



**THE LIFE OF SIR
WALTER SCOTT**

VOL. IV: 1816 -- 1820

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART

The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Vol. 4: 1816 - 1820

John Gibson Lockhart

Contents:

[The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Vol. 4: 1816 - 1820](#)

[Chapter I.](#)

[Chapter II.](#)

[Chapter III.](#)

[Chapter IV.](#)

[Chapter V.](#)

[Chapter VI.](#)

[Chapter VII.](#)

[Chapter VIII.](#)

[Chapter IX.](#)

[Chapter X.](#)

[Chapter XI.](#)

[Chapter XII.](#)

*The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Vol. 4: 1816 - 1820, J. G.
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Chapter I.

*PUBLICATION OF PAUL'S LETTERS TO HIS KINSFOLK—
GUY MANNERING "TERRY-FIED"—DEATH OF MAJOR
JOHN SCOTT—LETTERS TO THOMAS SCOTT—
PUBLICATION OF THE ANTIQUARY—HISTORY OF 1814
FOR THE EDINBURGH ANNUAL REGISTER—LETTERS
ON THE HISTORY OF SCOTLAND PROJECTED—
PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST TALES OF MY LANDLORD
BY MURRAY AND BLACKWOOD—ANECDOTES BY MR
TRAIN—QUARTERLY REVIEW ON THE TALES—BUILDING
AT ABBOTSFORD BEGUN—LETTERS TO MORRITT,
TERRY, MURRAY, AND THE BALLANTYNES. 1816.*

The year 1815 may be considered as, for Scott's peaceful tenor of life, an eventful one. That which followed has left almost its only traces in the successive appearance of nine volumes, which attest the prodigal genius, and hardly less astonishing industry of the man. Early in January were published Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk, of which I need not now say more than that they were received with lively curiosity, and general, though not vociferous applause. The first edition was an octavo, of 6000 copies; and it was followed, in the course of the next two or three years, by a

second and a third, amounting together to 3000 more. The popularity of the novelist was at its height; and this admitted, if not avowed, specimen of Scott's prose, must have been perceived, by all who had any share of discrimination, to flow from the same pen.

Mr. Terry produced in the spring of 1816 a dramatic piece, entitled, "Guy Mannering," which met with great success on the London boards, and still continues to be a favourite with the theatrical public; what share the novelist himself had in this first specimen of what he used to call "the art of Terryfying" I cannot exactly say; but his correspondence shows that the pretty song of the Lullaby was not his only contribution to it; and I infer that he had taken the trouble to modify the plot, and re-arrange, for stage purposes, a considerable part of the original dialogue. The casual risk of discovery, through the introduction of the song which had, in the mean time, been communicated to one of his humble dependents, the late Alexander Campbell, editor of Albyn's Anthology (commonly known at Abbotsford as, by way of excellence, "The Dunniewassail,") and Scott's suggestions on that difficulty, will amuse the reader of the following letter:

To D. Terry, Esq. Alfred Place, Bloomsbury, London.

"Abbotsford, 18th April, 1816.

"My dear Terry,

"I give you joy of your promotion to the dignity of an householder, and heartily wish you all the success you so well deserve, to answer the approaching enlargement of your domestic establishment. You will find a house a very devouring monster, and that the purveying for it requires a little exertion, and a great deal of self-denial and arrangement. But when there is domestic peace and contentment, all that would otherwise be disagreeable, as

restraining our taste and occupying our time, becomes easy. I trust Mrs. Terry will get her business easily over, and that you will soon 'dandle Dickie on your knee.' I have been at the spring circuit, which made me late in receiving your letter, and there I was introduced to a man whom I never saw in my life before, namely, the proprietor of all the Pepper and Mustard family, in other words, the genuine Dandle Dinmont. Dandie is himself modest, and says, 'he b'lives its only the dougs that is in the buik, and no himsel.' As the surveyor of taxes was going his ominous rounds past Hyndlea, which is the abode of Dandie, his whole pack rushed out upon the man of execution, and Dandie followed them (conscious that their number greatly exceeded his return), exclaiming, 'the tae hauf o' them is but whalps, man.' In truth, I knew nothing of the man, except his odd humour of having only two names for twenty dogs. But there are lines of general resemblance among all these hill-men, which there is no missing; and Jamie Davidson of Hyndlea certainly looks Dandie Dinmont remarkably well. He is much flattered with the compliment, and goes uniformly by the name among his comrades, but has never read the book. Ailie used to read it to him, but it set him to sleep. All this you will think funny enough. I am afraid I am in a scrape about the song, and that of my own making; for as it never occurred to me that there was any thing odd in my writing two or three verses for you, which have no connexion with the novel, I was at no pains to disown them; and Campbell is just that sort of crazy creature, with whom there is no confidence, not from want of honour and disposition to oblige, but from his flighty temper. The music of Cadil gũ lo is already printed in his publication, and nothing can be done with him, for fear of setting his tongue a-going. Erskine and you may consider whether you should barely acknowledge an obligation to an unknown friend, or pass the matter altogether in silence. In my opinion, my first idea was preferable to both, because I cannot see what

earthly connexion there is between the song and the novel, or how acknowledging the one is fathering the other. On the contrary, it seems to me that acknowledgment tends to exclude the idea of farther obligation than to the extent specified. I forgot also that I had given a copy of the lines to Mrs. Macleod of Macleod, from whom I had the air. But I remit the matter entirely to you and Erskine, for there must be many points in it which I cannot be supposed a good judge of. At any rate, don't let it delay your publication, and believe I shall be quite satisfied with what you think proper.

