of Wonder* came out, Scott's ballads, though unfortunate in their association, obtained some praise, yet, on the whole, might also be considered as a failure. These

would have been disappointments to a man who had set his heart on literary reputation. To Scott, who was at all periods of his career humble-minded about his literary efforts, they were nothing of the kind. In this respect he was a pattern to all authors, present and to come.

CHAPTER VI.

'MINSTRELSY OF THE SCOTTISH BORDER'—'LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL'—LIFE AT ASHESTIEL—'MARMION'—'LADY OF THE LAKE.'

THE circumstances seem to have been almost accidental which led him to make his first serious adventure in the literary world. His schoolfellow, James Ballantyne, was now settled at Kelso in the management of a weekly newspaper. Merely to give employment to his friend's types during the intervals of their ordinary use, Scott proposed to print a small collection of the old ballads which for some years he had been collecting on the Border. When the design was formed, he set about preparing the work, for which he soon obtained some assistance from Richard Heber and John Leyden—the former an Englishman of fortune, and an enthusiastic collector of books; the latter a Scottish peasant's son, from Denholm in Roxburghshire, who had studied for the church, and become a marvel of learning, especially in languages and antiquities. The *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* thus grew upon his hands, until it became such an assemblage of ballads, ancient and modern, and of historical annotation, as could only be contained in three octavo volumes. The first two made their appearance

in January 1802, and met a favourable reception. Many of the ballads were entirely new to the world; even those which had been published before, here appeared in superior versions. Industry in the collection of copies, and taste in the selection of readings, had enabled the editor to present this branch of popular literature with attractions it never possessed before; while the graceful and intelligent prose interspersed throughout, rich with curious learning, and enlivened by many a pleasant traditionary anecdote, served to constitute the whole as a most agreeable mélange. The work gave Scott at once a respectable place in the literary republic, more indeed as an editor than as an author, though one would suppose few could be altogether insensible to the spirit and graphic power displayed in the ballads of his own composition.

About this time he inherited between five and six thousand pounds from a paternal uncle. This, with his share of his deceased father's property, his sheriffship, and his wife's allowance from her brother, now advancing to fortune in India, made his income altogether about a thousand a year. He had been ten years at the bar with little success; his gains seldom reaching two hundred a year, and these from the merest drudgeries of the profession. It began, therefore, to appear to him that, in as far as any further income might be required to support his station in life, and advance the prospects of his children, it would be well to look for it rather to some post in the Court of Session, such as one of the principal clerkships, than to practice as a barrister. Assured in the meantime against want, and trusting to such a prospect being realisable by his friends the Buccleuchs and Melvilles, he gradually became disposed to give more of his regards to literature. As to income from this source, he had little hope or faith.

Literary research and composition were as yet their own reward with him: if any more solid remuneration accrued, he was happy to receive it: but he would not depend on such gains. Let literature, he said, be at the utmost a staff—not a crutch. It was natural for a prudent man of the world to form these ideas at that time, when literary biography was little besides a record of privation and sorrow. But it would have, nevertheless, been well for Scott if he had been content with his secured income, and the prospect of only such contingent additions to it as a fixed post or the profits of literature might hold out. To his over-anxious mind, when the temptation came, it appeared different, as we shall presently see.

It was about the time when the *Minstrelsy* was issuing from the press, that Scott was asked by the lovely and amiable Countess of Dalkeith to write a ballad upon a traditionary goblin story respecting the Buccleuch family. He commenced such a composition accordingly, adopting for its measure that of Coleridge's poem 'Christabel;' but it grew upon his hands far beyond ballad size. It became, in short, a long romantic narrative, divided into cantos, and set in a subordinate narrative, wherein the author represented it as a recitation by the last survivor of the fraternity of minstrels. This was published in January 1805, as *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and at once placed Scott in the first rank as an original poet, besides determining his fate as henceforth chiefly that of a man of letters. Immediately on the first edition proving successful, the publishers gave £600 for the copyright.

'Scott,' says Lockhart, 'had now adopted the habits in which, with very slender variation, he ever after persevered when in the country. He rose by five o'clock, lit his own fire when the season required one, and shaved and dressed

with great deliberation—for he was a very martinet as to all but the mere coxcombries of the toilet, not abhorring effeminate dandyism itself so cordially as the slightest approach to personal slovenliness, or even those "bedgown and slipper tricks," as he called them, in which literary men are so apt to indulge. Arrayed in his shooting-jacket, or whatever dress he meant to use till dinner-time, he was seated at his desk by six o'clock, all his papers arranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled around him on the floor, while at least one favourite dog lay watching his eye just beyond the line of circumvallation. Thus by the time the family assembled for breakfast between nine and ten, he had done enough—in his own language—"*to break the neck of the day's work.*" After breakfast a couple of hours more were given to his solitary tasks, and by noon he was, as he used to say, "his own man." When the weather was bad he would labour incessantly all the morning; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while, if any more distant excursion had been proposed over-night, he was ready to start on it by ten, his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming, as he said, a fund in his favour, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone with special brightness.

'It was another rule that every letter he received should be answered that same day. Nothing else could have enabled him to keep abreast with the flood of communications that in the sequel put his good-nature to the severest test; but already the demands on him in this way also were numerous, and he included attention to them among the necessary business which must be despatched before he had a right to close his writing-box. In turning over his enormous mass of correspondence, I have almost invari-

ably found some indication that, when a letter had remained more than a day or two unanswered, it had been so because he found occasion for inquiry or deliberate consideration.'

Before this time, Mr Ballantyne had set up a printing-office in Edinburgh, partly by the assistance of a loan from his old friend. Getting rapidly into a considerable business, which his skill and taste amply justified, he came to require additional capital, and Scott at length agreed to advance the needful sum, on condition of his being made a partner, but a secret one, in the concern. His dread of dependence on literary gains seems to have blinded him to the fact that mercantile gains are also precarious, and usually attended by risks.

By the interest of his titled friends, he soon after obtained an appointment to the duties of a clerkship in the Court of Session; the salary, however, which afterwards was fixed at £1300 a year, was not to be realised till the death of a superannuated predecessor in office, and, in fact, Scott touched nothing of it till 1812. With such an addition to his solid prospects, one cannot but wonder at the eagerness and assiduity with which he commenced and pursued literary labours of a severely tasking kind; such as an edition of the works of Dryden, a publication of Sadler's State Papers, and a reprint of Somers's collection of Tracts. It seems as if a naturally ambitious and ardent spirit had at length found a vent for its energies, and felt a self-rewarding pleasure in their exercise. At the same time, he gave much of his time to volunteer soldiering, to politics, and to the affairs of literary men less fortunate than himself. The recollections of his friends present a charming picture of his ordinary life at his summer retreat of Ashestiel on the Tweed, where he had found it necessary to establish himself on account of his duties as sheriff of Selkirkshire.

His household, enlivened by four healthy children, and superintended by Mrs Scott, was marked by simple elegance. On Sundays, being far from church, he read prayers and a sermon to his family; then, if the weather was good, he would walk with them, servants and all, to some favourite spot at a convenient distance, and dine with them in the open air. Frequent excursions on horseback, and coursing matches, varied the tenor of common domestic life. Friends coming to pay visits found him in constant good-humour, and at all times willing to introduce them to the fine scenery and interesting antiquities of the district. In the evenings, his conversation, in which stories and anecdotes formed a large part, was a sure resource against weariness. As a husband and father, he was most kind and indulgent. His children had access to his room at all times; and when they came—unconscious of the nature of his studies—and asked for a story, he would take them on his knee, repeat a tale or a ballad, kiss them, and then set them down again to their sports, never apparently feeling the least annoyance at the interruption. He taught them to think nothing of tumbles. 'Without courage,' he said, 'there can be no truth; and without truth there can be no other virtue.' His dogs, of which he always had two or three, were even more privileged, for he kept his window open in nearly all weathers, that they might leap out and in as they pleased.

Carlyle, in his essay upon Scott, tells of a lapdog which, when promenading with its mistress in Princes Street, seemed to live in perpetual fear of being stolen. But no sooner did Scott limp past one day, than it ran towards him, frisking, fawning, and licking his feet. An incident of the same nature happened more than once to Dr John Brown, author of *Rab and his Friends.*

These were the happiest days of Scott's life, when as yet

in the enjoyment of full vigour of body and mind, rather acquiring than reposing upon fame, and unembarrassed by possessions and dignities which afterwards made his position false and dangerous. He occasionally visited London, and allowed himself to go through that kind of exhibition called *lionising*, to which everything famous or even notorious is liable to be subjected in the metropolis; but he never was in the slightest degree spoiled by such idolatry. He fully showed that he estimated it at its real worth—as see his remark at the beginning of the *Autobiography*—and, after good-naturedly submitting to it, could laugh at its absurdity. It is less pleasant to record a change in his arrangements for study which took place about this time. Finding the day apt to be broken in upon by little duties and by visitors, he adopted the habit of rising and commencing his literary toils at six in the morning, usually finishing them at twelve, after the interruption of breakfast at ten. His biographer, Mr Lockhart, tells us how careful he was to dress neatly before sitting down, but he says nothing of his preparing for the duty before him by taking food. We have come to understand such things better now, and can easily see what fatal effects might arise in a few years from a habit of performing the principal duties of life with an exhausted system.

The year 1808 saw his poetical reputation brought to its zenith by the publication of *Marmion*, for which, to the astonishment of the public, Mr Constable undertook beforehand to pay a thousand guineas. Not long after, we find him quarrelling with this eminent publisher, and taking an interest in the establishment of the *Quarterly*, as an opposition to the *Edinburgh Review*. It would have been well if he had stopped here; but the same feelings, helped, perhaps, by that trafficking spirit which had entered

into him since he lost hopes at the bar, induced the false step of his setting up a publishing-house in Edinburgh, under the firm of John Ballantyne and Company, the ostensible manager being a younger brother of the printer, a clever comical being, not overstocked with worldly prudence, and possessed of few qualifications for business beyond a knowledge of accounts.

From this house issued, in May 1810, his most pleasing poem, the *Lady of the Lake*, which experienced even greater popularity than either of its two predecessors, and might, if anything could, have made its author a vain man. In this and his two preceding poems, the chief charm lay in the vividness with which the author brought the past before the minds of his readers. He gave the grace, the dignity, the gallantry of old times, free from all their rudeness and grossness. All was done, too, in such an easy and fluent style, that the reader was never wearied. Surely he did himself less than justice when he wrote: 'I am sensible that if there be anything good about my poetry or prose, it is a hurried frankness of composition, which pleases soldiers, sailors, and young people of bold and active disposition.' The singular fascination of these writings showed itself in numberless ways: for one thing, there was a rush of tourists to the scene of the *Lady of the Lake*, so great as to produce a marked rise of the amount of post-horse duty raised in Scotland. Scott's own firm, in connection with another, undertook to pay two thousand guineas for the *Lady of the Lake*, a fact in authorship at that time without anything approaching to a parallel.

