

THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT

JOHN MACRONE

EDITED WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

John Macrone (1809-1837) was a Scotsman who arrived in London around 1830 and became a publisher, in partnership with James Cochrane between January 1833 and August 1834, and independently between October 1834 and his death in September 1837. A friend of Dickens and Thackeray, he published *Sketches by Boz* and, posthumously, *The Paris Sketch Book*. One of his other projects was a life of Scott, which he began to write soon after the death of the novelist; but his book, chiefly remembered because Hogg wrote his *Anecdotes of Scott* for inclusion in it, fell under the displeasure of Lockhart, and was cancelled shortly before it was to have been published. A fragmentary manuscript, however, was recently discovered by the author of this thesis and has now been edited for the first time, together with a biographical study of Macrone, in which extensive use is made of previously unpublished and uncollected material.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Journal</i>	Scott, Walter, <i>The Journal of Sir Walter Scott</i> , edited by W. E. K. Anderson (Oxford, 1972)
JTM	Moore, Thomas, <i>The Journal of Thomas Moore</i> , edited by Wilfred S. Dowden et al., 6 vols (Delaware, 1983-91)
LJH	Hogg, James, <i>The Letters of James Hogg</i> , edited by Gillian Hughes et al., 3 vols (Edinburgh, 2004-8)
LPPWMT	Thackeray, W. M., <i>The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray</i> , edited by Gordon N. Ray, 2 vols (Harvard, 1945)
LTM	Moore, Thomas, <i>The Letters of Thomas Moore</i> , edited by Wilfred S. Dowden, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964)
LWS	Scott, Walter, <i>The Letters of Sir Walter Scott</i> , edited by H. J. C. Grierson et al., 12 vols (Constable, 1932-7)

INTRODUCTION

1

Hogg and Lockhart

John Macrone, one of Scott's earliest biographers, was a publisher of the 1830s, who befriended, employed, and, on occasion, quarrelled with several noteworthy writers and artists, before his abrupt and premature death. Although a great deal of information about him has been preserved in diaries, letters, and memoirs, his life has never been thoroughly investigated, and the following survey must be regarded as provisional.

According to T. E. Callander's transcription of the Croydon parish register,¹ Macrone was '28 years and five weeks' old when he died on 9 September 1837,² so he must have been born in 1809, and, if the register is to be taken literally, on 5 August. His origins have been the subject of dispute, John Sutherland calling him 'either a Scot, an Irishman, an Italian ("Macirone") or, most probably, a Manxman'.³ There is no evidence that Macrone was Irish or Italian; the latter hypothesis, indeed, is described as 'a mere speculation' by its originator, Percy Fitzgerald.⁴ Sutherland's 'most probably' is due to George Augustus Sala, who relates, in his memoirs, that his Aunt Eliza was married to a tailor called Crellin, 'a Manxman – a tall handsome person who looked as most West End tailors do, quite the gentleman. When he came to London to start in business, he was accompanied by a fellow-countryman, an intimate friend, named John Macrone – as handsome and intelligent a young fellow as Crellin

¹ Callander to William J. Carlton, 21 March 1958 (MS. The Charles Dickens Museum).

² *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Volume VIII (New Series), November 1837, 437.

³ John Sutherland, 'John Macrone: Victorian Publisher', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 13 (1984), 244.

⁴ Percy Fitzgerald, *Memories of Charles Dickens* (Arrowsmith, 1913), 339.

himself was'.⁵ This looks very like proof: but if we turn to the entry in Thomas Moore's journal for 29 October 1836, we find Macrone unequivocally described as a Scot;⁶ and since, unlike Sala, who, being less than nine years old when Macrone died, was probably not among his intimates, Moore had every opportunity of ascertaining his would-be publisher's background, we may venture to take his word on the matter. Sala's testimony, however, cannot be put altogether out of court. The Macrones had at least one link with the Isle of Man in the person of James McCrone, who settled there in 1817 as the Duke of Atholl's agent,⁷ and John Macrone may have spent part of his early life in the household of this eminent relative, before leaving Douglas for London in the company of his Manx friend Crellin, thus leaving the Salas with the impression that he was himself a Manxman.

Our first glimpse of Macrone in London occurs in the autumn of 1831, when we find him employed at the New Bond Street headquarters of the sheet-music publisher Samuel Chappell, and beginning to move among the *literati* of Scotland. 'You were so good as offer me [sic] a few easy airs for my daughter', Allan Cunningham wrote to him on 17 October, 'and as we are sending her a packet on wednesday morning I write to remind you of your kind offer [...] As some small recompense for all this you know I offered to furnish some pretty air with words for you'.⁸ The opportunity for another friendship arose on 31 December 1831, when Hogg arrived in London.⁹ While the chief purpose of his visit was to arrange the

⁵ George Augustus Sala, *The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala*, 2 vols (Scribner's, 1896), I, 143-4.

⁶ *The Journal of Thomas Moore*, edited by Wilfred S. Dowden et al., 6 vols (Delaware, 1983-1991), 5, 1832.

⁷ He had been 'a messenger at arms and a flax beater [...] Two men made off with money from the first bank in Glasgow and this James McCrone tracked them down to Belfast and did a very good job catching them. Following on the success of this, the Duke of Atholl, who couldn't get the Manxmen to pay their rents, thought he was just the man and engaged him' (Guy McCrone to William J. Carlton, 15 February 1959: MS. The Charles Dickens Museum).

⁸ Over the next six months, as his letters indicate, Cunningham sent at least three songs to Chappell by way of Macrone, including the 'Battle Song of Sir James Douglas', which its author thought 'enough to excite a Rebellion' (Cunningham to Macrone, 16 March 1832: MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 17156).

⁹ Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life* (Edinburgh, 2007), 240.

publication of his collected stories, under the name of *Altrive Tales*, by James Cochrane, an associate of Henry Colburn's who had recently started a business of his own, a subordinate one was to sell a song or two to Chappell,¹⁰ and it was probably in the course of the ensuing negotiations that he met Macrone, to whose offices he may have been recommended by Cunningham. By the time of his departure for Altrive on 25 March 1832, Hogg was on sufficiently good terms with Macrone to leave his Highland plaid as a memento to the young man 'to whom', as he would write to William Laidlaw, he had been 'much indebted for the kindest attentions',¹¹ and on whom he had already conferred a less picturesque but more valuable token of his regard, in the form of an introduction to Cochrane.¹² Charmed by his publisher's wife and children,¹³ Hogg had become a resident of Cochrane's household within a fortnight of his arrival in London; perhaps he invited Macrone to call on him at that address, in which case the introduction might naturally have taken place in the course of the visit. Whatever the circumstances of their meeting, Macrone was quick to see in Cochrane a chance of improving his fortunes. 'He represented to me that he had some capital & would be glad to join me in business', Cochrane wrote two years later;¹⁴ but any overtures in this direction were halted by Cochrane's financial difficulties, which led to the seizure of his assets in April and a fiat of bankruptcy in May.¹⁵

¹⁰ Ibid., 255.

¹¹ *The Letters of James Hogg*, edited by Gillian Hughes et al., 3 vols (Edinburgh, 2004-2008), 3, 57.

¹² Cochrane to Sir Egerton Brydges, 13 October 1834 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 3446).

¹³ *LJH*, 3, 156.

¹⁴ Cochrane to Brydges, 13 October 1834 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 3446). Elsewhere in this letter, Cochrane writes that Hogg had met Macrone by chance in Chappell's; but Macrone's acquaintance with Cunningham, having antedated Hogg's arrival in London by more than two months, forbids us to take the truth of Cochrane's account for granted, and he may have mis-remembered a story which cannot have seemed of great significance at the time of its telling.

¹⁵ *LJH*, 3, 318.

While Macrone's activities immediately after Hogg's return to Scotland do not seem to have been recorded, we know that he came, in the autumn, to spend a few weeks with Hogg at Altrive.¹⁶ It proved a jolly sojourn. 'Mr M,Crone will tell you all the news', Hogg wrote to Cunningham on 4 November, 'that he is admitted a member of The Border Club and competed at the archery with the Bowmen of the Border and counted above many [...] He will likewise tell you how much we have enjoyed the salmon breakfasts the haggis and sheepshead dinners, with hares, plovers, partridges, black-cocks, moorfowls, and pheasants and likewise how well he has shot and fished himself'.¹⁷ More intellectual pleasures were in evidence on 30 October, when Hogg inscribed 'to my young friend Mr John M,Crone' the first Edinburgh edition of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* and, even more cherishingly, Fergusson's *Poems*, with an inscription by the author,¹⁸ and on 2 November, when he supplied Macrone with the letter of introduction to Laidlaw quoted above. 'Being a great enthusiast in all things relating to literature he cannot leave Scotland without seeing all that can be seen about Abbotsford': the phrases are commonplace enough, but it is here that hindsight bids us recognise the earliest hint of the project which was to prove Macrone's initial claim on the attention of posterity.

It may be stated with reasonable confidence that Macrone, during the months which preceded his visit to Altrive, was in search of a means to distinguish himself among the crowd of aspirants to literary honours, whether creative or commercial, and that, by the time

¹⁶ Hughes, *James Hogg*, 268.

¹⁷ Hogg struck a more saturnine note when writing to Cochrane on the same day: 'We have had an idle time of it. Nothing but eating and drinking and rural sports. God forbid that every one of my acquaintances should pay me such a long visit for since John arrived I have not written one page for the press'. His vexation can be partly explained by Macrone's having lingered at Altrive for a week or more after he had been expected to leave on 5 or 6 November (*LJH*, 3, 99-101). He had certainly gone by 7 December, Hogg's letter of that date to Walter Phillips (*LJH*, 3, 106-7) making no mention of him.

¹⁸ Gillian Hughes, 'Hogg's Personal Library', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, 19, 2008, 32-65. I am indebted to Dr Christopher MacLachlan for this reference.

of that visit, he had resolved to turn biographer. ‘From my greenest boyhood’, he was to write, ‘I have read all manner of personal history with more delight than any other species of composition’,¹⁹ and we need not marvel that a young man of no particular eminence should have seen fit to write about someone else’s life instead of his own. The death of Scott, on 21 September, provided him with a subject which he must have thought peculiarly gratifying, since the disadvantages of his never having met Scott were mitigated by his friendship with Hogg, who had, of course, been a close friend of Scott’s for over two decades, and could easily provide what Macrone would later call ‘some little information regarding the more prominent features of Sir Walter’s character. Such as your opinion on his *politics religion* and literary matters. I want some insight also into his family circle such as none but you can give. Sir Walter in his study is pretty well known How was he in the parlour’.²⁰ On broaching the subject at Altrive, however, he met with a firm refusal. ‘If I can furnish any thing original about [Scott]’, Hogg said, ‘it must be to my friend Lockhart his legitimate Biographer’;²¹ but there was no reason why Macrone should not write a biography of Scott, however illegitimate, and Hogg did nothing to prevent Macrone from accomplishing his purpose. Meanwhile, in London, Cochrane was trying to raise funds to set himself up in business again, and Macrone’s offer of partnership had not been forgotten. By 13 January 1833, as we learn from Gillian Hughes, the firm of Cochrane and M‘Crone, 11, Waterloo Place, had come into existence,²² and the book on which Macrone was then hard at work must have been viewed by both partners as one of its most valuable properties.

¹⁹ Macrone to Brydges, 19 November 1833 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9467).

²⁰ This passage is taken from Hogg’s transcription in *LJH*, 3, 144.

²¹ *LJH*, 3, 144-5.

²² Hughes, *James Hogg*, 233.

The events which led to the cancellation of Macrone's biography two months later might have remained obscure to this day, had it not been for Douglas Mack, to whose research the following account is greatly indebted. Macrone's misfortunes began around the middle of February 1833, when Lockhart learned that he had copied a number of Scott's letters to Archibald Constable for publication in his *Life*. This threatened infringement of moral copyright led him to call on Cochrane at Waterloo Place with the warning that no private letters from Scott could be published without the consent of his executors. 'Mr. McCrone of whom I know nothing', he wrote afterward, 'was in the shop and immediately asked how we had suffered Mr Polwhele to publish private letters of Sir W. S. without interference?'²³ This particular publication, however, as Lockhart then informed him, had been sanctioned by Scott himself, one of the letters which Polwhele had printed bearing unequivocal witness to that effect;²⁴ but Macrone's argument, as it happened, was stronger than he himself may have realised. Richard Polwhele, vicar of Newlyn and historian of his native Cornwall, had been an occasional correspondent of Scott's for some fifteen years when, in 1824, he began to compile the two volumes of his *Traditions and Recollections*,²⁵ in which it was his desire to include such letters from Scott as he had preserved. On re-reading them, Scott reluctantly acceded to Polwhele's request,²⁶ and the letters were duly published. Eight years afterward, Polwhele rushed to capitalise on Scott's death by reprinting them in a

²³ Douglas S. Mack, 'Note on the Genesis of the Texts', in James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Scott*, edited by Jill Rubenstein (Edinburgh, 2004), xl-xli.

²⁴ Scott to Polwhele, 6 October 1824, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by H. J. C. Grierson et al., 12 vols (Constable, 1932-7), VIII, 393.

²⁵ Richard Polwhele, *Traditions and Recollections*, 2 vols (J. B. Nichols, 1826). J. C. Trewin calls it 'a haphazard collection of letters and minor verse that gives a lovable portrait of a late eighteenth century and Regency parson' in *Up from the Lizard* (Carroll & Nicholson, 1948), 90.

²⁶ 'I [...] can have no possible objection to your disposing of them as you please. I would, however, submit to you that the greater part of them are too frivolous to interest the public; and I hope you will be so good as to mention that I have consented to your wish merely because it was your wish, and without any idea on my part, that what was written for your own eye deserved a more extensive circulation' (Scott to Polwhele, 6 October 1824: *LSWS*, VIII, 393).

small book, which appeared at the beginning of December 1832,²⁷ fulsomely dedicated to Lockhart, and padded out with additional letters from Scott to Polwhele, Francis Douce, Polwhele's fellow-Cornishman Davies Gilbert, two London booksellers, and an unnamed autograph-hunter. The book would not be worth notice in this context had it not been that five of the new letters, and perhaps an undated sixth, had been written after 1824, and hence had not been approved by Scott for publication. Macrone, therefore, was probably correct in claiming that Polwhele had been allowed to print letters from Scott without consulting his executors; but since none of the letters, old or new, cast any light worth mentioning on the arcana of Abbotsford, Lockhart, if aware of Polwhele's lapse, must have thought it too trivial for censure.

Abandoning Polwhele, Macrone turned to a more important subject. 'Have we no right to print anecdotes such as Mr. Hogg's?' he asked. If these were his exact words – and it must be remembered that Lockhart's record of them was written several weeks later – then his conduct on this occasion had a flavour of duplicity, since the phrase 'anecdotes such as Mr. Hogg's' can be interpreted as either 'anecdotes which Mr. Hogg has in his power to tell' or 'anecdotes which Mr. Hogg has already written down for me'. The first of these interpretations was the correct one, but Lockhart evidently understood Macrone to mean the second. 'That's another affair', he replied. 'I have no right to prevent Hogg or any man from publishing what he pleases on the subject – always excepting *letters*'. Macrone then appears to have had the effrontery to ask whether Lockhart himself would provide him with the sort of information which he had sought to obtain from Hogg. 'I may very probably have added', Lockhart recalled, 'that if we interfered in such a case, it was not for any jealousy as to materials that might have been of service to *me* being given to another person – that our

²⁷ *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by Richard Polwhele (J. B. Nichols, 1832), reviewed in *The Athenæum*, No. 267 (8 December 1832), 786.

materials were more than abundant: but as to my conferring confidentially with either McCrone or Cochrane that was out of the question – I know and desire to know nothing of either of them'.²⁸ There can hardly have been much to say after so positive a declaration of enmity, but enough had been said for Cochrane, on 20 February, to inform Hogg that ‘Mr Lockhart called here a few days back on the subject of Mr M,Crones life of Sir Walter [...] so satisfied is he that you will assist our friend that he wishes him to give out the work as your own. Lockharts materials he says are so abundant he hardly knows how to bring in one half of them’.²⁹ Hogg now had no reason not to collaborate with Macrone, and he fell to work so energetically that the ‘Anecdotes of Sir W. Scott’ arrived at Waterloo Place early in March,³⁰ with the proviso, however, that they were not to be published without Lockhart’s approval.³¹

Thus far, Macrone had been lucky. Hogg’s reminiscences were at his disposal, and Lockhart, however brusquely, had not forbidden their publication under auspices other than his own. It is ironic that Macrone’s greatest stroke of good fortune should have led to the downfall of his biographical enterprise. This verdict may sound harsh, but Hogg alone must bear the responsibility for what happened when Macrone took the manuscript of the ‘Anecdotes’ to Lockhart in compliance with their author’s request. Never had he written with greater frankness than in his portrait of Scott, and never had his lack of judgement been more signally displayed than in his idea that Lockhart could possibly approve so chequered a eulogy for publication. ‘He produced in this room a bundle of your *M.S.*’, Lockhart wrote later to Hogg, ‘and told me here were your anecdotes³² [...] I cast my eye hastily over the

²⁸ Mack, xl-xli.