“I have got from my friend Glengarry the noblest dog ever seen on the Border since Johnnie Armstrong's time. He is between the wolf and deer greyhound, about six feet long from the tip of the nose to the tail, and high and strong in proportion: he is quite gentle, and a great favourite: tell Will. Erskine he will eat off his plate without being at the trouble to put a paw on the table or chair. I showed him to Matthews, who dined one day in Castle Street before I came here, where, except for Mrs. S., I am like unto

*‘The spirit who dwelleth by himself,
In the land of mist and snow’—*

for it is snowing and hailing eternally, and will kill all the lambs to a certainty, unless it changes in a few hours. At any rate, it will cure us of the embarrassments arising from plenty and low markets. Much good luck to your dramatic exertions: when I can be of use, command me. Mrs. Scott joins me in regards to Mrs. Terry, and considers the house as the greatest possible bargain: the situation is all you can wish. Adieu! yours truly,
Walter Scott.”

“P.S.—On consideration, and comparing difficulties, I think I will settle with Campbell to take my name from the

verses, as they stand in his collection. The verses themselves I cannot take away without imprudent explanations; and as they go to other music, and stand without any name, they will probably not be noticed, so you need give yourself no farther trouble on the score. I should like to see my copy: pray send it to the post-office, under cover to Mr. Freeling, whose unlimited privilege is at my service on all occasions."

Early in May appeared the novel of "the Antiquary," which seems to have been begun a little before the close of 1815. It came out at a moment of domestic distress.

Throughout the year 1815 Major John Scott had been drooping. He died on the 8th of May, 1816; and I extract the letter in which this event was announced to Mr. Thomas Scott by his only surviving brother.

To Thomas Scott, Esq. Paymaster of the 70th Regiment,
Canada.

"Edinburgh, 15th May, 1816.

"My dear Tom,

"This brings you the melancholy news of our brother John's concluding his long and lingering illness by death, upon Thursday last. We had thought it impossible he should survive the winter, but, as the weather became milder, he gathered strength, and went out several times. In the beginning of the week he became worse, and on Wednesday kept his bed. On Thursday, about two o'clock, they sent me an express to Abbotsford—the man reached me at nine. I immediately set out, and travelled all night but had not the satisfaction to see my brother alive. He had died about four o'clock, without much pain, being completely exhausted. You will naturally feel most anxious about my mother's state of health and spirits. I am happy to

say, she has borne this severe shock with great firmness and resignation, is perfectly well in her health, and as strong in her mind as ever you knew here. She feels her loss, but is also sensible that protracted existence, with a constitution so irretrievably broken up, could have been no blessing. Indeed I must say, that, in many respects, her situation will be more comfortable on account of this removal, when the first shock is over; for to watch an invalid, and to undergo all the changes of a temper fretted by suffering, suited ill with her age and habits. The funeral, which took place yesterday, was decent and private, becoming our father's eldest son, and the head of a quiet family. After it, I asked Hay Donaldson and Mr. MacCulloch* to look over his papers, in case there should be any testamentary provision, but none such was found; nor do I think he had any intention of altering the destination which divides his effects between his surviving brothers.

Your affectionate
W. S."

** The late Mr. Hay Donaldson, W.S.—an intimate friend of both Thomas and Walter Scott, and Mr. Macculloch of Ardwell, the brother of Mrs. Thomas Scott.*

A few days afterwards, he hands to Mr. Thomas Scott a formal statement of pecuniary affairs; the result of which was, that the Major had left something not much under £6000. Major Scott, from all I have heard, was a sober, sedate bachelor, of dull mind and frugal tastes, who, after his retirement from the army, divided his time between his mother's primitive fireside, and the society of a few whist-playing brother officers, that met for an evening rubber at Fortune's tavern. But, making every allowance for his retired and thrifty habits, I infer that the payments made to each of the three brothers out of their father's estate must

have, prior to 1816, amounted to £5000. From the letter conveying this statement (29th May), I extract a few sentences:—

“Dear Tom,

“ Should the possession of this sum, and the certainty that you must, according to the course of nature, in a short space of years succeed to a similar sum of £3000 belonging to our mother, induce you to turn your thoughts to Scotland, I shall be most happy to forward your views with any influence I may possess; and I have little doubt that, sooner or later, something may be done. But, unfortunately, every avenue is now choked with applicants, whose claims are very strong; for the number of disbanded officers, and public servants dismissed in consequence of Parliament turning restive and refusing the income-tax, is great and increasing. Economy is the order of the day, and I assure you they are shaving properly close. It would, no doubt, be comparatively easy to get you a better situation where you are, but then it is bidding farewell to your country, at least for a long time, and separating your children from all knowledge of those with whom they are naturally connected. I shall anxiously expect to hear from you on your views and wishes. I think, at all events, you ought to get rid of the drudgery of the paymastership—but not without trying to exchange it for something else. I do not know how it is with you—but I do not feel myself quite so young as I was when we met last, and I should like well to see my only brother return to his own country and settle, without thoughts of leaving it, till it is exchanged for one that is dark and distant. I left all Jack’s personal trifles at my mother’s disposal. There was nothing of the slightest value, excepting his gold watch, which was my sister’s, and a good one. My mother says he had wished my son Walter should have it, as his male representative which

I can only accept on condition your little Walter will accept a similar token of regard from his remaining uncle.—Yours affectionately,
W. S.”

