



**THE LIFE OF SIR
WALTER SCOTT**

VOL. VI: 1825 -- 1826

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART

The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Vol. 6: 1825 - 1826

John Gibson Lockhart

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Jazzybee Verlag Jürgen Beck

86450 Altenmünster, Loschberg 9

Germany

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Chapter I.

MARRIAGE OF LIEUTENANT WALTER SCOTT—LETTER TO LADY DAVY—PROJECT OF CONSTABLE’S MISCELLANY—TERRY AND THE ADELPHI THEATRE—PUBLICATION OF THE TALES OF THE CRUSADERS—PREPARATIONS FOR THE LIFE OF BUONAPARTE—LETTERS TO MR TERRY, MRS WALTER SCOTT, &c.—1825

With all his acuteness Captain Basil Hall does not seem to have caught any suspicion of the real purpose and meaning of the ball for which he was invited back to Abbotsford on the 9th of January, 1825. That evening was one of the very proudest and happiest in Scott’s brilliant existence. Its festivities were held in honour of a young lady, whom the Captain names cursorily among the guests as “the pretty heiress of Lochore.” It was known to not a few of the party, and I should have supposed it might have been surmised by the rest, that those halls were displayed for the first time in all their splendour, on an occasion not less interesting to the Poet than the conclusion of a treaty of marriage between the heir of his name and fortunes, and the amiable niece of his friends, Sir Adam and Lady Ferguson. It was the first regular ball given at Abbotsford, and the last. Nay,

though twelve years have elapsed, I believe nobody has ever danced under that roof since then. I myself never again saw the whole range of apartments thrown open for the reception of company except once on the day of Sir Walter Scott's funeral.

The lady's fortune was a handsome one, and her guardians exerted the powers with which they were invested, by requiring that the marriage-contract should settle Abbotsford (with reservation of Sir Walter's own liferent) upon the affianced parties, in the same manner as Lochore. To this condition he gave a ready assent, and the moment he had signed the deed, he exclaimed, "I have now parted with my lands with more pleasure than I ever derived from the acquisition or possession of them; and if I be spared for ten years, I think I may promise to settle as much more again upon these young folks." It was well for himself and his children that his auguries, which failed so miserably as to the matter of worldly wealth, were destined to no disappointment as respected considerations of a higher description. I transcribe one of the letters by which he communicated the happy event to the wide circle of friends, who were sure to sympathize in his feelings of paternal satisfaction.

To the Lady Davy, Grosvenor Street, London.

"Edinburgh, 24th January, 1825.

"My dear Lady Davy,

"As I know the kind interest which you take in your very sincere friend and Scotch cousin, I think you will like to hear that my eldest hope, who, not many years ago, was too bashful to accept your offered salute, and procured me the happiness of a kiss on his account, beside that which I always claim on my own, has, as he has grown older, learned a little better how such favours are to be

estimated. In a word, Walter, then an awkward boy, has now turned out a smart young fellow, with good manners, and a fine figure, if a father may judge, standing well with the Horse-Guards, and much master of the scientific part of his profession, retaining at the same time much of the simple honesty of his original character, though now travelled, and acquainted with courts and camps. Some one of these good qualities, I know not which, or whether it were the united force of the whole, and particularly his proficiency in the attack of strong places, has acquired him the affection and hand of a very sweet and pretty Mrs. Anne Page, who is here as yet known by the name of Miss Jobson of Lochore, which she exchanges next week for that of Mrs. Scott of Abbotsford. It would seem some old flirtation betwixt Walter and her had hung on both their minds, for at the conclusion of a Christmas party we learned the pretty heiress had determined to sing the old tune of—

*'Mount and go—mount and make you ready,
Mount and go, and be a soldier's lady.'*

Though her fortune be considerable, the favours of the public will enable me to make such settlements as her friends think very adequate. The only impediment has been the poor mother (a Highland lady of great worth and integrity), who could not brook parting with the sole object of her care and attention, to resign her to the vicissitudes of a military life, while I necessarily refused to let my son sink into a mere fox-hunting, muir-fowl-shooting squire. She has at length been obliged to acquiesce rather than consent—her friends and counsellors being clear-sighted enough to see that her daughter's happiness could scarce be promoted by compelling the girl to break off a mutual attachment, and a match with a young lieutenant of hussars, sure of having a troop very soon, with a good

estate in reversion, and as handsome a fellow as ever put his foot in a stirrup. So they succeeded in bringing matters to a bearing, although old Papa has practised the 'profane and unprofitable art of poem-making'—and the youngster wears a pair of formidable mustachios. They are to be quiet at Abbotsford for a few days, and then they go to town to make their necessary purchases of carriage, and so forth; they are to be at my old friend, Miss 's, and will scarcely see any one; but as I think you will like to call on my dear little Jane, I am sure she will see you, and I know you will be kind and indulgent to her. Here is a long letter when I only meant a line. I think they will be in London about the end of February, or beginning of March, and go from thence to Ireland, Walter's leave of absence being short. My kindest compliments to Sir Humphry, and pray acquaint him of this change in our family, which opens to me another vista in the dark distance of futurity, which, unless the lady had what Sir Hugh Evans calls good gifts, could scarce otherwise have happened during my lifetime—at least without either imprudence on Walter's part, or restrictions of habits of hospitality and comfort on my own.—Always, dear Lady Davy, your affectionate and respectful friend and cousin,
Walter Scott."