²⁹ *LJH*, 3, 144.

³⁰ Mack, xxxix.

³¹ *LJH*, 3, 144.

³² Lockhart later told William Blackwood that he had initially refused to look at the manuscript, ‘but McC. pressed him so much that he opened the scroll’ (Mack, xlivi).

M.S. and the first thing I lighted on was your statement concerning Lady Scott and *opium!*³³ and then I was wroth, and abused you heartily, & said the next thing would be to get Sir Walters valet and explain the secret history of his toilette'.³⁴ 'His poor auditor was quite dumfounded [sic]', as Blackwood put it,³⁵ and went off to inform Hogg by letter of the calamity, leaving the 'Anecdotes' for Lockhart to excoriate at his leisure. Hogg received Macrone's narrative on 20 March, and it is from the letter which he wrote to Lockhart on the same day, as well as from Lockhart's response of 22 March, both printed complete by Mack,³⁶ that the details of Macrone's two meetings with Lockhart have been drawn.

While Hogg defended the veracity of his 'Anecdotes', he did not want to cut short his friendship with Lockhart, whom, after all, he had known for years before Macrone had come to his notice. 'Not for any worldly consideration', he wrote to Lockhart on 20 March, 'would I hurt the feelings of any one of Sir Walter's family less your own than any other however deeply you have wounded mine. Therefore the whole [of the 'Anecdotes']] are cancelled and I write to M.Crone this very day to return the M. S. S. They will no doubt see the light some time but they shall not as long as I live'.³⁷ He was to break this vow, but when *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, as the memoir was eventually called, made its appearance on the bookstalls of New York in April 1834,³⁸ it was as a book in its own right. The withdrawal of the 'Anecdotes', together with Lockhart's earlier ban on the publication of letters from Scott, had deprived Macrone's biography of what would have been its chief attractions to the reviewers and the public; and furthermore, as Hogg pointed in a letter of 12 May to Macrone,

³³ James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Scott*, edited by Jill Rubenstein (Edinburgh, 2004), 10-11.

³⁴ Mack, xli.

³⁵ Mack, xlivi.

³⁶ Mack, xxxviii-xlii.

³⁷ *LJH*, 3, 145.

³⁸ Mack, l.

‘as [Lockhart] and Chambers are both quite mad at you and considering the power that they possess over the whole British press I saw that they would damn the work in the very outset [...] I therefore think that it would be better to suppress the work for a while till we see if the bowls will rowe right for I have the warmest wish to further it for your sake’.³⁹ Macrone took Hogg’s advice, laid aside his unfinished biography – for good, as it proved – and applied himself to making a success of his partnership with Cochrane.

It is pleasant to reflect that he seems to have borne no grudge against Hogg for the inadvertent sabotage of his biographical ambitions. The beginning of June found him again at Altrive, where, as on his earlier visit, he took part in the festivities of the Border Club, attending a dinner at Innerleithen on 11 June, when, in the words of a reporter for the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* whose article of 17 June is quoted by Hughes, ‘many of Mr Hogg’s most beautiful songs were sung in excellent style by Mr M’Crone, from London, whose presence added much to the hilarity of the meeting’,⁴⁰ and when he left for London on 17 June, it was with Hogg’s formal offer to the firm of Cochrane and M’Crone of his new book, *Genuine Tales of the days of Montrose*.⁴¹ Margaret Hogg, too, had grown fond of him. ‘You cannot imagine’, Hogg wrote on 3 August, ‘how much poor Mrs Hogg is interested in Mr Cochrane’s success and your’s. She has taken my word for it that you are honest men and she says there is such a genuine spirit of kindness about you both that if I can be of any benefit to your house I *must* do all I can even with some little risk of losing it’.⁴² Even Lockhart, by the autumn, seems to have agreed to let bygones be bygones. ‘I am [...] trusting Cochrane and M,Crone with two or three vols of the Altrive Tales till I see how they come

³⁹ *LJH*, 3, 155.

⁴⁰ *LJH*, 3, 159.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *LJH*, 3, 170.

on', Hogg wrote to him on 17 September. 'I like the men and would like to be of use to them if I could'.⁴³ The phrasing is a trifle defensive, but one may infer, from the sentence as a whole, that the tempers of both parties to the quarrel had cooled.

⁴³ *LJH*, 3, 178.

Brydges

While Galt's *Autobiography* – a work, incidentally, of which Macrone was far from enamoured¹ – is the most valuable of Cochrane & M'Crone's publications, the publishers themselves would probably have given their vote to Cunningham's eight-volume edition of Burns, which began to appear, at the rate of a volume per month, in January 1834. The editor's life of Burns was not received with universal acclaim, the *Literary Gazette* reviewer, who received an advance copy in time for the 4 January number, being particularly tepid,² but Carlyle thought it 'well worth reading',³ and the sales of the complete edition were good, although, as a loyal Scot, Macrone was mortified when the eight volumes of Murray's concurrently-published Crabbe fared almost as well.⁴ Cochrane and Macrone chose Milton as the subject of their next comparable enterprise, on the grounds that no thoroughly annotated edition of his works had yet appeared, and also, it may be suspected, because the ideal editor, or so they thought him, was already on their list of authors, in the person of Sir Egerton Brydges. Here, as all too often in these pages, a liberal use of inference and conjecture is necessary, if the reader is to be presented with anything more than a disjointed recital of events; but we are fortunate in the survival of eight letters from Macrone to Brydges, written

¹ 'It is a graceful book – as for the contents – that is another affair' (Macrone to Brydges, 31 October 1833: MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9466).

² 'We have felt something like disappointment in a want of enthusiasm which pervades (if the negative, or what is not present, can be described in the positive as pervading) the volume. We are sure Mr. Cunningham must have felt more in contemplating Burns than he has thought it safe to express; and, for fear of being deemed ardent and romantic, he has fallen into the less estimable tone of being calm and cold' (*The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 885, 2).

³ Carlyle to William Graham, 14 September 1834, in *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, edited by Charles Richard Saunders et al., 37 vols (Duke, 1970 et seq.), 7, 299–300.

⁴ 'Murray's "Crabbe" too, has succeeded beyond expectation – he sells nearly as many as we do of Burns! – this is humiliating, when one thinks of the respective genius of the two men' (Macrone to Brydges, 1 April 1834: MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9468).

between 31 October 1833 and 7 October 1834, from which a not inconsiderable amount of useful information can be extracted.

Brydges's first known contact with Macrone took place at the beginning of 1833, when he supplied the novice biographer, perhaps at the request of their common friend Cunningham, with his reminiscences of Scott,⁵ which do not appear to have been published in their original form. Since he had lived in Geneva since the latter part of 1826, Macrone must have thanked him in writing; and one may reasonably imagine, if the tenor of their subsequent correspondence is any guide, that, in the course of his letter, he expressed a hope that Brydges would favour him with the manuscript of some longer work, which it would be a privilege for an admirer of so eminent a literary personage to publish. For half a century, Brydges had longed for acclamation as an author in his own right, and no publisher who offered to further his ambitions was likely to receive a frigid answer. Happily for Cochrane and M'Crone, whose list was not over-burdened with modern masterworks, he was then at work on the most enjoyable of his later books, the compendiously-titled *Autobiography, Times, Opinions, and Contemporaries of Sir Egerton Brydges, Bart.*⁶ and by November 1833, a manuscript comprising the greater part of it was in the hands of its prospective publishers. 'We would go to press immediately,' Macrone wrote on 31 October, 'but town is so utterly empty that it would absolutely be throwing away good matter and money to appear before March 1834'.⁷ Since it was in February or March 1834 that he received the last

⁵ 'With regard to the paper on Sir Walter Scott, which you did me the honour to send for my projected biography, I have long ago returned it to Mr Valpy – having been compelled, from many untoward circumstances, to abandon the idea; and that, too, when my *MS* was on the very eve of publication' (Macrone to Brydges, 31 October 1833: MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9466).

⁶ It was Macrone who suggested this title, in his letter to Brydges of 19 November 1833 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9467).

⁷ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9466.

chapters of the *Autobiography*,⁸ an earlier publication would, in any case, have been impractical; but Brydges provided more than enough work for Macrone in the course of the intervening months. There was, for example, the difficulty of obtaining a portrait of Brydges to serve as a frontispiece. In the beginning, it seems, Macrone was directed, probably by Brydges, to F. W. Wilkin, a painter of portraits who had taken up lithography in 1831 and rapidly established himself among the foremost practitioners of that art in London. A specialist in lithographic portraits from life,⁹ he may well have visited Geneva between 1831 and 1833 and painted Brydges on stone; be that as it may, there was in his possession, by the autumn of 1833, a lithograph of Brydges, which Macrone inspected on 31 October. ‘It is a foot long’, he wrote on the same day, ‘and even were we to have a reduced copy, it would neither print the necessary number (no lithographic drawing will give more than 4 or 5 hundred) nor would the effect be nearly so good as we could wish. – The painting is, I am informed, by no means a flattered likeness – nor, under submission, is it so well executed as we could wish. – Is there no other from which we could have an Engraving on Steel?’¹⁰ Brydges’s answer to this entreaty appears to have been in the negative. It is true that in 1819, while on a tour of Italy, he had sat for his portrait to the Florentine miniaturist Pietro Carloni, and had been sufficiently pleased by the result to prefix an engraving of it to his *Letters from the Continent* in 1821; but Carloni’s picture, a ‘flattered likeness’ if ever there was one, had been outdated by the lapse of fourteen years. There was, however, an English painter of rare distinction at Brydges’s disposal. Francis Danby, whose imaginary landscapes and Biblical tableaux had won him the admiration of Lawrence and the enmity of Constable, had wrecked

⁸ ‘I am in your debt [*sic*] many kind letters, which I now gratefully acknowledge, as well as the last chapters of The Autobiography, which terminate the work in an appropriate and feeling manner’ (Macrone to Brydges, 1 April 1834: MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9468).

⁹ ‘Henceforth, we hear, the artist [Wilkin] intends to confine his lithographic works to portraits *from life*, on stone’ (*The Athenaeum*, No. 235 (28 April 1832), 275).

¹⁰ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9466.

his London career in 1829 by an elopement with Ellen or Helen Evans, the governess of his seven children, who were themselves to follow him several months later, their mother having found consolation in an elopement of her own with one of Danby's friends. His wanderings brought him to Geneva in August 1832, where he contrived to support his large household by the sale of paintings and watercolours to English expatriates and local connoisseurs;¹¹ and it was only natural that Brydges should have taken an interest in the misfortunes of so remarkable a fellow-countryman.

'Whatever artist you may think proper to employ on our account shall be our choice', Macrone replied on 19 November. 'Danby is, I know, a man of great talent -- A mere pencil sketch would be sufficient for the engraver¹² to follow, and we should have it executed in the *first rate* style. -- Would *five guineas* for such a sketch be a sufficient remuneration? -- If so, I will pay it to anyone here whom the artist may depute to receive it, or I could send it direct to Geneva. -- You will, of course take care that he throws sufficient energy and feeling into the face, and makes it worthy of the Book -- May I beg that this be done *speedily*? -- The Engraver will take some six weeks or two months to transfer it to steel'.¹³ At this point, unfortunately, there is a hiatus in the correspondence, Macrone's next surviving letter to Brydges being dated 1 April 1834; but the rudiments of what happened in the interim are not beyond reconstruction. Throughout his career, Danby was averse to accepting charity, domestic burdens notwithstanding, and any man of means who felt kindly towards him would have wanted to disburse as large a sum as he could be persuaded to accept. It may have been for this reason that Brydges commissioned something more elaborate than Macrone's 'mere pencil sketch': namely, that Danby would paint a portrait of Brydges, etch it himself, keep

¹¹ Francis Greenacre, *Francis Danby 1793-1861* (The Tate Gallery, 1988), 31.

¹² Macrone was probably thinking of W. C. Edwards, whom he mentions in his letter to Brydges of 29 April 1834 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9469). Edwards later acquired a number of letters to Macrone from such men as John Irvine and John Strang, now in the possession of the Charles Dickens Museum.

¹³ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9467.

Macrone informed of his progress by letter, and finally send him the plate, probably, to save the expense of postage, together with the next installment of Brydges's manuscript. Whatever Macrone's opinion of this proposal, he had no desire to offend Brydges, whose rank among the literati would be of service to the reputation of Cochrane & M'Crone; and he might well receive the plate earlier than would have been the case if his original scheme had been carried out.

By April 1834, Danby had produced two portraits of Brydges. The first was a full-length watercolour, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum,¹⁴ an engraving of which appeared in the February 1834 issue of *Fraser's*, as an illustration to the article on Brydges in William Maginn's 'Gallery of Literary Characters'.¹⁵ Apart from Brydges's face, here bearing an odd resemblance to Hardy's, it might have been taken from a tailor's manikin, and may well have been a mere stopgap, worked up in a hurry to oblige an acquaintance at *Fraser's*; but our knowledge of Danby's workshop in Montalègre, whither, by the beginning of 1834, he had removed from Geneva,¹⁶ is too scanty for further speculation on this topic. The etching was more troublesome. As far as is known, Danby had never etched a plate in his life, and any conclusions about his facility with the needle which may be derived from the length of time that elapsed between Macrone's approval of the project in November and Danby's completion of the portrait in March, will find confirmation in Macrone's letter to Brydges of 1 April: 'From the tenor of M^r Danby's notes, I perceive he has not much faith in its merits – I hope *you* are satisfied with it – for, unless it be a fitting ornament to the book, I would rather give six times the sum to have it properly done'.¹⁷ This last remark was

¹⁴ Greenacre, 149.

¹⁵ *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol. IX, No. L, 146.

¹⁶ Eric Adams, *Francis Danby: Varieties of Poetic Landscape* (Yale, 1973), 92.

¹⁷ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9468.

unfortunate, since Macrone, as Brydges had pointed out in his previous letter, had not yet paid the last installment of Danby's bill. 'Your hint regarding Danby shall be attended to: the money shall be remitted forthwith',¹⁸ he continued, and seems to have kept his word, for Danby, soon afterward, was paid in full: we cannot say exactly when, because the spring torrents of the Bise had temporarily cut off communication between Montalègre and Geneva, and it was only on 25 April, when the waters had subsided, that he sent his thanks to Brydges 'for the haste in which you obtained the payment [...] I much fear from your total silence as to what Mr McCrone¹⁹ thought or said of [*the etching*] that you determined to spare my feelings. However, I prefer knowing the whole extent of my misfortunes rather than be in doubt, even though they should prove worse than I could imagine; besides, I know exactly the defects of Portrait [*sic*], which place it neither so low as I think such a person as Mr McCrone would rank it, nor as high as I most heartily wished it. Do at all events tell me *as a Friend* all that was said about it, and what you think its fate is likely to be'.²⁰

Danby's prediction of how Macrone would regard his etching was accurate. 'I have been compelled, after all, to discard Danbys portrait', he wrote on 29 April, in his next surviving letter to Brydges, 'and have commissioned Edwards – one of the best of our *head* Engravers – to copy that by Carloni, which is a dignified & well-executed Engraving – as it ought to be – He must literally work day and night to have it ready in time – but we do not grudge the expense – the *delay* was most vexatious. – It has been suggested to me that Danby's might be stuck in Volume 2 as a sort of *pictorial curiosity* – After this exhibition, M^r Danby must not again attempt scratching upon Copper. – You must forgive me if I have

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Adams prints 'McCrome', here and below; but he is careless enough to refer to 'McCrome' in the main text of his monograph, and it is hard to believe that Danby, throughout his correspondence with Macrone and Brydges, could have persistently mistaken *n* for *m*. The spelling has therefore been emended.

²⁰ Adams, 94.

expressed myself rather strongly upon this subject'.²¹ Looking at Danby's portrait,²² which ultimately served as the frontispiece, probably for want of a better, to the second volume of the *Autobiography*, one can see why Macrone felt injured. Brydges is portrayed in his study, late at night, wrapt in melancholy as he sits by a window, his head supported on one arm, the other lying across an open book, inkpot and quill at his elbow, and a lamp still burning, while the first faint light of dawn is reflected in a bend of water, far away under the mountains. Imperfect as an etching – Danby's line is far from fluent, and Brydges's left hand is out of drawing – it is admirable as a portrait, neither caricatured nor idealised; but its depth of chiaroscuro has nothing in common with the sub-Stothard insipidity which was dear to the average publisher of the 1830s, and Macrone's taste in art was evidently neither better nor worse than that of his fellows.

Throughout his correspondence with Brydges, Macrone was careful to treat him with a judicious mixture of flattery and frankness, and by the spring of 1834, they were on sufficiently good terms for Macrone to confide in Brydges about his penchant for collecting literary manuscripts. 'There is a lady [...] who wrote to me for *holographs*!' Hogg had exclaimed, when writing to Macrone on 12 May 1833. 'I told her that you had some hundreds of mine and all the literary men in Britain'.²³ Hogg was exaggerating, of course; but Macrone's only recorded acquisition speaks well for his acumen as a collector. 'I yesterday made a purchase of some highly interesting autograph letters of Dr Johnson – not hitherto published', he wrote to Brydges on 1 April 1834. 'It has been my hobby for some time to collect these *Memoralia* of the great, and I have now a very large collection. – I throw out this by way of hint to *you*, because I shrewdly suspect you could enrich me much out of your

²¹ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9469.