The letter in which Scott communicated his brother’s death to Mr. Morritt, gives us his own original opinion of *The Antiquary*. It has also some remarks on the separation of Lord and Lady Byron and the “domestic verses” of the noble poet.

To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq. M. P. London.
“Edinburgh, May 16, 1816.
“My dear Morritt,

“I have been occupied of late with scenes of domestic distress, my poor brother, Major John Scott, having last week closed a life which wasting disease had long rendered burthensome. His death, under all the circumstances, cannot be termed a subject of deep affliction; and though we were always on fraternal terms of mutual kindness and good-will, yet our habits of life, our taste for society and circles of friends were so totally different, that there was less frequent intercourse between us than our connexion and real liking to each other might have occasioned. Yet it is a heavy consideration to have lost the last but one who was interested in our early domestic life, our habits of boyhood, and our first friends and connexions. It makes one look about and see how the scene has changed around him, and how he himself has been changed with it. My only remaining brother is in Canada, and seems to have an intention of remaining there; so that my mother, now upwards of eighty, has now only one child left to her out of thirteen whom she has borne. She is a most excellent woman, possessed, even at her advanced age, of all the force of mind and sense of duty which have carried her

through so many domestic griefs, as the successive death of eleven children, some of them come to men and women's estate, naturally infers. She is the principal subject of my attention at present, and is, I am glad to say, perfectly well in body and composed in mind.

“Nothing can give me more pleasure than the prospect of seeing you in September, which will suit our motions perfectly well. I trust I shall have an opportunity to introduce you to some of our glens which you have not yet seen. But I hope we shall have some mild weather before that time, for we are now in the seventh month of winter, which almost leads me to suppose that we shall see no summer this season. As for spring, that is past praying for. In the month of November last, people were skating in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh; and now, in the middle of May, the snow is lying white on Arthur's Seat, and on the range of the Pentlands. It is really fearful, and the sheep are perishing by scores. *Jam satis terræ nivis, &c.* may well be taken up as the song of eighteen hundred and sixteen.

“So Lord Byron's romance seems to be concluded for one while and it is surely time, after he has announced, or rather they themselves have announced, half a dozen blackguard newspaper editors, to have been his confidants on the occasion. Surely it is a strange thirst of public fame that seeks such a road to it. But Lord Byron, with high genius and many points of a noble and generous feeling, has Childe Harolded himself, and outlawed himself, into too great a resemblance with the pictures of his imagination. He has one excuse, however, and it is a sad one. I have been reckoned to make a good hit enough at a pirate, or an outlaw, or a smuggling bandit; but I cannot say I was ever so much enchanted with my work as to think of carrying off a drift of my neighbour's sheep, or half a dozen of his milk cows. Only I remember, in the rough times, having a

scheme with the Duke of Buccleuch, that when the worst came to the worst, we should repair Hermitage Castle, and live, like Robin Hood and his merry men, at the expense of all round us. But this presupposed a grand bouleversement of society. In the mean while, I think my noble friend is something like my old peacock, who chooses to bivouac apart from his lady, and sit below my bedroom window, to keep me awake with his screeching lamentation. Only I own he is not equal in melody to Lord Byron, for Fare-thee-well—and if for ever, &c., is a very sweet dirge indeed. After all, C'est genie mal logé, and that's all that can be said about it.

“I am quite reconciled to your opinions on the income-tax, and am not at all in despair at the prospect of keeping £200 a-year in my pocket, since the ministers can fadge without it. But their throwing the helve after the hatchet, and giving up the malt-duty because they had lost the other, was droll enough. After all, our fat friend* must learn to live within compass, and fire off no more crackers in the Park, for John Bull is getting dreadfully sore on all sides when money is concerned.

** Shortly after Beau Brummell (immortalized in Don Juan) fell into disgrace with the Prince Regent, and was dismissed from the society of Carlton House, he was riding with another gentleman in the Park, when the Prince met them. His Royal Highness stopt to speak to Brummell's companion—the Beau continued to jog on—and when the other dandy rejoined him, asked with an air of sovereign indifference, “Who is your fat friend?” Such, at least, was the story that went the round of the newspapers at the time, and highly tickled Scott's fancy. I have heard that nobody enjoyed so much as the Prince of Wales himself an earlier specimen of the Beau's assurance. Taking offence at some part of His Royal Highness's conduct or demeanour,*

“Upon my word,” observed Mr. Brummell, “if this kind of thing goes on, I shall be obliged to cut Wales, and bring the old King into fashion.”

“I sent you, some time since, the Antiquary. It is not so interesting as its predecessors—the period did not admit of so much romantic situation. But it has been more fortunate than any of them in the sale, for 6000 went off in the first six days, and it is now at press again; which is very flattering to the unknown author. Another incognito proposes immediately to resume the second volume of Triermain, which is at present in the state of the Bear and Fiddle. Adieu, dear Morritt. Ever yours,
Walter Scott.”