The marriage took place at Edinburgh on the 3d day of February, and when the young couple left Abbotsford two or three weeks afterwards, Sir Walter promised to visit them at their regimental quarters in Ireland in the course of the summer. Before he fulfilled that purpose he had the additional pleasure of seeing his son gazetted as Captain in the King's Hussars—a step for which Sir Walter advanced the large sum of £3500. Some other incidents will be gathered from his letters to his son and daughter-in-law—of which, however, I give such copious extracts chiefly for the illustration they afford of his truly paternal tenderness for

the young lady who had just been admitted into his family—and which she, from the first hour of their connexion to the last, repaid by a filial love and devotedness that formed one of the sweetest drops in his cup of life.

To Mrs. Walter Scott, Dublin.
“Abbotsford, March 20, 1825.
“My dearest Child,

“I had the great pleasure of receiving your kind and attentive letter from London a few days later than I ought to have done, because it was lying here while I was absent on a little excursion, of which I have to give a most interesting account. Believe me, my love, I am very grateful for the time you bestow on me, and that you cannot give so great happiness to any one as to me by saying you are well and happy. My daughters, who deserve all the affection a father can bestow, are both near me, and in safe guardianship, the one under the charge of a most affectionate husband, and the other under the eye of her parents. For my sons, I have taught them, and what was more difficult, I have taught myself the philosophy, that for their own sake and their necessary advancement in life, their absences from my house must be long, and their visits short; and as they are both, I hope, able to conduct themselves wisely and honourably, I have learned to be contented to hope the best, without making myself or them uneasy by fruitless anxiety. But for you, my dear Jane, who have come among us with such generous and confiding affection, my stoicism must excuse me if I am more anxious than becomes either a philosopher or a hackneyed man of the world, who uses in common cases to take that world as it goes. I cannot help worrying myself with the question, whether the object of such constant and affectionate care may not feel less happy than I could wish her in scenes which must be so new, and under privations which must be

felt by you the more that your earlier life has been an entire stranger to them. I know Walter's care and affection will soften and avert these as much as possible, and if there be any thing in the power of old papa to assist him in the matter, you will make him most happy by tasking that power to the utmost. I wrote to him yesterday that he might proceed in bargain for the troop, and send me the terms that I might provide the needful, as mercantile folks call it, in time and place suitable. The rank of Captain gives, I am aware, a degree of consideration which is worth paying for; and what is still more, my little Jane, as a Captain's lady, takes better accommodation every way than is given to a subaltern's. So we must get the troop by all means, *coute qui coute*.

"Now I will plague you with no more business; but give you an account of myself in the manner of Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck, if ever you heard of such a person. You must suppose that you are busy with your work, and that I am telling you some long story or other, and that you now and then look round and say *eh*, as you do when you are startled by a question or an assertion—it is not quite *eh* neither, but just a little quiet interjection, which shows you are attending. You see what a close observer papa is of his child.

"Well then, when, as I calculate (as a Yankee would say), you were tossing on the waves of the Irish Channel, I was also tossing on the *Vadum Scotticum* of Ptolemy, on my return from the celebrated *Urbs Orrea* of Tacitus. 'Eh,' says Jane; 'Lord, Walter, what can the old gentleman mean?'—'Weiss nichts davon,' says the hussar, taking his cigar from under his moustaches (no, I beg pardon, he does not take out the cigar, because, from the last advices, he has used none in his London journey). He says *weiss nichts*, however, which is, in Italian, No so—in French, *Je nen scais*

rien—in broad Scotch, I neither ken nor care—Well you ask Mr. Edgeworth, or the chaplain of the regiment, or the first scholar you come by—that is to say, you don't attempt to pronounce the hieroglyphical word, but you fold down the letter just at the place, show the talismanic Urbs Orrea and no more, and ask him in which corner of the earth Sir Walter can have been wandering? So, after a moment's recollection, he tells you that the great Roman general, Agricola, was strangely put to his trumps at the Urbs Orrea during his campaign in Caledonia, and that the ninth legion was surprised there by the British and nearly destroyed; then he gets a county history and a Tacitus, and Sir Robert Sibbald's Tracts, and begins to fish about, and finds at length that the Urbs Orrea is situated in the kingdom of Fife*—that it is now called Lochore—that it belonged to the Lochores—the De Vallences—the Wardlaws—the Malcolms—and Lord knows whom in succession and then, in a sheet wet from the press, he finds it is now the property of a pretty and accomplished young lady, who, in an unthrift generosity, has given it with a much more valuable present, namely, her own self—to a lieutenant of hussars. So there the scholar shuts his book, and observes that as there are many cairns and tumuli and other memorials upon the scene of action, he wonders whether Sir Walter had not the curiosity to open some of them. 'Now heaven forbid,' says Jane; 'I think the old knight has stock enough for boring one with his old Border ballads and battles, without raising the bones of men who have slept 1000 years quietly on my own estate to assist him.' Then I can keep silence no longer, but speak in my own proper person. 'Pray do you not bore me, Mrs. Jane, and have not I a right to retaliate?'—'Eh,' says the Lady of Lochore, 'how is it possible I should bore you, and so many hundred miles between us?'—'That's the very reason,' says the Laird of Abbotsford, 'for if you were near me the thing would be impossible—but being, as you say, at so many hundred

miles distant, I am always thinking about you, and asking myself an hundred questions which I cannot answer; for instance, I cannot go about my little improvements without teasing myself with thinking whether Jane would like the green-house larger or less—and whether Jane would like such line of walk, or such another—and whether that stile is not too high for Jane to step over.’ ‘Dear papa,’ says Jane, ‘your own stile is really too high for my comprehension.’