²² It should be noted that the reproductions in Adams and Greenacre are astonishingly poor, and give only the roughest impression of the etching as originally printed.

²³ *LJH*, 3, 156.

stores, *and M^r Valpy's franks can enclose a goodly bulk.* – The following is one of the interesting & melancholy relics of the moody lexicographer';²⁴ but here we must interrupt Macrone and provide his purchase with a measure of context. It will be remembered that, on the night of 16 June 1783, Johnson suffered a paralytic stroke which left him temporarily dumb. ‘In order to rouse the vocal organs I took two drams’, he wrote afterward to Mrs Thrale. ‘Wine has been celebrated for the production of eloquence; I put myself into violent motion, and, I think, repeated it. But all was vain; I then went to bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think, slept. When I saw light, it was time to contrive what I should do [...] My first note was necessarily to my servant [Frank Barber], who came in talking, and could not immediately comprehend why he should read what I put into his hands. I then wrote a card to Mr [Edmund] Allen, that I might have a discreet friend at hand to act as occasion should require’.²⁵ Johnson’s ‘card’ to Allen, and a letter to John Taylor, written on the same morning, are printed in Boswell,²⁶ and reproduced by R. W. Chapman;²⁷ but the note to Barber is lost. It appears to have been this note, however, which Macrone bought on 31 March 1834, and, on the next day, transcribed as follows:

It has pleased God by a sudden stroke to deprive me, for the present, of my speech; – I must desire you to be as much about me as is possible – Tell M^{rs} Williams – and shut out company.

S. J.

²⁴ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9468.

²⁵ Johnson to Mrs Thrale, 19 June 1783, in *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, edited by R. W. Chapman, 3 vols (Oxford, 1952), 3, 34-5.

²⁶ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (The Modern Library, 1931), 1058-9.

²⁷ *LSJ*, 3, 32-3.

Tuesday MS ¼ past b. June 17. 1783.²⁸

In the absence of his letters, we cannot say whether Brydges granted Macrone's request, but he cannot have rejected it out of hand, since we find Macrone, in his letter of 29 April, returning to the subject of autographs: 'Might I take the liberty of begging, for a literary friend, an autographed note of Bonstettens? – I cannot tell you how much this would oblige me at this time. – With respect to your own letters, I am quite besieged for them – but I hold fast my integrity, and wont part with a single line. – Is there such a thing as a letter of Rousseau's to be had in Geneva?'²⁹

The *Autobiography* was published early in July 1834, and fared ill with the critics. 'Have you heard that Lockhart meditates a review of the Auto: in next Quarterly?' Macrone had written on 1 April. 'This is good news, and, I hope, true [...] I have sent him the sheets as far as we have printed them, that he may have plenty of time to do them justice';³⁰ but Lockhart's notice³¹ was Rhadamanthine in the extreme, with its reference to 'an exquisite temperament unaccompanied by strength of mind and firmness of purpose',³² a not inaccurate summary of Brydges's works as 'broadsides and pamphlets, a few hasty novels, and a swarm of black-letter reprints',³³ and the verdict, which must have infuriated Brydges more than all beside, that he 'never has written, never will write a really great work: the want of logical

²⁸ 'June 17. 1783' is in Johnson's usual style of dating, but he would not have written 'Tuesday', and 'MS ¼ past b.' is enigmatic. In the absence of the note, however, it is difficult to pronounce on the authenticity of these details.

²⁹ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9469.

³⁰ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9468.

³¹ *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. LI, No. CII (June 1834), Art. III, 342-365.

³² *Ibid.*, 347.

³³ *Ibid.*, 346.

movement in his mental processes must ever render it impossible for him to do so. But if any one else furnished him with a good plan, we know no author who could fill it up with more grace and liveliness of detail'.³⁴ Macrone, singularly enough, had anticipated Lockhart's advice more than a month earlier, when he asked Brydges to edit the works of Milton for Cochrane & M'Crone. 'Both M^r Cochrane and myself have thought very seriously upon it', he wrote on 29 April, 'and feel convinced that a reprint of this sublime poet, illustrated with your notes, and Turners pencil, would be certain, in these days of monthly issues, to succeed well. – Byron, Scott, Shakspeare, Burns & Crabbe have had this justice done them – and who remains but Milton! – I am convinced that revising and collating his works would be to you a labour of love, and such an Edition might be the result as would hand your name down with His own to the remotest posterity, as the greatest and worthiest Commentator of the poet. – I would beseech you therefore to give it your serious consideration – Your fund of original information respecting him must be vast – and "while it is yet day" should not be suffered to slumber. – The undertaking we contemplate wo^d form about 12 or 14 Volumes – the first, or part of the first, to contain an Original Life from your pen. – Every assistance would be afforded to you here, that the labour might be made light to you'.³⁵ There follows a two-month gap in Macrone's correspondence; but it is clear from his letter of 28 June that Brydges had agreed to edit Milton, and that the initial part of his labours had not been untroubled: 'I venture to hope that you are by this time engaged upon this – I will almost call

³⁴ Ibid., 364-5. In his letter of 23 July, Macrone tried to console Brydges by asserting that 'your friend M^r Lockhart' had been the victim of 'a jealous and an overbearing clique, who are steeped to the very eyes in *Toryism* in its most illiberal shape – He will doubtless write to you in a deprecatory strain – but you will estimate his letter at its *proper value*' (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9471). Macrone was confident, however, that the *Edinburgh Review* would 'sail on the other tack, and praise you for the very faults (?) which they of the Quarterly assaulted you withal'; but Bulwer, whose notice appeared in the July number of the *Edinburgh* (Vol. LIX, No. CXX, Art. IX, 439-445), was even more severe than Lockhart, accusing Brydges of 'morbid susceptibility to the opinion which a no less morbid pride affects to disdain' (439) and 'a moody and absorbed concentration in self' (441).

³⁵ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9469.

it – *national* undertaking – To you it could in no degree partake of the nature of a *task* – Much reference you would not require for the life and works of Milton are written in your heart. – In the meantime, until I hear from you, I remain in a state of great indecision upon the subject. – I have applied to Turner, who has undertaken to furnish the illustrations, but I can make no bargain with him until I hear from you as to the extent &^c of the undertaking'.³⁶ The truth of the matter seems to have been that Brydges, for all his learning and facility as a writer, was no longer capable of the hard work and care for detail which are vital to the making of an edition rather than a reprint; and it comes as no surprise when Macrone's letter of 23 July informs us that Cunningham had been enlisted as a collaborator, though the exact nature of his rôle in the '*national* undertaking' is obscure.³⁷ In the end, Brydges provided Macrone with a one-volume life of Milton, critical remarks on all the major poems, and several sonnets;³⁸ but the notes were chiefly drawn from Warton, Hurd, and other commentators, and the text itself had been prepared by the theatrical biographer James Boaden, 'whose critical sagacity', Macrone wrote, 'has enabled him to detect many glaring errors in the established readings',³⁹ while Cunningham's contribution had been reduced to eleven delightful short essays on folklore, crowded with unfamiliar anecdotes, which are buried among the notes to *Comus*.⁴⁰ We anticipate, however, and must return to the summer of 1834. 'It was our intention, could it have been found practicable, to have commenced

³⁶ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9470.

³⁷ 'With respect to the management [...] and, indeed, the whole plan of the undertaking, – M^r Cunningham has furnished his opinion very fully, and this, I am sure, you will be pleased to receive from his *practised* pen, because it will relieve you from some of the *mechanical* [illegible]. – I shall see that he sets about forming it immediately, and shall lose no time in transmitting to you the skeleton' (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9471).

³⁸ Brydges was much given to sonnets, writing more than two thousand between the autumn of 1833 and his death four years later (Mary Katherine Woodworth, *The Literary Career of Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges* (Blackwell, 1935), 69).

³⁹ 'Advertisement', *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, edited by Sir Egerton Brydges, 6 vols (Macrone, 1835), VI, vii.

⁴⁰ The associated lines are 117, 131, 205, 256, 301, 395, 434, 436, 516, 527, and 651.

publishing with the New Year', Macrone wrote on 23 July, 'but I am afraid the most we can do will be to bring out the prospectus – artists are so extremely dilatory and withal so saucy that they can only be got to work when the fit seizes them, and in the Autumn particularly, they are Coasting & Rhine-ing and so forth, and will not settle to work. – M^r Turner is the most uncertain of all his profession'.⁴¹ Within a fortnight, Macrone would have more to fret about than Turner's unreliability. The crisis of his career was at hand.

⁴¹ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9471.

Brydges and Cochrane

On 8 August 1834, the readers of the *London Gazette* learned ‘that the Partnership between us the undersigned, James Cochrane and John M‘Crone [...] has this day been dissolved by mutual consent’.¹ The unstated reason for this action was Cochrane’s discovery that his wife was Macrone’s mistress. ‘I took him into my house & introduced him as my Partner to my family’, he later recalled. ‘For Eighteen months we went on smoothly – when – Oh horrible to say – I detected a vile Correspondence with the beloved Partner of my bosom. – While pretending the utmost friendship for me – he had during that long period being [sic] rioting in the embraces of my wife – having used the most hellish arts to accomplish his purpose. – The moment I discerned the perfidy of the man – I repaired to my friend Allan Cunningham & took the most decisive steps to vindicate my honour’.² Cunningham, in a letter quoted by Hughes, gave a graphic account of their conversation: ‘Cochrane on a Sunday afternoon came to me like a man distracted and said that he had just found that Macrone the villain – these were his words – had seduced his wife [...] I bade him be calm and reflect a little and perhaps he might find he had been rash in his conclusions.³ “No no he said – read these letters – there are 14 of them – she had hidden in her petticoat – they will confirm all” I hesitated for I was unwilling to meddle in such delicate matters and said so; but Cochrane entreated and begged of me to read but one or two: Thus entreated I read the first and a bit of the second – no more was necessary – the language was but too plain – among other things he signed himself her husband: alluded to their frequent intercourse and begged

¹ *LJH*, 3, 236.

² Cochrane to Brydges, 13 October 1834 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 3446).

³ ‘I had no suspicion of any thing being wrong’, Cunningham wrote elsewhere in the same letter, ‘and set down the attentions of Mac. to a sort of forwardness for which he was something conspicuous’ (*LJH*, 239).

her to burn all his letters as she rec^d them'.⁴ A group of Cochrane's friends thereupon met in council, including 'Honest Allan', the printers A. J. Valpy and George Woodfall, the bookseller William Nicol, and the stationer Sir John Key. 'On account of the dear innocent children', Cochrane wrote, '[they] urged me to get rid of the villain, without a public exposure, which after a hard struggle I consented to do – I took the precaution of stopping the account at the Bankers & so far all was right. He was released from all responsibility & fairly kicked out of the concern'. Mrs Cochrane evidently met a similar fate, as we may infer from Cochrane's reference in the same letter to his having been 'left with six lovely children to mourn the loss of a parent'.⁵

While Cochrane was confident that his late partner would vanish from the literary world, Macrone saw the collapse of their firm as an opportunity to go into business on his own. The first step, of course, was to poach as many of his former clients as he could alienate from Cochrane. He began by hoaxing Brydges, whose isolation in Switzerland made it difficult for him to keep abreast of literary gossip. In the letter (now lost) which Macrone sent to Brydges early in August, he represented himself as having lost patience with Cochrane's mismanagement of affairs, which had led him, after eighteen months, to break their partnership. Deceived by this plausible account, Brydges promptly assured Macrone of his continued support. 'I have great pleasure in acknowledging your letters of the 13th & 14th', Macrone replied on 20 August, 'and feel highly flattered that you approve so much of the step I have taken with respect to my late partner. – It is certainly true that I was much trammeled in my literary speculations, as every one must be who is connected with a person of diverse tastes and habits – I am now convinced I have taken a proper step, since it has your approbation – and I trust that our literary connection may be long and brilliant. – No one has

⁴ *LJH*, 3, 239.

⁵ Cochrane to Brydges, 13 October 1834 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 3446).

lamented more than I have done, that, by improper management in their publication, your works have hitherto had such injustice done to them⁶ – and it shall now be my duty, as it has hitherto been my pride, to bestow my undivided attention upon whatever MS you may place in my hands – I think I may, without vanity, appeal to your own Memorials and Allan Cunningham's Burns, now in your hands, as specimens of my method & management [...] I have this day concluded a bargain for a house in *St James's Square* – which I hope to render as celebrated as the joint names of Milton and Brydges can make it – It will be some considerable time before the alterations I meditate can be completed, and in the meantime I am in the middle of all sorts of engagements with artists, authors, & mechanics [...] I have a particular desire to recommence my publishing career with one of your *offspring*'.⁷

Early in September, Macrone set out on what he was to describe as a ‘somewhat protracted visit to Scotland’,⁸ probably in the belief that he could confirm the loyalty of his friends more effectively in person than by letter. ‘I rejoice to inform your Lordship’, he wrote afterward to Brydges, ‘that my literary crusade has been eminently successful – many *Savans* of high renown having promised me their valuable assistance’.⁹ There had, however, been one failure, and that of the most unfortunate. Macrone’s recollections of their gaieties at Altrive and Innerleithen must have made it seem likely that Hogg would side with him rather than with Cochrane; but scandal is no sluggard, and the news came to Altrive before Macrone did, in spite of Cochrane’s decision to avoid a public exposure. ‘M,Crone was not here poor fellow’, Hogg wrote to Cochrane, of all people, on 13 October, ‘and I was sorry for it for I

⁶ This may be a reference to the reviews by Lockhart and Bulwer previously mentioned.

⁷ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9472.

⁸ Macrone to Brydges, 7 October 1834 (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9473).

⁹ Ibid.

think he esteemed me; but Margt caused me forbid him the house'.¹⁰ This note seems to have taken longer than usual to reach Cochrane, for it was only on 3 November that he wrote the letter of explanation which Hogg received four days afterward. 'As for the first part of your letter', Hogg replied on 8 November, 'it is so heart-breaking that the circumstances shall never more be mentioned nor alluded to by me'.¹¹ 'My wife is so shocked at it', he wrote to Cunningham on the same day, 'that she is like to faint whenever it is spoken about. Poor woman she kens very little about London morality'.¹² He had evidently taken the news more calmly than his wife; but Cochrane, after all, was the injured party, and Margaret Hogg would not have permitted any wavering in Macrone's direction. Between the unknown date of his last visit to Altrive and Hogg's death on 21 November 1835, there is no evidence that either of them had anything to do with the other; their friendship had been broken as conclusively as Macrone's partnership with Cochrane.

After a month or so of 'rather erratic' travel in Scotland, Macrone embarked on the Leith packet for London, and arrived at Blackwall on the evening of 6 October. 'As luck would have it', he wrote to Brydges on the following day, 'Turner the Academician was my companion on the voyage, and we had therefore an opportunity of discussing the pictorial department of my first undertaking at some length. – He enters most enthusiastically into the speculation, and will commence the embellishments forthwith – They are to be purely *imaginative* and will no doubt be very beautiful.¹³ – I am thus prepared to meet you in every respect, and will wait with much anxiety for the Life [...] Turner suggests that *Spenser* wo^d

¹⁰ *LJH*, 3, 233.

¹¹ *LJH*, 3, 235.

¹² *LJH*, 3, 238.

¹³ There were to be seven of these 'Imaginative Illustrations', as they are called on the title pages of Brydges's edition: 'Mustering of the Warrior Angels', 'The Expulsion from Paradise', 'The Fall of the Rebel Angels', 'The Temptation of the Mountain', 'Ludlow Castle – Rising of Sabrina', 'The Temptation of the Pinnacle of the Temple', and 'The Death in Lycidas'.

be another good reprint, and he is ready to undertake the illustrations¹⁴ – This is an author that I am sure you would be delighted to edit'.¹⁵ Turner and Macrone did not confine their conversation to art. Earlier in the summer, Brydges had written to Macrone that his edition would contain Milton's poetry and nothing more, which was rational enough, the bulk of Milton's prose being devoted to obsolete religious and political controversies; but Macrone, who had hoped for a Milton that would overshadow all competitors, did not look with favour on the proposed limitation. 'Respecting the prose works', he wrote on 23 July, 'I am at a loss what to say – I think the public look for and want an edition of the *whole works of Milton*. We can proceed with the poetry, however, and if there is a feeling that the prose should be added, nothing will be more easy. We might judge by *its* success'.¹⁶ Brydges, however, seems to have continued obdurate in his refusal to have anything to do with the prose; but Cunningham, at some point between 23 July and Macrone's departure for Scotland, came up with a compromise, and when Macrone, in search of a second opinion, brought up the subject while talking to Turner, he must have been relieved to find that artist and author were in agreement. 'M^r Turner (a judge of no mean pretensions) and M^r Cunningham are both of opinion', he wrote on 7 October, 'that *a selection from the prose writings of Milton ought to be included in The Life*, and this would obviate the necessity of venturing upon them *singly*, a risk which I agree with you in thinking would be too great. – Of course the very cream might be extracted and this would not only lengthen the narrative parts of the biography but would be gratefully appreciated by the *lazy reader*'.¹⁷ Brydges followed this advice, and padded his *Life* with extracts from *The Reason of Church-Government*, *Eikonoklastes*, and the two

¹⁴ 'The Cave of Despair' (c. 1835), Turner's only recorded painting of a scene from Spenser, may have been derived from this unrealised project.