Speaking of his third novel in a letter of the same date to Terry, Scott says, “It wants the romance of Waverley and the adventure of Guy Mannering; and yet there is some salvation about it, for if a man will paint from nature, he will be likely to amuse those who are daily looking at it.”

After a little pause of hesitation, The Antiquary attained popularity not inferior to Guy Mannering; and, though the author appears for a moment to have shared the doubts which he read in the countenance of James Ballantyne, it certainly was, in the sequel, his chief favourite among all his novels. Nor is it difficult to account for this preference, without laying any stress on the fact, that, during a few short weeks, it was pretty commonly talked of as a falling off from its immediate predecessors—and that some minor critics re-echoed this stupid whisper in print. In that view, there were many of its successors that had much stronger claims on the parental instinct of protection. But the truth is, that although Scott’s Introduction of 1830 represents him as pleased with fancying that, in the principal personage, he had embalmed a worthy friend of his boyish

days, his own antiquarian propensities, originating, perhaps in the kind attentions of George Constable of Wallace-Cragie, and fostered not a little, at about as ductile a period, by those of old Clerk of Eldin, and John Ramsay of Ochertyre, had by degrees so developed themselves, that he could hardly, even when the *Antiquary* was published, have scrupled about recognising a quaint caricature of the founder of the Abbotsford Museum, in the inimitable portraiture of the Laird of Monkbarns. The Descriptive Catalogue of that collection, which he began towards the close of his life, but, alas! never finished, is entitled “*Reliquiæ Trotcosianæ—or the Gabions of the late Jonathan Oldbuck, Esq.*”

But laying this, which might have been little more than a good-humoured pleasantry, out of the question, there is assuredly no one of all his works on which more of his own early associations have left their image. Of those early associations, as his full-grown tastes were all the progeny, so his genius, in all its happiest efforts, was the “Recording Angel;” and when George Constable first expounded his “Gabions” to the child that was to immortalize his name, they were either wandering hand in hand over the field where the grass still grew rank upon the grave of Balmawhapple, or sauntering on the beach where the Mucklebuckets of Prestonpans dried their nets, singing,

*“Weel may the boatie row, and better may she speed,
O weel may the boatie row that wins the bairns’ bread”—*

or telling wild stories about cliff-escapes and the funerals of shipwrecked fishermen.

Considered by itself, without reference to these sources of personal interest, this novel seems to me to possess, almost throughout, in common with its two predecessors, a kind of

simple unsought charm, which the subsequent works of the series hardly reached, save in occasional snatches:—like them it is, in all its humbler and softer scenes, the transcript of actual Scottish life, as observed by the man himself. And I think it must also be allowed that he has nowhere displayed his highest art, that of skilful contrast, in greater perfection. Even the tragic romance of *Waverley* does not set off its *Macwheebles* and *Callum Begs* better than the oddities of *Jonathan Oldbuck* and his circle are relieved, on the one hand, by the stately gloom of the *Glenallans*, on the other, by the stern affliction of the poor fisherman, who, when discovered repairing the “auld black bitch o’ a boat” in which his boy had been lost, and congratulated by his visiter on being capable of the exertion, makes answer, “And what would you have me to do, unless I wanted to see four children starve, because one is drowned? it’s weel wi you gentles, that can sit in the house wi’ handkerchers at your een, when ye lose a friend; but the like o’ us maun to our wark again, if our hearts were beating as hard as my hammer.”

It may be worth noting, that it was in correcting the proof-sheets of this novel that Scott first took to equipping his chapters with mottoes of his own fabrication. On one occasion he happened to ask *John Ballantyne*, who was sitting by him, to hunt for a particular passage in *Beaumont and Fletcher*. John did as he was bid, but did not succeed in discovering the lines. “Hang it, Johnnie,” cried Scott, “I believe I can make a motto sooner than you will find one.” He did so accordingly; and from that hour, whenever memory failed to suggest an appropriate epigraph, he had recourse to the inexhaustible mines of “old play” or “old ballad,” to which we owe some of the most exquisite verses that ever flowed from his pen.

Unlike, I believe, most men, whenever Scott neared the end of one composition, his spirits seem to have caught a new spring of buoyancy, and before the last sheet was sent from his desk, he had crowded his brain with the imagination of another fiction. The Antiquary was published, as we have seen, in May, but by the beginning of April he had already opened to the Ballantynes the plan of the first Tales of my Landlord; and—to say nothing of Harold the Dauntless, which he began shortly after the Bridal of Triermain was finished, and which he seems to have kept before him for two years as a congenial plaything, to be taken up whenever the coach brought no proof-sheets to jog him as to serious matters—he had also, before this time, undertaken to write the historical department of the Register for 1814. Mr. Southey had, for reasons upon which I do not enter, discontinued his services to that work; and it was now doubly necessary, after trying for one year a less eminent hand, that if the work were not to be dropped altogether, some strenuous exertion should be made to sustain its character. Scott had not yet collected the materials requisite for his historical sketch of a year distinguished for the importance and complexity of its events; but these, he doubted not, would soon reach him, and he felt no hesitation about pledging himself to complete, not only that sketch, but four new volumes of prose romances—and his Harold the Dauntless also, if Ballantyne could make any suitable arrangement on that score—between the April and the Christmas of 1816.