Meanwhile he was urging into print, as a publisher, an *Annual Register*, to commence with the year 1808; an edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, under the care of a drudging German of the name of Weber; a huge quarto,

under the title of *Tixall Poetry;* an edition of Defoe's novels; the *Secret Memoirs of the Court of James I.;* and some other books agreeable to his own taste, but hardly to that of the public. These huge indigestible masses of paper and print had brought his outlay in the printing and publishing concerns up to £9000 before the end of this year. Scarcely ever did the most thoughtless of the tuneful tribe make a more unfortunate adventure than this publishing affair was destined to prove itself. If Scott had instituted some safe and modest copartnery, to give himself the publishing profits of his own writings, diminished only by expenses and the small profits due to his acting associates, he would have been doing what perhaps it will yet be seen all authors of decided popularity may rightly do. But he had an antiquarian taste, and a disposition to overestimate all literary productions save his own—he indulged these tendencies in his firm of John Ballantyne and Company, and unavoidably became a great loser. Before it was fully seen that such was to be his fate as a man of business—namely, in the summer of 1811—he had thought so well of his means and prospects—the clerkship salary being now on the eve of realisation—as to resolve on purchasing a hundred acres of land on Tweedside, in order to build a cottage residence for himself, and this notwithstanding that the £4000 requisite in the very first place had to be borrowed, the one half as a permanent burden on the property. Such was the origin of his estate of Abbotsford, where ultimately he reared a castle. The purchase would have been a perfectly right one, if he had not involved his superfluous fortune in business: as things actually stood, it was only preparing for himself needless embarrassments.

CHAPTER VII.

REMOVAL TO ABBOTSFORD—THE WAVERLEY NOVELS.

HIS removal to the little estate which he had purchased took place in May 1812, and he soon became involved in the pleasant but costly labours attendant on building and planting at Abbotsford. At the same time, besides attending to other literary avocations, he was composing a fourth romance in verse, which appeared just before the close of the year under the title of *Rokeby*, but in point of popularity proved a comparative failure. Ere this time, the concerns of John Ballantyne and Company were seriously embarrassed, insomuch that Scott was glad to accept of a little credit from his friend Mr Morritt of Rokeby Park. The difficulties had only increased during the early months of 1813, and it then became necessary for those who had begun in rivalry to Mr Constable to resort to that publisher for his friendly aid. To give an idea of the fatality of the whole adventure, it appears that the single publication of *Tixall Poetry*, which proved a dead failure, involved an outlay of £2500, while the *Edinburgh Annual Register* was attended by an annual loss of £1000. At the same time, all the parties concerned were living in a style rather suited to their hopes than to their realised profits. To sustain so severe a drainage, the private fortune of Scott and even his unprecedented literary gains were inadequate. Fortunately, the hope of regaining the author of *Marmion* as an adherent of his house, induced Mr Constable to grant relief to

some extent by the purchase of stock, trusting that the rival house would as soon as possible be extinguished. The Duke of Buccleuch also extended the favour of his credit for the sum of £4000, by means of which, and of further sales of stock to other publishers, the principal difficulties were passed, though not without the most serious vexation to Scott for the greater part of a year. In the midst of his worst perplexities, he resigned an offer of the laureateship to Mr Southey, and was liberal as usual to unfortunate men of letters, sending, for one thing, fifty pounds to Mr Maturin, the Irish novelist.

Scott had, so early as 1805, commenced a prose fiction on the manners of the Highlanders, which he designated *Waverley, or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since.* Discouraged by the unfavourable opinion of his friends regarding the first few chapters, he threw aside the manuscript, which lay accordingly unthought of in an old desk for nine years. Happening to find it while rummaging for fishing-tackle, he bethought of completing the story, and seriously trying his fortune in a new walk of literature. Three weeks of June 1814 enabled him to add the second and third volumes, and the tale appeared anonymously in the ensuing month. The public almost immediately appreciated its merits, and the first edition of a thousand copies meeting with a quick sale, was speedily followed by a second and a third. The lifelike representation here given of times not too remote for sympathy, and yet sufficiently so in character to tell as eminently romantic, joined to the wonderful ease, spirit, and mingled humour and pathos of the narrative, gave *Waverley* at once a place far above all contemporary novels, and awakened great curiosity regarding the unknown author. Always unconcerned about the fate of his works, Scott immediately set out on a six weeks' yachting excursion

round the north of Scotland, with hardly a chance of hearing news from the world of letters during that time, and when he came back, he found himself famous in a new and impersonal capacity. Many reflecting persons were at no loss to see that only the same mind which had reproduced the times of the Jameses in *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*, could have resuscitated the court and camp of Charles Edward Stuart in 1745; but with the mass of the public the mystery was successful. Some thought it most likely that Scott's brother, Thomas, had produced this romance; there were even some who attributed it to Jeffrey. Of Thomas he had himself so high an opinion, that he about this time offered him money from his own pocket for any novel he might produce. But the opinion of Walter Scott regarding the literary powers of his contemporaries was of absolutely not the least value, in consequence of the peculiar generosity of his nature. Thomas Scott and many others whom he stimulated, and helped to become authors, were in the eyes of the world very ordinary persons, and can only be remembered because they were the objects of this great man's love and esteem.

The success of *Waverley*, and the necessity of money to relieve the Ballantyne concern, quickly urged Scott to a new effort in the same walk. During the short vacation at the Christmas of this year (1814), he produced his tale of *Guy Mannering*, which, being published in the ensuing February, was received with transports of delight—more sober language would be quite inappropriate—by both the Scottish and English public. The author had, only a month before, brought out his last poem, *The Lord of the Isles*, which met with a reception so cool as to convince him that he must now resign the top of the poetical walk to his young rival, Lord Byron. He heard the report of

the public decision on this point from James Ballantyne, was disconcerted for a few minutes, and then, recovering his usual spirits, tranquilly resumed the writing of his novel. How much it would tell to the happiness of literary men in general, if they had but a tithe of the equanimity of Scott about the success of their exertions! In the summer of this memorable year he visited the field of Waterloo, and wrote on that subject a descriptive work, entitled *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, and also a poem, which proved a failure in respect of popular approbation. The results of these various labours, with his professional income, not only set him free of the immediate pressure of the publishing encumbrances, but enabled him to add somewhat to his domains on Tweedside. This year was also memorable to him as that which introduced him to the personal notice of the Prince Regent, who, after greatly enjoying his society at Carlton House, sent him a present of a gold snuff-box set in brilliants.

Scott was now at ease in his circumstances. His ordinary and assured income sufficed for any domestic expenditure he chose to indulge in; the recent embarrassments were at an end; and he might calculate on easily adding a few occasional thousands, for the sake of posterity, by no very great exertion of his ever-fertile brain. But who of mortal mould can ever say 'enough?' especially when the temptation of great facility in acquiring is before him. For Scott at this time to grow from the idea of a cottage retreat in the country to that of a little lairdship and a good sort of mansion, was certainly very natural, when he found that the work of little more than a month at any time could secure him enough of money to buy from fifty to a hundred acres of ground. It was the more so in his case, as his education and the original bent of his own feelings alike

tended to create in him a veneration for the possession of land. Add to this, that he had a taste for planting and decoration, and felt a genial joy in being bread-giver to a retinue of that kindly peasantry whose virtues he has himself depicted in such lively colours. Of vulgar ambition for wealth and state there was in Scott not one particle: to be a chief of the soil and its people, and contemplate his children as succeeding him in the same character, was only, with him, to realise, or set forth in substance, one of the poetical dreams which haunted his mind. It is therefore not surprising at this period to find him far from being disposed to suspend his energies, even although he might have done so under the excuse of somewhat broken health, for he now had frequent visits of stomach-cramp—in no small degree a consequence of some of his literary habits.

The spring of 1816 saw the public in possession of his novel *The Antiquary*, perhaps, of all his works, the one in which there is a reflection of the bent of his own mind. It was scarcely published before he had designed his *Tales of My Landlord*, the first series of which came out, as by a new author, in December, and was at once hailed with all the applause accorded to its predecessors, and set down as another offshoot of the same tree. This time, Murray and Blackwood were identified with its publication, the names of both appearing on the title-page. Early in 1817 appeared *Harold the Dauntless*, which, not bearing his name, and being even a greater failure than any of his recent poems, formed the last of that class of his publications. The public might now, perhaps, have had a more rapid succession of novels from his pen, if he had not thought proper to write the historical part of his *Annual Register*, in a vain hope to float that unfortunate work into popularity. As it was, he produced this year his novel of *Rob Roy*, which

came out at New Year 1818, and experienced a brilliant reception. So great was his sense of the encouragement extended to these novels, that in 1817 he made purchase of an addition to his property, involving an outlay of no less than £10,000. Just to show, however, how much generosity towards others was mixed with the no way mean ambition of Scott, his prime object here was to secure a residence for his old school-friend, Adam Ferguson, and his sisters, whom he was eager to plant near his own fireside. On his concluding a rather hasty bargain for this estate, Ferguson expressed his surprise and concern at seeing him exert so little pains to cheapen it. 'Never say a word about it,' said Scott; 'it will just answer you and the ladies exactly; and it's only scribbling a little more nonsense some of these mornings, to pay anything it costs me more than enough.' From calculations of this kind, Scott is understood to have bought nearly the whole of his landed property at a very large percentage above its actual value.

From this time till the close of 1825—a space of eight years—prosperity reigned unchecked over the life of Scott. His novels of *The Heart of Midlothian*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Legend of Montrose*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, *The Pirate*, *Kenilworth*, *The Fortunes of Nigel*, *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, *St Ronan's Well*, *Redgauntlet*, and the *Tales of the Crusaders* (*The Talisman*), streamed from his pen with a rapidity as wonderful as their general merits were great. The public read with delight, and Scott was happy to pipe to a dance which led to such solid results for his own benefit. Generally, the first burst of sale called for ten thousand copies, after which the books continued to go off in large numbers in handsome collective reprints. In 1819, Messrs Constable and Company agreed to give him, for the copy-

right of the novels published up to that time, and certain shares of poetical copyrights, the sum of £12,000. Two years later, the same booksellers purchased for five thousand guineas the remaining copyright of four succeeding novels—little more than a year's work—from which the author had already drawn £10,000. After another similar interval, the author received five thousand guineas for other four novels, which likewise had previously yielded him half profits. Scott spoke of these sums with triumph and pleasure, as wonderful prices for what he was pleased to call his *yeld kye*—that is, cows which have ceased to give milk. Such a matter of successful authorship was a surprising novelty in its day.

