



**THE LIFE OF SIR
WALTER SCOTT**

VOL. VII: 1826 -- 1832

JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART

The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Vol. 7: 1826 - 1832

John Gibson Lockhart

Contents:

[The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Vol. 7: 1826 - 1832](#)

[Preface.](#)

[Chapter I.](#)

[Chapter II.](#)

[Chapter III.](#)

[Chapter IV.](#)

[Chapter V.](#)

[Chapter VI.](#)

[Chapter VII.](#)

[Chapter VIII.](#)

[Chapter X.](#)

[Chapter XI.](#)

[Chapter XII.](#)

*The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Vol. 7: 1826 - 1832, J. G.
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Preface.

London, February 10, 1838.

In dismissing the last volume of this Work I have to apologize for some mistakes, which shall be corrected in the text, should it reach a second edition. I notice such as have been pointed out to me, but I am afraid very many more might be detected on a careful revision, and I shall be thankful for any suggestions on this head.

I find, from the evidence of documents kindly forwarded to me by my friend, Dr Macfarlane, Principal of the University of Glasgow, that the cause of the minister, M'Naught, in which Sir Walter Scott made his first appearance at the bar of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, was heard in May 1793, not 1795.

It appears, that another person alluded to in connexion with his early practice as a barrister, Mr. Knox, killed accidentally in July, 1795, was not door-keeper to the Faculty of Advocates, but bar-keeper to the Court of Session. These situations are not, it seems, held by

individuals of exactly the same rank in society; and a relation of the bar-keeper has favoured me with a conspectus of his pedigree; which, however, I do not think it necessary to insert here.

I have received a letter from Kelso, complaining sharply of an extract from Sir Walter's MSS., in which (vol. I. p. 119) a lady, known to him in his youth, is described as having been seen by him afterwards in the situation of governess to a manufacturer's children in Paisley. For this mistake, if it was one, I cannot account.

I have been informed of my error in stating (vol. II. p. 2) that Francis, the eighth Lord Napier, had been a lord of the bedchamber. I had confounded him, it seems, with the late Earl of Morton, who succeeded him as Commissioner to the General Assembly. It also has been communicated to me, by more than one correspondent, that I must have relied too much on my own very early recollections, in mixing Lord Napier's name with a little story told in a note on the same page. It is said by an ancient gentlewoman, to whose accuracy I bow, that the real hero of that anecdote was another gentleman of the same name.

I regret having introduced (vol. II. p. 11) Mr. Archibald Park, brother of the African traveller, as being a Sheriff's Officer of Selkirkshire; whereas, at the time when he gave Scott assistance in seizing a criminal, he was the tenant of an extensive farm on the Buccleuch estate, and had accidentally been riding with the Sheriff.—I am also sorry to find that the Scotch Judge, who so unfeelingly condemned an old acquaintance to death (vol. III. p. 342), was not Lord Braxfield, as stated by me, but a still more distinguished, or at least, celebrated person, "his yoke-fellow of the bench." I can only say that, to the best of my

recollection and belief, Sir Walter always told the story of his early friend, Braxfield.

Lastly, The Honourable Colonel Murray, who commanded the 18th hussars in 1821, assures me that the dissolution of that corps had no connexion whatever with certain trivial irregularities on which Sir Walter Scott gave advice and admonition to his son the Cornet (vol. V., ch. 3.) I thought I had sufficiently conveyed my belief that the rumours which reached Sir Walter, and called forth his paternal remarks, were grossly exaggerated; but I shall make my statement clearer, in case of the text being revised.

And now, as no other opportunity may be afforded me, I may as well say a few words on some of the general criticisms with which these volumes have been honoured while in the course of publication.

The criticisms have, of course, been contradictory on all points; but more seem to agree in censuring the length of the book, than as to any other topic either of blame or commendation. I suggest, in the first place, that if Scott really was a great man, and also a good man, his life deserves to be given in much detail; and that the object being to bring out the character, feelings, and manners of the man, this was likely to be effected better by letting him speak for himself, wherever I could, than by any elaborate process of distilling and concentrating the pith and essence into a formal continuous essay;—because on the former plan, the reader is really treated as a judge, who has the evidence led in his presence, in place of being presented merely with the statement of the counsel, which he might have both inclination and reason to receive with distrust. Let it be granted to me, that Scott belonged to the class of first-rate men, and I may very safely ask—who would be sorry to possess a biography of any such man of a former

time in full and honest detail? If his greatness was a delusion, I grant that these Memoirs are vastly too copious; but had I not been one of those who consider it as a real substantial greatness, I should have been very unwilling to spend time on any record of it whatever.

And yet, even though Scott should not keep his high place in the estimation of future ages, it must always be allowed that he held one of the first in that of his own age—not in his own country alone, but all over the civilized world; that he mixed largely with the most eminent of his contemporaries, and observed keenly the events of a critical period—a period of great deeds, and, above all, of great changes;—and such being the case, I conceive it to be probable that, even supposing his poetry and novels to be comparatively little read a hundred or two hundred years hence, the student of history, and especially of manners, would not be sorry to have access to him “in his habit as he lived.” For my own part, I certainly should be exceedingly thankful if any one were to dig out of the dust of the Bodleian or the British Museum a detailed life, however unambitiously compiled, of any clever accomplished man who had access to the distinguished society of any interesting period in our annals. Nay, they must have been very lofty philosophers, indeed, who did not rejoice in the disinterring of Pepys’s Diary—the work of a vain, silly, transparent, coxcomb, without either solid talents or solid virtues, but still one who had rare opportunities of observation.