The Antiquary had been published by Constable, but I presume that, in addition to the usual stipulations, he had been again, on that occasion, solicited to relieve John Ballantyne and Co.'s stock to an extent which he did not find quite convenient; and at all events he had, though I know not on what grounds, shown a considerable reluctance of late to employ James Ballantyne and Co. as

printers. One or other of these impediments is alluded to in a note of Scott's, which, though undated, has been pasted into John Ballantyne's private letterbook among the documents of the period in question. It is in these words:

"Dear John,

"I have seen the great swab, who is supple as a glove, and will do all, which some interpret nothing. However, we shall do well enough.

W. S."

Constable had been admitted, almost from the beginning, into the secret of the Novels and for that, among other reasons, it would have been desirable for the Novelist to have him continue the publisher without interruption; but Scott was led to suspect, that if he were called upon to conclude a bargain for a fourth novel before the third had made its appearance, his scruples as to the matter of printing might at least protract the treaty; and why Scott should have been urgently desirous of seeing the transaction settled before the expiration of the half-yearly term of Whitsunday, is sufficiently explained by the fact, that while so much of the old unfortunate stock of John Ballantyne and Co. still remained on hand—and with it some occasional recurrence of commercial difficulty as to floating bills was to be expected—the sanguine author had gone on purchasing one patch of land after another, until his estate at Abbotsford had already grown from 150 to nearly 1000 acres. The property all about his original farm had been in the hands of various small holders (Scotticé cock-lairds); these persons were sharp enough to understand, ere long, that their neighbour could with difficulty resist any temptation that might present itself in the shape of an offer of more acres; and thus he proceeded buying up lot after lot of unimproved ground, at

extravagant prices, his appetite increasing by what it fed on, while the ejected yeomen set themselves down elsewhere to fatten at their leisure upon the profits, most commonly the anticipated profits, of "The Scotch Novels."

He was ever and anon pulled up with a momentary misgiving, and resolved that the latest acquisition should be the last, until he could get rid entirely of "John Ballantyne and Co."; but John Ballantyne was, from the utter lightness of his mind, his incapacity to look a day before him, and his eager impatience to enjoy the passing hour, the very last man in the world who could, under such circumstances, have been a serviceable agent. Moreover John, too, had his professional ambition; he was naturally proud of his connexion, however secondary, with the publication of these works and this connexion, though subordinate, was still very profitable; he must have suspected, that should his name disappear altogether from the list of booksellers, it would be a very difficult matter for him to retain any concern in them; and I cannot, on the whole, but consider it as certain, that, the first and more serious embarrassments being overcome, he was far from continuing to hold by his patron's anxiety for the ultimate and total abolition of their unhappy copartnership. He, at all events, unless when some sudden emergency arose, flattered Scott's own gay imagination, by uniformly representing every thing in the most smiling colours; and though Scott, in his replies, seldom failed to introduce some passing hint of caution such as "Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia" he more and more took home to himself the agreeable cast of his Rigdum's anticipations, and wrote to him in a vein as merry as his own—e. g.—"As for our stock,

*"'Twill be wearing awa', John,
Like snaw-wreaths when it's thaw, John," &c. &c. &c.*

I am very sorry, in a word, to confess my conviction that John Ballantyne, however volatile and light-headed, acted at this period with cunning selfishness, both by Scott and by Constable. He well knew that it was to Constable alone that his firm had more than once owed its escape from utter ruin and dishonour; and he must also have known, that had a fair, straightforward effort been made for that purpose, after the triumphant career of the Waverley series had once commenced, nothing could have been more easy than to bring all the affairs of his “back-stock, &c.,” to a complete close, by entering into a distinct and candid treaty on that subject, in connexion with the future works of the great Novelist, either with Constable or with any other first-rate house in the trade. But John, foreseeing that, were that unhappy concern quite out of the field, he must himself subside into a mere subordinate member of his brother’s printing company, seems to have parried the blow by the only arts of any consequence in which he ever was an adept. He appears to have systematically disguised from Scott the extent to which the whole Ballantyne concern had been sustained by Constable—especially during his Hebridean tour of 1814, and his Continental one of 1815—and prompted and enforced the idea of trying other booksellers from time to time, instead of adhering to Constable, merely for the selfish purposes, first, of facilitating the immediate discount of bills; secondly, of further perplexing Scott’s affairs, the entire disentanglement of which would have been, as he fancied, prejudicial to his own personal importance.

It was resolved, accordingly, to offer the risk and half profits of the first edition of another new novel or rather collection of novels not to Messrs Constable, but to Mr. Murray of Albemarle Street, and Mr. Blackwood, who was then Murray’s agent in Scotland; but it was at the same

time resolved, partly because Scott wished to try another experiment on the public sagacity, but partly also, no question, from the wish to spare Constable's feelings, that the title-page of the "Tales of my Landlord" should not bear the magical words "by the Author of Waverley." The facility with which both Murray and Blackwood embraced such a proposal, as no untried novelist, being sane, could have dreamt of hazarding, shows that neither of them had any doubt as to the identity of the author. They both considered the withholding of the avowal on the forthcoming title-page as likely to check very much the first success of the book; but they were both eager to prevent Constable's acquiring a sort of prescriptive right to publish for the unrivalled novelist, and willing to disturb his tenure at this additional, and as they thought it, wholly unnecessary risk.