¹⁵ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9473.

¹⁶ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9471.

¹⁷ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9473.

Defences of the People of England, in Richard Washington's and Robert Fellowes's translations respectively.

'I have at length got into my *new house*', Macrone wrote to Brydges in the same letter, 'and all future communications will find me immediately if addressed to 3 St James's Square.¹⁸ – I shall write very soon, and at greater length – but I fear I annoy your Lordship with my prolixity'.¹⁹ The rest of his correspondence with Brydges, unhappily, does not appear to have been preserved; but, as before, we are not wholly ignorant of what happened after the descent of the curtain. On 13 October, having learned that Macrone had returned to publishing, and, what was worse, that the rights to Brydges's edition of Milton had been transferred, without Cochrane's knowledge, to the new firm, Cochrane wrote to Brydges, explaining the circumstances of Macrone's dismissal and warning him 'against the vile arts of this monster of iniquity – M^cCrone'. His delay in writing, he explained, had been due to another of Macrone's misdeeds. Brydges had sent Cochrane & M^cCrone a larger amount of manuscript than could be printed in two volumes, and the overflow had therefore been set aside as material for a third. The commercial failure of the *Autobiography*²⁰ would probably have led to the cancellation of this project; but Cochrane's interest in it was revived when he found that Macrone, in taking his leave of Waterloo Place, had taken the unprinted part of Brydges's memoirs as well. 'I was in hopes your Lordship's son would have been authorised to demand every scrap of MS. belonging to your Lordship in the possession of M^cCrone', he

¹⁸ Macrone's friend Crellin, the Manxman who had come with him to London, was his partner in the lease, as Cochrane wrote to Brydges on 13 October 1834, and himself lived nearby at 4, St James's Street (Sala, I, 143).

¹⁹ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9473.

²⁰ 'The profit has been but small, owing to the determined hostility of both Edinburgh & Quarterly Reviewers' (Cochrane to Brydges, 1 January 1835: MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 103). Macrone, more tactfully, had explained to Brydges, on 23 July 1834, little more than a month after the publication of the *Autobiography*, that it was 'by far too good a book for the times: – your light lady reader requires something as fleeting and as empty as her own fair head, and the appetites of our moderns are [illegible] with froth & syllabub' (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9471).

wrote, ‘but as this has not been done & McCrone is going about town boasting of his correspondence with your Lordship & shewing your Lordship’s letters, I lose no time in acquainting you with his real character, & to beg your Lordship’s pardon for not undeceiving you sooner. But the agony of my mind must plead my excuse. – After all I have stated, should your Lordship still continue to write to him, I shall have nothing to reproach myself with. – I have mentioned many honourable names – & it is only for your Lordship to demand of Allan Cunningham the truth of my statement, to convince your Lordship of the facts. – He & all others who value their character have indignantly spurned the viper from their doors’.²¹

On receiving this letter, Brydges must have written to Macrone for an explanation of his conduct; and Macrone’s reply must have been a masterpiece of rhetoric, since, far from restoring his edition of Milton to Cochrane, Brydges confirmed its transfer to Macrone. It may be that he had already signed a contract with Macrone which he felt unable or reluctant to break; or he may simply have preferred Macrone to Cochrane, whose letters to Brydges are those of a brusque and thin-skinned man with little talent for flattery. Nevertheless, it was to Cochrane that Brydges eventually awarded the third volume of his memoirs, no doubt on the grounds that it made no sense to divide the book between rival publishers. This agreement had been reached by 20 December, when Cochrane sent Brydges a promissory note for £50 in part-payment for the not yet completed work. ‘I trust the treasures of the 3^d Vol. will draw all hearts around you’, he wrote to Brydges on 1 January 1835. ‘I am anxiously awaiting the arrival of the MSS. – M^cCrone is stating every where that you have made him a present of the MSS in his hands remaining over after the two vols. were finished – but after what your Lordship has said, I trust it is an idle invention’.²² Whether this was the case or not, Macrone

²¹ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 3446. Cunningham, however, was to be reconciled with Macrone: see Appendix I.

²² MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 103.

refused to give up the papers. ‘M^cCrone’s obstinacy still continues’, Cochrane wrote on 5 February, ‘but the affair is in the hands of the lawyers who will soon bring him to reason’.²³ Brydges, for his part, was being almost as troublesome as Macrone where his memoirs were concerned. On 25 January, he had written to Cochrane that ten sheets of the third volume were ready to be printed; but when Cochrane, replying on 5 February, asked for them to be sent immediately, Brydges evidently retreated into procrastination or silence. Early in March, fourteen sheets were ‘lying ready except the contents for the head of each chapter’;²⁴ but one week after another went by without any apparent progress, and finally Cochrane lost his patience. ‘It is now six weeks since the receipt of your Lordship’s last letter in which it is stated [...] that your Lordship would *now* send these [sheets] in a parcel through Mory the Calais agent’, he wrote on 20 April. ‘This parcel I have never received nor have I had a single letter from your Lordship explanatory of the delay. This I consider most extraordinary in your Lordship, after the very liberal manner in which I acted by advancing £50 before receiving a sheet of the MS. – on the faith of your Lordship’s word. – I am the more galled by such treatment as M^cCrone is exhibiting almost daily packets from your Lordship.²⁵ My blood boils in my veins when I think of that worthless villain. The enclosed letters from my solicitor²⁶ will explain to your Lordship how he has acted in open defiance of your written orders to deliver up the MS. of Autobiog^y sent to the firm. – He now insists on my sending out a commission to examine your Lordship on the spot – but I do not wish to go to that expense, & if your Lordship will only authorise Mess^{rs} Longman & Co or any respectable house to repay me the £50 – I will relinquish it altogether [...] M^cCrone has also had the

²³ MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 104

²⁴ Cochrane to Brydges, 20 April: MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 105.

²⁵ The packets probably contained revisions to Brydges’s *Life of Milton*.

²⁶ These letters are lost.

meanness to refuse payment of the books sent out by the firm for the use of Milton, amounting to £6.. 2 – 3 trade prices. – Your Lordship will be so good as direct payment of the same in your next letter. The books I send to your Lordship's order go to account – but I cannot think of paying for Milton'.²⁷ Here Cochrane was being disingenuous: according to the terms of severance published in the *Literary Gazette*, he was responsible for all debts incurred by Cochrane & M'Crone. Nothing more is heard of the commission, Brydges probably having decided to leave Macrone in possession of the papers, which would be of little service to him, since the memoirs were being rewritten for Cochrane in any case.

Pointedly ignoring Cochrane's tantrum, perhaps because he felt it not unjustified, Brydges replied, if that is the word, on 3 May, with a proposal that Cochrane reprint his first novel, *Mary de Clifford*, with new annotations;²⁸ he also sent a handful of sonnets for the *Monthly Magazine*, which appears not to have printed them. It was only on 24 May that he wrote again to Cochrane, explaining that he had found his manuscript to be in greater want of revision than he had imagined in March. 'I shall be happy to receive the revised MS. of the 3^d Vol. Autobiog^y – sheet by sheet [*illegible*] post as proposed,' Cochrane replied on 30 May, 'although I should have preferred the whole at once in a parcel direct by the usual conveyance'.²⁹ There followed yet another delay, this time of more than two months. On receiving Brydges's first packet of manuscript, now grown to eighteen sheets, in the middle of August, Cochrane was dismayed to find that Brydges had devoted it to his King Charles's Head, the refusal of the House of Lords to acknowledge his claim to the Barony of

²⁷ MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 105.

²⁸ Cochrane had sense enough to recognise another of Brydges's bad ideas. 'It would appear to great advantage in The Standard Novelists published by Bentley', he replied on 30 May. 'Unless in a series of popular works I fear it would not be advisable to reproduce it by itself' (MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 106).

²⁹ MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 106.

Chandos.³⁰ ‘I was in hopes’, Cochrane wrote on 17 August, ‘your Lordship would have made the volume more literary than personal. Of the thousand & one characters & anecdotes of the various illustrious individuals whom your Lordship came in contact with & which your Lordship’s mind is known to be abundantly stored – very few are given. I hope the remainder of the MS will amply supply this deficiency. – I propose going to press immediately & publishing the volume at the commencement of the season in October’.³¹ It need hardly be said that this proposal came to nothing. ‘I have been long waiting for the remainder of the Autobiography’, Cochrane wrote on 7 October, ‘as I have not more than two thirds of a volume. If the latter portion be such as described in literary anecdote & character relative to Hannah More – Mackintosh – Malthus & many other litterateurs – nothing can be more to the purpose – The moment I receive the sheets – the volume will be proceeded with – they had better come by post as before. – Let me have free opinions of your contemporaries by all means, whether deceased or living. Any thing from your Lordship’s pen is sure to be read with avidity’.³² The rest of Cochrane’s letters to Brydges are lost; but since no third volume of the *Autobiography* was published, one may presume that its latter pages either remained unwritten, or were found to be as unsaleable as their predecessors.

Brydges’s Milton had better luck than his memoirs. ‘The Prospectus of Milton looks well’, Cochrane had written on 5 February. ‘I only hope for your Lordship’s sake that [Macrone] has the necessary means to bring it to maturity. He states he pays your Lordship a

³⁰ Macrone, playing the hypocrite with abandon, had seized on this obsession as a theme for flattery. ‘My lord’, he began his letter of 1 April 1834, ‘I will no longer keep up the silly affectation of “Sir”-ing you: – Anyone who has, as I have done, attentively perused your palpable case, must perceive that both morally and politically you are entitled to enjoy the name of your ancestors – and anyone may also perceive that in your honourable struggles to attain your just rights, you are actuated by other feelings than those of a personal nature – a title can neither add to, nor take away from your already high name – but what is right is right, and I hope you may long live, not only to achieve your end, but to enjoy the advantages resulting from it’ (MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 9468).

³¹ MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 107.

³² MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 108.

mere trifle – which I can hardly believe – as the Life of Milton must be the result of much severe mental labour & anxious thought'.³³ This report, coloured as it probably is by Cochrane's desire to give Brydges a bad opinion of Macrone, is not known to have impaired Brydges's relations with his new publisher, any more than the bickering over his papers which, as we have seen, continued well into April. The *Life* was published on 1 June;³⁴ 'the remaining Volumes', in Macrone's words, 'will be delivered on the last day of each succeeding month, and the publication will be completed in October'.³⁵ The completion of this programme was not unattended with difficulties. 'Your Lordship's Life of Milton will hand you down to posterity – by the side of the immortal Bard – it is every where praised, & ought to be a fortune to the publisher', Cochrane wrote to Brydges on 7 October. 'I regret that he is not treating you well – Your son informs me you have only received £120 – whereas he had agreed to give £100 for the Life & £50 for every succeeding volume. These sums ought to have been paid on the day of publication of each volume. I paid Allan Cunningham [for his edition of Burns] in hard cash £800 – being £100 a volume & an additional £50 on the second edition of the Life just published. – I trust by the time this reaches your Lordship – he will have honorably fulfilled his engagements. – I mentioned to your respected daughter M^{rs} Swann³⁶ – it matters not what the actual sale is – your Lordship must be paid'.³⁷ The disappearance of Macrone's letters to Brydges after October 1834, and Cochrane's after

³³ MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 104.

³⁴ *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 19, No. 959 (6 June 1835), 384. Cunningham thought it 'a most beautiful book outwardly: still more so inwardly: the pen and pencil have done their best and wrought with a spirit akin to the poet. The biography contains more truly inspired pages than any work which I know of the like compass: all is easy and graceful: penetrating and vigorous' (Cunningham to Macrone, 29 May 1835: MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 17157).

³⁵ John Macrone, 'Advertisement', *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, edited by Sir Egerton Brydges, 6 vols (Macrone, 1835), I, vii.

³⁶ Charlotte Katharine Brydges had married Frederick Dashwood Swann in 1830 (see the obituary of Brydges in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. VIII (New Series), November 1837, 539).

³⁷ MS. Houghton, Eng 1006, 108.

October 1835, stands in the way of our ascertaining when, or whether, Macrone paid his debts; but room for speculation is provided by the obscure episode which must conclude our survey of Brydges's dealings with Macrone. While editing Milton and working on his memoirs, Brydges had dashed off what was to be his last book, *Moral Axioms in Single Couplets*, which Macrone described as 'nearly ready' in a catalogue of 'New and Standard Works in Immediate Preparation', bound into some copies of Brydges's *Life*; in the *Literary Gazette* advertisement for the *Life* itself, it is included among seven books already available. In the event, however, Macrone published the *Axioms* on 8 July 1837,³⁸ after a lapse of more than two years, the author's preface being dated 'GENEVA, May, 1837'.³⁹ Brydges must have withdrawn his manuscript in the summer of 1835, no doubt when Macrone began to fall behind in his payments for Milton. It is difficult to explain how he was able to recover the copyright of the *Axioms*, but our knowledge of his character encourages the supposition that he fulfilled his part of the contract with Brydges in the spring of 1837, and took the opportunity of asking whether 'his Lordship' would mark the renewal of their good relations by allowing him to publish another of his books. Brydges, however, had confined his literary work since 1835 to an abundance of mediocre sonnets, and had nothing to offer Macrone except the *Axioms*, which duly appeared and vanished from the attention of the public two months to the day before Brydges's death on 8 September.

³⁸ *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 21, No. 1068 (8 July 1837), 440.

³⁹ Sir Egerton Brydges, *Moral Axioms in Single Couplets* (Macrone, 1837), viii.

Private Life

One of the reasons why Cunningham and Hogg were astonished to learn of Macrone's perfidy towards Cochrane, was that they had supposed him to be in love with another woman. 'During the time [Macrone] was here the summer before last', Hogg wrote to Cunningham on 8 November 1834, 'there was a constant correspondence between him and a Miss Salem which I am almost certain was in [Mrs Cochrane's] hand. The papers were also all directed in the same hand and they were the very papers which came into Mr Cochrane's house every morning'.¹ In the absence of these letters and papers, we cannot say whether Hogg was right to suspect that Macrone's intrigue with Mrs Cochrane was being carried on at Altrive, but 'Miss Salem', at least, was no fabrication. It will be remembered that Crellin, the Manx tailor who had come with Macrone to London, had married Elizabeth Sala; and while he 'had been courting my Aunt Eliza', her nephew was to write, 'young Mr Macrone had been wooing her sister, my Aunt Sophia; but the match never came off, and Macrone married another lady, by whom he had a family. Prior, however, to the rupture of the tender relations between young Mr Macrone and Miss Sophia Sala – this was I think in 1836 – he, finding that the capital of the publishing firm was urgently in need of expansion, borrowed from Miss Sala the sum of £500; and I believe that a considerable portion of this money went to pay Charles Dickens for the copyright of "Sketches by Boz"' (Sala, I, 144).² The chronology is a trifle askew here, since Macrone's marriage took place early in 1835 and Sophia Sala is unlikely to have lent him a small fortune afterward. A more probable version of events is given in an article of Sala's published seventeen years before his *Life and Adventures*, namely, that 'a maiden aunt

¹ *LJH*, 3, 237-8.

² Macrone was with Sophia Sala at Margate when Cochrane discovered his misconduct (Cunningham to Hogg, 15 November 1834: quoted by Hughes, *LJH*, 3, 239).

of mine, long since deceased, lent John Macrone five hundred pounds to start him withal'.³

The loan, therefore, must almost certainly have been given in August or September 1834, probably before 20 August, when Macrone and Crellin signed the lease for 3, St James's Place. One would like to think that Macrone did not accept Sophia Sala's money with the intention of jilting her after it had been spent, if only because it is possible even to cuckold one's partner, as Macrone had done, without being wholly a blackguard. 'My Aunt Sophia died, I think, in 1837',⁴ Sala recalled, and the loan was never repaid.

Joseph Bordwine, Macrone's father-in-law, was a military engineer who had risen to the rank of major in the 88th Regiment (Connaught Rangers) and taken part in the disastrous invasion of the Rio de la Plata. Returning to England in the autumn of 1807, he was compelled, according to Skottowe,⁵ to resign from the army after publishing a denunciation of his former commander-in-chief, Lieutenant-General Whitelocke.⁶ In January 1809, however, he found employment at the new military college founded by the East India Company at Addiscombe, as assistant professor of fortification under the mathematician James Glenie, whom he replaced in May 1811.⁷ The series of events which led to his meeting Macrone began on 17 December 1827, when Cunningham asked for Scott's help in procuring his eldest son Joseph 'a Cadetship in the British Artillery – or in the Indian army'.⁸ On 18

³ 'George Cruikshank: A Life Memory', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. CCXLII, May 1878, 548.

⁴ Sala, I, 144.