There is, however, one circumstance of very peculiar interest which, I venture to say, always must attach to Sir Walter Scott. Let him have been whatever else, he was admitted, by all the Scotchmen of his time, to be the most faithful portrayer of the national character and manners of his own country: and he was (as he says of his Croftangry)

“a Borderer between two ages”—that in which the Scotch still preserved the ancient impress of thought, feeling, demeanour, and dialect, and that when whatever stamped them a separate distinct people was destined to be obliterated. The amalgamation of the sister countries on all points has already advanced far, and will soon be completed.

I have also considered it as my duty to keep in view what Sir Walter’s own notions of biography were. He says, in an early letter to Miss Seward (vol. I. p. 374), “Biography loses all its interest with me, when the shades and lights of the principal character are not accurately and faithfully detailed. I can no more sympathize with a mere eulogist than I can with a ranting hero on the stage; and it unfortunately happens that some of our disrespect is apt, rather unjustly, to be transferred to the subject of the panegyric in the one case, and to poor Cato in the other.” He has elsewhere smiled over Queen Elizabeth’s famous admonition to Zuccherro, that she expected him to paint her without any shadows on the face. Walker flattered fine ladies, I daresay, as lavishly as Lawrence; but he knew Oliver Cromwell too well either to omit his wart, or cover it with a beauty-spot of court plaster. I despise—and Scott himself would have despised—the notion of painting a great and masculine character unfaithfully—of leaving out any thing essential to the preservation of the man as he was, which the limner finds it in his power to represent. There will be at best enough of omissions. Copy as you may, you can give neither life nor motion. With such sentiments I find it difficult to understand how many biographies are undertaken at all. It was my comfort and support in undertaking this, that I felt a perfect conviction from the beginning, that I should best please those to whom Scott’s memory is dearest, by placing the truth, and the whole

truth, before the reader. And, as far as regards them, I have not been disappointed.

At the same time, I consider myself bound not to accept all the praise which the openness of my revelations has brought me from some quarters, while others have complained of it, and condemned it. A little reflection might have suggested that the materials for the business part of Sir Walter's history could not be exclusively in the keeping of his executors. Had I been capable of meditating to mock the world, for purposes of my own, with an unfair and partial statement on that class of matters, I must have known that this could not be done, without giving such an impression of other dead persons as must necessarily induce their representatives to open their own cabinets for themselves. Moreover, I should have thought it might have occurred to any one that Scott and his associates in business lived and died in the midst of a keen and closely observant small society; and that even if all their executors had joined in a cunning attempt to disguise what really occurred, there are many men still alive in Edinburgh who could have effectually exposed any such juggle.

As for the reclamations which have been put forth on the score that I have wilfully distorted the character and conduct of other men, for the purpose of raising Scott at their expense, I have already expressed my regret that my sense of duty to his memory should have extorted from me the particulars in question. If the complaining parties can produce documents to overthrow my statements let them do so. But even then I should be entitled to ask, why those documents were kept back from me? I can most safely say, that while I have withheld many passages in Scott's letters and diaries that would have pained these gentlemen, I have scrupulously printed every line that bore favourably on their predecessors. Indeed, I am not aware that I have

suppressed any thing, in the immense mass of MSS. at my disposal, which seemed to me likely to give unmixed pleasure to any one individual or family with whom Sir Walter Scott had any kind of connexion. I have been willing to gratify his friends. I assuredly have not availed myself of his remains for the purpose of gratifying any grudge or spleen of my own.

J. G. L.

Chapter I.

LIFE OF NAPOLEON, AND CHRONICLES OF THE CANONGATE IN PROGRESS—REVIEWALS OF MACKENZIE'S EDITION OF HOME, AND OF HOFFMAN'S TALES—RHEUMATIC ATTACKS—THEATRICAL FUND DINNER—AVOWAL OF THE SOLE AUTHORSHIP OF THE WAVERLEY NOVELS—LETTER FROM GOETHE—DEATHS OF THE DUKE OF YORK—MR GIFFORD—SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT,—ETC.—MR CANNING MINISTER—COMPLETION OF THE LIFE OF BUONAPARTE—REMINISCENCES OF AN AMANUENSIS—GOETHE'S REMARKS ON THE WORK—ITS PECUNIARY RESULTS—DECEMBER, 1826—JUNE, 1827.