How sharply the unseen parent watched this first negotiation of his Jedediah Cleishbotham, will appear from one of his letters:

To Mr. John Ballantyne, Hanover Street, Edinburgh.

"Abbotsford, April 29, 1816.

"Dear John,

"James has made one or two important mistakes in the bargain with Murray and Blackwood. Briefly as follows:

"1stly. Having only authority from me to promise 6000 copies, he proposes they shall have the copyright for ever. I will see their noses cheese first.

"2dly. He proposes I shall have twelve months' bills—I have always got six. However, I would not stand on that.

"3dly. He talks of volumes being put into the publishers' hands to consider and decide on. No such thing; a bare

perusal at St John Street* only.

** James Ballantyne's dwelling-house was in this street, adjoining the Canongate of Edinburgh.*

“Then for omissions—It is not stipulated that we supply the paper and print of successive editions. This must be nailed, and not left to understanding. Secondly, I will have London bills as well as Blackwood's.

“If they agree to these conditions, good and well. If they demur, Constable must be instantly tried; giving half to the Longmans, and we drawing on them for that moiety, or Constable lodging their bill in our hands. You will understand it is a four volume touch—a work totally different in style and structure from the others; a new cast, in short, of the net which has hitherto made miraculous draughts. I do not limit you to terms, because I think you will make them better than I can do. But he must do more than others, since he will not or cannot print with us. For every point but that, I would rather deal with Constable than any one; he has always shown himself spirited, judicious, and liberal. Blackwood must be brought to the point instantly; and whenever he demurs, Constable must be treated with, for there is no use in suffering the thing to be blown on. At the same time, you need not conceal from him that there were some proposals elsewhere, but you may add, with truth, I would rather close with him. Yours truly,
W. S.

“P.S.—I think Constable should jump at this affair; for I believe the work will be very popular.”

Messrs Murray and Blackwood agreed to all the author's conditions here expressed. They also relieved John

Ballantyne and Co. of stock to the value of £500; and at least Mr. Murray must, moreover, have subsequently consented to anticipate the period of his payments. At all events, I find, in a letter of Scott's, dated in the subsequent August, this new echo of the old advice:—

To Mr. John Ballantyne.

“Dear John,

“I have the pleasure to enclose Murray's acceptances. I earnestly recommend to you to push realizing as much as you can.

‘Consider weel, gude man,
We hae but borrowed gear;
The horse that I ride on,
It is John Murray's mear.’

Yours truly,

W. Scott.”

I know not how much of the tale of the Black Dwarf had been seen by Blackwood, in St John Street, before he concluded this bargain for himself and his friend Murray; but when the closing sheets of that novel reached him, he considered them as by no means sustaining the delightful promise of the opening ones. He was a man of strong talents, and, though without any thing that could be called learning, of very respectable information, greatly superior to what has, in this age, been common in his profession; acute, earnest, eminently zealous in whatever he put his hand to; upright, honest, sincere, and courageous. But as Constable owed his first introduction to the upper world of literature and of society in general to his Edinburgh Review, so did Blackwood his to the Magazine, which has now made his name familiar to the world—and at the period of which I write that miscellany was unborn; he was known only as a diligent antiquarian bookseller of the old

town of Edinburgh, and the Scotch agent of the great London publisher, Murray. The abilities, in short, which he lived to develop, were as yet unsuspected unless, perhaps, among a small circle; and the knowledge of the world, which so few men gather from any thing but painful collision with various conflicting orders of their fellow-men, was not his. He was to the last plain and blunt; at this time I can easily believe him to have been so, to a degree which Scott might look upon as “ungracious”—I take the epithet from one of his letters to James Ballantyne. Mr. Blackwood, therefore, upon reading what seemed to him the lame and impotent conclusion of a well-begun story, did not search about for any glossy periphrase, but at once wrote to beg that James Ballantyne would inform the unknown author that such was his opinion. This might possibly have been endured; but Blackwood, feeling, I have no doubt, a genuine enthusiasm for the author’s fame, as well as a just tradesman’s anxiety as to his own adventure, proceeded to suggest the outline of what would, in his judgment, be a better upwinding of the plot of the Black Dwarf, and concluded his epistle, which he desired to be forwarded to the nameless novelist, with announcing his willingness, in case the proposed alteration were agreed to, that the whole expense of cancelling and reprinting a certain number of sheets should be charged to his own personal account with “James Ballantyne and Co.” His letter appears to have further indicated that he had taken counsel with some literary person, on whose taste he placed great reliance, and who, if he had not originated, at least approved of the proposed process of recasting. Had Scott never possessed any such system of inter-agency as the Ballantynes supplied, he would, among other and perhaps greater inconveniences, have escaped that of the want of personal familiarity with several persons, with whose confidence,—and why should I not add? with the innocent gratification of whose little vanities—his own pecuniary interests were

often deeply connected. A very little personal contact would have introduced such a character as Blackwood's to the respect, nay, to the affectionate respect, of Scott, who, above all others, was, ready to sympathize cordially with honest and able men, in whatever condition of life he discovered them. He did both know and appreciate Blackwood better in after times; but in 1816, when this plain-spoken communication reached him, the name was little more than a name, and his answer to the most solemn of go-betweens, was in these terms, which I sincerely wish I could tell how Signior Aldiborontiphoscophornio translated into any dialect submissible to Blackwood's apprehension.