* According to the general creed (out of the “Kingdom of Fife,” that is to say)—Mr. Oldbuck was quite wrong as to the identification of this prætorium.

“Well then, I am the most indulgent papa in the world, and so you see I have turned over a new leaf. The plain sense of all this rambling stuff, which escapes from my pen as it would from my tongue, is that I have visited for a day, with Isaac Bayley,* your dominions of Lochore, and was excellently entertained and as happy as I could be, where every thing was putting me in mind that she was absent whom I could most have wished present. It felt, somehow, like an intrusion; and as if it was not quite right that I should be in Jane’s house, while Jane herself was amongst strangers; this is the sort of false colouring which imagination gives to events and circumstances. Well, but I was much pleased with all I saw, and particularly with the high order Mr. Bayley has put every thing into; and I climbed Bennarty like a wild goat, and scrambled through the old crags like a wild-cat, and pranced through your pastures like a wild-buck (fat enough to be in season though), and squattered through your drains like a wild-duck, and had nearly lost myself in your morasses like the ninth legion, and visited the old castle, which is not a stupid place, and in short, wandered from Dan to Beersheba, and tired myself as effectually in your dominions as I did you in mine upon a certain walk to the Rhymer’s Glen. I had the

offer of your pony, but the weather being too cold, I preferred walking; a cheerful little old gentleman, Mr. Burrell, and Mr. Gray the clergyman, dined with us, and your health was not forgotten. On my retreat (Border fashion) I brought away your pony and the little chaise, believing that both will be better under Peter Mathieson's charge than at Lochore, in case of its being let to strangers. Don't you think Jane's pony will be taken care of?

* A cousin of the young lady, and the legal manager of her affairs.

"The day we arrived the weather was gloomy and rainy, the climate sorrowful for your absence I suppose; the next, a fine sunny frost; the third, when I came off, so checkered with hail showers as to prevent a visit I had meditated to two very interesting persons in the neighbourhood. 'The Chief Commissioner and Charles Adam, I suppose?'—'Not a bit, guess again.' O, Mr. Beaton of Contal, or Mr. Sym of Blair?'—'Not a bit, guess again.'—'I won't guess any more.'—Well then, it was two honest gentlemen hewn in stone—some of the old knights of Lochore, who were described to me as lying under your gallery in the kirk; but as I had no reason to expect a warm reception from them, I put off my visit till some more genial season.

"This puts me in mind of Warwick unvisited, and of my stupidity in not letting you know that the church is as well worth seeing as the castle, and you might have seen that, notwithstanding the badness of the morning. All the tombs of the mighty Beauchamps and Nevilles are to be seen there, in the most magnificent style of Gothic display, and in high preservation. However, this will be for another day, and you must comfort yourself that life has something still to show.

“I trust you will soon find yourself at Edgeworthstown, where I know you will be received with open arms, for Miss Edgeworth’s kindness is equal to her distinguished talents.

“I am glad you like my old acquaintance, Mathews. Some day I will make him show his talent for your amusement in private; for I know him well. It is very odd, he is often subject to fits of deep melancholy.

“This is a letter of formidable length, but our bargain is, long or short, just as the humour chances to be, and you are never to mend a pen or think upon a sentence, but write whatever comes readiest. My love to Walter. I am rather anxious to know if he has got his horses well over, and whether all his luggage has come safe. I am glad you have got a carriage to your mind; it is the best economy to get a good one at once. Above all, I shall be anxious to hear how you like the society of the ladies of the 15th. I know my Jane’s quiet prudence and good sense will save her from the risk of making sudden intimacies, and induce her to consider for a little while which of her new companions may suit her best; in the mean-while being civil to all.

“You see that I make no apology for writing silly letters; and why should you think that I can think yours stupid? There is not a stupid bit about them, nor any word, or so much as a comma, that is not interesting to me. Lady Scott and Anne send their kindest love to you, and grateful compliments to Mrs. Edgeworth, Miss Edgeworth, our friend Miss Harriet, and all the family at Edgeworthstown. Buona notte, amata bene. Goodnight, darling, and take good care of yourself. I always remain your affectionate father,
Walter Scott.

“P.S.—They say a man’s fortune depends on a wife’s pleasure. I do not know how that may be; but I believe a lady’s comfort depends much on her fille-de-chambre, and therefore beg to know how Rebecca discharges her office.”

To Mrs. Walter Scott, Edgeworthstown, Ireland.

“Abbotsford, March 23, 1825.