⁵ B. C. Skottowe, 'Bordwine, Joseph (d. 1835)', revised by James Lunt, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

⁶ The 88th saw action only in what proved to be the last engagement of the war, the second invasion of Buenos Aires on 5 July 1807, in which they suffered many casualties and were forced to surrender to a body of Spanish volunteers. Bordwine, therefore, had more than good reason to abominate Whitelocke, whose rashness and incompetence were largely responsible for the defeat of British aims in South America. While Bordwine's act of insubordination was rightly punished, his opinions were shared by the government, and Whitelocke was court-martialled, convicted, and cashiered. See Ian Fletcher, *The Waters of Oblivion* (Spellmount, 1991).

⁷ H. M. Vibart, *Addiscombe: Its Heroes and Men of Note* (Constable, 1894), 39.

⁸ This letter is quoted in *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by W. E. K. Anderson (Oxford, 1972), 480.

May 1828, while on a visit to the Lockharts in London, Scott obtained the consent of his old friend Lord Melville, then First Lord of the Admiralty, to Cunningham's project.⁹ Five days later, on being introduced to John Loch, a director of the East India Company, he asked the same favour for Cunningham's younger son Alexander, and met with equal success; 'and thus I am in the situation in which I have been at Gladdies Wiel when I have caught two trouts, one with the fly the other with the bobber', he wrote in his journal afterward. 'I have landed both and so I will now'.¹⁰ The two Cunninghams were duly enrolled at Addiscombe in 1829, and proved a credit to their sponsors, Joseph, indeed, passing out first, 'with the first prize for mathematics, the sword for good conduct, and the first nomination to the Bengal Engineers in 1831'.¹¹ Since Alexander, too, became a military engineer, they must both have studied fortification under Bordwine, and evidently brought good reports of him to their father's house in Belgrave Square, since, by the summer of 1829, the Cunninghams and the Bordwines were on good terms with one another, as we may judge from a letter of 17 July, in which Cunningham invited Bordwine and his family to dinner. 'We are all very well', he wrote, 'yet not so well but that we will be the better of your accepting - I pray you forget none of the young ladies [...] My wife unites with me in love for the House of Bordwine'.¹² It was around this time, Skottowe tells us, that Bordwine's friends persuaded him to write a full account of his chief contribution to the art of war, a new system of fortification which he had devised in 1803, while involved, as a lieutenant in the Royal Staff Corps, in securing the western shores of England against the threat of invasion by the French. His first book on the subject, it is true, had attracted little notice on its publication in 1809; but surely the critics

⁹ *Journal*, 477.

¹⁰ *Journal*, 480.

¹¹ H. M. Stephens, 'Cunningham, Joseph Davey (1812-1851)', revised by James Lunt, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

¹² MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 17160.

would grant a respectful hearing to the veteran Professor of Fortification at Addiscombe. Bordwine's official work, however, took up most of his time, and it was only in the spring or early summer of 1834 that he finished his *Memoir of a Proposed New System of Permanent Fortification*. In looking for a publisher, he may well have consulted Cunningham, the only literary man with whom we know him to have been acquainted; and it stands to reason that Cunningham would probably have directed him to the men for whom he had recently edited Burns. Cochrane & M'Crone, at any rate, accepted Bordwine's manuscript, and Cochrane & Co. brought it out in August.¹³ Here, then, was an opportunity for Cunningham to introduce Macrone, if he had not already done so, to Bordwine and his family, among whom Adeline, the second of the Professor's daughters, was to catch the young publisher's eye. The rest of the story is a mere handful of dates and names. Macrone and Adeline Bordwine were married on 3 January 1835.¹⁴ Bordwine himself must have been in poor health at the time; on 4 February, he retired on half-pay,¹⁵ and on 21 February, he died.¹⁶ The Macrones had three children, Frederick, who was born on 20 October 1835 and died on 16 November,¹⁷ William, born on 30 September 1836,¹⁸ and one of whose existence we might never have known, had it not been for a reference, in one of Dickens's letters, to the widowed Mrs Macrone's 'two helpless infant children'.¹⁹ Having now exhausted our knowledge of Macrone's married life, we must return to his professional activities in St James's Square.

¹³ The book is advertised as 'just published' in the *Literary Gazette*, Vol. 18, No. 918 (23 August 1834), 583.

¹⁴ *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly*, Vol. XVI (New Series), January 1835, 151.

¹⁵ Vibart, 39-40 and 127.

¹⁶ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. IV (New Series), July 1835, 101.

¹⁷ *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, edited by Madeline House et al., 12 vols (Oxford, 1965-2002), 1, 94.

¹⁸ *LCD*, 1, 183.

¹⁹ *LCD*, 1, 371.

Dickens and Ainsworth

If Macrone's rise in the publishing world had been accelerated by the patronage of his fellow Scots, the fortunes of his new firm were equally indebted to his English acquaintances. One of the latter was Ainsworth, who turns up everywhere in the record of Macrone's activities between April 1835 and February 1837. Their public association began when Macrone leased the copyright of *Rookwood*, almost certainly from Ainsworth,¹ bringing out a 'thoroughly corrected and revised' third edition on 1 May 1835,² and a fourth, in one volume, 'greatly enlarged, with numerous additional Lyrics', as well as 'Twelve Graphic Designs by Cruikshank, and a Superb Portrait by Daniel Maclise, Esq. A. R. A.; richly bound and lettered', on 18 June 1836.³ As one may infer from the extent of these alterations, Ainsworth took a great interest in his publisher's career. 'I hope and, indeed, nothing doubt but that you will do great things next season', he wrote to Macrone on 2 June 1836. 'If you will suffer me to direct your course, I feel confident that I can not only make you a successful but – what in my opinion is of as much consequence – a *recherché* and gentleman-like publisher'.⁴ His most valuable service of this kind, however, had been performed in the previous autumn, when he introduced Macrone to Dickens, then unknown except as a journalist. Forster tells us that the introduction took place 'a few weeks before' the beginning of 1836;⁵ but since Dickens's first surviving letter to Macrone is dated 27 October 1835,⁶ and was evidently

¹ Sutherland, 247.

² *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 19, No. 954 (2 May 1835), 287. Macrone's advertisement is dated 1 May.

³ *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1013 (18 June 1836), 398.

⁴ S. M. Ellis, *William Harrison Ainsworth and His Friends*, 2 vols (John Lane, 1911), 1, 295.

⁵ John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 2 vols (Everyman's Library, 1969), 1, 57.

⁶ LCD, 1, 81-4.

written at a time when the first of their collaborative projects was well-advanced, it may be concluded that they made each other's acquaintance no later than the first weeks of October. 'Leaving Kensal Lodge with Ainsworth's publisher, Macrone, one evening to walk back to Holborn', according to Edgar Johnson, 'Dickens was delighted to learn that his companion was also going to Furnival's Inn. The publisher told him that his *Sketches* were "capital value" and should be collected into a volume for publication. Macrone added the suggestion that they might be illustrated by Cruikshank'.⁷ Johnson, unfortunately, gives no source for this account; but it is credible and circumstantial enough to warrant quotation. By 27 October, at any rate, Dickens and Macrone were on excellent terms with each other, not least, perhaps, because Dickens, as a passage in his letter indicates, knew little of his publisher's private life. Having been unable to provide Macrone with a copy of 'The Steam Excursion', he advised him 'to send to Cochrane's (you are more likely to get what we want than I am) for' the magazine in which it had appeared,⁸ inadvertently bearing witness to the efficiency with which Macrone had been able to conceal the nature of his break with Cochrane from public notice. By March 1836, Dickens and Macrone had become such close friends that Dickens asked Macrone to serve as best man at his wedding on 2 April; but this amiable project was thwarted by the punctilio of Eliza Macrone. 'The unanimous voice of the ladies, confirms the authority of Mrs. Macrone', Dickens informed her husband in an undated letter. 'They say, with her, that I *must* be attended to the place of execution, by a single man: I have therefore engaged a substitute, and inclose you an Invite to the subsequent ceremonials, which of course you accept'.⁹ The substitute in question, Dickens's school-friend Thomas Beard, later

⁷ Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, 2 vols (Simon and Schuster, 1952), 1, 104.

⁸ LCD, 1, 83.

⁹ LCD, 1, 142.

recalled that ‘the only persons present beyond the members of the Dickens and Hogarth families were Macrone [...] and myself. It was altogether a very quiet piece of business’.¹⁰

The history of Dickens’s professional dealings with Macrone, having been reconstructed by Johnson and Robert L. Patten in considerable detail, need only be summarised here. It began, as we have seen, in the autumn of 1835, when Macrone bought the rights to the first edition of *Sketches by Boz* for £150.¹¹ Published on 7 February 1836,¹² the *Sketches* were promptly and spectacularly successful, so that Macrone was able to pay Dickens £50 on 5 March¹³ and the rest of the money five days later.¹⁴ Around this time, too, he signed a contract, now lost, with Dickens, for a second series of the *Sketches*,¹⁵ which duly appeared in December 1836¹⁶ and met with equal favour from the public; and on 9 May, in a letter to Macrone, Dickens undertook to sell him ‘the first Edition of a Work of Fiction (in Three Volumes of the usual size) to be written by me, and to be entitled *Gabriel Vardon, the Locksmith of London*’,¹⁷ which was to be delivered, if possible, by 30 December, for ‘the sum of Two Hundred Pounds’.¹⁸ Dickens, however, was not yet fully aware of his increased commercial value, and must have been mortified to learn, soon afterward, that Richard Bentley had wanted to enter into a similar arrangement with him,¹⁹ probably for a higher

¹⁰ *Dickens to His Oldest Friend*, edited by Walter Dexter (Putnam, 1932), xv-xvi.

¹¹ Forster, 1, 57.

¹² Johnson, 1, 109.

¹³ LCD, 1, 137.

¹⁴ LCD, 1, 138.

¹⁵ Ellis, 1, 307: cited in LCD, 1, 647.

¹⁶ Johnson, 1, 152.

¹⁷ This novel, of course, was eventually published as *Barnaby Rudge*.

¹⁸ LCD, 1, 150.

¹⁹ Johnson, 1, 150.

price. In the course of the summer, he seems to have persuaded himself that his letter of 9 May was not legally binding, and began to negotiate with Bentley, the result being a contract, signed by both parties on 22 August, by the terms of which Dickens was to provide Bentley with a three-volume novel for £500: not in itself, perhaps, an infringement on Macrone's claim to *Gabriel Vardon*, had it not been for the clause which stipulated that 'no other literary production shall be undertaken by the said Charles Dickens Esqre until the completion of the above mentioned novel'. Bentley was also to have the refusal of Dickens's next three-volume novel for the same price as that of his first.²⁰ Ainsworth heard of this agreement, and advised Macrone to look into the matter,²¹ but Macrone did nothing, probably because he could not believe Dickens capable of such perfidy. Dickens, meanwhile, kept Macrone in the dark as to the destination of *Gabriel Vardon* for nearly three months, and ultimately, with more prudence than courage, explained his conduct by letter, not in person. Overwhelmed, as he must have been, with rage and humiliation, Macrone dashed off a reply which, with the self-deception familiar in such cases, he thought remarkably dignified, under the circumstances; but he was not long to retain his illusions on this point. 'Had you submitted your reply to Mr. Dickens to me,' Ainsworth wrote to him on 12 November, 'I should have objected to its going forth in its present shape. I differ from you in thinking you have kept your temper, though I own the circumstances are sufficient to endanger one's equanimity; and I find it hard to blame Mr. Bentley or any other spirited Publisher (yourself, for instance) for patronizing rising talent. Your difference is with Mr. Dickens – and to him alone should your letter and your complaints have been confined':²² 'I advise you', he added on 14 November, 'to place the matter between Mr. Dickens and yourself *immediately* in legal hands. 'Your reply to

²⁰ LCD, 1, 648-9.

²¹ Ellis, 1, 305.

²² Ibid.

[Dickens]' he wrote, 'ought simply to have been – "My dear D. In reply to your note, I beg to state that I shall hold you to your agreement." Nothing more. The allusion to Mr. Bentley was (pardon my frankness) in extremely bad taste – and the whole tone of the note betrayed irritability and *weakness*. This I state that you may judge of its effect on the opposite party. He who is firm is always calm: and in the present matter you must be firm [...] But get legal advice at once, and I pray of you write no more hasty letters in which you commit yourself more than you imagine'.²³ Macrone, however, had been shaken more than Ainsworth realised, and, after his initial outburst against Dickens and Bentley, appears to have lapsed into despondency and procrastination. 'There cannot be a shadow of doubt but that [Dickens] is bound fast', Ainsworth reassured him on 28 November, having read 'Mr. Dickens's agreements', which must have included the *Gabriel Vardon* letter. 'So be easy on that score. The matter is, however, of so much consequence that you should get legal advice without a moment's loss of time [...] It is a clear case in your favour'.²⁴ 'I think you would be extremely to blame, where a matter of so much consequence to yourself is at stake', he wrote on 29 November, 'if you did not take the *best* legal advice, acting throughout in a gentleman-like spirit – but in a most decided manner. Rely on it, if you do not do this – you will hereafter regret it. If due notice be not given to Mr. Dickens it may be construed into a waiving of your claim'.²⁵ The fact that Ainsworth felt it necessary to tell Macrone to hire a good lawyer and behave like a gentleman shows the extent to which Macrone's habitual self-possession had abandoned him; but this last letter of advice and reproof must have done its work, since by 2 December, Macrone had sent his printer, T. C. Hansard, to call on Dickens,

²³ Ellis, 1, 306-7.

²⁴ Ellis, 1, 307.

²⁵ Ellis, 1, 308.

with a proposal to buy the copyrights of *Sketches by Boz* for £200,²⁶ evidently as a step towards winding up their association. In the ordinary way, Dickens would probably have turned him down, since the popularity of the *Sketches* had not been impaired by that of *The Pickwick Papers*; but he must, by now, have realised that he was liable to prosecution for breach of contract, no matter whom he chose to publish his unwritten three-volume novel, as long as Macrone retained the *Gabriel Vardon* letter, and in replying to Hansard, after demanding £150 in unpaid printing fees and £250 for the copyrights, he took care to ask ‘whether Mr. Macrone intends [...] to retain possession of a letter of mine, respecting which, a misunderstanding has arisen between us. Mr. Macrone’s reply [...] will regulate my decision’.²⁷ Macrone, however, could dictate his own terms, and Dickens was eventually forced to sell him the copyrights ‘without any reserve whatever’, in exchange for the *Gabriel Vardon* letter and £100.²⁸ It was a bargain for Macrone, whom Dickens, with the energy of resentment, would later accuse of having made ‘some £4000’²⁹ out of the *Sketches*; and Dickens, for his part, when the money had been paid over on 5 January 1837,³⁰ must have thought himself well rid of his troublesome friend.

‘I sincerely regret [...] you have lost Mr. Dickens’, Ainsworth had written to Macrone on 12 November 1836. ‘It is a serious misfortune. For I look upon him as unquestionably a writer of the first order [...] Once more, I say, I am exceedingly sorry for your loss. You will not easily repair it’.³¹ Within two months of Dickens’s departure, Macrone would suffer the

²⁶ LCD, 1, 203.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ LCD, 1, 550.

³⁰ LCD, 1, 203.

³¹ Ellis, 1, 305.

comparably grave loss of Ainsworth himself. The series of events which ended in this calamity, as recounted by Ellis and Sutherland, began in the spring of 1835, when Ainsworth, still exultant over the success of *Rookwood*, promised Macrone his next novel, *Crichton*, for publication in October.³² Unluckily for both men, he also decided to improve on the pattern of its predecessor. ‘It was a *very* historical romance’, Ellis observes of the completed novel, ‘and the mass of erudition, the quantity of Latin, and the ultra-profusioness of detail with which it bristled, must have sadly perplexed the great bulk of its less-cultured readers’.³³ Ainsworth, in short, had over-estimated his facility, and, in consequence, *Crichton* proved far more difficult to write than he had expected. ‘My head spins round with working at *Crichton*’, he wrote to Macrone on 8 March 1836, ‘so that I scarcely know what I write’.³⁴ ‘Mr Ainsworth daily sends us a few crumbs; which are all I want but I cannot see that he has turned to the conclusion of his story – he’ll have to bring in a flash of lightning to settle matters’, Hansard had complained to Macrone a day earlier. ‘Its a book I want to see out firstly because the corrections have been so extravagant that the sooner its out the less time he’ll have to murder & [illegible] I am sure it will sell well if public expectation be not balked’.³⁵ ‘If I live twenty days longer’, Ainsworth wrote to Macrone on 23 April, ‘the whole MS. (*preface excepted*) shall be in Hansard’s hands, and my labours in regard to *Crichton* at an end – for correcting the proof I hold to be nothing. In point of matter *written* and *cast aside* I have already achieved *Crichton*. But this is nothing to the purpose. To the 25th I pledge myself – so make yourself easy on that score, and on all other scores in which *I* have any concern. I am really sorry I have delayed you so long, but I will make it up to you in the

³² Ellis, 1, 288.

³³ Ellis, 1, 319.