During the winter of 1826-7, Sir Walter suffered great pain (enough to have disturbed effectually any other man's labours, whether official or literary) from successive attacks of rheumatism, which seems to have been fixed on him by the wet sheets of one of his French inns; and his Diary contains, besides, various indications that his constitution was already shaking under the fatigue to which he had subjected it. Formerly, however great the quantity of work he put through his hands, his evenings were almost always reserved for the light reading of an

elbow-chair, or the enjoyment of his family and friends. Now he seemed to grudge every minute that was not spent at the desk. The little that he read of new books, or for mere amusement, was done by snatches in the course of his meals; and to walk, when he could walk at all, to the Parliament House, and back again through the Prince's Street Gardens, was his only exercise and his only relaxation. Every ailment, of whatever sort, ended in aggravating his lameness; and, perhaps, the severest test his philosophy encountered was the feeling of bodily helplessness that from week to week crept upon him. The winter, to make bad worse, was a very cold and stormy one. The growing sluggishness of his blood showed itself in chilblains, not only on the feet but the fingers, and his hand-writing becomes more and more cramped and confused. I shall not pain the reader by extracting merely medical entries from his Diary; but the following give characteristic sketches of his temperament and reflections:

—

“December 16.—Another bad night. I remember I used to think a slight illness was a luxurious thing. My pillow was then softened by the hand of affection, and the little cares put in exercise to soothe the languor or pain, were more flattering and pleasing than the consequences of the illness were disagreeable. It was a new scene to be watched and attended, and I used to think that the malade imaginaire gained something by his humour. It is different in the latter stages—the old post-chaise gets more shattered and out of order at every turn; windows will not be pulled up, doors refuse to open, or being open will not shut again—which last is rather my case. There is some new subject of complaint every moment—your sicknesses come thicker and thicker—your comforting and sympathizing friends fewer and fewer—for why should they sorrow for the course of nature? The recollection of youth, health, and

uninterrupted powers of activity, neither improved nor enjoyed, is a poor strain of comfort. The best is, the long halt will arrive at last, and cure all. This was a day of labour, agreeably varied by a pain which rendered it scarce possible to sit upright. My journal is getting a vile chirurgical aspect. I begin to be afraid of the odd consequences complaints in the post equitem are said to produce. I shall tire of my journal. In my better days I had stories to tell; but death has closed the long dark avenue upon loves and friendships, and I look at them as through the grated door of a burial-place filled with monuments of those who were once dear to me, with no insincere wish that it may open for me at no distant period, provided such be the will of God. My pains were those of the heart, and had something flattering in their character; if in the head, it was from the blow of a bludgeon gallantly received, and well paid back. I think I shall not live to the usual verge of human existence; I shall never see the threescore and ten, and shall be summed up at a discount. No help for it, and no matter either.

“December 18.—Sir Adam Ferguson breakfasted—one of the few old friends left out of the number of my youthful companions. In youth we have many companions, few friends perhaps; in age companionship is ended, except rarely, and by appointment. Old men, by a kind of instinct, seek younger associates, who listen to their stories, honour their grey hairs while present, and mimic and laugh at them when their backs are turned. At least that was the way in our day, and I warrant our chicks of the present brood crow to the same tune. Of all the friends that I have left here, there is none who has any decided attachment to literature. So either I must talk on that subject to young people—in other words, turn proser—or I must turn tea-table talker and converse with ladies. I am too old and too proud for either character, so I’ll live alone and be

contented. Lockhart's departure for London was a loss to me in this way."

He spent a few days at Abbotsford at Christmas, and several weeks during the spring vacation; but the frequent Saturday excursions were now out of the question if for no other reason, on account of the quantity of books which he must have by him while working at his Napoleon. He says on the 30th of December "Wrote hard. Last day of an eventful year; much evil and some good, but especially the courage to endure what Fortune sends without becoming a pipe for her fingers.* It is not the last day of the year; but to-morrow being Sunday, we hold our festival to-day.—The Fergusons came, and we had the usual appliances of mirth and good cheer. Yet our party, like the chariot-wheels of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, dragged heavily.—It must be allowed that the regular recurrence of annual festivals among the same individuals has, as life advances, something in it that is melancholy. We meet like the survivors of some perilous expedition, wounded and weakened ourselves, and looking through diminished ranks to think of those who are no more. Or they are like the feasts of the Caribs, in which they held that the pale and speechless phantoms of the deceased appeared and mingled with the living. Yet where shall we fly from vain repining?—or why should we give up the comfort of seeing our friends, because they can no longer be to us, or we to them, what we once were to each other?"

* *Hamlet, Act III. Scene 2.*

"January 1, 1827.—God make this a happy new year to the King and country, and to all honest men.

"I went to dine as usual at the kind house of Huntly-Burn; but the cloud still had its influence. The effect of grief upon

persons who, like myself and Sir Adam, are highly susceptible of humour, has, I think, been, finely touched by Wordsworth in the character of the merry village teacher Matthew, whom Jeffrey profanely calls “a half crazy sentimental person.” But, with my friend Jeffrey’s pardon, I think he loves to see imagination best when it is bitted and managed, and ridden upon the grand pas. He does not make allowance for starts and sallies, and bounds, when Pegasus is beautiful to behold, though sometimes perilous to his rider. Not that I think the amiable bard of Rydale shows judgment in choosing such subjects as the popular mind cannot sympathize in. It is unwise and unjust to himself. I do not compare myself, in point of imagination, with Wordsworth, far from it; for his is naturally exquisite, and highly cultivated from constant exercise. But I can see as many castles in the clouds as any man, as many genii in the curling smoke of a steam-engine, as perfect a Persepolis in the embers of a sea-coal fire. My life has been spent in such day-dreams. But I cry no roast-meat. There are times a man should remember what Rousseau used to say, Tait-toi, Jean Jacques, car on ne t’entend pas!*

** Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I. Scene 1.*

“Talking of Wordsworth, he told Anne a story, the object of which, as she understood it, was to show that Crabbe had no imagination. Crabbe, Sir George Beaumont, and Wordsworth were sitting together in Murray’s room in Albemarle Street. Sir George, after sealing a letter, blew out the candle which had enabled him to do so, and exchanging a look with Wordsworth, began to admire in silence the undulating thread of smoke which slowly arose from the expiring wick, when Crabbe put on the extinguisher. Anne laughed at the instance, and enquired if the taper was wax, and being answered in the negative, seemed to think that there was no call on Mr. Crabbe to

sacrifice his sense of smell to their admiration of beautiful and evanescent forms. In two other men I should have said 'Why, it is affectations,' with Sir Hugh Evans; 'but Sir George is the man in the world most void of affectation; and then he is an exquisite painter, and no doubt saw where the incident would have succeeded in painting. The error is not in you yourself receiving deep impressions from slight hints, but in supposing that precisely the same sort of impression must arise in the mind of men, otherwise of kindred feeling, or that the common-place folk of the world can derive such inductions at any time or under any circumstances.

"January 13.—The Fergusons, with my neighbours Mr. Scrope and Mr. Bainbridge, eat a haunch of venison from Drummond Castle, and seemed happy. We had music and a little dancing, and enjoyed in others the buoyancy of spirit that we no longer possess ourselves. Yet I do not think the young people of this age so gay as we were. There is a turn for persiflage, a fear of ridicule among them, which stifles the honest emotions of gaiety and lightness of spirit; and people, when they give in the least to the expansion of their natural feelings, are always kept under by the fear of becoming ludicrous. To restrain your feelings and check your enthusiasm in the cause even of pleasure, is now a rule among people of fashion, as much as it used to be among philosophers.

"Edinburgh, January 15.—Off we came, and in despite of rheumatism I got through the journey tolerably. Coming through Galashiels, we met the Laird of Torwoodlee, who, on hearing how long I had been confined, asked how I bore it, observing that he had once in his life—Torwoodlee must be between 60 and 70—been confined for five days to the house, and was like to hang himself. I regret God's free air

as much as any man, but I could amuse myself were it in the Bastile.

“February 19.—Very cold weather. What says Dean Swift?

*“When frost and snow come both together,
Then sit by the fire and save shoe leather.”*

I read and wrote at the bitter account of the French retreat from Moscow, in 1812, till the little room and coal fire seemed snug by comparison. I felt cold in its rigour in my childhood and boyhood, but not since. In youth and middle life I was yet less sensible to it than now—but I remember thinking it worse than hunger. Uninterrupted to-day, and did eight leaves.*

** One page of his MS. answers to from four to five of the close-printed pages of the original edition of his Buonaparte.*

“March 3.—Very severe weather, and home covered with snow. White as a frosted plum-cake, by jingo. No matter; I am not sorry to find I can stand a brush of weather yet. I like to see Arthur’s Seat and the stern old Castle with their white watch-cloaks on. But, as Byron said to Moore, d——n it, Tom, don’t be poetical. I settled to Boney, and wrote right long and well.

“Abbotsford, March 12.—Away we set, and came safely to Abbotsford amid all the dulness of a great thaw, which has set the rivers a streaming in full tide. The wind is high, but for my part

*‘I like this rocking of the battlements.’**

** Zanga, in “The Revenge.”*

I was received by old Tom and the dogs with the unsophisticated feelings of good-will. I have been trying to read a new novel which I had heard praised. It is called *Almacks*, and the author has so well succeeded in describing the cold selfish fopperies of the time, that the copy is almost as dull as the original. I think I shall take up my bundle of Sheriff-Court processes instead of *Almacks*, as the more entertaining avocation of the two.

“March 13.—Before breakfast, prepared and forwarded the processes to Selkirk. Had a pleasant walk to the thicket, though my ideas were olla-podrida-ish. I expect this will not be a day of work but of idleness, for my books are not come. Would to God I could make it light, thoughtless idleness, such as I used to have when the silly smart fancies ran in my brain like the bubbles in a glass of champagne,—as brilliant to my thinking, as intoxicating, as evanescent. But the wine is somewhat on the lees. Perhaps it was but indifferent cyder after all. Yet I am happy in this place, where every thing looks friendly, from old Tom to young Nym.† After all, he has little to complain of who has left so many things that like him.

† Nimrod—a stag-hound.

“March 21.—Wrote till twelve, then out upon the heights, though the day was stormy, and faced the gale bravely. Tom Purdie was not with me. He would have obliged me to keep the sheltered ground. There is a touch of the old spirit in me yet, that bids me brave the tempest,—the spirit that, in spite of manifold infirmities, made me a roaring boy in my youth, a desperate climber, a bold rider, a deep drinker, and a stout player at single-stick, of all which valuable qualities there are now but slender remains. I worked hard when I came in, and finished five pages.

“March 26.—Despatched packets. Colonel and Captain Ferguson arrived to breakfast. I had previously determined to give myself a day to write letters; and this day will do as well as another. I cannot keep up with the world without shying a letter now and then. It is true the greatest happiness I could think of would be to be rid of the world entirely. Excepting my own family, I have little pleasure in the world, less business in it, and am heartily careless about all its concerns.