“My dearest Jane,

“I am afraid you will think me a merciless correspondent, assailing you with so close a fire of letters; but having a frank, I thought it as well to send you an epistle, though it can contain nothing more of interest excepting that we are all well. I can, however, add more particularly than formerly, that I learn from Mrs. Bayley that Mrs. Jobson’s health is not only good, but her spirits are remarkably so, so as to give the greatest pleasure to all friends. I can see, I think, a very good reason for this; for, after the pain of the first separation from so dear an object, and after having brought her mind to believe that your present situation presented to you a fair chance for happiness, I can easily suppose that her maternal anxiety is greatly relieved from fears and apprehensions which formerly distressed her. Nothing can be more kind and more handsome than the way in which Mrs. Jobson speaks of Walter, which I mention, because it gives me sincere pleasure, and will, I am sure, afford the same to you, or rather much more.

“My troops here are sadly diminished. I have only Anne to parade for her morning walk, and to domineer over for going in thin slippers and silk stockings through dirty paths, and in lace veils through bushes and thorn brakes. I think Jane sometimes came in for a share of the lecture on these occasions. So I walk my solitary round—generally speaking—look after my labourers, and hear them regularly enquire, ‘If I have heard from the ‘Captain and his Leddy?’

I wish I could answer them—yes; but have no reason to be impatient. This is the 23d, and I suppose Walter will be at Cork this evening to join the 15th, and that you are safe at Edgeworthstown to spend your first short term of widowhood. I hope the necessary hospitality to his mess will not occasion his dissipating too much; for, to be a very strong young man, I know no one with whom what is called hard living agrees so ill. A happy change in the manners of the times fortunately renders such abuse of the good creature, wine, much less frequent and less fashionable than it was in my days and Sir Adam's. Drinking is not now the vice of the times, whatever vices and follies they may have adopted in its stead.

“I had proceeded thus far in my valuable communication, when, lo! I was alarmed by the entrance of that terrific animal a two-legged boar—one of the largest size and most tremendous powers. By the way, I learned, from no less an authority than George Canning, what my own experience has since made good, that an efficient bore must always have something respectable about him, otherwise no one would permit him to exercise his occupation. He must be, for example, a very rich man (which, perhaps, gives the greatest privilege of all)—or he must be a man of rank and condition too important to be treated sans ceremonie—or a man of learning (often a dreadful bore)—or of talents undoubted, or of high pretensions to wisdom and experience—or a great traveller;—in short, he must have some tangible privilege to sanction his profession. Without something of this kind, one would treat a bore as you do a vagrant mendicant, and send him off to the workhouse if he presumed to annoy you. But when properly qualified, the bore is more like a beggar with a badge and pass from his parish, which entitles him to disturb you with his importunity whether you will or no. Now, my bore is a complete gentleman and an old friend, but, unhappily for

those who know him, master of all Joe Miller's stories of sailors and Irishmen, and full of quotations from the classics as hackneyed as the post-horses of Melrose. There was no remedy; I must either stand his shot within doors or turn out with him for a long walk, and, for the sake of elbow-room, I preferred the last. Imagine an old gentleman, who has been handsome, and has still that sort of pretension which leads him to wear tight pantaloons and a smart half-boot, neatly adapted to show off his leg; suppose him as upright and straight as a poker, if the poker's head had been, by some accident, bent to one side; add to this, that he is a dogged Whig; consider that I was writing to Jane, and desired not to be interrupted by much more entertaining society—Well, I was had, however—fairly caught—and out we sallied, to make the best we could of each other. I felt a sort of necessity to ask him to dinner; but the invitation, like Macbeth's amen, stuck in my throat. For the first he got the lead, and kept it; but opportunities occur to an able general, if he knows how to make use of them. In an evil hour for him, and a happy one for me, he started the topic of our intended railroad; there I was a match for him, having had, on Tuesday last, a meeting with Harden, the two Torwoodlees, and the engineer on this subject, so that I had at my finger-end every cut, every lift, every degree of elevation or depression, every pass in the country, and every possible means of crossing them. So I kept the whip-hand of him completely, and never permitted him to get off the railway again to his own ground. In short, so thoroughly did I bore my bore, that he sickened and gave in, taking a short leave of me. Seeing him in full retreat, I then ventured to make the civil offer of a dinner. But the railroad had been breakfast, luncheon, dinner, and supper to boot—he hastily excused himself, and left me at a double-quick time, sick of railroads, I dare say, for six months to come. But I must not forget that I am perhaps

abusing the privilege I have to bore you, being that of your affectionate papa.

“How nicely we could manage without the said railroad, now the great hobby of our Teviotdale lairds, if we could by any process of conjuration waft to Abbotsford some of the coal and lime from Lochore—though, if I were to wish for such impossibilities, I would rather desire Prince Houssein’s tapestry in the Arabian Nights to bring Walter and Jane to us now and then, than I would wish for ‘Fife and all the lands about it.’* ”

** A song of Dr. Blacklock’s.*

“By the by, Jane, after all, though she looks so demure, is a very sly girl, and keeps her accomplishments to herself. You would not talk with me about planting and laying out ground; and yet, from what you had been doing at Lochore, I see what a pretty turn you have for these matters. I wish you were here to advise me about the little pond which we passed, where, if you remember, there is a new cottage built. I intend to plant it with aquatic trees, willows, alders, poplars, and so forth—and put trouts and perches into the water—and have a preserve of wild-ducks on the pond, with Canadian geese and some other water-fowl. I am to get some eggs from Lord Traquair of a curious species of half-reclaimed wild-ducks, which abound near his solitary old chateau, and no where else in Scotland that I know of; and I can get the Canadian geese, curious painted animals, that look as if they had flown out of a figured Chinese paper, from Mr. Murray of Broughton. The foolish folks, when I was absent, chose to improve on my plan by making an island in the pond, which is exactly the size and shape of a Stilton cheese. It will be useful, however, for the fowl to breed in.