³⁴ Ellis, 1, 293.

³⁵ MS. The Charles Dickens Museum.

end'.³⁶ By 2 June, however, he had completed only two volumes,³⁷ and the third took even longer to come into shape. 'I have been working night and day at *Crichton*', he wrote to Macrone at the beginning of November, 'and have done it all in the rough. I am now re-copying and shall transmit daily to Hansard. It will be impossible to be out on the 10th; but let not that discomfort you. Before the end of the month I stake my name and your own that we shall blaze away in style'.³⁸ This pledge, too, was broken; by 28 November, as we learn from another of Ainsworth's letters, *Crichton* had not yet been completed.³⁹ He had not been idle, to be sure, and either he or Macrone had had the idea of producing makeshift review copies of *Crichton* by combining the previously printed first and second volumes with unbound proofs of the third; but the high speed at which Hansard must have been working resulted in an intolerable number of typographical errors. 'Indeed indeed my dear Macrone you have given me a dreadful Printer', Ainsworth wrote in an undated letter. 'I am really in despair. I dare scarcely send away a proof: – nor do I believe such blunders were ever made before'.⁴⁰ In the end, Macrone was forced to supply the reviewers with only the first and second volumes, in the hope of keeping public interest alive until the complete novel was available.⁴¹ It will thus be seen that Ainsworth's relations with Macrone were coming under strain at the time when they learned of Dickens's contract with Bentley, which may account for some of the acerbity in Ainsworth's letters on that subject. Another source of discomfort was that Macrone, for reasons which have not yet been ascertained, was badly in debt. 'One

³⁶ Ellis, 1, 293-4.

³⁷ Ellis, 1, 294.

³⁸ Ellis, 1, 300.

³⁹ Ellis, 1, 307.

⁴⁰ MS. Huntington, AI 73: incompletely and inaccurately transcribed in Ellis, 1, 303.

⁴¹ One gentleman, as Sutherland notes, was kind enough to 'congratulate Mr. Ainsworth on a work equally brilliant, interesting, and original' (*The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1036 (26 November 1836), 754).

thing I beseech you to do', Ainsworth had written to him earlier in November, 'keep up your spirits. 'Boz' will do, and I shall do – and though we shall not make up your £5000 by next Xmas, WE will put a few cool hundreds into your pocket to help to carry on the war, and to establish your credit'.⁴² By the beginning of 1837, however, Ainsworth was unlikely to have retained much of his confidence about his publisher's ability to keep himself out of the Marshalsea. Faced with the departure of Dickens, Macrone had shown petulance and indecision, and it had taken a fortnight of goading to make him protect his interest in the *Sketches*. A man of this kind was not to be trusted with the affairs of a novelist whose fame, after all, was largely dependent on a single book which Bentley had brought out more than two years earlier; and Bentley, indeed, had been trying to win Ainsworth back to his first allegiance for some time, as Ainsworth had told Macrone in his letter of 12 November.⁴³ Since none of Ainsworth's letters to Macrone after December 1836 is known to survive, we know nothing of how their association, and, one presumes, their friendship, came to an end, except that in January or February 1837, Macrone sold his interest in *Crichton* to Bentley for £1000.⁴⁴ 'The whole of the first edition was sold out the first day – 1250 copies', Ainsworth wrote to James Crossley on 1 March. 'I am now at press with a second'.⁴⁵ Macrone must have been mortified at how close he had come to profiting from a best-seller, to say nothing of what he might have earned from the books which Ainsworth would probably have written for him in the future.

The last reverberation of these quarrels came early in June, when Dickens learned that Macrone was going to publish 'a new issue of my sketches in monthly parts of nearly the

⁴² Ellis, 1, 300.

⁴³ Ellis, 1, 305.

⁴⁴ Sutherland, 255.

⁴⁵ Ellis, 1, 318.

same size and in just the same form as the *Pickwick papers*', which would give the impression that Dickens was trying 'to presume upon the success of the *Pickwick*, and thus foist this old work upon the public in its new dress for the mere purpose of putting money in my own pocket'. Unwilling, as before, to confront Macrone in person, Dickens asked Forster to act as his intermediary. 'I wish him to be reminded', he wrote, 'of the sums he paid for these books – of the sale he has had for them – of the extent to which he has already pushed them – and of the very great profits he must necessarily have acquired from them. I wish him to be reminded that no intention of publishing them in this form was in the remotest manner hinted to me, by him, or on his own behalf', that is, by Hansard, 'when he obtained possession of the copyright. I then wish you to put it to his feelings of common honesty and fair-dealing whether after this communication he will persevere in his intention [...] I have only to add that in case you should be met with the assertion that the preparations he has made have involved him in great expence already, and that this is a reason for persisting in his design, Chapman and Hall, knowing my feeling on the subject are ready and willing to buy the copyrights, and to consider this circumstance in settling the amount of the purchase money'.⁴⁶ Forster, however, 'found Mr. Macrone inaccessible to all arguments of persuasion', which was natural enough, since, as Macrone put it, 'he had a right to make as much as he could of what was his, without regard to how it had become so'; and when Forster asked Macrone how much he would take for the copyrights, 'so wide a mouth was opened [...] that I would have no part in the costly process of filling it. I told Dickens so, and counselled him to keep quiet for a time. But the worry and vexation were too great'⁴⁷ for Dickens, especially when he learned from Hansard, a few days later, that Bentley had tried to cut out Chapman and Hall by entering into negotiations with Macrone on his own account,

⁴⁶ LCD, 1, 269-270.

⁴⁷ Forster, 1, 68.

with the result, as Dickens wrote to Bentley, that Macrone and Hansard had ‘formed some magnificent notions of what you are prepared to do, which from what you tell me of the extent to which you would go, I know to be greatly exaggerated’.⁴⁸ Soon afterward, ‘Macrone and his friend [Hansard] (arcades ambo) waited on [Chapman and Hall], and after a long discussion peremptorily refused to take one farthing less than the two thousand pounds’.⁴⁹ The price was exorbitant, but Macrone, as in the *Gabriel Vardon* affair, had the law on his side; and on 17 June, Chapman and Hall formally undertook to pay him the stipulated £2000 for the copyrights of the *Sketches*, with an additional £250 for unsold stock and the plates of Cruikshank’s illustrations, the transaction itself taking place on 24 June.⁵⁰ The £3250 which he had thus obtained for the *Sketches* and *Crichton* covered most of the debts which he had contracted by November 1836. It is not known whether he was able to discharge the rest in the few remaining months of his life.

⁴⁸ LCD, 1, 272.

⁴⁹ LCD, 1, 273.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

6

Willis, Thackeray, and Moore

Most of Macrone's authors appear to have given him less trouble than Dickens and Ainsworth. One may recall, for example, the American journalist N. P. Willis, who landed at Dover on 1 June 1834¹ after two and a half years of rambling through Europe and the Levant, and, armed, as he was, with a letter of introduction from Landor to Lady Blessington,² and the belief that American papers never crossed the Atlantic, set about entertaining the readers of the *New York Mirror* with an abundance of social and literary gossip, later collected as *Pencillings by the Way*, much of it in the form of private conversation between Willis and such men as Moore and John Wilson. The folly of his course was demonstrated in September 1835, when Lockhart, whom Willis had called 'the most unfair and unprincipled critic of the day',³ attacked him in the *Quarterly* as 'the first example of a man creeping into your home, and forthwith printing – accurately or inaccurately, no matter which – before your claret is dry on his lips – unrestrained *table-talk on delicate subjects, and capable of compromising individuals*'.⁴ This tirade, of course, brought *Pencillings by the Way* to the attention of the piratical, and to that of Macrone, who, according to Willis, 'immediately procured a broken set of this paper from an American resident [in London], and called on me with an offer of £300 for an immediate edition of what he had. This chanced on the day before my marriage', in other words, on 30 September,⁵ 'and I left immediately for Paris, – a literary friend most

¹ Henry A. Beers, *Nathaniel Parker Willis* (Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 130.

² Beers, 131.

³ Letter CXXVII, *Pencillings by the Way*, in N. P. Willis, *Complete Works* (J. S. Redfield, Clinton Hall, 1846), 199; previously published as Letter XX in the third volume of Macrone's edition.

⁴ *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. LIV, No. CVII (September 1835), Art. VII, 469.

⁵ The date of Willis's marriage is given in Beers, 177.

kindly undertaking to look over the proofs, and suppress what might annoy any one then living in London'.⁶ Macrone had been able to lay his hands on only seventy-nine of Willis's hundred and thirty-nine despatches; but, even after the ministrations of the unidentified 'literary friend',⁷ enough was left for Hansard to fill three volumes, post octavo, without an excess of typographical trickery. This first London edition of the *Pencillings*, which appeared on 4 December,⁸ sold extremely well, and Macrone brought out a second on 6 May 1836,⁹ with a new preface, dated 8 March, by the author, who avowed that he 'could not but express a surprise (which I doubt not, will be shared by the critics) that a work so hastily written, and published with such doubt and unwillingness, should have met [...] with so extensive a sale'.¹⁰ One such critic, if only in private, was Ainsworth. 'For God's sake dont [sic] make any offer for the Copyright of Pencillings', he wrote to Macrone, also on 8 March. 'That book seems to bewitch you. You wont [sic] sell 100 more'.¹¹ Macrone probably disregarded this warning, since a third edition of the *Pencillings*, 'in the new favourite form of a single [duodecimo] volume', appeared under his imprint in the spring of 1839.¹²

Willis's association with Macrone is chiefly remembered on account of an episode which took place on 5 November 1835,¹³ a fortnight or so after Willis had returned to London

⁶ Preface to *Pencillings by the Way*, in Willis, *Complete Works*, xi.

⁷ The description of Bulwer in Letter CXVI is typical of the passages deleted from Macrone's edition: 'He is short, very much bent in the back, slightly knock-kneed, and, if my opinion in such matters goes for anything, as ill-dressed a man for a gentleman, as you will find in London. His figure is slight and very badly put together, and the only commendable point in his person, as far as I could see, was the smallest foot I ever saw a man stand upon. *Au reste*, I liked his manners extremely' (Willis, *Complete Works*, 183).

⁸ *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 19, No. 986 (12 December 1835), 800.

⁹ *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1007 (7 May 1836), 304.

¹⁰ *Pencillings by the Way* (George Virtue, 1842), iii.

¹¹ MS. Huntington, AI 68: inaccurately transcribed in Ellis, 1, 293.

¹² *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 23, No. 1165 (18 May 1839), 309.

¹³ *LCD*, 1, 88.

from his wedding journey.¹⁴ ‘I was following a favorite amusement of mine one rainy day, in the Strand’, he recalled, ‘strolling toward the more crowded thoroughfares with cloak and umbrella, and looking at people and shop-windows. I heard my name called from a passenger in a street-cab. From out the smoke of the wet straw peered the head of my publisher, Mr. Macrone (a most liberal and noble-hearted fellow, since dead). After a little catechism as to my damp destiny for that morning, he informed me that he was going to visit Newgate, and asked me to join him. I willingly agreed, never having seen this famous prison, and after I was seated in the cab, he said he was going to pick up, on the way, a young paragraphist for the Morning Chronicle, who wished to write a description of it [...] We pulled up at the entrance of a large building used for lawyers’ chambers [Furnival’s Inn]. Not to leave me sitting in the rain, Macrone asked me to dismount with him’. Going upstairs, they were ‘ushered into an uncarpeted and bleak-looking room, with a deal table and two or three chairs and a few books, a small boy and Mr. Dickens – for the contents [...] We went down and crowded into the cab (one passenger more than the law allowed, and Dickens partly in my lap and partly in Macrone’s) and drove on to Newgate’, where they spent ‘an hour or two [...] Not long after this, Macrone sent me the “sheets of Sketches by Boz,” [sic] with a note saying that they were by the gentleman who went with us to Newgate. I read the book with amazement at the genius displayed in it, and in my note of reply assured Macrone that I thought his fortune was made as a publisher if he could monopolize the author’.¹⁵ The only part of this anecdote which needs clarification is that, as Johnson explains, Dickens’s room was ‘bleak-looking’ because he had moved into Furnival’s Inn only a few days earlier.¹⁶

¹⁴ Beers, 178.

¹⁵ *Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil*, in Willis, *Complete Works*, 662.

¹⁶ Johnson, 1, 100.

Macrone did not succeed in coming to terms with every author in whom he took an interest. A provisional arrangement with Browning is mentioned in two of Ainsworth's letters to Macrone, written on 14 June and 29 July 1836, and printed, the first only in part, by the unreliable Ellis. On 13 June, Ainsworth had learned from Forster 'that Colburn is anxious to publish Browning's new poem *Sordello*. I hope you will not let this work, which will, at all events, do you credit as a publisher, slip through your hands without due consideration [...] You should see Forster as soon as you can, and come to some positive understanding on this point'.¹⁷ By 29 July, Browning is 'your new Poet'; but since Ainsworth, who had met him a day earlier, goes on to say that 'in appearance he might pass for a son of Paganini, and Maclise and I must hide our diminished heads before his super-abundant black locks – while even your whiskers, improved as they are by the salt water, are insignificant compared with his lion-like ruff', one may conclude that any negotiations between Macrone and Browning had been conducted by letter or through intermediaries. '*Sordello complete*', Ainsworth reported, 'he is to write a Tragedy [*Strafford*] for Macready – and I feel quite sure that he has great dramatic genius. As, moreover, the Tragedy is to be written for and produced next season, you will have no reason to regret your immediate undertaking'.¹⁸ *Strafford*, however, took precedence over *Sordello*, and Browning did not finish his poem until 1840, well after Macrone was in his grave. Other projects came even more speedily to nothing. Macrone went to Paris in August 1836, hoping to obtain the rights to a novel by Hugo, perhaps to commission one,¹⁹ as well as to meet someone to whom Dickens, in a letter dated

¹⁷ Ellis, 289-290.

¹⁸ Ellis, 290.

¹⁹ 'It could have been a good hit, a novel by Victor Hugo', John Strang wrote to Macrone on 13 September. 'I am very sorry that you did not tell me of your projected journey to Paris, as I could have given you a letter to a friend that could have introduced you to several of the literary Lions' (MS. The Charles Dickens Museum).

‘Wednesday Morning’, referred as ‘Paul the needy’,²⁰ but returned, as far as is known, empty-handed. Early in 1837, on reading Carlyle’s ‘Memoirs of Mirabeau’ in the *London and Westminster Review*,²¹ of which he was then the publisher,²² he remarked to John Stuart Mill that he ‘would wish much to have a Book of that sort’.²³ ‘My wife crows over me at the oracle Macrone has spoken’, Carlyle wrote to Mill on 11 March. ‘It is a new thing in Israel’;²⁴ but no more was heard of it. Macrone had better luck with Thackeray, another friend whom he probably met through Ainsworth. In the summer of 1836, there was talk of Thackeray’s illustrating *Crichton*; but he did not respond to the letter which ‘Father Prout’ wrote to him on Ainsworth’s behalf, and Ainsworth turned to Maclise, who, on 12 July, undertook ‘to furnish three etchings illustrative of the 3 vols. of *Crichton* by the 20th of September, for fifty pounds’.²⁵ This arrangement broke down, for no evident reason, and the task of illustrating *Crichton* fell to John Franklin, who etched a dozen plates; but these cannot have been to Ainsworth’s liking, since he wrote to Thackeray, early in January 1837, asking whether he could supply Macrone with illustrations at a fortnight’s notice. Thackeray sent a letter of acceptance in sportive doggerel,²⁶ and, by the middle of the month, when Macrone wrote to ask how he was getting on, had completed three drawings and sketches for three

²⁰ LCD, 1, 170. The editors of Dickens’s letters think that he may have been Paul de Kock.

²¹ *The London and Westminster Review*, Vol. IV and XXVI, No. II (January 1837), Art. V, 382-439.

²² Macrone published *The Westminster Review* between March 1835 and its incorporation with *The London Review* in March 1836, and the combined *London and Westminster Review* until April 1837 (*The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 19, No. 948 (21 March 1835), 189; *ibid.*, Vol. 20, No. 1001 (26 March 1836), 205; and Sutherland, 255).

²³ *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, edited by Charles Richard Sanders et al., 37 vols (Duke, 1970 et seq.), 9, 175.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9, 171.

²⁵ Ellis, 1, 298-9.

²⁶ *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, edited by Gordon N. Ray, 2 vols (Harvard, 1945), I, 326.

more;²⁷ but the transfer of *Crichton* to Bentley put an end to his labours, Macrone being left with Franklin's now useless illustrations, which, in February, he published in a slim folio on their own.²⁸ Fortune, however, had not been altogether malicious. 'Will you give me £ 50 20 now', Thackeray had asked Macrone in January, 'for the 1st Edition of a book in 2 Wollums. with 20 drawings. entitled Rambles & Sketches in old and new Paris by WT I have not of course written a word of it, that's why I offer it so cheap, but I want to be made to write, and to bind myself by a contract or fine. Think now about the advantages of this offer [...] I want something to do – & w^d be right glad to do this'.²⁹ Macrone agreed, and was rash enough to advertise *Rambles and Sketches in Old and New Paris* alongside Franklin's *Tableaux from Crichton* as 'just ready'. The *Paris Sketch Book*, in the event, was only finished in 1840; but since it appeared under Macrone's imprint, we may consider him to have been the first publisher of Thackeray as of Dickens.