Nor was the author alone blessed by the pecuniary productiveness of the Waverley Novels. We find the Edinburgh theatrical manager realising £3000 by the brilliant run of the drama formed from *Rob Roy*. A painter received £300 for sketches to illustrate a section of the tales. If we reflect on the facility with which Scott could write these novels—devoting to them merely the mornings of a life full of other business and of amusement—we can hardly be surprised to learn that he thought nothing of entering into engagements with Constable and Company for producing four novels, not one line of which had then been written, nor even the leading theme determined on.

Nor was it wonderful that he should have gradually been tempted to build additions to his house on Tweedside till it became the architectural romance which it now is, and fitted to receive and entertain a large assortment of company. The house of Abbotsford, where Sir Walter Scott chiefly spent the last twenty years of his life, may be assumed as the centre of a great part of that region which we have

styled *his*. This 'romance in stone and lime,' as some Frenchman termed it, is situated on the south bank of the Tweed, at that part of its course where the river bursts forth from the mountainous region of the Forest into the more open country of Roxburghshire, two or three miles above the abbey of Melrose, and six-and-thirty from Edinburgh. Though upon a small scale, the Gothic battlements and turrets have a good effect, and would have a still better, if the site of the house were not somewhat straitened by the bank rising above it, and by the too close neighbourhood of the public road.

All around Abbotsford, and what gave it a great part of its value in his eyes, are the scenes commemorated in Border history, and tradition, and song. The property itself comprises the spot on which the last feudal battle was fought in this part of the country. The abbeys of Melrose and Dryburgh, the latter of which now contains the revered dust of the minstrel; the Eildon Hills, renowned in the annals of superstition; Selkirk, whose brave burghers won glory in the field where so much was lost by others, namely, at Flodden; Ettrick Forest, with its lone and storied dales; and Yarrow, whose stream and 'dowie dens' are not to be surveyed without involuntary poetry—are all in the near neighbourhood of the spot. The love, the deep, heartfelt love which Scott bore to the land which contains these places, was such as no stranger can appreciate. It was a passion absorbing many others which might have been expected to hold sway over him, and it survived to the last.

Scott was social and good-natured; to see him and his mansion was an object of ambition to half the public, including the highest persons in the land. He was thus led, during the seven months of the year which he spent

in the country, to be the host of so many persons of every kind, that his wife spoke of the house as a hotel in all but the name. Not that he would have voluntarily indulged in any undue expense on this account, if he had been in limited circumstances; but believing himself to be able to afford it, benevolence gave her irresistible dictate that he should thus make himself the servant of the public, even at the expense of much personal inconvenience to himself and his family. It is stated in Lockhart's biography that sixteen uninvited parties came in one day to Abbotsford. These would pass quickly away; but fashionable tourists, some of them of high rank, came in scarcely smaller shoals, to stay one or two days. A lady reported to us, from the conversation of Miss Anne Scott, the younger daughter of Sir Walter, that on one occasion there were *thirteen ladies'-maids* in the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

BARONETCY—THE KING'S VISIT TO SCOTLAND.

IN 1820, Scott was made a baronet. The honour was unsolicited, and he considered himself as accepting it, partly because it was gratifying to his family, and partly with a view to the interests of his eldest son, who had entered a hussar regiment. If he had any enjoyment of the honour in his own breast, it probably arose from no common worldly vanity, but from its touching on some string of romantic feeling amongst those to whom we owe his delightful works. Though now a *laird* and a man of title, as well as looked up to by all who reverenced intellectual

distinction, he was no whit different from what he had been in his younger days, when content with love and a cottage at Lasswade. His personal tastes and habits, his bearing to his friends, his familiarity with the poor and lowly, remained the same. As Wilkes is said to have never been a Wilkite, so Scott never, to any appearance, joined the opinion which the world entertained about him as an author. He spoke of his labours in this manner to Southey: 'Dallying with time—tossing my ball and driving my hoop.' Such men as Davy and Watt he considered as the true honour of his age and country. 'Scott,' writes Lockhart, 'never considered any amount of literary distinction as entitled to be spoken of in the same breath with mastery in the higher departments of practical life. . . . To have done things worthy to be written was, in his eyes, a dignity to which no man made any approach, who had only written things worthy to be read.'

At home, in the bosom of his family, when the world would let him alone, he was the most simple and kindly of associates. As he walked about his grounds, he conversed freely and easily with his servants and the peasantry, amongst whom he was an object of the deepest reverence and affection. Often would this illustrious man work half a day at the felling of trees in his woods, beside several workmen, trying which could cut down one with the fewest blows, and laughing heartily when he was victor. He delighted to walk in the evening towards the house of an aged servant, that he might hear the psalm which the old man was raising with his wife, as they conducted their evening devotions. One of his retinue said to a visitor one day: 'Sir Walter speaks to every man as if they were blood-relations.' It was not a condescending kind of talk he indulged in with these people. He entered into their

feelings and tastes, and, speaking their own homely dialect, witched them out of the idea that a master or a laird was before them.

The year 1822 was a somewhat memorable one in Scott's life, on account of the concern he had to take in the arrangements necessary on the occasion of the king's visit to Scotland. The external character of this piece of pageantry was much determined by that revival of national and medieval associations which the novels had effected. Everywhere we were reminded of the Stuarts in Holyrood, and the plaided clansmen on their mountains. Feelings due towards the romantic kings of an elder day were expended, often ludicrously, on the battered beau of Carlton House and St James's Street. Amidst the delirium of the time, the man chiefly concerned in giving it a peculiar character moved in perfect possession of his wonderful powers of management, dictating or advising in the principal doings, and attending to the minutest details of many of them. The king afterwards expressed, both formally and in private, his deep sense of obligation to Scott for what he had done to make this visit pass off well. The affair is interesting for the proof it gives of the business genius of Scott, and his qualifications for the affairs of the world. Assuredly never was high imagination united with so many of the soberest mental qualities as in his instance.

[The author of this little volume has given the following account of the manner in which he became acquainted with Scott. 'When not out of my teens, I attracted some attention from Sir Walter Scott, by writing for him and presenting him (through Mr Constable) a transcript of the songs of the *Lady of the Lake*, in a style of peculiar caligraphy' [resembling small print], 'which I practised for want of any way of attracting the notice of people superior to

myself. When George IV., some months afterwards, came to Edinburgh' [August 1822], 'good Sir Walter remembered me, and procured for me the business of writing the address of the Royal Society of Edinburgh to His Majesty, for which I was handsomely paid. Several other learned bodies followed the example, for Sir Walter was the arbiter of everything during that frantic time, and thus I was substantially benefited by his means.

'According to what Mr Constable told me, the great man liked me, in part, because he understood I was from Tweedside. On seeing the earlier numbers of the *Traditions*' [1823], 'he expressed astonishment as to "where a boy got all the information." But I did not see or hear from him till the first volume had been completed. He then called upon me one day, along with Mr Lockhart. I was overwhelmed with the honour, for Sir Walter was almost an object of worship to me. I literally could not utter a word. While I stood silent, I heard him tell his companion that Charles Sharpe was a writer in the *Traditions*. A few days after this visit, Sir Walter sent me, along with a kind letter, a packet of manuscript, consisting of sixteen folio pages, in his usual close handwriting, and containing all the reminiscences he could at that time summon up of old persons and things in Edinburgh. Such a treasure to me! And such a gift from the greatest literary man of the age to the humblest! Is there a literary man of the present age who would scribble as much for any humble aspirant? Nor was this the only act of liberality of Scott to me. When I was preparing a subsequent work, *The Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, he sent me whole sheets of his recollections, with appropriate explanations. For years thereafter, he allowed me to join him in his walks home from the Parliament House, in the course of which he freely

poured into my greedy ears anything he knew regarding the subjects of my studies. His kindness and good-humour on these occasions were untiring. I have since found, from his journal, that I had met him on certain days when his heart was overladen with woe. Yet, his welcome to me was the same. After 1826, however, I saw him much less frequently than before, for I knew he grudged every moment not spent in thinking and working on the fatal tasks he had assigned to himself for the redemption of his debts.'

It was in one of their walks through the Old Town that Scott pointed out the place of his birth to Robert Chambers; also the little old school in Hamilton's Entry where he had received some of his rudimentary instruction. On another occasion, he showed him the house once occupied by Dr Daniel Rutherford at the foot of Hyndford's Close, where he had often been when a boy. It was a fine antique edifice, reputed to have been the residence of the Earl of Selkirk in 1742. Latterly, it had undergone some changes, with a new entrance from the Mint Close, and formed the residence of a Roman Catholic clergyman, in connection with a neighbouring chapel. Sir Walter communicated to Robert Chambers a curious circumstance connected with this old mansion. 'It appears that the house immediately adjacent was not furnished with a stair wide enough to allow a coffin being carried down in decent fashion. It had, therefore, what the Scottish law calls a *servitude* upon Dr Rutherford's house, conferring the perpetual liberty of bringing the deceased inmates through a passage into that house, and down its stair into the lane.]

His qualifications as a man of the world shone in various functions which he consented to assume about this time, as the presidency of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, that

of an antiquarian book-printing association called the Bannatyne Club, the chairmanship of an oil-gas factory, and so forth. He had no inclination to thrust himself into such situations, but having been drawn into them, he set about the business which they involved with all the requisite zeal, and with a marvellous amount of skill, good temper, and judgment. The common-sense and sagacity which he exhibited in the performance of these duties, form, perhaps, a greater distinction between Scott and the generality of literary men than even his transcendent genius.

He had at this time, when the writer of these pages first knew him, the appearance of a respectable elderly country-gentleman. Tall, robust, and rather handsome in person, he was deformed by the shortness of his right limb, the foot of which only touched the ground at the toes, while he rocked from side to side on the support of a stout walking-cane, which he moved along with the foot, and put down at the same time. While living in town, he wore a common black suit; in the country, he had gray trousers, a short green jacket, and a white hat. The public is made familiar with his face by numberless portraits; it is only necessary to mention that at this time it was ruddy with the glow of health, and at the same time somewhat venerable from his thin gray hair. The countenance and quick gray eye usually had a common-world expression, but of a benevolent kind. All was changed, however, when he told anything serious, or recited a piece of ballad poetry; he then seemed to become a being of a totally different grade and sphere. A visitor to Abbotsford, seeing how much Scott's time was occupied with lion-hunters and with his work-people, asked him how he was ever able to write while in the country. 'I know,' he said, 'that you contrive to get a few hours in your own room, and that may do for the mere pen-work;

but when is it that you think?' 'Oh,' said Scott, 'I lie simmering over things for an hour or so before I get up, and there is the time I am dressing to overhaul my half-sleeping, half-waking *projet de chapitre*, and when I get the paper before me, it commonly runs off pretty easily. Besides, I often take a doze in the plantations, and while Tom marks out a dyke or a drain as I have directed, one's fancy may be running its ain riggs in some other world.'