“Mamma drove out your pony and carriage to-day. She was (twenty years ago), the best lady-whip in Edinburgh, and was delighted to find that she retained her dexterity. I hope she will continue to exercise the rein and whip now and then, as her health is much improved by moderate exercise.

“Adieu, my dear Jane. Mamma and Anne join in the kindest love and best wishes. I please myself with the idea that I shall have heard you are well and happy long before this reaches you.—Believe me always your affectionate father,
Walter Scott.

“I hope you will take my good example, and write without caring or thinking either what you have got to say, or in what words you say it.”

To Walter Scott, Esq., &c. &c. Barracks, Cork.

“Abbotsford, 4th April, 1825.

“My dear Children,

“I received your joint composition without a date, but which circumstances enabled me to fix it as written upon the 24th or 25th March. I am very sorry on Jane’s account for the unpleasant necessity of night journeys, and the inconvenience of bad quarters. I almost wish you had stuck by your original plan of leaving Jane at Edgeworthstown. As for you, Mr. Walter, I do not grudge your being obliged to pay a little deference to the wig and gown. *Cedant arma togæ* is a lesson well taught at an assize. But although you, thanks to the discipline of the most excellent of fathers, have been taught not to feel greatly the inconvenience of night journeys or bad lodgings, yet, my poor Jane, who has not had these advantages, must, I fear, feel very uncomfortable; and I hope you will lay your plans so that she shall be exposed to them as little as possible. I like old

songs, and I like to hear Jane sing them; but I would not like that she had cause to sing,

*'Oh but I'm weary with wandering,
Oh. but my fortunes are bad;
It sets not a gentle young lady
To follow a sodger lad.'*

But against the recurrence of these inconveniences I am sure Walter will provide as well as he can. I hope you have delivered your introduction to Mrs. Scott (of Harden's) friend in the neighbourhood of Cork. Good introductions should never be neglected, though numerous ones are rather a bore. A lady's society, especially when entering on life, should be, as they are said to choose their liquor, little but good; and Mrs. Scott being really a woman of fashion, a character not quite so frequent in reality as aspired to—and being, besides, such an old friend of yours, is likely to introduce you to valuable and creditable society.

"We had a visit from Lockhart yesterday. He rode out on Saturday with a friend, and they dined here, remained Sunday, and left us this morning early. I feel obliged to him for going immediately to Mrs. Jobson's when the explosion took place so near her in my friend Colin Mackenzie's premises.* She had experienced no inconvenience but the immediate fright, for the shock was tremendous—and was rather proud of the substantial capacity of the house, which had not a pane broken, when many of the adjoining tenements scarce had one left.

** This alludes to an explosion of gas in Shandwick Place, Edinburgh.*

"We have had our share of casualties. Sibyl came down with me, but without any injury; but Tom Purdie being sent

on some business by Mr. Laidlaw, she fell with him, and rolled over him, and bruised him very much. This is rather too bad, so I shall be on the pavé for a pony, my neck being rather precious.

“Touching Colonel Thwackwell,† of whom I know nothing but the name, which would bespeak him a strict disciplinarian, I suppose you are now arrived at that time of life you can take your ground from your observation, without being influenced by the sort of cabal which often exists in our army, especially in the corps where the officers are men of fortunes or expectations, against a commanding officer. The execution of their duty is not always popular with young men, who may like the dress and show of a regimental officer; and it often happens that a little pettishness on the one side begets a little repulsiveness of manner on the other, so that it becomes the question how the one shall command, and the other obey, in the way most disagreeable to the other, without a tangible infringement of rules. This is the shame of our army, and in a greater degree that of our navy. A humble and reflecting man keeps as much aloof as possible from such feuds. You have seen the world more than when you joined the 18th.

† Sir Walter had misread, or chose to miswrite, the name of his son's new commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Thackwell.

“The Catholic question seems likely to be carried at last. I hope, though I doubt it a little, that Ireland will be the quieter, and the people more happy. I suspect, however, that it is laying a plaster to the foot while the head aches, and that the fault is in the landholders' extreme exactions, not in the disabilities of the Catholics, or any more remote cause.

“My dear Jane, pray take care of yourself, and write me soon how you are and what you are doing. I hope it will contain a more pleasant account of your travels than the last. Mamma and Anne send best loves. I hope my various letters have all come to your hand, and am, my dear children, always your affectionate father,
Walter Scott.”

To Walter Scott, Esq., Lieutenant, 15th Hussars, Barracks, Dublin.

“Abbotsford, 27th April, 1825.

“My dear Walter,

“I received to-day your interesting communication, and have written to Edinburgh to remit the price of this troop as soon as possible. I can make this out without troubling Mr. Bayley; but it will pare my nails short for the summer, and I fear prevent my paying your carriage, as I had intended.