One of the other books in Macrone's February advertisement was 'Colonel Macerone's [sic] Autobiography, Edited by the Author of "Rookwood", "Crichton", &c.' Francis Maceroni was an Anglo-Italian adventurer and polymath who had been one of Murat's aides-de-camp, collaborated in the design of a thirty-horsepower steam-carriage,³⁰ and written a pamphlet on street-fighting for the benefit of revolutionaries during the Reform agitation of 1832.³¹ He told stories extremely well, but was much prone to digression, and it is no wonder that Macrone thought him in want of an editor. On Ainsworth's departure, nothing was done about Maceroni until July, when Macrone sent the first four sheets of his

²⁷ Ibid., I, 327-8.

²⁸ *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 21, No. 1048 (18 February 1837), 120.

²⁹ *LPPWMT*, I, 328-9.

³⁰ Dale H. Porter, *The Life and Times of Sir Goldsworthy Gurney* (Lehigh, 1998), 118-9.

³¹ His widow, 'a woman of culture and charm', was Meredith's landlady at Weybridge between 1849 and 1853 (Siegfried Sassoon, *Meredith* (Constable, 1948), 9-10).

memoirs to Thackeray, who might be relied on to judge whether the book was publishable. ‘By twisting and turning, by suppressing 20 pages or near, and rewriting some part of the remainder I think we can make something of it’, Thackeray answered on 26 July. ‘There seems to be *stuff* in the book, and I think that if the adventures in the rest of the volume are so interesting as you describe them to be, we might make a fierce, strange, interesting book – wild and Robinson-Crusoe like: but you should have Maceroni’s assent; and give me only his adventures, d – his language, and his reflections moral religious and scientifick [...] I have a notion that I could make a very fine book of it: and some hundred pounds too, – for you will give me a share in the plunder’.³² Macrone’s last illness, which, as we shall see, would fall on him within a month of Thackeray’s letter, probably prevented him from taking up this offer, since the version of Maceroni’s *Memoirs* which finally appeared under his imprint in May 1838³³ has all the faults which Thackeray reprehended. One passage, however, which, it is but fair to observe, is not in the Colonel’s happiest vein, indicates that Macrone was not always defeated by Maceroni’s discursiveness: ‘The beautiful picturesque scenery of the country [Corsica] through which I passed; the abrupt confused stupendous piles of granite mountains thrown, as it were, one above the other, and covered from base to summit with stately chesnuts, oaks, and pines, but above all, the sturdy independent character of the romantic-looking and romantically-inspired natives; hospitable in the extreme, and implacable in their enmities, but brave and open-hearted. These themes would form the subject of an interesting digression, especially if conjoined to the geological and social novelties that I culled upon my way. But such matters I am prohibited from entering upon; inasmuch, as the arts and sciences, – the treating of the phenomena of nature, which I have, with so much assiduity and delight, treasured up in my mind, are, they say, *now* held by “the

³² LPPWMT, I, 344-5.

³³ *The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 22, No. 1114 (26 May 1838), 336.

reading public,” as tiresome interruptions to the “story” of mortal strife, battles, blood, and civil turmoil! I must, therefore, submit, and wave [*sic*] much that I had intended to depict of the chesnut crops *vice* potatoes, which distinguishes the main resource of the Corsican poor labourer from his social counterpart of Ireland; – of the interesting sight to a geologist, of granite rocks merging into the constituents of basaltic lavas filled with lucits [*sic*]. Of granites, by clear gradations, becoming *Cipolinas*. Of the most palpable demonstrations of the identity of granite with igneous lavas, in which latter, upon cooling, crystals of feldspar are produced, although a *substance* which *subsequent* incandescent heat calcines and obliterates. All these things, and many more, which *I* think might be very acceptable to a portion of my readers, *I must eschew*'.³⁴

Macrone's last prize was Thomas Moore, who, on 31 July 1836, received a letter from E. H. Moran, the editor of the *Globe*, ‘containing a proposal of a plan from Macrone to publish a new Edition of all my work’ for £1000, ‘Turner to embellish the volumes with his best style of illustrations, going, if necessary, to Ireland for the purpose’;³⁵ but, as Moore wrote to Moran on the same day, the Longmans, who had published all his major work since 1817, apart from his edition of Byron, ‘have been for some time thinking of the plan which M^r Macrone proposes’,³⁶ and Moore learned from their partner Owen Rees, on 3 August, that although ‘they had never lost sight of the projected edition of my works, the fact was that they *had* set it aside, and that but for this proposition of Macrone's, it would have been allowed still to slumber on’.³⁷ He was therefore obliged to turn down Macrone's offer, but assured him in writing that ‘he had had a lucky escape in being saved the enormous difficulty

³⁴ *Memoirs of the Life and Adventures of Colonel Maceroni*, 2 vols (Macrone, 1838), II, 294-5.

³⁵ *JTM*, 5, 1811.

³⁶ *The Letters of Thomas Moore*, edited by Wilfred S. Dowden, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964), II, 1088.

³⁷ *JTM*, 5, 1812.

& expence he would have had to encounter in getting possession of all the copy-rights'.³⁸ Macrone, however, was determined to have Moore on his list, and made a new proposal, namely, that he should reprint Moore's novel, *The Epicurean*, in a bijou edition with engravings by Turner. The Longmans, this time, were amenable to reason, and, after some hesitation, advised Moore to see how much Macrone would be willing to pay. Moore accordingly went to see him on 16 October, 'and, judging from the Longmans' letter, that I might now give him reason to expect I would come to an agreement with him, *did* so. We then came to the important point of the sum he would give me for the edition', he wrote in his diary afterward, 'and after some very courteous parleying, during which he pressed me to name a sum, and I professed my inability to do so from my total ignorance as to what the speculation might be worth to him, he said at last, "Should you think £500 sufficient?" to which I answered laughing "most abundantly so – and I only marvel at your courage in risking so much." The fact is, £300 was the utmost I had raised my own expectations to. On this we parted'.³⁹ After a correspondence, now lost, 'on the subject of our proposed agreement', Moore invited his prospective publisher to spend a weekend with him at Sloperton, where Macrone arrived on the evening of 28 November. In his journal entry for the next day, Moore 'found our visitor a very agreeable, clever, dashing young fellow, knowing a great deal of the general literature of the day, and having seen and known something of most of the eminent men of the time, particularly his own countrymen viz. Sir Walter Scott, Jeffry [sic], Hogg &c. – His knowledge of Scott's life & habits chiefly derived from his intimacy with Laidlaw [...] Was delighted to learn from Macrone that Laidlaw said he never saw Scott so pleased or happy with any visitor as he was during the few days I passed at Abbotsford'. Alas, when Moore and Macrone fell to talking business, 'a difficulty

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *JTM*, 5, 1831.

arose which to a great degree “took the shine out of” his first gallant proposal to me. He had, on more closely considering the matter found that the Epicurean was a work of much smaller compass than he had at first imagined, and that it would not therefore make a book large enough to warrant the outlay he originally intended [...] At last, on considering the matter and taking into account the *great* convenience that a few hundred pounds would be to me just now I made up my mind to suggest (for he left the whole decision of the matter very handsomely to myself) that, if he thought he could make any thing of the Epicurean by itself, he must only reduce his payment to me, in proportion, and make it £300 instead of £500 – This he most joyfully jumped at, and our agreement was so arranged’, and Macrone returned to London on 31 November with a contract for *The Epicurean* in his pocket. His weekend had been a great success. ‘Worked as much as I could well manage’, Moore wrote on 30 November, much as Hogg had done four years earlier,⁴⁰ ‘with so active and enthusiastic a visitor in the house [...] Besides his other accomplishments Macrone draws well and has been employing himself in taking a likeness of Tom⁴¹ for his Mamma’.⁴²

Five months went by before Macrone’s next appearance in Moore’s journal. Moore had ‘written to him to say that in looking over the MS. of my first sketch of the Epicurean (which was originally intended to be in verse) it occurred to me that we might subjoin this poetical fragment to his Edition, so as to increase the size of the Volume. Had brought up the MS. with me & gave it to him to-day’ [22 April 1837] ‘to read. He wished me to name the sum I required for it but this I declined or at least deferred doing’. By the time that Moore sat down to breakfast with Macrone on 25 April, he ‘had made up my mind not to name any price for the additional “matter,” and it was lucky for myself that I did, as what he offered

⁴⁰ See above: page 4, footnote 17.

⁴¹ This was Moore’s eldest son Thomas, eighteen at the time of Macrone’s visit.

⁴² *JTM*, 5, 1832-3.

(£200) was, to say the truth, about twice as much as I should have had the face to ask for it'.

He also wanted Moore to sit to Macrile for his portrait, ‘this new “monstrum horrendum informe”⁴³ (as it is sure to be) being intended to form one of the ornaments of the new splendid edition of the Epicurean’;⁴⁴ but although Moore obliged him on 28 and 29 April, no portrait seems to have been produced. In town again on 9 June, Moore ‘had Macrone to breakfast who was full of ecstacy at the Letter of the High Priest,⁴⁵ which I had sent him up, but does not intend, unless the aspect of the money market improves very considerably, to proceed any further with his Edition of the Epicurean for some time’.⁴⁶ There followed a rather uncomfortable interview on 4 August. ‘Breakfasted at home – note from Macrone – called upon him in consequence’, Moore wrote in his journal, ‘and found him preparing to start for Scotland, whither he has been ordered, for change of air – his state of health evidently perilous, and no less so, I fear, his circumstances’. It transpired that Macrone had raised Moore’s £500 by going halves with the engraver Edward Goodall, who, ‘taking fright at it latterly, wanted to be off his agreement – but that Macrone would not hear of. – A proposal was then made by the publisher (Sherwood & Co I think) to take the whole of the concern off Macrone’s hands, and this he appeared to me disposed to accept – Said to me however, that it was his intention in making his estimate to give in £750 as the sum he had paid to me for the copyright. This I told him he might do, if he thought right, so that *I* had no share in the transaction. He then explained, that his object was not to let *them* have the advantage of the cheap turns upon which he had become possessed of the copyright of the

⁴³ *Aeneid* III. 658: ‘frightful, shapeless monster’.

⁴⁴ *JTM*, 5, 1861-2.

⁴⁵ The editors of *JTM* mistakenly print ‘Letters’. Moore is referring to ‘From Orcus, High Priest of Memphis, to Decius, the Praetorian Prefect’, which he had appended to ‘Alciphron’, the ‘first sketch of the Epicurean’ printed in Macrone’s edition of the novel.

⁴⁶ *JTM*, 5, 1870.

edition, but to let the additional £250 he might thus get from them go into *my* pocket. To this I, of course, decidedly objected, as far as I myself was concerned, and (if I did not misunderstand him) am certainly by no means disposed to think the better of his trading morality for this very *naïve* proposition. – But, so it is – the ethics of the *shop* are all of the same stamp'.⁴⁷ In the event, Macrone did not sell *The Epicurean* to Sherwood, and it appeared under his imprint on 1 November 1839.⁴⁸ 'I saw poor Macrone the day of his departure', Moore wrote to Moran on 16 August 1837, 'and was grieved to find so much cause for *real* alarm in the state of his health';⁴⁹ nor did his observation delude him, for on 9 September, little more than a month after their last meeting, Macrone was dead, at the age of twenty-eight. From first to last, he had moved in Scottish and English literary circles for barely half a dozen years.

Macrone's business was inherited by one Hugh Cunningham, probably a relative of Allan's, who had been a witness to the sale of *Sketches by Boz* in June.⁵⁰ 'Ainsworth and I are attempting to get up a one volume collection of original fragments for the benefit of Macrone's (the publisher's) widow', Dickens wrote to Talfourd on 12 February 1838, 'who is left utterly destitute with two helpless infant children. With this view we are writing to all those for whom he published, seeking their assistance as contributors'.⁵¹ A contract between Dickens and Colburn was drawn up and signed on 10 August, in which Dickens undertook to provide Colburn with enough material for three volumes, post octavo, in time for publication by 30 November, 'the exact period of the publication to be left to the discretion of the said

⁴⁷ *JTM*, 5, 1901-2.

⁴⁸ 'On the 1st of November will be published [...] a new edition of The Epicurean' (*The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 23, No. 1187 (19 October 1839), 670).

⁴⁹ *LTM*, II, 1105.

⁵⁰ Sutherland, 256.

⁵¹ *LCD*, 1, 371.

Henry Colburn'.⁵² In light of Mrs Macrone's desperate situation, it is initially surprising to learn that *The Pic Nic Papers*, as the miscellany was eventually called, only appeared in 1841; but when it is remembered that Hugh Cunningham continued publishing books under Macrone's imprint through 1840, and that at least two of them, *The Epicurean* and *The Paris Sketch Book*, had been commissioned by Macrone himself, one may hazard a guess that some arrangement was made, by which Adeline Macrone had a share in the profits of her husband's business, for as long as those profits were derived from her husband's individual enterprise. *The Pic Nic Papers*, which included stories by Ainsworth, Moore, and Cunningham, and Dickens's own 'Lamplighter's Story', earned £450 for Mrs Macrone,⁵³ who thereupon vanished into private life; and so the story of John Macrone came to an end.

⁵² LCD, 1, 665.

⁵³ LCD, 1, 94.

The Manuscript

Hitherto, all writers on Macrone appear to have tacitly taken it for granted that his life of Scott was unwritten or lost. In the autumn of 2005, however, while engaged in research for a thesis on Galt's uncollected and unpublished writings, I found, in the Galt collection at the University of Guelph in Ontario, a file containing 131 sheets and scraps of paper, described in the catalogue as an 'unpublished manuscript concerning the life of Sir Walter Scott assumed to be written by J. Galt, 1837', with 'John McCrone' listed as a 'related name'.¹ This manuscript was plainly not in Galt's handwriting, and it was the work of a moment to identify it as the biography mentioned by Douglas Mack in his essay on Hogg's *Anecdotes of Scott*. Remembering that Mack had not said whether the book in question had been preserved, let alone published, I had the manuscript photographed, and set about its transcription, acquainting myself, meanwhile, with Macrone's character and background. In the brief space of time during which I was able to examine the manuscript itself, having subsequently been obliged to work from photographs, I could not detect any watermarks by which it might be dated; but a comparison with the Yale collection of Macrone's letters to Brydges indicates that it is entirely in his handwriting, and all internal evidence, notably the footnote in which Macrone refers to the death of John Aitken on 15 February 1833 (92), is consistent with its having been written before Lockhart's tirade against Hogg resulted in the cancellation of the whole project in March.

Macrone's biography may have survived because a bookseller found the notes of his interview with Galt, here printed in Appendix V, and salvaged all the papers in the same cabinet, as it were, on the grounds that they, too, might have some connection with Galt and

¹ MS. Guelph, XR1 MS A277053.

could be sold to one of his admirers; whatever the truth of this conjecture, the history of Macrone's manuscript, as far as we know it, begins late in the nineteenth century or early in the twentieth, when it was bought by another John Galt, the second son of the novelist's third son Alexander. On the death of this younger John Galt in 1933, his widow Mabel gave it to her sisters-in-law, Selina and Muriel Galt, who, in turn, gave it to their sister Annie's husband, the unofficial family archivist William Harvey Smith, at the beginning of August 1937.² When Smith died in 1940, it came into the hands of his children, Henry and Muriel, who gave it to Hamilton Baird Timothy, editor of Galt's poems and author of *The Galts: A Canadian Odyssey*, who sold it to the University of Guelph in 1989. His interest in Macrone's work appears to have been confined to the aforementioned interview with Galt, which he transcribed and published in 1972;³ the note which he appended to 'Galt on Scott' suggests that he did not trouble to decipher the rest of the manuscript, probably because he must have instantly recognised it as having been written by someone other than Galt.

While most of Macrone's anecdotes and analyses are complete in themselves, implying that he was probably the sort of writer who works on chapters, or even paragraphs, in isolation, fitting them together into a coherent narrative when each has been satisfactorily polished, his book, in its present condition, is fragmentary and chaotic, not least because, apart from writing 'Preface' and 'The End' in the proper places, Macrone did not indicate how it was to have been arranged. Occasionally, indeed, he headed a passage with 'This to go on page 42' or the like, which indicates that he had transcribed at least part of his text in a fair copy; but since this copy does not appear to have survived, such notes are of little use in establishing the form in which he intended his *Life* to be published. The order in which the fragments are here printed, therefore, is of my own invention, as are the titles and sub-

² Smith describes himself as 'having just received the manuscripts' in the note on their provenance, written on 9 August 1937 (MS. Guelph), from which the preceding details are derived.