“April 24.—Still deep snow a foot thick in the court-yard, I dare say. Severe welcome for the poor lambs now coming into the world. But what signifies whether they die just now, or a little while after to be united with sallad at luncheon time? It signifies a good deal too. There is a period, though a short one, when they dance among the gowans, and seem happy. As for your aged sheep or wether, the sooner they pass to the Norman side of the vocabulary, the better. They are like some old dowager ladies and gentlemen of my acquaintance—no one cares about them till they come to be cut up, and then we see how the tallow lies on the kidneys and the chine.

“May 13.—A most idle and dissipated day. I did not rise till half-past eight o’clock. Col. and Capt. Ferguson came to breakfast. I walked half-way home with them, then turned back and spent the day, which was delightful, wandering from place to place in the woods, sometimes reading the new and interesting volumes of Cyril Thornton, sometimes ‘chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies’ which alternated in my mind, idly stirred by the succession of a thousand vague thoughts and fears, the gay strangely mingled with those of dismal melancholy; tears which seemed ready to flow unbidden; smiles which approached to those of insanity; all that wild variety of mood which

solitude engenders. I scribbled some verses, or rather composed them in my memory. The contrast at leaving Abbotsford to former departures, is of an agitating and violent description. Assorting papers, and so forth. I never could help admiring the concatenation between Ahithophel's setting his house in order and hanging himself. The one seems to follow the other as a matter of course. But what frightens and disgusts me is those fearful letters from those who have been long dead, to those who linger on their wayfare through the valley of tears. Those fine lines of Spencer came into my head—

*"The shade of youthful hope is there,
That lingered long, and latest died;
Ambition all dissolved to air,
With phantom honours by his side.
"What empty shadows glimmer nigh?
They once were Friendship, Truth, and Love!
Oh die to thought, to Memory die,
Since lifeless to my heart ye prove."†*

† Poems by the late Honourable W. R. Spencer, London, 1835, 45. See ante, vol. vi. p. 373, note.

Ay, and can I forget the Author the frightful moral of his own vision? What is this world?—a dream within a dream as we grow older—each step is an awakening. The youth awakes, as he thinks, from childhood—the full-grown man despises the pursuits of youth as visionary—the old man looks on manhood as a feverish dream. The grave the last sleep? No; it is the last and final awakening.

"Edinburgh, May 15.—It is impossible not to compare this return to Edinburgh with others in more happy times. But we should rather recollect under what distress of mind I took up my lodgings in Mrs. Brown's last summer. Went to

Court and resumed old habits. Heard the true history of ——* Imagination renders us liable to be the victims of occasional low spirits. All belonging to this gifted, as it is called, but often unhappy class, must have felt that but for the dictates of religion, or the natural recoil of the mind from the idea of dissolution, there have been times when they would have been willing to throw away life as a child does a broken toy. I am sure I know one who has often felt so. O God! what are we?—Lords of nature?—Why a tile drops from a house-top, which an elephant would not feel more than the fall of a sheet of pasteboard, and there lies his lordship. Or something of inconceivably minute origin, the pressure of a bone, or the inflammation of a particle of the brain takes place, and the emblem of the Deity destroys himself or some one else. We hold our health and our reason on terms slighter than one would desire, were it in their choice, to hold an Irish cabin.”

** Sir Walter had this morning heard of the suicide of a man of warm imagination, to whom, at an earlier period, he was much attached.*

These are melancholy entries. Most of those from which they have been selected begin with R. for Rheumatism, or RR. for Rheumatism Redoubled, and then mark the number of leaves sent to James Ballantyne—the proof-sheets corrected for press—or the calculations on which he reluctantly made up his mind to extend the Life of Buonaparte from six to seven, from seven to eight, and finally from eight to nine thick and closely printed volumes.

During the early months of 1827, however, he executed various minor tracts also; for the Quarterly Review, an article on Mackenzie’s Life and Works of John Home, author of Douglas, which is, in fact, a rich chapter of Scott’s own early reminiscences, and gives many

interesting sketches of the literary society of Scotland in the age of which Mackenzie was the last honoured relic; and for the Foreign Review, then newly started under the editorship of Mr. R. P. Gillies, an ingenious and elaborate paper on the writings of the German Novelist Hoffman. This article, it is proper to observe, was a benefaction to Mr. Gillies, whose pecuniary affairs rendered such assistance very desirable. Scott's generosity in this matter—for it was exactly giving a poor brother author £100 at the expense of considerable time and drudgery to himself—I think it necessary to mention; the date of the exertion requires it of me. But such, in fact, had been in numberless instances his method of serving literary persons, who had little or no claim on him, except that they were of that class. I have not conceived it delicate to specify many instances of this kind; but I am at liberty to state, that when he wrote his first article for the Encyclopedia Supplement, and the Editor of that work, Mr. Macvey Napier (a Whig in politics, and with whom he had hardly any personal acquaintance), brought him £100 as his remuneration, Sir Walter said, "Now tell me frankly, if I don't take this money, does it go into your pocket or your publisher's, for it is impossible for me to accept a penny of it from a literary brother." Mr. Napier assured him that the arrangements of the work were such, that the Editor had nothing to do with the fund destined for contributions:—Scott then pocketed his due, with the observation, that "he had trees to plant, and no conscience as to the purse of his fat friend"—to wit, Constable.