"Dear James,

"I have received Blackwood's impudent letter. G—— d—— his soul! Tell him and his coadjutor that I belong to the Black Hussars of Literature, who neither give nor receive criticism. I'll be cursed but this is the most impudent proposal that ever was made.
W. S."

This, and a few other documents referring to the same business, did not come into my hands until both Ballantyne and Blackwood were no more: and it is not surprising that Mr. Murray's recollection, if (which I much doubt) he had been at all consulted about it, should not, at this distance of time, preserve any traces of its details. "I remember nothing," he writes to me, "but that one of the very proudest days of my life was that on which I published the first Tales of my Landlord; and a vague notion that I owed the dropping of my connexion with the Great Novelist to some trashy disputes between Blackwood and the Ballantynes."

While these volumes were in progress, Scott found time to make an excursion into Perthshire and Dumbartonshire, for the sake of showing the scenery, made famous in the *Lady of the Lake* and *Waverley*, to his wife's old friends Miss Dumergue and Mrs. Sarah Nicolson,* who had never before been in Scotland. The account which he gives of these ladies' visit at Abbotsford, and this little tour, in a letter to Mr. Morritt, shows the "Black Hussar of Literature" in his gentler and more habitual mood.

** The sister of Miss Jane Nicolson.—See vol. i, ante, pp. 268, 372.*

To J. S. S. Morritt, Esq. M.P. Rokeby Park.
"Abbotsford, 21st August, 1816.
"My dear Morritt,

"I have not had a moment's kindly leisure to answer your kind letter, and to tell how delighted I shall be to see you in this least of all possible dwellings, but where we, nevertheless, can contrive a pilgrim's quarters and the warmest welcome for you and any friend of your journey;—if young Stanley, so much the better. Now, as to the important business with the which I have been occupied, you are to know we have had our kind hostesses of Piccadilly upon a two months' visit to us. We owed them so much hospitality, that we were particularly anxious to make Scotland agreeable to the good girls. But, alas! the wind has blown, and the rain has fallen, in a style which beats all that ever I remembered. We accomplished, with some difficulty, a visit to Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond, and, by dint of the hospitality of Cambusmore and the Ross, we defied bad weather, wet roads, and long walks. But the weather settled into regular tempest, when we settled at Abbotsford; and, though the natives, accustomed to bad weather (though not at such a time of year), contrived to

brave the extremities of the season, it only served to increase the dismay of our unlucky visitors, who, accustomed only to Paris and London, expected fiacres at the Milestane Cross, and a pair of oars at the Deadman's Haugh. Add to this, a strong disposition to commérage, when there was no possibility of gratifying it, and a total indisposition to scenery or rural amusements, which were all we had to offer—and you will pity both hosts and guests. I have the gratification to think I fully supported the hospitality of my country. I walked them to death. I talked them to death. I showed them landscapes which the driving rain hardly permitted them to see, and told them of feuds about which they cared as little as I do about their next door news in Piccadilly. Yea, I even played at cards, and as I had Charlotte for a partner, so ran no risk of being scolded, I got on pretty well. Still the weather was so execrable, that, as the old drunken landlord used to say at Arroquhar, 'I was perfectly ashamed of it;' and, to this moment, I wonder how my two friends fought it out so patiently as they did. But the young people and the cottages formed considerable resources. Yesterday they left us, deeply impressed with the conviction, which I can hardly blame, that the sun never shone in Scotland,—which that noble luminary seems disposed to confirm, by making this the first fair day we have seen this month—so that his beams will greet them at Longtown, as if he were determined to put Scotland to utter shame.

“In you I expect a guest of a different calibre; and I think (barring downright rain) I can promise you some sport of one kind or other. We have a good deal of game about us; and Walter, to whom I have resigned my gun and license, will be an excellent attendant. He brought in six brace of moorfowl on the 12th, which had (*si fas est diceri*) its own effect in softening the minds of our guests towards this unhappy climate. In other respects things look melancholy

enough here. Corn is, however, rising; and the poor have plenty of work, and wages which, though greatly inferior to what they had when hands were scarce, assort perfectly well with the present state of the markets. Most folks try to live as much on their own produce as they can, by way of fighting off distress; and though speculating farmers and landlords must suffer, I think the temporary ague-fit will, on the whole, be advantageous to the country. It will check that inordinate and unbecoming spirit of expense, or rather extravagance, which was poisoning all classes, and bring us back to the sober virtues of our ancestors. It will also have the effect of teaching the landed interest, that their connexion with their farmers should be of a nature more intimate than that of mere payment and receipt of rent, and that the largest offerer for a lease is often the person least entitled to be preferred as a tenant. Above all, it will complete the destruction of those execrable quacks, terming themselves land-doctors, who professed, from a two days' scamper over your estate, to tell you its constitution,—in other words its value,—acre by acre. These men, paid according to the golden hopes they held out, afforded by their reports one principal means of deceiving both landlord and tenant, by setting an ideal and extravagant value upon land, which seemed to entitle the one to expect, and the other to offer, rent far beyond what any expectation formed by either, upon their own acquaintance with the property, could rationally have warranted. More than one landed gentleman has cursed, in my presence, the day he ever consulted one of those empirics, whose prognostications induced him to reject the offers of substantial men, practically acquainted with the locale. Ever, my dear Morritt, most truly yours,
Walter Scott."