“Nicol is certainly going to sell Faldonside. The Nabal asks £40,000,—at least £5000 too much. Yet in the present low rate of money, and general thirst for land, there is no saying but he may get a fool to offer him his price, or near it. I should like to know your views about this matter, as it is more your concern than mine, since you will, I hope, have a much longer date of it. I think I could work it all off during my life, and also improve the estate highly; but then it is always a heavy burden, and I would not like to undertake it, unless I was sure that Jane and you desired such an augmentation of territory. I do not mean to do any thing hasty, but, as an opportunity may cast up suddenly, I should like to know your mind.

“I conclude, this being 27th April, that you are all snugly settled in Dublin. I am a little afraid of the gaieties for Jane,

and hope she will be gay moderately that she may be gay long. The frequent habit of late hours is always detrimental to health, and sometimes has consequences which last for life. Avis au lecteur; of course I do not expect you to shut yourselves up at your period of life. Your course of gaiety at Cork reminds me of Jack Johnstone's song—

*'Then we'll visit the Callaghans, Brallaghans,
Nowlans, and Dowlans likewise,
And bother them all with the beauty
Which streams from my Judy's (or Jeanie's) black eyes.'*

“We have better accounts of little Johnnie of late—his cough is over for the present, and the learned cannot settle whether it has been the hooping-cough or no. Sophia talks of taking him to Germiston. Lockhart comes here for the Circuit, and I expect him to-morrow.

“Sir Adam and Lady Ferguson bring most excellent accounts of Mrs. Jobson's good health and spirits. Sir Henry Jardine (he writes himself no less now) hath had the dignity of knighthood inflicted on him. Mamma and Anne join in kind love. I expect a long letter from Jane one of these days soon; she writes too well not to write with ease to herself, and therefore I am resolved her talent shall not be idle, if a little jogging can prevail on her to exercise it.

“You have never said a word of your horses, nor how you have come on with your domestics, those necessary plagues of our life. Two or three days since, that cub of Sir Adam's chose to amuse himself with flinging crackers about the hall here when we were at dinner. I think I gave him a proper jobation.

“Here is the first wet day we have had—very welcome, as the earth required it much, and the season was backward. I

can hear Bogie whistling for joy.
“Your affectionate father,
Walter Scott.”

In May 1825, Sir Walter’s friend Terry, and his able brother comedian, Mr. Frederick Yates, entered on a negotiation, which terminated, in July, in their becoming joint lessees and managers of the Adelphi Theatre, London. Terry requested Scott and Ballantyne to assist him on this occasion by some advance of money, or if that should be inconvenient, by the use of their credit. They were both very anxious to serve him, but Sir Walter had a poor opinion of speculations in theatrical property, and, moreover, entertained suspicions, too well justified by the result, that Terry was not much qualified for conducting the pecuniary part of such a business. Ultimately Ballantyne, who shared these scruples, became Terry’s security for a considerable sum (I think £500), and Sir Walter pledged his credit in like manner to the extent of £1250. He had, in the sequel, to pay off both this sum and that for which Ballantyne had engaged.

Several letters were interchanged before Terry received the support he had requested from his Scotch friends; and I must extract two of Sir Walter’s. The first is, in my opinion, when considered with reference to the time at which it was written, and the then near though unforeseen result of the writer’s own commercial speculations, as remarkable a document as was ever penned. It is, moreover, full of shrewd and curious suggestions touching theatrical affairs in general—from the highest to the lowest. The second is, at least, a specimen of friendly caution and delicate advice most inimitably characteristic of Scott.

To Daniel Terry, Esq., London.
“Edinburgh, May 5th, 1825.

“My Dear Terry,

“I received your long confidential letter; and as the matter is in every respect important, I have given it my anxious consideration. The plot is a good plot, and the friends, though I know them only by your report, are, I doubt not, good friends, and full of expectation. There are, however, two particulars unfavourable to all theatrical speculations, and of which you are probably better aware than I am. The first is, that every scheme depending on public caprice must be irregular in its returns. I remember John Kemble, complaining to me of Harry Siddons’ anxious and hypochondriac fears about his Edinburgh concern, said, ‘He does not consider that no theatre whatever can be considered as a regular source of income, but must be viewed as a lottery, at one time strikingly successful, at another a total failure.’ Now this affects your scheme in two ways. First, you can hardly expect, I fear, your returns to be so regular every season, even though your calculation be just as to the recent average. And, secondly, you must secure some fund, either of money or credit, to meet those blanks and bad seasons which must occasionally occur. The best business is ruined when it becomes pinched for money, and gets into the circle of discounting bills, and buying necessary articles at high prices and of inferior quality, for the sake of long credit. I own your plan would have appeared to me more solid, though less splendid, if Mr. Jones, or any other monied man, had retained one-half or one-third of the adventure; for every speculation requires a certain command of money, and cannot be conducted with any plausibility upon credit alone. It is easy to make it feasible on paper, but the times of payment arrive to a certainty. Those of supply are less certain, and cannot be made to meet the demands with the same accuracy. A month’s difference between demand and receipt makes loss of credit; loss of credit is in such a case ruin. I would advise