At this period, Sir Walter's Diary very seldom mentions any thing that could be called a dinner-party. He and his daughter partook generally once in every week the family meal of Mr. and Mrs. Skene of Rubislaw; and they did the like occasionally with a few other old friends, chiefly those of the Clerks' table. When an exception occurs, it is easy to

see that the scene of social gaiety was doubly grateful from its rarity. Thus one entry, referring to a party at Mr. J. A. Murray's (now Lord Advocate for Scotland), says, "Went to dine with John Murray, where met his brother (Henderland), Jeffrey, Cockburn, Rutherford, and others of that file. Very pleasant—capital good cheer and excellent wine—much laugh and fun. I do not know how it is, but when I am out with a party of my Opposition friends, the day is often merrier than when with our own set. Is it because they are cleverer? Jeffrey and Harry Cockburn are to be sure very extraordinary men; yet it is not owing to that entirely. I believe both parties meet with the feeling of something like novelty. We have not worn out our jests in daily contact. There is also a disposition on such occasions to be courteous, and of course to be pleased."

Another evening, spent in Rose Court with his old friend, Mr. Clerk, seems to have given him especial delight. He says,—“This being a blank day at the Court, I wrote hard till dressing time, when I went to Will Clerk's to dinner. As a bachelor, and keeping a small establishment, he does not do these things often, but they are proportionally pleasant when they come round. He had trusted Sir Adam to bespeak his dinner, who did it *con amore*, so we had excellent cheer, and the wines were various and capital. As I before hinted, it is not every day that M'Nab mounts on horseback,* and so our landlord had a little of that solicitude that the party should go off well, which is very flattering to the guests. We had a very pleasant evening. The Chief Commissioner was there, Admiral Adam, J. A. Murray, Tom Thomson, &c. &c.—Sir Adam predominating at the head, and dancing what he calls his merry-andrada in great style. In short we really laughed, and real laughter is a thing as rare as real tears. I must say, too, there was a heart, a kindly feeling prevailed over the party. Can London give such a dinner?—it may, but I never saw one—they are

too cold and critical to be easily pleased.—I hope the Bannatyne Club will be really useful and creditable. Thomson is superintending a capital edition of Sir James Melville's Memoirs. It is brave to see how he wags his Scots tongue, and what a difference there is in the form and firmness of the language, compared to the mincing English edition in which he has hitherto been alone known."

** That singular personage, the late M'Nab of that ilk, spent his life almost entirely in a district where a boat was the usual conveyance. I suspect, however, there is an allusion to some particular anecdote which I have not recovered.*

No wonder that it should be a sweet relief from Buonaparte and Blucher to see M'Nab on horseback, and Sir Adam Ferguson in his merry-andrada exaltation, and laugh over old Scotch stories with the Chief-Commissioner, and hear Mr. Thomas Thomson report progress as to the doings of the Bannatyne Club. But I apprehend every reader will see that Sir Walter was misled by his own modesty, when he doubted whether London could afford symposia of the same sort, He forgets that he had never mixed in the society of London except in the capacity of a stranger, a rare visiter, the unrivalled literary marvel of the time, and that every party at which he dined was got up expressly on his account, and constituted, whoever might be the landlord, on the natural principle of bringing together as many as the table could hold—to see and hear Sir Walter Scott. Hence, if he dined with a Minister of State, he was likely to find himself seated with half the Cabinet—if with a Bishop, half the Bench had been collected. As a matter of course, every man was anxious to gratify on so rare an occasion as many as he could of those who, in case they were uninvited, would be likely to reproach him for the omission. The result was a crowding together of too many rival eminences; and

he very seldom, indeed, witnessed the delightful result so constantly produced in London by the intermingling of distinguished persons of various classes, full of facts and views new to each other—and neither chilled nor perplexed by the pernicious and degrading trickery of lionizing. But, besides, it was unfair to institute any comparison between the society of comparative strangers and that of old friends dear from boyhood. He could not have his Clerks and Fergusons both in Edinburgh and in London. Enough, however, of commentary on a very plain text.

That season was further enlivened by one public dinner, and this, though very briefly noticed in Scott's Diary, occupied a large space in public attention at the time, and, I believe I may add, several columns in every newspaper printed in Europe. His good friend William Murray, manager of the Edinburgh Theatre, invited him to preside at the first festival of a charitable fund then instituted for the behoof of decayed performers. He agreed, and says in his Journal—"There are 300 tickets given out. I fear it will be uncomfortable; and whatever the stoics may say, a bad dinner throws cold water on charity. I have agreed to preside, a situation in which I have been rather felicitous, not by much superiority of art or wisdom, far less of eloquence; but by two or three simple rules, which I put down here for the benefit of my posterity.

"1st, Always hurry the bottle round for five or six rounds, without prosing yourself or permitting others to prose. A slight filip of wine inclines people to be pleased, and removes the nervousness which prevents men from speaking—disposes them; in short, to be amusing and to be amused.