In October, 1816, appeared the Edinburgh Annual Register, containing Scott's historical sketch of the year 1814—a

composition which would occupy two such volumes as the reader now has in his hand. Though executed with extraordinary rapidity, the sketch is as clear as spirited; but I need say no more of it here, as the author travels mostly over the same ground again in his Life of Napoleon.

Scott's correspondence proves, that during this autumn he had received many English guests besides the good spinsters of Piccadilly and Mr. Morritt. I regret to add, it also proves that he had continued all the while to be annoyed with calls for money from John Ballantyne; yet before the 12th of November called him to Edinburgh, he appears to have nearly finished the first "Tales of my Landlord." He had, moreover, concluded a negotiation with Constable and Longman for a series of Letters on the History of Scotland: of which, however, if he ever wrote any part, the MS. has not been discovered. It is probable that he may have worked some detached fragments into his long subsequent "Tales of a Grandfather." The following letter shows likewise that he was now busy with plans of building at Abbotsford, and deep in consultation on that subject with an artist eminent for his skill in Gothic architecture, Mr. Edward Blore, R.A.

To Daniel Terry, Esq.
"November 12th, 1816.
"My dear Terry,

"I have been shockingly negligent in acknowledging your repeated favours; but it so happened, that I have had very little to say, with a great deal to do; so that I trusted to your kindness to forgive my apparent want of kindness, and indisputable lack of punctuality. You will readily suppose that I have heard with great satisfaction of the prosperity of your household, particularly of the good health of my little namesake and his mother. Godmothers of yore used to

be fairies; and though only a godfather, I think of sending you, one day, a fairy gift—a little drama, namely, which, if the audience be indulgent, may be of use to him. Of course, you will stand godfather to it yourself: it is yet only in embryo—a sort of poetical Hans in Kelder—nor am I sure when I can bring him forth; not for this season, at any rate. You will receive, in the course of a few days, my late whereabouts in four volumes: there are two tales the last of which I really prefer to any fictitious narrative I have yet been able to produce—the first is wish-washy enough. The subject of the second tale lies among the old Scottish Cameronians—nay, I'll tickle ye off a Covenanter as readily as old Jack could do a young Prince; and a rare fellow he is, when brought forth in his true colours. Were it not for the necessity of using scriptural language, which is essential to the character, but improper for the stage, it would be very dramatic. But of all this you will judge by and by. To give the go-by to the public, I have doubled and leaped into my form, like a hare in snow: that is, I have changed my publisher, and come forth like a maiden knight's white shield (there is a conceit!) without any adhesion to fame gained in former adventures (another!) or, in other words, with a virgin title-page (another!).—I should not be so lighthearted about all this, but that it is very nearly finished and out, which is always a blithe moment for Mr. Author. And now to other matters. The books came safe, and were unpacked two days since, on our coming to town most ingeniously were they stowed in the legs of the very handsome stand for Lord Byron's vase, with which our friend George Bullock has equipped me. I was made very happy to receive him at Abbotsford, though only for a start; and no less so to see Mr. Blore, from whom I received your last letter. He is a very fine young man, modest, simple, and unaffected in his manners, as well as a most capital artist. I have had the assistance of both these gentlemen in arranging an addition to the cottage at Abbotsford,

intended to connect the present farm-house with the line of low buildings to the right of it. Mr. Bullock will show you the plan, which I think is very ingenious. He has promised to give it his consideration with respect to the interior; and Mr. Blore has drawn me a very handsome elevation, both to the road and to the river. I expect to get some decorations from the old Tolbooth of Edinburgh, particularly the copestones of the door-way, or lintels, as we call them, and a niche or two—one very handsome indeed! Better get a niche from the Tolbooth than a niche in it, to which such building operations are apt to bring the projectors. This addition will give me:—first,—a handsome boudoir, in which I intend to place Mr. Bullock's Shakspeare,* with his superb cabinet, which serves as a pedestal. This opens into the little drawingroom, to which it serves as a chapel of ease; and on the other side, to a handsome dining-parlour of 27 feet by 18, with three windows to the north, and one to the south, the last to be Gothic, and filled with stained glass. Besides these commodities, there is a small conservatory or greenhouse; and a study for myself, which we design to fit up with ornaments from Melrose Abbey. Bullock made several casts with his own hands—masks, and so forth, delightful for cornices, &c.

** A cast from the monumental effigy at Stratford-upon-Avon—now in the library at Abbotsford was the gift of Mr. George Bullock, long distinguished in London as a collector of curiosities for sale, and honourably so by his "Mexican Museum" which formed during several years a popular exhibition throughout the country. This ingenious man was, as the reader will see in the sequel, a great favourite with Scott.*

"Do not let Mrs. Terry think of the windows till little Wat is duly cared after.† I am informed by Mr. Blore that he is a fine thriving fellow, very like papa. About my armorial