It has been hinted that Scott's eldest son, Walter, had become an officer in a hussar regiment. This youth, in 1825, wedded a young heiress, Miss Jobson, much to the satisfaction of his father, who, in the marriage-contract, placed against the young lady's fortune a settlement of the estate of Abbotsford upon his son, reserving only his own liferent. He declared that he thus parted with the property of his lands with more pleasure than he ever derived from the acquisition or possession of them. He at the same time expended £3500 in purchasing a company for his son. It was now that the great poet might be considered as at the height of his fortunes. His career had hitherto been an almost uninterrupted series of prosperous and happy events; he had risen from the briefless barrister to the head of the literary world, a title, and the possession of a landed fortune, with the prospect of leaving a race of gentry to follow him. Alas! even while thus triumphantly exalted, the ground was hollow beneath his feet, and a sad prostration was approaching.

Keeping this reverse for its proper place, it is right here to mention that the novels had fallen off somewhat in popularity since *The Monastery*. The author was not made aware of this fact; but he nevertheless felt the necessity of varying his themes as much as possible, in order to preserve

the public favour. Hence his shifting ground to England and France, and his attempt, in *St Ronan's Well*, to depict the society of the modern world. Latterly, he bethought him that history was a field of some promise, and he was disposed to enter it.

It was now (June 1825) that Mr Constable, moved by some examples of popular publishing in London, adopted the idea that that trade had never been conducted on right principles, seeing that it sought customers only in the more affluent classes, while the masses were left to regard books as luxuries beyond their reach. He projected a periodical issue of volumes, at a comparatively low price, to consist of reprints of approved copyright works belonging to his house, mingled with original works; and claiming and obtaining the support of Scott, it was arranged that the Waverley Novels should reappear in this cheap form, alternated at starting with the volumes of a *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, to be composed for the purpose by the same author. Thus was Scott set down, in 1825, to the history of one whose career he had beheld, while it lasted, with the strongest sentiments of reprobation and hatred, feeling, as he did, that the French emperor was the public enemy of England in the first place, and all Europe in the second. It was at first intended that the work should consist of four volumes, or less than a half of what it ultimately became. Just before going seriously into his task, he paid a visit to his son in Ireland, where he was received and entertained with the greatest enthusiasm by all classes—to his own surprise, as he had regarded the Irish as not a reading people. The contrast between the elegant mansions of the gentry in which he lived, with the misery of the houses of the general population, awoke painful feelings in his mind; but upon the whole, he much enjoyed his tour in Ireland.

In the later part of 1825, a second domestic change took place. His eldest daughter, Sophia, had been married in 1820 to Mr J. G. Lockhart, a young barrister, destined to be the biographer of his father-in-law, and editor of the *Quarterly Review*. Hitherto, the young couple had lived in his immediate neighbourhood, both in town and country. He delighted in the ballads which Mrs Lockhart sang to him with the accompaniment of her harp; he found Mr Lockhart a useful adviser in literary matters, and a most agreeable companion; and he felt the tenderest interest in their eldest child, called John Hugh, or, familiarly, 'Hugh Littlejohn,' whose fatal delicacy of constitution only heightened the affection he was otherwise fitted to excite. In consequence of an offer of the editorship of the *Quarterly Review*, Mr Lockhart removed to London with his family, by which Scott's family circle was of course much contracted. This, however, was but a trifling evil compared with others which were about to befall the hitherto fortunate author of *Waverley*.

CHAPTER IX.

MISFORTUNES BRAVELY BORNE.

THE years 1824 and 1825 were distinguished by an extraordinary mania for speculation, the consequence of which was, that, towards the close of the latter year, a scarcity of money began to be generally felt. A tightening of this kind always of course tells severely upon men who have been keeping up their trade by means of fictitious bills; and of this class, it now appeared, were Archibald Constable and Company. The leading member of this firm

had been fortunate in the proprietorship of the *Edinburgh Review*, and the publishing of many of the works of Scott. Naturally grand in his ideas, and of an aspiring temper, at the same time that he despised, and in practice wholly overlooked, common mercantile calculations, he had come to conduct business in a manner which usually leads to ruin. We have seen that the bookselling concern of Scott —John Ballantyne and Company—was indebted to him for some important assistance in enabling it to wind up; the printing concern—James Ballantyne and Company—was also indebted to him for a vast amount of business; while Scott, more personally, was so imprudent as to take bill payments from him for works as yet unwritten, that he might help out his equally imprudent purchases of land. By these means, it came about very naturally that the name of James Ballantyne and Company—that is, Sir Walter Scott—was lent to Constable and Company for the raising of large sums amongst the banks. Scott, venerating the supposed sagacity of Constable, recked not of the danger of this traffic. Constable himself, inflated with a high sense of the literary property and stock which he held, regarded himself as a rich man, notwithstanding the large borrowings to which he condescended. James Ballantyne, venerating both, easy of nature, and unprepared by education or habit to keep a rigid supervision over business matters, gave no alarm regarding the immense compromise of his own and his friend's name.

These explanations serve so far; for what more is necessary, it must, we fear, be admitted that the whole group of persons concerned in the poems and novels, including the mighty Magician himself, were naturally enough intoxicated to a certain degree by a literary success so infinitely exceeding all precedent. All of them, except-

ing James Ballantyne, had lived in an expensive manner. Scott himself had gone in this respect a good way beyond what prudence dictated, though it is also very certain that if his writings had been published under reasonably favourable circumstances for the realisation of profit, he might have bought land, and kept house as he did, without injury to anybody. All, moreover, had been culpably negligent about accounts and bargainings—Scott ridiculously so, to his own injury, as there appears no good reason for his dividing the six or eight thousand pounds realised by the first issues of his novels with his booksellers, to whom a commission on sales would have been remuneration sufficient. There was, however, at that time a much more loose and heedless fashion in most business affairs than now prevails, and this requires that some allowance should be made with regard to individual cases. So it was that one of the firmest, and, generally speaking, most sagacious men of his time, discovered, in the course of January 1826, that he was involved in obligations far exceeding the extent of his whole fortune—was, in short, a ruined man.

On the 18th December 1825, fearing bad news of Constable's affairs, he says, in a diary which he kept—and surely few more touching words have ever fallen from any man's pen—'Men will think pride has had a fall. Let them indulge their own pride in thinking that my fall will make them higher, or seem so at least. I have the satisfaction to recollect that my prosperity has been of advantage to many, and to hope that some at least will forgive my transient wealth, on account of the innocence of my intentions, and my real wish to do good to the poor. Sad hearts, too, at Darnick, and in the cottages of Abbotsford. I have half resolved never to see the place again. How could I tread my hall with such a diminished crest?—how live a poor

indebted man, where I was once the wealthy, the honoured? I was to have gone there on Saturday, in joy and prosperity, to receive my friends. My dogs will wait for me in vain. It is foolish—but the thoughts of parting from these dumb creatures have moved me more than any of the painful reflections I have put down. Poor things! I must get them kind masters. There may be yet those who, loving me, may love my dog, because it has been mine. I must end these gloomy forebodings, or I shall lose the tone of mind with which men should meet distress. I feel my dogs' feet on my knees—I hear them whining and seeking me everywhere. This is nonsense, but it is what they would do could they know how things are. Poor Will Laidlaw! poor Tom Purdie! this will be news to wring your heart, and many a poor fellow's besides, to whom my prosperity was daily bread.'

The evil day had not yet come in all its reality. Mr Constable went to London, to endeavour to raise money on the copyrights he possessed, in order to put over the difficulties. Moderate-minded men of the present day read, as of something belonging to a different state of society, of this 'Napoleon of the realms of print' seriously expecting to raise one or two hundred thousand pounds on the pledge of his copyrights, one large section of which afterwards, at a fair auction, brought only £8500; his whole property being such as only in the long-run to pay 2s. 9d. a pound upon debts amounting to £256,000. Having utterly failed in raising money on any terms amongst those who deal in it, he induced Scott to advance him ten thousand, which the Laird of Abbotsford was only able to do by acting upon a right he had reserved in his son's marriage-contract to borrow that sum on the security of his estate, for the benefit of his younger children. And this last sacrifice for

Mr Constable, he afterwards, very naturally, grudged more than all the rest. It was on the 17th of January 1826 that Scott finally ascertained the ruin of his affairs. 'It was hard, after having fought such a battle,' as he says in his diary; but he sustained the first shock with Roman firmness. When his friend Skene called, he found Scott writing in his study. He rose and said: 'My friend, give me a shake of your hand—mine is that of a beggar.' His resolution was immediately taken, to accept of no grace from his creditors beyond time. 'God grant me health and strength,' he said in deep solemnity to his several friends, 'and I will yet pay every man his due.' To Skene he said at another time: 'Woe's me, I much mistrust my vigour, for the best of my energies are already expended. . . . Do you know, I experience a sort of determined pleasure in confronting the very worst aspect of this sudden reverse —in standing, as it were, in the breach that has overtaken my fortunes, and saying, Here I stand, at least an honest man. And God knows, if I have enemies, this I may at least with truth say, that I have never wittingly given cause of enmity in the whole course of my life, for even the burnings of political hate seemed to find nothing in my nature to feed the flame. I am not conscious of having borne a grudge towards any man, and at this moment of my overthrow, I wish well and feel kindly to every one. And if I thought that any of my works contained a sentence hurtful to any one's feelings, I would burn it.'

To those marvellous powers which he had exerted for the purpose of buying land and keeping state, he trusted for the means of clearing off the tremendous encumbrance which had fallen upon him. At the same time, *state* was to be given wholly up. He resolved to sell his house in Edinburgh, and use a common lodging while obliged to attend his duties in

the Court of Session. At other times he would join his family in strict retirement at Abbotsford, which obviously could have been put to no better use. There was no bravado in all this—nothing but a good, sound, honest resolution to redeem the painful obligations into which his imprudence had hurried him. In the same frame of mind, he declined many offers of money made to him by friends.