"2d, Push on, keep moving, as Young Rapid says.* Do not think of saying fine things—nobody cares for them any

more than for fine music, which is often too liberally bestowed on such occasions. Speak at all ventures, and attempt the mot pour rire. You will find people satisfied with wonderfully indifferent jokes, if you can but hit the taste of the company, which depends much on its character. Even a very high party, primed with all the cold irony and non est tanti feelings or no feelings of fashionable folks, may be stormed by a jovial, rough, round, and ready preses. Choose your text with discretion—the sermon may be as you like. Should a drunkard or an ass break in with any thing out of joint, if you can parry it with a jest, good and well—if not, do not exert your serious authority, unless it is something very bad. The authority even of a chairman ought to be very cautiously exercised. With patience you will have the support of every one.

** Morton's comedy of A Cure for the Heart-Ache.*

“3dly, When you have drunk a few glasses to play the good-fellow, and banish modesty—(if you are unlucky enough to have such a troublesome companion)—then beware of the cup too much. Nothing is so ridiculous as a drunken preses.

“Lastly, always speak short, and Skeoch dock na skiel—cut a tale with a drink.

This is the purpose and intent

*Of gude Schir Walter's testament.”**

This dinner took place on Friday the 23d February. Sir Walter took the chair, being supported by the Earl of Fife, Lord Meadowbank, Sir John Hope of Pinkie, Admiral Adam, Robert Dundas of Arniston, Peter Robertson, and many other personal friends. Lord Meadowbank had come on short notice, and was asked abruptly on his arrival to take a toast which had been destined for a noble person who had not been able to appear. He knew that this was the first

public dinner at which the object of this toast had appeared since his misfortunes, and taking him aside in the anteroom, asked him whether he would consider it indelicate to hazard a distinct reference to the parentage of the Waverley Novels, as to which there had, in point of fact, ceased to be any obscurity from the hour of Constable's failure. Sir Walter smiled, and said, "Do just as you like only don't say much about so old a story."—In the course of the evening the Judge rose accordingly and said—†

** Sir Walter parodies the conclusion of King Robert the Bruce's "Maxims, or Political Testament." See Hailes's Annals, A. D. 1311,—or Fordun's Scoti-chronicon,—XII. 10.*

† By the favour of a friend, who took notes at this dinner, I am enabled to give a better report of these speeches than that of the contemporary newspapers.

"I would beg leave to propose a toast—the health of one of the Patrons, a great and distinguished individual, whose name must always stand by itself, and which, in an assembly such as this, or in any other assembly of Scotsmen, must ever be received, I will not say with ordinary feelings of pleasure or of delight, but with those of rapture and enthusiasm. In doing this I feel that I stand in a somewhat new situation. Whoever had been called upon to propose the health of my Hon. Friend some time ago, would have found himself enabled, from the mystery in which certain matters were involved, to gratify himself and his auditors by allusions sure to find a responding chord in their own feelings, and to deal in the language, the sincere language, of panegyric, without intruding on the modesty of the great individual to whom I refer. But it is no longer possible, consistently with the respect due to my auditors, to use upon this subject terms either of mystification, or of obscure or indirect allusion. The clouds have been dispelled

—the darkness visible has been cleared away—and the Great Unknown—the minstrel of our native land—the mighty magician who has rolled back the current of time, and conjured up before our living senses the men and the manners of days which have long passed away, stands revealed to the eyes and the hearts of his affectionate and admiring countrymen. If I were capable of imagining all that belongs to this mighty subject—were I able to give utterance to all that as a man, as a Scotsman, and as a friend, I must feel regarding it, yet knowing, as I well do, that this illustrious individual is not more distinguished for his towering talents, than for those feelings which render such allusions ungrateful to himself, however sparingly introduced, I would on that account still refrain from doing what would otherwise be no less pleasing to myself than to those who hear me. But this I hope I may be allowed to say—(my auditors would not pardon me were I to say less)—we owe to him, as a people, a large and heavy debt of gratitude. He it is who has opened to foreigners the grand and characteristic beauties of our country. It is to him that we owe that our gallant ancestors and illustrious patriots—who fought and bled in order to obtain and secure that independence and that liberty we now enjoy—have obtained a fame no longer confined to the boundaries of a remote and comparatively obscure country—it is He who has called down upon their struggles for glory and freedom the admiration of foreign lands. He it is who has conferred a new reputation on our national character, and bestowed on Scotland an imperishable name, were it only by her having given birth to himself. I propose the health of Sir Walter Scott.”

Long before Lord Meadowbank ceased speaking, the company had got upon chairs and tables, and the storm of applause that ensued was deafening. When they recovered

from the first fever of their raptures, Sir Walter spoke as follows:

“I certainly did not think, in coming here to-day, that I should have the task of acknowledging, before 300 gentlemen, a secret which, considering that it was communicated to more than twenty people, has been remarkably well kept. I am now at the bar of my country, and may be understood to be on trial before Lord Meadowbank as an offender; and so quietly did all who were airt and pairt conduct themselves, that I am sure that, were the panel now to stand on his defence, every impartial jury would bring in a verdict of Not Proven. I am willing, however, to plead guilty—nor shall I detain the Court by a long explanation why my confession has been so long deferred. Perhaps caprice might have a considerable share in the matter. I have now to say, however, that the merits of these works, if they had any, and their faults, are all entirely imputable to myself. Like another Scottish criminal of more consequence, one Macbeth,