you and Mr. Yates to consider this, and sacrifice some view of profit to obtain stability by the assistance of some monied man—a class of whom many are in your great city just gaping for such an opportunity to lay out cash to advantage. This difficulty, the want of solid cash, is an obstacle to all attempts whatsoever; but there is something, it would seem, peculiarly difficult in managing a theatre. All who practise the fine arts in any department are, from the very temperament necessary to success, more irritable, jealous, and capricious than other men made up of heavier elements; but the jealousy among players is signally active, because their very persons are brought into direct comparison, and from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot they are pitted by the public in express rivalry against each other. Besides, greatly as the profession has risen in character of late years, theatrical talent must still be found frequently allied with imperfect general education, low habits, and sometimes the follies and vices which arise out of them. All this makes, I should think, a theatre very difficult to manage, and liable to sudden checks when your cattle jibb or do not work kindly. I think you have much of the talent to manage this; and bating a little indolence, which you can always conquer when you have a mind and a motive, I know no one whose taste, temper, and good sense make him more likely to gain and secure the necessary influence over the performers. But il faut de l' argent—you must be careful in your situation, that a check shall not throw you on the breakers, and for this there is no remedy but a handsome provision of the blunt. This is the second particular, I think, unfavourable to undertakings of a theatrical description, and against which I would wish to see you guarded by a more ample fund than your plan involves.

“You have of course ascertained from the books of the theatre that the returns of receipts are correct; but I see no

provision made for wear and tear of stock, expense of getting up new pieces, &c. which, in such an undertaking, must be considerable. Perhaps it is included in the charge of £36 per night; but if not, it seems to me that it will materially alter your calculations for the worse, for you are naturally disposed to be liberal in such expenses, and the public will expect it. Without baits the fish cannot be caught. I do not state these particulars from any wish to avoid assisting you in this undertaking; much the contrary. If I saw the prospect of your getting fairly on the wing, nothing could give me more pleasure than to assist to the extent of my means, and I shall only, in that case, regret that they are at present more limited than I could wish by circumstances which I will presently tell you. But I should not like to see you take flight, like the ingenious mechanist in Rasselas only to flutter a few yards, and fall into the lake. This would be a most heart-breaking business, and would hang like a millstone about your neck for all your life. Capital and talent will do excellent things together; but depend on it, talent without capital will no more carry on an extensive and progressive undertaking of this nature than a race-horse will draw a Newcastle waggon. Now, I cannot at present assist you with ready money, which is the great object in your undertaking. This year has been, owing to many reasons, the heaviest of my expenditure, and the least fruitful of profit, because various anxieties attending Walter's marriage, and feasting, &c. after it, have kept me from my usual lucrative labours. It has no doubt been a most advantageous concern, for he has got an amiable girl, whom he loves, and who is warmly attached to him, with a very considerable fortune. But I have had to find cash for the purchase of a troop for him about £3500; item, the bride's jewels, and so forth, becoming her situation and fortune, £500: item, for a remount to him on joining his regiment, equipage for quarters, carriage, and other things, that they may enter life with a free income, £1000

at least. Moreover, I am a sharer to the extent of £1500 on a railroad, which will bring coals and lime here at half price, and double the rent of the arable part of my property, but is dead outlay in the mean-time; and I have shares in the oil-gas, and other promising concerns, not having resisted the mania of the day, though I have yielded to it but soberly; also, I have the dregs of Abbotsford House to pay for and all besides my usual considerable expenditure; so I must look for some months to be put to every corner of my saddle. I could not let my son marry her like a beggar; but, in the mean-time, I am like my namesake in the days of the crusades—Walter the Penniless.

“Every one grumbles at his own profession, but here is the devil of a calling for you, where a man pays £3000 for an annuity of £400 a-year and less renounces his free will in almost every respect;—must rise at five every morning to see horses curried—dare not sleep out of a particular town without the leave of a cross Colonel, who is often disposed to refuse it merely because he has the power to do so; and, last of all, may be sent to the most unhealthy climates to die of the rot, or be shot like a black-cock. There is a per contra, to be sure—fine clothes and fame; but the first must be paid for, and the other is not come by by one out of the hundred. I shall be anxious to know what you are able to do. Your ready is the devil—

*‘The thing may to-morrow be all in your power,
But the money, gadzooks, must be paid in an hour.’*

If you were once set a-rolling, time would come round with me, and then I should be able to help you a little more than at present. Mean-while, I am willing to help you with my credit by becoming one of your guarantees to the extent of £1250.

“But what I am most anxious about is to know how you raise the £5000 cash; if by bills and discounts, I beg to say I must decline having to do with the business at all; for besides the immense expense of renewals, that mode of raising money is always liable to some sudden check, which throws you on your back at once, and I should then have hurt myself and deprived myself of the means of helping you some other way. If you can get such a sum in loan for a term of years certain, that would do well. Still better, I think, could you get a monied partner in the concern to pay the sum down, and hold some £2000 more ready for current expenses. I wish to know whether in the £36 for nightly expenses you include your own salary, within which you would probably think it prudent to restrain your own expenses, at least for a year or two; for, believing as I do, that your calculation of £70 per night (five per cent on the outlay) is rather sanguine, I would like to know that your own and Mr. Yates’s expenses were provided for, so as to leave the receipts, whatever they may be, free to answer the burdens. If they do so, you will have great reason to be contented. I need not add that Theodore Hook’s assistance will be repayable. On the whole, my apprehension is for want of money in the outset. Should you either start with marked success, or have friends sufficient to carry on at some disadvantage for a season or two, I should have little fear; but great attention and regularity will be necessary. You are no great accountant yourself, any more than I am, but I trust Mr. Yates is. All rests with prudence and management. Murray is making a fortune for his sister and family on the very bargain which Siddons, poor fellow, could not have sustained for two years longer. If I have seemed more cautious in this matter than you might expect from my sincere regard for you, it is because caution is as necessary for you as myself; and I assure you I think as deeply on your account as on my own. I beg kind compliments to Mrs. Terry, and inclose a lock of my gray