He was engaged at the time of his misfortunes in writing the *Life of Bonaparte*, taking up his new novel of *Woodstock* at intervals by way of relief. These tasks he continued with steady perseverance in the midst of all his distresses. Even on the day which brought him assurance of the grand catastrophe, he resumed in the afternoon the task which had engaged him in the morning. There was more triumph over circumstances here than might be supposed, for he had lately begun to feel the first touches of the infirmities of age—age, to which ease, not hard work, is naturally appropriate. His sleep was now less sound than it had been; his eyesight was failing; and, above all, he felt that backwardness of the intellectual power which is inseparable from years. The will, however, was green as ever, and, under the prompting of an honourable spirit, it did its work nobly. Doggedly, doggedly did this glorious old man rouse himself from his melancholy couch, and set to his task at an hour when gaiety has little more than sought his. Firmly did he keep to his desk during long hours, till he could satisfy himself that he had done his utmost. The temptations of society, the more insinuating claims of an overworked system for rest, were alike resolutely rejected. The world must ever hear with wonder, that between the third day after his bankruptcy and the fifteenth day thereafter, he had written a volume of *Woodstock*, although several of these days had been spent in

comparative vacancy, to allow the imagination time for brooding. He believed that, for a bet, he could have written this volume *in ten days!* Just a fortnight after his final breach with fortune, he says in his Journal: 'I have now no pecuniary provisions to embarrass me, and I think, now the shock of the discovery is past and over, I am much better off on the whole. . . . I shall be free of a hundred petty public duties imposed on me as a man of consideration—of the expense of a great hospitality—and, what is better, of the waste of time connected with it. I have known in my day all kinds of society, and can pretty well estimate how much or how little one loses by retiring from all but that which is very intimate. . . . If I could see those about me as indifferent to the loss of rank as I am, I should be completely happy. As it is, time must salve that sore, and to time I trust it.' With such philosophy could Scott regard his reverses, even in the very crisis of their occurrence, and yet from many other passages we find a keen sensibility to the circumstances of his downfall. It was rectitude of mind, and not stoicism, which enabled him to rise above his misfortunes. Nothing, indeed, of sensibility appeared in his external demeanour, even to his children. To them, as to the world, it must have been a lost secret, but for his Journal.

Early in spring, the ministry made an effort to correct the unsound state of things which had led to the late fatal mania, by attempting to pass a bill for the limitation of bank circulation. It was determined to suppress all notes under five pounds. In Scotland, where there is a vast faith in the utility of one-pound bank-notes, and no other circulation is so much liked, this measure was very unpopular. By the banks it was regarded as fraught with ruin to their interests. Scott, who had disapproved of some recent

changes affecting old Scottish institutions, and whose mind, serene as it was, perhaps required some kind of vent for its own vexations, was led to take a strong, perhaps exaggerated view of this question, under which he wrote three letters, in the character of Malachi Malagrowther, originally published in a newspaper, afterwards as a pamphlet. His great humour and fund of droll anecdote gave wings to this production, and helped to rouse the Scottish people to an attitude of resistance, to which, in the long-run, the ministry gave way. The affair presented Scott in a new light—namely, as one setting himself up against authority, and appealing to popular sentiment on the adverse side. The public was somewhat surprised; the ministers, some of whom were his friends, felt hurt at opposition from such a quarter; and there was actually some dryness between him and Lord Melville for a short time. The explanation is, that Scott never was a servile friend of power, but one only as far as his view of what was good for the country led him; and there was a manliness and independence in his character which admitted of no hesitation about a course, when he saw only men on the one side, and the land of his birth on the other. It is gratifying to think that Scott lost no friendship by his conduct on this occasion, beyond a temporary coldness on the part of a few persons.

The novel of *Woodstock* came rapidly to completion, and, early in April, the first edition of it was sold in the printed sheets for £8228, in itself a proof that the author might all along have had a better market for his works if he had chosen. This was a cheering omen of what he was to do for his creditors. Removing at the close of the winter session to Abbotsford, he continued there his habits of application with unabated vigour, although, as appears from the diary, not without some battlings between duty and

inclination. The daily amount of work he set to himself in the writing of Napoleon's life was four sheets of manuscript a day, making about twenty-four of the printed pages. We find him on one occasion finishing this before noon—a surprising effort, considering that reference to his authorities or materials must have often been necessary during the progress of the work. At the same time he commenced another work of fiction, a series of tales, entitled *Chronicles of the Canongate*, for he felt the one task as a relief to the other.

He now of course received no company at his rural retreat. Only a few intimate friends of his neighbourhood occasionally joined the family circle. It was a melancholy spring to one whose life in the country had hitherto been a constant holiday. To add to his griefs, the health of his wife had sunk to a low pitch. His kind-hearted Charlotte died on the 16th of May, of water in the chest, the end being somewhat accelerated by the late disasters. Scott, absent at the moment on duty in Edinburgh, quickly hurried home. The event itself, and the grief of his younger daughter on the occasion, powerfully affected him. He thus communes with himself in his Journal: 'It would have been inexpressibly moving to me as a stranger—what was it, then, to the father and the husband! For myself, I scarce know how I feel—sometimes as firm as the Bass Rock, sometimes as weak as the water that breaks on it. I am as alert at thinking and deciding as I ever was in my life. Yet, when I contrast what this place now is with what it has been not long since, I think my heart will break. Lonely, aged, deprived of my family—all but poor Anne; an impoverished, an embarrassed man, deprived of the sharer of my thoughts and counsels, who could always talk down my sense of the calamitous apprehensions which

break the heart that must bear them alone. Even her foibles were of service to me, by giving me things to think of beyond my weary self-reflections.'

Allowing himself little rest for the indulgence of grief, he quickly resumed, or rather hardly interrupted, his usual employments. Between the 12th of June and the 12th of August he wrote the fourth volume of *Napoleon*, besides a portion of his novel. Thus he wrought all the summer, and part of the autumn, till it was found necessary that he should pay a visit to London and Paris, in order to consult documents necessary for *Napoleon*. This journey occupied six weeks, and perhaps was useful as a rally to his spirits. It is hardly necessary to say that, with high and low, wherever he went, he was an object of as cordial admiration and interest as ever. The king, the Duke of Wellington, and many other eminent persons, paid him marked attentions. In France, he was treated with no less distinction. Public papers in both countries were placed at his disposal without reserve; and in London he obtained an assurance that his second son, Charles, would be employed in the diplomatic department.

The Waverley secret had of course been much blown upon, in consequence of the insolvency of the author; yet some obscurity still rested on the point. It was dispelled in February of next year, at a dinner for the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund, where Scott presided; for he there gratified the audience with a distinct avowal that he was the sole author of that series of fictions. It is now known that the mystery was confided to about twenty persons, all of whom had so respected the charge, that no evidence for Scott as the author had ever come before the public.

The spring of 1827 was past, and summer had gone to June, ere Scott's great task was completed. He then finished

the last volume of his *Life of Napoleon*, which he had been engaged upon for about two years, but had actually written in scarcely more than a twelvemonth of continuous time. The paper and print of the first and second editions, in nine volumes, brought the creditors £18,000—an amount of gain, in relation to amount of labour, unexampled in the history of literature. The book was unfortunate in its excessive length; and, written in such haste, it could not be expected to be very perfect, either in style or in facts. Yet it made a tolerably fair impression on the public. The contrast between the manner of its composition and that of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon's works is startling. All of these narratives were the study and the production of years. It had never till now entered the head of man to think of a great historical task being executed in a twelvemonth. The last-century historians filed and polished their writings sentence by sentence—Scott did not once reperuse the matter which had flowed from his pen. And all this labour had been performed in the midst of grief and shaken health, and without interfering with official duties, one of which called for several hours a day during five months of the twelve.

CHAPTER X.

'TALES OF A GRANDFATHER'—MARVELLOUS INDUSTRY.

IMMEDIATELY on concluding *Napoleon*, he commenced his delightful *Tales of a Grandfather;* presenting a selection of the most striking points from the Scottish chroniclers, in a style designed to suit the intelligence of his grandson, 'Hugh Littlejohn.' This he carried on alternately

with his *Chronicles of the Canongate*, the first series of which appeared early in the ensuing winter, and was well, though not brilliantly received. He underwent at this period some harassment from a Jewish London house, holding one of Constable and Company's bills for £2000. With a view to forcing payment by some means, they threatened Scott with arrest; and he actually contemplated at one moment resorting to that sanctuary (Holyrood), in which he placed his imaginary hero, Chrystal Croftangry. At length the vexation was taken off his head by Sir William Forbes, the leading member of a banking company who were amongst his chief creditors. This generous man paid the sum out of his own pocket, without letting Scott suppose but that it was arranged for by the body of creditors. It is pleasant to know that Scott unconsciously underwent several obligations of this nature on the part of other old friends.

The first series of the *Tales of a Grandfather* appeared before the end of 1827, and was hailed with more rapture than any work of his for several years. This was the date of another happy circumstance of a more important kind. The copyrights of his novels and of a large proportion of his poetical writings being presented for sale by Constable and Company's creditors, a purchase of them was made for £8500, on the part of his own creditors as half-sharers, while the other half belonged to Mr Robert Cadell, a member of Constable's late house, now in business by himself. It was designed that the novels should be republished by Cadell in a comparatively cheap form, with notes and prefaces by the author, and illustrations. It was hoped that the share of profits due to his creditors would tell materially to the reduction of the debts; and this hope was more than realised. Meanwhile, a first dividend was

paid to these gentlemen from the aggregate gains of Scott's pen during the past two years, amounting very nearly to the unheard-of sum of £40,000. Such were the first-fruits of that hardy industry which he had determined to exert for the redemption of his credit and good name.

Scott's conduct and demeanour towards his old associates in business affairs becomes a matter of some importance, as it too oftens happens that commercial adversity introduces wrath into such fraternities. It is pleasant to relate, that even towards Mr Constable, who had been the cause of so much loss, he maintained a friendly bearing. He did not, indeed, shut his eyes to the new view he had obtained of Mr Constable's character as a man of business; but though he could trust no longer, he was far from hardening his heart. One thing he felt sorely—his last advance for Constable when in the jaws of ruin. Nor was it a soothing circumstance that the bookseller had endeavoured to get his credit for £20,000 more, which would have only been an additional loss at the speedy and inevitable day of reckoning. Still, he was willing to regard all this as only the effect of sanguine calculations; and accordingly all his expressions regarding the fallen publisher, both in his diary and his letters, are of a mild and even kindly tenor. Mr Cadell, on the other hand, had secured Sir Walter's esteem and confidence by an honest warning which he gave as to the above £20,000. From the first, he determined to befriend this member of the late house in preference to the other. With regard to James Ballantyne, Scott told him, on the very day when ruin was declared, that he would never forsake him. Mr Ballantyne now conducted business on his own account, and was honoured with the steady friendship and patronage of his old schoolfellow, as of yore.