*‘I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on’t again, I dare not,’*

“I have thus far unbosomed myself, and I know that my confession will be reported to the public. I mean, then, seriously to state, that when I say I am the author, I mean the total and undivided author. With the exception of quotations, there is not a single word that was not derived from myself, or suggested in the course of my reading. The wand is now broken, and the book buried. You will allow me further to say, with Prospero, it is your breath that has filled my sails, and to crave one single toast in the capacity of the author of these novels. I would fain dedicate a bumper to the health of one who has represented several of those characters, of which I had endeavoured to give the

skeleton, with a truth and liveliness for which I may well be grateful. I beg leave to propose the health of my friend Bailie Nicol Jarvie—and I am sure, that when the author of Waverley and Rob Roy drinks to Nicol Jarvie, it will be received with the just applause to which that gentleman has always been accustomed, nay, that you will take care that on the present occasion it shall be pro—di—gi—ous!” (Long and vehement applause.)

Mr. Mackay,—“My conscience! My worthy father the deacon could never have believed that his son would hae sic a compliment paid to him by the Great Unknown!”

Sir Walter Scott.—“The Small Known now, Mr. Bailie,” & &c.

Shortly after resuming his chair, Sir Walter (I am told) sent a slip of paper to Mr. Robertson, begging him to “confess something too,—why not the murder of Begbie?” (See ante, Vol. III. p. 53.) But if Peter complied with the hint, it was long after the senior dignitaries had left the room.

The “sensation” produced by this scene was, in newspaper phrase, “unprecedented.” Sir Walter’s Diary merely says—“February 24.—I carried my own instructions into effect the best I could, and if our jests were not good, our laughter was abundant. I think I will hardly take the chair again when the company is so miscellaneous; though they all behaved perfectly well. Meadowbank taxed me with the novels, and to end that farce at once, I pleaded guilty, so that splore is ended. As to the collection—it has been much cry and little woo, as the deil said when he shore the sow. I got away at ten at night. The performers performed very like gentlemen, especially Will Murray.—March 2.—Clerk walked home with me from the Court. I was scarce able to keep up with him; could once have done it well enough.

Funny thing at the Theatre last night. Among the discourse in *High Life below Stairs*, one of the ladies' ladies asks who wrote Shakspeare. One says 'Ben Jonson,' another 'Finis.' 'No,' said Will Murray, 'it is Sir Walter Scott, he confessed it at a public meeting the other day.'"

The reader may, perhaps, expect that I should endeavour to name the "upwards of twenty persons" whom Sir Walter alluded to on this occasion as having been put into the secret of the *Waverley Novels*, previously, and without reference, to the catastrophe of 1826. I am by no means sure that I can give the complete list: but in addition to the immediate members of the author's own family (including his mother and his brother Thomas) there were Constable, Cadell, the two Ballantynes, Terry, Laidlaw, Mr. Train, and Mr. G. H. Gordon; Charles Duke of Buccleuch, Lady Louisa Stuart, Lord Montagu, Lord and Lady Polwarth, Lord Kinnedder, Sir Adam Ferguson, Mr. Morritt, Mr. and Mrs. Skene, Mr. William Clerk, Mr. Hay Donaldson, Mr. John Richardson, and Mr. Thomas Moore.

The entries in Scott's *Diary* on contemporary literature are at this time very few; nor are there many on the public events of the day, though the period was a very stirring one. He seems, in fact, to have very rarely seen, even when in town, any newspaper except the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*. At his age, it is not wonderful that when that sheet reached him it for the most part contained the announcement of a death which interested his feelings; and several of the following passages refer to incidents of this melancholy class:—

"January 9.—This morning received the long-expected news of the Duke of York's death. I am sorry both on public and private accounts. His R. H. was, while he occupied the situation of next in succession, a Break-water behind the

throne. I fear his brother of Clarence's opinions may be different, and that he may hoist a standard under which men of desperate hopes and evil designs will rendezvous. I am sorry, too, on my own account. The Duke of York was uniformly kind to me, and though I never tasked his friendship, yet I find a powerful friend is gone. His virtues were honour, good sense, integrity; and by exertion of these qualities, he raised the British army from a very low ebb to be the pride and dread of Europe. His errors were those of a sanguine and social temper—he could not resist the temptation of deep play, which was fatally allied with a disposition to the bottle. This last is incident to his complaint, which vinous influence soothes for the time, while it insidiously increases it in the end.

“January 17.—I observe in the papers my old friend Gifford's funeral. He was a man of rare attainments and many excellent qualities. His Juvenal is one of the best versions ever made of a classical author, and his satire of the Baviad and Mæviad squabashed at one blow a set of coxcombs, who might have humbugged the world long enough. As a commentator he was capital, could he but have suppressed his rancours against those who had preceded him in the task; but a misconstruction or misinterpretation, nay, the misplacing of a comma was, in Gifford's eyes, a crime worthy of the most severe animadversion. The same fault of extreme severity went through his critical labours, and in general he flagellated with so little pity, that people lost their sense of the criminal's guilt in dislike of the savage pleasure which the executioner seemed to take in inflicting the punishment. This lack of temper probably arose from indifferent health, for he was very valetudinary, and realized two verses, wherein he says Fortune assigned him—

— — *‘One eye not over good,*