hair, which Jane desired me to send you for some brooch or clasp at Hamlet's.—Ever yours, very truly,
Walter Scott.”

To the Same.

“My dear Terry,

“You have long ere this heard from honest James that he accedes to your proposal of becoming one of your sureties. I did not think it right in the first instance either to encourage or deter him from taking this step, but sent him the whole correspondence upon the subject, that he might judge for himself, and I fancy he concluded that his own risk of loss was not by any means in proportion to your fair prospect of advantage.

“There is an idea among some of your acquaintance, which I partly acquiesce in, that you are in general somewhat of a procrastinator. I believe I have noticed the same thing myself; but then I consider it the habit of one accustomed to alternations of severe exertion and great indolence; and I have no doubt that it will give place to the necessity of following out a regular, stated, and daily business—where every hour brings its own peculiar duties, and you feel yourself like the mail-coach compelled to be in to time. I know such routine always cures me of the habit of indolence, which, on other occasions, I give way to as much as any man. This objection to the success which all agree is in your own power, I have heard coupled with another, which is also founded on close observation of your character, and connected with an excellent point of it; it is, that you will be too desirous to do things perfectly well—to consider the *petite economie* necessary to a very extensive undertaking. This, however, is easily guarded against. I remember Mrs. John Kemble telling me how much she had saved by degrading some unfortunate figurantes into paper

veils and ruffles. I think it was a round sum, and without going such lengths, I fear severer economy than one would like to practise is essential to making a theatre profitable. Now, I have mentioned the only two personal circumstances which induce envy to lift her voice against your prospects. I think it right you should know them, for there is something to be considered in both particulars; I would not mention them till the affair was finished, because I would not have you think I was sheltering myself under such apologies. That the perils rising out of them are not formidable in my eyes, I have sufficiently shown; and I think it right to mention them now. I know I need not apologize for my frankness, nor will you regard it either as an undue exercise of the privilege of an adviser, or an abuse of the circumstances in which this matter has placed us.—Yours ever, with best love to Mrs. Terry and Watt, W. Scott.”

While this business of Terry’s was under consideration, Scott asked me to go out with him one Saturday to Abbotsford, to meet Constable and James Ballantyne, who were to be there for a quiet consultation on some projects of great importance. I had shortly before assisted at a minor conclave held at Constable’s villa of Polton, and was not surprised that Sir Walter should have considered his publisher’s new plans worthy of very ample deliberation. He now opened them in more fulness of detail, and explained his views in a manner that might well excite admiration, not unmixed with alarm. Constable was meditating nothing less than a total revolution in the art and traffic of bookselling; and the exulting and blazing fancy with which he expanded and embellished his visions of success, hitherto undreamt of in the philosophy of the trade, might almost have induced serious suspicions of his sanity, but for the curious accumulation of pregnant facts on which he rested his justification, and the dexterous

sagacity with which he uncoiled his practical inferences. He startled us at the outset by saying, "Literary genius may, or may not, have done its best; but printing and bookselling, as instruments for enlightening and entertaining mankind, and, of course, for making money, are as yet in mere infancy. Yes, the trade are in their cradle." Scott eyed the florid bookseller's beaming countenance, and the solemn stare with which the equally portly printer was listening, and pushing round the bottles with a hearty chuckle, bade me "Give our twa sonsie babbies a drap mother's milk." Constable sucked in fresh inspiration, and proceeded to say that, wild as we might think him, his new plans had been suggested by, and were in fact mainly grounded upon, a sufficiently prosaic authority—namely, the annual schedule of assessed taxes, a copy of which interesting document he drew from his pocket, and substituted for his D'Oyley. It was copiously diversified, "text and margent," by figures and calculations in his own handwriting, which I for one should have regarded with less reverence, had I known at the time this "great arithmetician's" rooted aversion and contempt for all examination of his own balance-sheet. His lecture on these columns and ciphers was, however, as profound as ingenious. He had taken vast pains to fill in the numbers of persons who might fairly be supposed to pay the taxes for each separate article of luxury; and his conclusion was, that the immense majority of British families, endowed with liberal fortunes, had never yet conceived the remotest idea that their domestic arrangements were incomplete, unless they expended some considerable sum annually upon the purchase of books. "Take," said he, "this one absurd and contemptible item of the tax on hair-powder; the use of it is almost entirely gone out of fashion. Bating a few parsons' and lawyers' wigs, it may be said that hair-powder is confined to the flunkeys, and indeed to the livery servants of great and splendid houses exclusively; nay, in many even