On the other hand, the conduct of Scott's immediate dependents had been highly creditable. Deeply attached, in consequence of his long-enduring kindness, all were anxious to remain, if possible, about his person. His butler, Dalgleish, said he would take any or no wages, but go he would not. His coachman, Peter Matheson, went to work with his horses at the plough, glad to the core that he was allowed to remain at Abbotsford on such terms.

The spring of 1828 gave the world *The Fair Maid of Perth*, his last popular novel. He then indulged in a little relaxation, by spending a few weeks in London, in the enjoyment of Mr and Mrs Lockhart's society, as well as that of many attached friends. We have at this time a valuable addition to that testimony to his temper which the second last paragraph affords. He had some years before engaged his credit for £1200 in favour of his friend Daniel Terry the actor, who was then undertaking the management of the Adelphi Theatre. Being now informed of the ruin of Mr Terry's affairs, he wrote him a letter, in which the following passage occurs: 'For my part, I feel as little title, as God knows I have the wish, to make any reflections on the matter, beyond the most sincere regret on your own account. The sum for which I stand noted in the schedule is of no consequence in the now more favourable condition of my affairs. . . . I told your solicitor that I desired he would consider me as a friend of yours, desirous to take, as a creditor, the measures which seemed best to forward your interest.' These are precious things to put into a biography; but they do not exhaust the list. Even while drudging so hard for the means of diminishing his own encumbrances, he is found pretty frequently composing and giving away a paper for the benefit of some unfortunate man of letters, little regarding, perhaps, the strict merits of

the object of his bounty. One of the most remarkable of these benefactions consisted in his allowing the publication of two religious discourses for the benefit of a young man endeared to him by misfortune as well as merit. This publication yielded £250, a sum which few literary men would allow to pass from their own pockets in such a manner.

A great part of his time was now taken up with the new writing connected with the popular edition of his works; yet before the end of 1828 he had advanced a good way with a new novel, the ground of which he laid in Switzerland, notwithstanding his being acquainted with the scenery of that country only by description and engravings. His mind was now in a more cheerful mood regarding his affairs than it had been since the dreadful January 1826; and if he had been free of various ailments, inclusive of rheumatism, caught from a damp bed in France, he might have enjoyed his life in the country almost as heartily as ever. Suffer as he might, perseverance at his desk was a fixed principle with him. Of this we have a striking trait in his finishing *Anne of Geierstein* before breakfast one morning, and commencing, as soon as the meal was over, a *History of Scotland*, for Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopædia*.

When in London in 1828, he writes in his Journal: 'Dined by command with the Duchess of Kent. I was very kindly recognised by Prince Leopold. I was presented to the little Princess Victoria—I hope they will change her name—the heir-apparent to the Crown as things now stand. How strange that so large and fine a family as that of his late majesty should have died off and decayed into old age with so few descendants! Prince George of Cumberland is, they say, a fine boy about nine years old—a bit of a pickle, swears and romps like a brat that has been bred in a barrack-yard. This little lady is educated

with much care, and watched so closely by the Duchess and the principal governess that no busy maid has a moment to whisper—"You are heir of England." I suspect if we could dissect the little head we should find that some pigeon or other bird of the air had carried the matter. She is fair, like the Royal Family, but does not look as if she would be pretty. The Duchess herself is very pleasing and affable in her manner.

Being much admired abroad, Scott was constantly receiving presents of various kinds. One of these was amusing. He had done some service for a gentleman who had settled in New South Wales, and who consequently thought it proper to bring Scott home a couple of emus. 'I wish,' says Scott, 'his gratitude had taken a different turn, or remained as quiescent as that of others whom I have obliged more materially. I at first accepted the creatures, conceiving them, in my ignorance, to be some sort of blue and green parrot, which, though I do not admire their noise, might scream and yell at their pleasure if hung up in the hall among the armour. But your emu, it seems, stands six feet high in his stocking soles, and is little better than a kind of cassowary or ostrich. Hang them! they might eat up my collection of old arms for what I know. No! I'll no emuses!'

The prospectus of what he called his *opus magnum*—namely, the re-issue of the Waverley Novels—came out in February 1829, and was so well received that an edition of 10,000 seemed the least he could throw off, a number which in those days appeared immense. When the book was published, it was quickly found that this edition would be quite insufficient to supply the public demand. In short, the sale of the early volumes was not under 35,000. This was of course magnificent success, and

afforded the prognostic of a much quicker and more easy settlement of the debts than had been anticipated. The volumes were sold at five shillings. It was easy to see that, when a certain section of the public had been supplied at that rate, a still cheaper edition might be issued with benefit to all concerned. Thus it might be hoped that Sir Walter would in time rest a free man, with little help from his own immediate exertions. His heart rebounded at the prospect; and he even glanced at the possibility of adding to his son's estate before he died. The public, too, had their visions on the subject, and, under the idea that his embarrassments were, comparatively speaking, at an end, the old stream of tourists and friend-visitors began once more to pour into Abbotsford. The only drawback was in his infirm and failing health.

The death of Tom Purdie, his forester and friend, was a great blow to him in the autumn of 1829. William Laidlaw, who was with him at the time, remarked: 'Kindness of heart is positively the reigning quality of Sir Walter's character.'

CHAPTER XI.

FAILING HEALTH—TRAVELS ON THE CONTINENT—DEATH AND FUNERAL AT DRYBURGH.

IN February 1830 he experienced the first decidedly bad symptom, in an attack of an apoplectic nature, which caused him to fall speechless and insensible on the floor. This, it seems, was a hereditary affection in his family, and it therefore gave him the greater apprehension, though his physicians were of opinion that the attack proceeded

from the stomach. On still went the pen of the ready writer, now engaged on a volume of *Demonology* for Murray's *Family Library*. To obtain even more time for literary taskwork, he now resigned his clerkship on a retiring allowance of £800 a year, and went to fix himself at Abbotsford as a permanent residence. It was an injudicious step, as it deprived him of the society of most of his old friends, and threw him more and more upon that taskwork which had already been prosecuted only too zealously. His friends, Cadell and Ballantyne, were now sensible that he had carried his zeal for the discharge of his debts too far, and would have fain restricted him to lighter duty; but it was difficult to deal with a mind acting under such powerful impulses. Greatly against their wishes, he commenced a new novel, styled *Count Robert of Paris*, which, when it appeared, showed very clearly how glory had departed from him. He also embroiled his mind in the politics of the crisis then passing, and wrote a long pamphlet against the reforming measures of the day, which afterwards he was induced to suppress.

Amidst the vexations arising to him from public affairs, one ray of pleasure visited him when his creditors (December 1830) presented him with his library, furniture, plate, and articles of virtu, considered as equivalent to £10,000, thus enabling him to make a provision for the younger branches of his family. These gentlemen were led to this act of generosity by their sense of his unparalleled exertions in their behalf. Their claims against Scott had now been reduced to £54,000, and as he had insured £22,000 upon his life in their favour, and the Waverley Novels were continuing to produce large returns, all doubt of the ultimate discharge of the claims had ceased. About this time, the honour of being made a member of the Privy-

council was offered to him, but peremptorily declined, as unsuitable to his circumstances.

In November of the past year, Scott had had another slight stroke of apoplexy. He lived in the most sparing manner, yet this did not prevent his being seized with a distinct paralytic affection in April 1831. From this he recovered, by the care of a good surgeon, in a few days, and was then placed, by way of caution, upon extremely low diet, which, however, he did not always adhere to. He was now extremely infirm in walking, and, from heedlessness, often tumbled over articles of furniture or other impediments. The desire to be writing continued, nevertheless, in full vigour as a ruling passion. Here, however, he was destined to receive a shock more terrible to him than bodily illness, when his friends, Cadell and Ballantyne, felt it right to tell him that his tale of *Count Robert of Paris* was, in their opinion, an entire failure. 'The blow is a stunning one, I suppose'—thus he speaks in his diary —'for I scarcely feel it. . . . I am at sea in the dark, and the vessel leaky, I think, into the bargain. I have suffered terribly, that is the truth, rather in body than in mind, and I often wish I could lie down and sleep without waking. But I will fight it out if I can.' His friends and medical attendants strongly advised him to intermit these severe exertions, which evidently were only a gentle form of self-murder; but they preached to deaf ears. They were equally unsuccessful in their endeavours to keep him back from a county election in which he felt interested. He went—took part in the proceedings—and came to a collision with the populace, which could not but leave distressing effects on one who, on all other points, delighted to stand in kindly relations towards the humbler classes. In the very depth of this dark crisis he began a tale, called *Castle*

Dangerous, in which the failing powers of his mind became even more painfully conspicuous. He was now fully sensible that, in all probability, he had but a short time to live; but it only made him the more eager to work for the acquittance of his great obligations. So much was this the case, that, being at a country-house in Lanarkshire on a short visit, the intelligence of a friend having fallen down suddenly in a fit, from which it was not expected he would recover, caused him instantly to break up his engagement, and go home; answering to all remonstrances on the subject: 'The night cometh when no man may work.'

He was now advised to spend the ensuing winter in Italy; and the government having handsomely placed a ship at his disposal, he sailed for Naples in October, attended by his eldest son and younger daughter. He was most unwilling to leave home, but a long-entertained wish to see some of the continental countries besides France served to reconcile him to the change. The voyage was a pleasant one: he enjoyed the objects to be seen at Malta, so full of middle-age associations, and thought of fictions he could found upon them. On the 17th December, he reached Naples, where everything was done by the king and the best society of the place, including many English visitors, to render his residence happy. His chief companion here was Sir William Gell, an invalid English gentleman, who wrote upon the antiquities of Italy, and with whom Scott at once became extremely intimate. He beheld most of the classical antiquities with indifference—saying only at Pompeii: 'The city of the dead!'—but was keenly interested in any object or document which took his mind into the middle ages. Here he actually wrote a new tale (entitled *The Siege of Malta*), and commenced a second, neither of which was deemed by his friends as fit to see the light. For some time

he entertained cheerful views about his health; he was also under an impression that his debts were all discharged: it is needless to say that in both particulars he was deceived. Thus about four months rolled on. He then became anxious to return home, and, as he would not obey rule either as to writing or his diet, it was thought best to gratify him, in the hope that a more effectual control might there be exercised.

Attended by his younger son, who had been placed at Naples as an attaché to the embassy there, and by his younger daughter as before, Scott left Naples for Tweedside on the 16th of April 1832. He paused a few weeks at Rome, chiefly to gratify his daughter with the sights, of which, however, he himself also partook, beholding, as before, the medieval antiquities with the greater share of interest. The houses occupied by the dethroned Stuarts, and their tombs in St Peter's, were objects of peculiar interest in his eyes. Here, as at Naples, he was treated by persons of the highest rank, native and foreign, with the greatest respect. There is a pathos about the last entry in his Journal, which is left unfinished, the last lines he ever penned:

'We entered Rome by a gate renovated by one of the old Pontiffs, but which I forget, and so paraded the streets by moonlight to discover, if possible, some appearance of the learned Sir William Gell or the pretty Miss Ashley. At length we found an old servant, who guided us to the lodging taken by Sir William Gell, where all was comfortable, a good fire included, which our fatigue and the chilliness of the night required. We dispersed as soon as we had taken some food, wine, and water. We slept reasonably, but on the next morning'——

Leaving Rome on the 11th of May, he proceeded by Venice, through the Tyrol, to Frankfort, with a haste which

must have been unfavourable to him, but which nothing could control. It was soon after necessary for him to have blood let by his servant Nicolson, who had been instructed for that purpose. On the 13th of June he reached London, totally exhausted. It was now evident that this illustrious man was drawing near to the end of a greater journey. He was kept three weeks in London, during which his friends saw in him but occasional gleams of sense. He never knew distinctly where he was: he knew, however, that he was not at Abbotsford, and there he yearned to be. To gratify him, he was taken to Scotland by sea, and from Edinburgh, as soon as possible, to his own house. As he approached it, he began faintly to recognise familiar objects, and by-and-by it was found difficult to keep him in the carriage, so greatly was he excited. At length, alighting at the porch, and seeing his steward and friend, he exclaimed: 'Ha, Willie Laidlaw! Oh man, how often have I thought of you!' His dogs came about his knees, and he sobbed over them until stupor fell again upon him. He remained for two months in the sad state to which he was now reduced. Sometimes the mind cleared a little, and on one occasion he caused himself to be placed at his desk to write, where, however, the fingers failed to grasp the pen, and he sunk back weeping in his chair. More generally he was in a state of slumber.

When sensible, he caused the Bible and church services to be read to him. 'Lockhart,' he said once, 'I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man, be virtuous, be religious, be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here.' At another time he requested Lockhart to read to him, and when asked from what book, he said: 'Need you ask? There is but one.' So he read to him the 14th chapter of

St John's Gospel. Scott listened with mild devotion, and said when he was done, 'Well, this is a great comfort. I have followed you distinctly, and I feel as if I were myself again.' At length, on the 21st of September, the scene was gently closed. 'On that day,' says Lockhart, 'Sir Walter breathed his last, in the presence of all his children. It was a beautiful day—so warm that every window was wide open—and so perfectly still, that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear, the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles, was distinctly audible as we knelt around the bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes.' It is said that on the last morning of his life, consciousness returned. He asked his nurse to help him to the window; he gave one last look on Tweed, and said: 'To-night I shall know all.' Sir Walter died in the sixty-second year of his age. He was buried a few days after in a family sepulchre within the limits of Dryburgh Abbey.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARACTER OF SCOTT—MONUMENT—DESCENDANTS—TRIBUTE BY MR ANDREW LANG, ETC.

THE character of Scott has already been indicated in the tenor of his life, and it is not necessary to say much in addition. It certainly included a wonderful amount of the very noblest and most lovable of the qualities of humanity—rarely, perhaps, have so many been combined in one person. The revelations concerning his commercial affairs damaged the ideal image of Scott only; it has not injured the real man. Far better, we would say, to look the

actual character in the face, and judge of it from its shadows as well as its lights; then only can we truly appreciate even the worth and goodness of Scott, for then only do we see a bearer of our own nature, charged with a share of its infirmities, as well as of its glories. Admit, for instance, that he erred in his anxiety for wealth; see, on the other hand, what objects he had here in view! There was nothing sordid in this passion of his—the results were mainly used to realise a poetic dream from which others were to derive the substantial benefits. A large share was also devoted without a grudge to solace the unfortunate. Grant, again, that he venerated rank; the feeling was essentially connected with his historic taste. He worshipped not the title or its living bearer; his idol was constituted by the romantic associations which it awoke—and thus he has been known to pay far more practical respect to a poor Highland chieftain than to a modern English peer.

The gravest charge against him lies undeniably in his heedlessness regarding his affairs. Apart altogether from his accommodations to Constable and Company, he had entered deeply into a false system of credit on his own account; and while much debt was consequently hanging over him, he is found transferring the only solid security for it—his estate—to his son. This, however, should be contemplated in connection with all the circumstances which we can suppose to have justified it in his own mind. To one who was producing ten thousand a year by his pen, and who had done so for years—who, moreover, saw large possessions in his own hands—there might appear no pressing reason for looking anxiously into the accounts concerning even so large a sum of floating debt as forty-six thousand pounds; at least to one whose temperament, we

now see, was sanguine and ideal as ever poet manifested, though in his case usually veiled under an air of worldly seeming. When this is considered, the weight of the charge will, we think, appear much lessened, though it cannot be altogether done away. For what remains, let us reflect on the latter days of Scott, and surely we must own that never was fault more nobly expiated, or punishment more nobly borne, than by the great Minstrel.

Lady Scott, one day speaking of a person who had been very fortunate in life, seemed to impute a good deal of his success to luck. 'Ah, mamma!' said Sir Walter—he often addressed his wife familiarly by the term *mamma*—'you may say as you like; but take my word for it, 'tis skill leads to fortune.' Being one day in company when the various merits of Johnson's imitators were discussed, he said: 'Ay, ay, many of them produce his report, but which of them carries his bullet?'

He once reproved his daughter Anne for speaking of something as *vulgar*. He explained that the meaning of vulgar was common. 'Nothing that is common, except wickedness, can deserve to be spoken of in a tone of contempt; and when you have lived to my years, you will be disposed to agree with me in thanking God that nothing really worth having or caring about in this world is *uncommon*.'

The estimates of the work and influence of Scott by Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin are very different. The former finds nothing spiritual in him; all is 'economical, material, of the earth, earthy.' He does justice to his power as a novelist, however, and admits that when he departed, 'he took a man's life along with him. No sounder piece of British manhood was put together in that eighteenth century of Time.' On the other hand, Ruskin

finds no words full enough to tell 'what good Scott has in him to do;' and he esteems him as 'beyond comparison the greatest intellectual force manifested in Europe since Shakespeare. . . His ideal of honour in men and women is inbred, indisputable; fresh as the air of his mountains, firm as their rocks.' Amongst the novels, he ranks *The Heart of Midlothian* as highest and best; in *Waverley* and the *Lay*, he thinks Scott is all himself.

After the death of Scott, the whole of his debts were cleared off by the profits of his writings. It was found that the remaining principal sum of commercial debt amounted to £54,000 in his life-time. A sum of £22,000 had been insured upon his life. Mr Cadell offered to advance £30,000, and this, with money in the hand of the trustees, allowed of the general creditors being paid in 1833. At length in 1847, fifteen years after Scott's death, Cadell's claims were discharged, and Abbotsford was free of burden. Lockhart generously set aside the profits of Scott's biography in behalf of the creditors. Scott had spent upon Abbotsford about £71,000, and earned not less than £140,000 by his pen.

A few years after the death of Sir Walter, the citizens of Edinburgh resolved to erect a monument to his memory, and the device adopted was that magnificent Norman cross, from plans of Mr George M. Kemp, placed in so conspicuous a situation in Princes Street as to strike the eye of every passing traveller. It encloses, under open Gothic arches, a marble statue (life-size) of the poet in a sitting posture, by a native artist, Mr John Steell. The monument, which was completed in 1846, is open daily for the inspection of strangers. The cost of the structure has been upwards of £15,000. It has been justly described by

Professor Masson as the finest monument ever erected to a man of letters.

All Sir Walter Scott's brothers predeceased him. The only one of them who was married was Thomas, who left a son and three daughters. There is something sorrowful in the failure of Scott's high hopes of founding a family. The fond dream of his life may be said to have come to nought. He left two sons and two daughters, who did not long survive him. Miss Anne Scott died in London, 25th June 1833. Sophia, who was married to John Gibson Lockhart, and who, in appearance and character, most resembled her father, died 17th May 1837. Charles Scott, the second son, died, unmarried, while acting as an attaché to a diplomatic embassy to Persia, 28th October 1841. Walter, the eldest son, who succeeded to the baronetcy, and rose to be lieutenant-colonel in the 15th Hussars, died on his passage home from India, 8th February 1847. He was married, but left no issue, and the baronetcy is extinct. Mrs Lockhart had three children, John Hugh Lockhart—the 'Hugh Littlejohn' for whom Scott so lovingly wrote the *Tales of a Grandfather*—who died 15th December 1831; Walter Scott Lockhart, an officer in the army, who died at Versailles, 10th January 1853; and Charlotte Harriet Jane Lockhart, who was married in 1847 to James Robert Hope, barrister, grandson of the Earl of Hopetoun. This lady, the last surviving child of Lockhart, died at Edinburgh 26th October 1858. She had three children, two of whom died young, the only survivor being Mary Monica, born 2d October 1852. Mrs Hope having, in virtue of inheritance, succeeded to the estate of Abbotsford, assumed with her husband the surname Scott, in addition to that of Hope. Their daughter was accordingly known as Miss Hope-Scott. In 1874 she married Joseph Constable-Maxwell, brother of

Lord Herries, by whom she had a family of sons and daughters, and the surname of Scott has also been adopted. Mrs Maxwell-Scott gave her sanction to the issue of Scott's Journal in 1890, and she has edited a 'catalogue of the armour and antiquities' to be seen at Abbotsford, and has also penned a little life of Mary, Queen of Scots. Mr Hope Scott, who occupied Abbotsford, was by a second marriage united to a sister of the Duke of Norfolk, 1861. He built a large additional wing to Abbotsford.

Fresh attention was directed to the career of Scott by the publication of his Journal in 1890, with its frank confessions, 'the outpouring of a noble spirit, bearing up against crushing misfortune, and battling to leave behind an unsullied name;' and by a collection of his letters which appeared in 1893. The original of the private Journal (1825-32) consists of two small quarto volumes bound in vellum, and furnished with strong locks. The manuscript is closely written on both sides, and towards the end shows painful evidence of the physical prostration of the writer. The issue of fresh editions of Scott's writings from time to time bears abundant testimony to the strong and continued hold he has of the reading public.

SCOTT AS A MAN OF LETTERS.

The greatness of his heart, the loyal affection and kindness of his nature, are at least as remarkable as his astonishing genius. There is only one voice as to his goodness. He was the most generous, the most friendly, the most honourable of men. In no relation of life did he fall short of the highest excellence. The magnetism (as we may call it for want of a better word) of his personality endeared him not only to mankind, but to the lower

animals. Dogs, cats, and horses took to him at once. He was even persecuted by the affection of grotesque friends, pigs and chickens. He is one of the few who retain, after death, this power of making us love those 'whom we have not seen.' Nor was he less sagacious, in all affairs but his own, than he was sympathetic. As a man of letters he was more than generous: far from being envious, he could hardly even be critical, and he admired contemporaries in whom the judgment of posterity has seen little to approve. In his life-time the Whigs, as Whigs, did not love him. He was a Tory. With a sympathy for the poor, which showed itself not only in his works but in all his deeds and in all his daily life, he believed in subordination. All history showed him that equality had never existed, except in the lowest savagery; and he could not believe in a sudden reversal of experience. His tastes as a poet also attached him to the antique world. His ideal was, perhaps, a feudalism in which every order and every man should be constant to duty. Absentee landlords he condemned as much as callous capitalists. He had seen the French Revolution, he had witnessed various abortive 'risings' in the west country, and his later years were saddened by apprehension of a Jacquerie. He hated the mob as much as he loved the people, his own people, the kindly Scots. He was a sturdy Scotchman; 'but,' says Lockhart, 'I believe that had any anti-English faction, civil or religious, sprung up in his own time in Scotland, he would have done more than any other living man could have hoped to do to put it down.'

As a writer it is a truism to say that, since Shakespeare, whom he resembled in many ways, there has never been a genius so human and so creative, so rich in humour, sympathy, poetry, so fertile in the production of new and real

characters, as the genius of Sir Walter Scott. To think of the Waverley novels is to think of a world of friends, like the crowd whose faces rise on us at the name of Shakespeare. To say this is to say enough, but it must be added that scenes as well as people, events as well as characters, are summoned up by his magic wand. There is only one Shakespeare, however, and he possessed, what Scott lacked, every splendour and every glory of style. Of both men it might be said that 'they never blotted a line;' but the metal flowed from the furnace of Shakespeare's brain into many a mould of form, all magical and immortal in their beauty. Scott 'never learned grammar,' as he said, and his style is that of an improviser. Its recklessness, and occasional flatness, he knew as well as any of his critics. But again and again, in published work, as in unpublished letters, he owns himself to be incapable of correcting, and impatient of the labour of the file. In proofs he corrected freely, but seldom to improve the style. It is often lax, and even commonplace; it rarely approaches distinction. It is at its best, absolutely perfect indeed, in his Scotch dialogue. Nor was he more careful of his plots. In the Introduction to the *Fortunes of Nigel* he shows us exactly how he worked, incapable of laying down the lines of a plot, and sticking to them, following always where fancy led him, after Dugald Dalgetty, or Bailie Nicol Jarvie. Delay, painstaking, would not have made *him* a more finished writer, and would have deprived us of many a Waverley novel.

Every man must do his work as he may: speed was Scott's way. The only real drawback to his unapproached excellence, then, is this congenital habit of haste, this quickness of spirit, which, as Lady Louisa Stuart said, made him weary of his characters long before his readers

were weary. Yet his genius triumphs in his own despite, and what he wrote for the amusement of a generation is fashioned for immortality, living with the fiery and generous life of his own heroic heart. Scott's poetry suffers more from his 'hasty glance and random rhyme' than his prose, because from poetry more exquisite finish is expected. That finish is only to be found in his lyrics, the freshest, most musical, most natural and spirited of English verses. In his metrical romances he has spirit, speed, ringing cadences, all the magic of romance, all the grace of chivalry. Since Homer no man has written so much in Homer's mood, so largely, so bravely, with such delight in battle. But 'the grand style' is absent, save in the more inspired passages. Scott's lays are lighted with the Border sun, now veiled in mists, now broken with clouds: we are not here in the wide and luminous ether of Homer and of Hellas.

> Wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,
> Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale!

he exclaims, in lines addressed to Erskine, conscious of his fault, but impenitent. His fame must suffer in some degree from his own wilfulness, or, rather, from the incurable defect of a genius which was rich, but not rare—abundant, but seldom fine. It may suffice for one man to have come nearer than any other mortal to Shakespeare in his fiction, and nearer than any other mortal to Homer in his verse. His influence on literature was immense. The Romantic movement in France owed nearly as much to him as to Shakespeare. Alexander Dumas is his literary foster-child, and his only true successor. To him also is due the beginning of a better appreciation of all ancient popular

antiquities, and a more human understanding of history.—ANDREW LANG, in *Chambers's Encyclopædia.*

SCOTT'S POSITION TO-DAY.

It is sixty years since Sir Walter Scott was laid to rest in Dryburgh Abbey, a period which has witnessed great changes in the literature of England as well as in the social life of the country. When Scott entered the field as a novelist he had few competitors, and assuredly not one capable of rivalling him in the field of romantic fiction. Jane Austen's genius, so consummate of its kind, differs as much from Scott's as the most famous of Dutch masters differs from Raphael or from Titian. Since Sir Walter's day, the writers of fiction have broken new ground in many directions, and have given their readers representations of life and character entirely distinct from the pictures that fill the spacious gallery of the Waverley Novels. The fresh fields and the new pastures are, many of them, full of fragrance, and of a beauty that is not likely to fade. To say nothing of living writers, it is impossible to believe that a time will come when readers will cease to care for the finest productions of novelists like Thackeray and Dickens, like Hawthorne and Charlotte Brontë, like George Eliot and Trollope, and some other writers of fiction who might be mentioned, scarcely inferior to these in versatility and power. In our day, much of the novelist's art is expended on the dissection, rather than on the healthy representation, of character; but the authors we have mentioned are Sir Walter's brethren rather than his rivals, and, dear as they may be to the reader, they need not diminish one jot of the affection and reverence which he feels for the illustrious name of Scott. Sir Walter stands apart from them all, and, in our judgment, above them all, in the largeness of

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may be the gulf between them, places Scott next t
above in the imaginative literature of his country.
June, 1893.

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his sympathies; in the number of lifelike characters that fill his pages; in the fresh, out-of-door atmosphere, alike wholesome and exhilarating, in which they move; in a humour and a pathos that are never strained; in a manly reverence for everything that is pure and noble; and in the wealth of a creative and poetical genius, which, whatever may be the gulf between them, places Scott next to Shakespeare in the imaginative literature of his country.—*Spectator*, 1893.

THE END.

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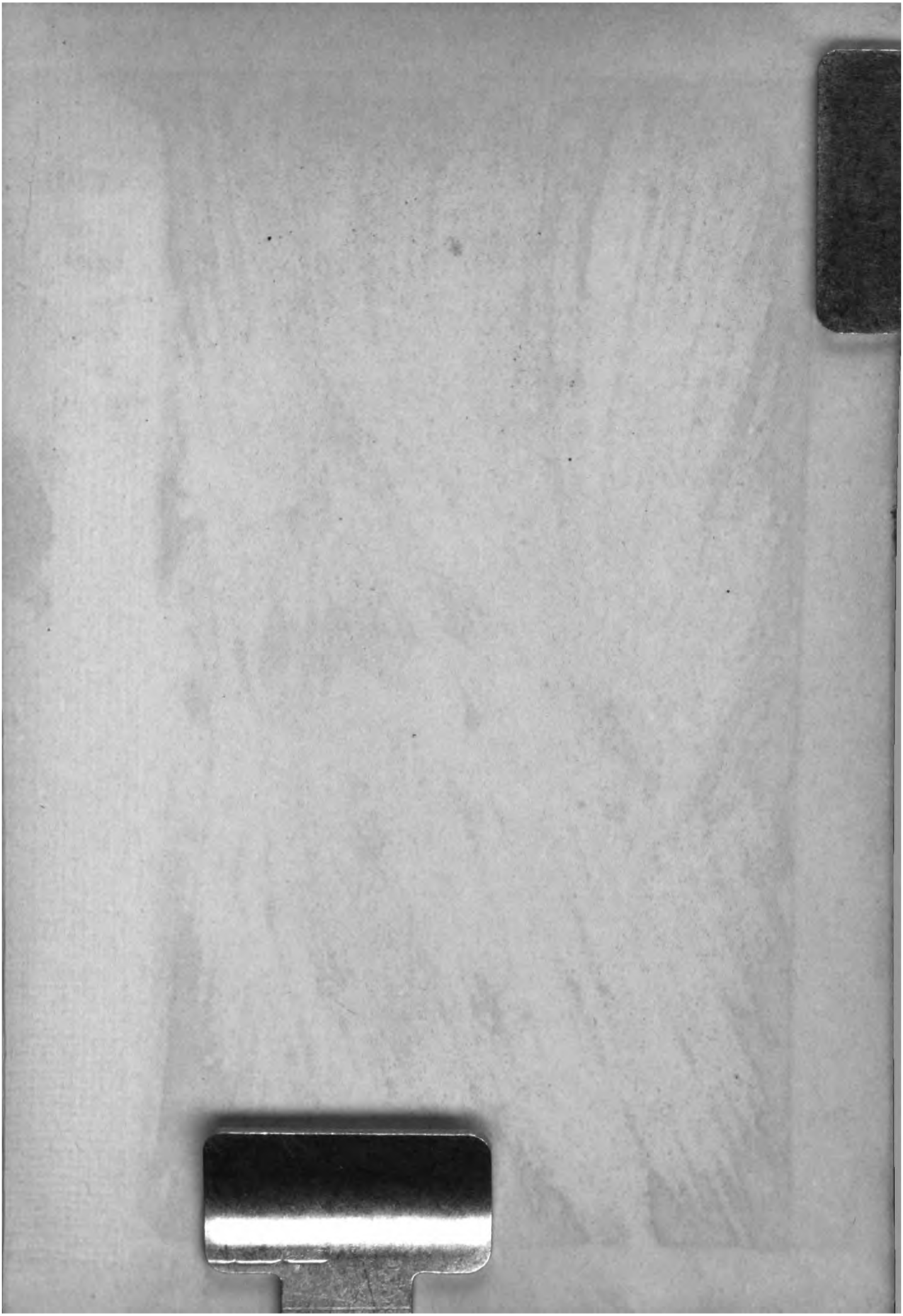
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