³ Hamilton B. Timothy, 'Galt on Scott', *Library Review*, Vol. 23 (1972), No. 8, 323-5.

headings of the chapters into which, for ease of reference, I have divided the resulting text. It must also be remembered that, like most writers in the early nineteenth century, Macrone was careless about punctuation, on the understanding that his multitude of dashes and occasional want of full-stops would be corrected by the printer. A literal reproduction of his manuscript would serve no purpose but pedantry, and I have accordingly re-punctuated it from start to finish, making no attempt, however, to imitate the style of punctuation typical of the 1830s, such a course being likely to give the impression that Macrone had left his book in a more finished state than that in which it has been preserved. I have also expanded his abbreviations, replacing, for example, ‘Sir W.’ with ‘Sir Walter’, and silently incorporated his corrections into the text. Otherwise, I have altered nothing, except in one instance, where a slip of the pen was too palpable to be overlooked.⁴ Paragraphs truncated by the loss of preceding pages are set flush left, and unfinished sentences are printed as they stand. In the footnotes – all of which are mine, except where otherwise indicated – I have sought to identify as many of Macrone’s quotations and literary references as I could recognise, and to record the phrases and passages which he revised or deleted, when such alterations were of greater significance than, for example, the replacement of ‘discern’ with ‘perceive’. Macrone wrote draughts of two prefaces to his book, one complete and titled ‘Preface’, the other incomplete and untitled, each wholly different from the other. I chose to print the first preface as part of the main text, and relegated the second to Appendix II, since, in its present form, it could not have been intended for publication.

⁴ In his account of Scott’s life at Abbotsford, Macrone expressed the opinion that ‘there are only two artists who have caught the perfect expression of his ever-varying countenance. I refer to Raeburn’s well-known full-length portrait, the original of which is in the Duke of Buccleuch’s collection [...] The other is Chantrey’s bust, which is too well-known to be described by me’ (116-7). While at work on this passage, he inserted ‘first’ into the second sentence, by means of a caret between ‘Raeburn’s’ and ‘well-known’. It is clear, however, that ‘first’ applies to the order in which Macrone mentioned Raeburn’s portrait and Chantrey’s bust, rather than to the portrait itself. I therefore amended the sentence to ‘I refer to Raeburn’s well-known full-length portrait, first’, which, though inelegant, is as close to what Macrone wrote as can be reconciled with what he meant.

There are a number of anecdotes in Macrone's book which I do not recall having seen in other contemporary accounts of Scott, such as Hogg's disconcerting exchange with Lady Scott (140), and Macrone's own glimpse of his idol's last departure for Abbotsford (151-2); nor are his comments on Scott's poems and novels without interest, as when he unexpectedly declares a preference for *The Talisman* over the works for which its author is best remembered (106). His research, in the five months or so which elapsed between the death of Scott and the suppression of the *Life*, was remarkably thorough. His printed sources included Scott's prefaces and annotations in the *Magnum* edition of the Waverley Novels, the biographical studies of Scott by Cunningham and Chambers, published on 6 October 1832 in *The Athenaeum* and *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* respectively, and William Weir's unfinished life of Scott, the first number of which had been published by 4 December 1832.⁵ He had also interviewed Campbell, Galt, Anne Grant of Laggan, Hogg, Laidlaw, John Martin, and Scott's manservant Nicolson, and obtained written testimony from Brydges, David Constable, Sir Andrew Halliday, Thomas Heaphy, Hogg, and a man who had known Scott as a schoolboy in Edinburgh. Macrone's own writing, though marred by elegant variation, is vigorous and efficient; lines from Shakespeare, Burns, and Byron, to say nothing of Scott himself, come readily to his pen, and he rushes at narrative and criticism with equal exuberance. The chief merit of his book, however, is that it allows us to consider Hogg's *Anecdotes*, for the first time, in their original context. Macrone, as we know from the fragment here printed in Appendix IV, was aware that the *Anecdotes* often verged on, and sometimes embodied, what the spirit of the age would have defined as indecent; yet the unequivocal sympathy with which he testified to Hogg's 'manly spirit of candour' need not be wholly attributed to his natural desire to seize the attention of critics and readers. 'It has been the fashion', he wrote, 'to portray the immortal Author of *Waverley* as a perfect being,

⁵ Kenneth Cameron, 'Weir of the *News*: yesterday's mediaman', *Library Review*, Vol. 26 (1977), No. 1, 31, 37.

untainted by any weakness or frailty. The exuberant praises of his admirers do more to weaken the faith of his real friends as to their truth, than the collected attacks of a thousand miscellaneous enemies [...] The impression which, it will be seen, [Hogg's] unsophisticated narrative leaves upon the mind of the reader, is renewed admiration of the wonderful being on whose private character he has been employed, not the sickly feeling of satiety with which we rise from the contemplation of an individual on whose character the biographer has exhausted the language of encomium and fulsome flattery' (168). Macrone's good sense, never shown to more advantage than in this view of Hogg's unconventional memoir, together with the amount of little-known and valuable material which he elicited from his literary connections, might well have resulted in a biography worth reading for its own sake, not merely as a source of dates and details; but even as it stands, this first edition of his one book ought to earn him a measure of the fame which eluded him in the spring of 1833.

THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT**JOHN MACRONE**

PREFACE

The author presents himself at the bar of public opinion with fear and trembling,¹ and an overwhelming consciousness of his own inability to do justice to the task he has allotted to himself. He is well aware of the many qualifications required to be brought forward in a compilation of this description, and, once for all, he tells the critical reader that if he expects to find in the succeeding pages the cunning of the master workman displayed by the tyro, he will be sadly mistaken; but one thing he can promise to those whose partiality for the author may tempt them to favor him with a fair hearing, and that is *sincerity*, and an ardent love for the character and attributes of that great and good man whose name has shed a lustre on British literature, equalled only by Shakespeare himself.

He cannot either boast of a personal acquaintance with the illustrious dead; but this, in his opinion, will go far to make his remarks on his character more important than those which might be expected from one who has had the honor of sitting at his board, and listening to his bland accents of wisdom, truth and genius. Such a biographer (and who could blame him?) would be apt to be carried away by his enthusiasm, and forget the duties of the historian in his love and veneration as a man.

The author has, however, the enviable privilege of being very intimate with those who shared the friendship and esteem of the Author of *Waverley*, and from these valued sources he is enabled to present many interesting traits and anecdotes, strongly illustrative of the *Man*, and all tinged with that naïveté which germinated his glorious fiction. He regrets, however, that he is compelled, in many instances, from obvious motives, to withhold the names of his authorities; but their value cannot be much lowered thereby, and thousands can vouch their authenticity: a *vraisemblance* which, in fact, they bear stamped upon them.

¹ ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling’ (Philippians 2. 12).

To these valuable auxiliaries the author begs to return his most grateful thanks; without their esteemed advice and assistance the work would probably have never been dreamed of, and should he, in his first biographical effort, prove unsuccessful, he will be more than consoled by the proud consciousness that his humble productions have been encouraged and praised by the first names in the world of literature.

Such as it is, then, he commits it to the world.

It was evidently Macrone's intention to end his preface here; but after the dispute with Lockhart, he turned the page upside-down and wrote a new paragraph in a hastier hand.

I feel perfectly aware of the difficulties I have been under in a task where my means of information are so limited, but I will yield to none in &^c and I [*illegible*] no prerogatives in thus adding another stone to that rapidly-accumulating cairn of information regarding the illustrious deceased; far less do I acknowledge that my humble wall will ever interfere with those more legitimate memoirs which the public has a right to expect, and which are expected from a talented member of the great bard's own family. Having said thus much, I commit the following pages, my virgin efforts, to the approval of a kind public.

JMC

CHAPTER I

MACRONE AT ABBOTSFORD AND INNERLEITHEN IN 1832

**A Prospect of Abbotsford – The Old Shepherd at Blackhouse – Mrs Grant of Laggan –
Her Elegy for Scott**

It was in the afternoon¹ of a beautiful autumn day that I found myself trudging on my way from Altrive Lake on a pilgrimage to Abbotsford and the poet's tomb. I had walked scarcely three miles beyond Selkirk, when I found myself gradually getting into a richer and better-cultivated tract of country than that which I had just quitted, though less pastoral in its character; a lordly river winded through the vale, among richly wooded hills and fertile holm lands. It was the Tweed. I involuntarily stopped, for my footstep was new on that classic ground, whose each ‘babbling brook’ had its separate tale, and each mountain is rendered immortal by the pen of the Grey Wizard. Pursuing my musing course, I suddenly came in view of Abbotsford itself, with its grey towers sleeping in the setting sun. Again my footsteps were arrested, and as I gazed on the quaint Elizabethan pile, the offspring of his vivid and romantic imagination, with its proud appurtenances and castellated battlements, its fertile gardens and lofty trees, I could not believe that at no very distant period of time this fairy land was – to use the words of a talented American writer,² from whom I shall have to quote repeatedly in the course of this work – ‘the most unlovely spot in this part of the world: a mean farm house stood on part of the site of the present edifice; a *kaleyard* bloomed where the stately embattled courtyard now spreads itself, and for many thousand acres of flourishing plantations, half of which have all the appearance of being twice as old as they really are,

¹ Macrone originally wrote ‘evening’ for ‘afternoon’.

² *Macrone’s footnote:* An anonymous contributor to “The Anniversary” for 1829, an elegant annual edited by my friend Allan Cunningham, Esq.

there was but a single long straggling stripe of unthriving firs [...] It is difficult to form a more complete contrast to the Abbotsford of 1825'.³ I viewed the same scene when seven more years had done their thrifty duty upon the beautiful woodland scenery, and I sighed as I thought on the probability of this beautiful creation passing away for ever from the possession of the race of the bard. Let us hope, however, for the honour of the nation whom he delighted, that this fair situation which he earned, and these trees which he planted and watched over with proud satisfaction, will be given by a grateful nation to the offspring of her chiefest bard, a small return for the countless boon [*sic*] he has bestowed on her literary fame, and the fresh wreath of undying laurel he has bound on the brows of green Albion.

*

In the course of a tour through part of Scotland in the autumn of last year, I had the pleasure of spending a few days at Abbotsford, in the house of the poet's late, talented amanuensis, Mr Laidlaw, to whom I was introduced by my excellent friend, the Ettrick Shepherd. I had been on a pretty long visit at the house of the latter in the wilds of Ettrick, and had considerably outstayed the time I had fixed on to return to town; it was my first incursion into that part of the country, and the recent death of Sir Walter Scott made his name and fame almost the only topics of conversation at every table. During my sojourn, I had an ample opportunity of marking, in the conversations of even the meanest peasants, that a great light had departed from amongst them. Each seemed to me – and the feeling was

³ Macrone is quoting from 'Abbotsford described, by a distinguished American', *The Anniversary: or, Poetry and Prose for MDCCCXXIX* (John Sharpe, 1829), 81-100. The passage in question will be found on page 83, and has been somewhat altered. Originally, it formed part of a speech by an unnamed friend of the American's, and began: 'Some fifteen or sixteen years ago, he tells me, there was not a more unlovely spot, in this part of the world, than that on which Abbotsford now exhibits all its quaint architecture and beautiful accompaniment of garden and woodland. A mean farm house', and so on as above, except that Macrone wrote 'form' for 'imagine'.

inexpressibly delightful – each seemed to mourn as if he had lost a member of his own family, as if the bereavement had left an empty space at his own *ingleside*. I shall endeavour to relate one conversation which strongly impressed itself on my mind at the time, as expressive of the almost patriarchal reverence with which ‘The Shirra’ was regarded in the country.

One day, in the course of a fishing excursion, Mr Hogg and myself arrived at a farm named Blackhouse, where he had lived for a great many years while a shepherd lad, and which he had since immortalised in his *Winter Evening Tales* as the scene of a tremendous snowstorm.⁴ We had had little sport, and, as a *dernier resort*, we made our way to the house in question, where, *entre nous*, they sell a ‘cannie gill’. It was during the important season of *smearing* (tarring) the sheep, and I, being curious to observe the process, stole out to the *smearing pen*. I found there an exceedingly intellectual old shepherd, busily employed in this disgusting duty, with whom I was soon deeply engaged in an animated discussion on politics, and [illegible], and other learned topics. He was as enthusiastic in his admiration of Scott as I myself, and to his merits we went, tooth and nail. I was amazed at his knowledge of ‘The Shirra’s works, and I blush to say that he often corrected me in my remarks, with great justice and discrimination. I well remember his concluding observation, which I shall try to give *verbatim et literatim*: ‘Aye, aye, sir, it’s e’en as ye say. The Shirra’s works are a wonderful help to us hinds; I wadna ken what to do, mony a lang summer day, an it wanna for thae novells an’ Maister Hogg’s daft sangs. Od, sir, I’se warran I hae read the hale o’

⁴ *Macrone’s footnote*: A word, en passant, regarding this tale, which forms part of *The Shepherd’s Calendar* in the collection. When the Ettrick Shepherd was in town last year, I had the honor of dining with him in the company of Mr Lockhart, Sir Richard Vyvyan, Galt, M. T. Sadler, M. P., and other of the eminent litterateurs of the day [*sic*]. In such a company, the conversation was, of course, instructive in the highest degree, and I was a delighted and edified listener. I particularly remember Mr Sadler’s opinion of Mr Hogg’s story of the snowstorm, which he characterised as one of the most splendid specimens of English descriptive prose he had ever read, and took the opportunity of complimenting the Shepherd very flatteringly on the subject. I, to whom Hogg’s fame has always been dear, most cordially subscribed to the truth of the remark. [The story to which Macrone refers will be found in *Winter Evening Tales*, edited by Ian Duncan (Edinburgh, 2002), 376-82.]

them mair nor ane or twa times'. Let the reader imagine this speech from a poor labouring man – one who had, doubtless, to send for, and pay dear for, the privilege of reading the Waverley Novels – and this may be taken as one instance in a hundred similar [*sic*] which I have heard from the peasantry of the south of Scotland.

What a mind must that man have had, who could thus claim the attention, the undivided attention, of the humblest of his countrymen! what a Shakespeare-like perception of human nature, who could delight all ranks from the potentate on his throne to the lone shepherd on his mountain! and what a lesson to that potentate upon the folly and nothingness of human grandeur unaided by genius! I looked with respect upon my humble, unlettered countryman, and set him down as one whom the God of Nature had honoured far more in the expansion of his mind than he had honoured the belted earl with the possession of broad lands. But I wander from the current of my remarks – I will not say story – for like the knife-grinder in Canning's [*blank in manuscript*]⁵

'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir'.

I may here, however, mention another tribute of respect from a very different quarter, which, as it occurred previous to my visit to Abbotsford, prepared me to expect many similar ebullitions of feeling upon the bereavement the country had experienced. While with Mr Hogg, I was invited to accompany him to the Innerleithen annual meeting of the Border archers, of which he is a conspicuous member. We agreed, as the distance was but trifling from Altrive Lake, to take our guns and spend the day in shooting across the hills which divide the Vale of Ettrick from that of Tweed. We reached Innerleithen late in the afternoon

⁵ George Canning and John Hookham Frere, 'The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-grinder', in *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, edited by L. Rice-Oxley (Oxford, 1924), 8-9.

(with *light bags*, by the way), and while enjoying our first meal with sportsman-like appetite, I learned that the celebrated and venerable Mrs Grant of Laggan was in the village, whither she had recently arrived for the benefit of the waters; and next morning, we were surprised with a very kind note from that lady, inviting us to breakfast: an invitation which we gladly accepted, particularly myself, for I was anxious to see the personage whom fame had honoured by naming as the Authoress of *Waverley*. We found a most venerable, lady-like old person, slightly bent with age and lame from the effects of a severe fall she had recently had while descending the stair. I have scarcely ever met with an individual who has a more complete and graceful command of language than Mrs Grant. She dwelt with peculiar delight on the universal idol Scott, and the tears ran fast from her eyes when she mentioned his various acts of disinterested kindness shewn to her on every occasion. It was truly affecting to be witness to this universal homage, and I blessed the good old lady in my heart for her tears. She observed that, being particularly annoyed with the underserved honour a part of the public persisted in paying her, she took the liberty of complaining to the real offender himself upon the subject, and said that, much as she wished to be the enviable, unknown author or authoress, she had more honour than to arrogate that which did not belong to her and took from the fame of another. Sir Walter's reply was characteristic, and I regret that I have not preserved the words as she related them, but they were to the effect that the mere name could not do her any harm, and if the author did not choose to reveal himself, the honour was as much her right as another's, and turned the matter off in his peculiarly felicitous style. At the time of my interview with Mrs Grant, many poetical elegiums on the death of Sir Walter happened to be in the newspapers,⁶ and I inquired of her, as I looked over one, whether the subject had yet employed her pen; but I had inadvertently touched upon a tender chord, and the tears again stood in her eyes, as she told me that she had not been able to muster

⁶ Macrone originally wrote 'the newspapers which lay on the table'.

resolution to write more than a very few lines, which she would have great happiness in sending me. After proper acknowledgements for the obligation, I took my leave of this excellent person, and carried with me a high opinion of her intellect and powers of conversation. On the evening of the same day,⁷ I received the following lines from her, which I have great pleasure in transcribing for the reader, and which, although simple, have at least the merit of being the pure unalloyed feelings of her heart; and they struck me in a particular manner, as I perused them among the very scenes she therein mentions, the scenes which *he* loved well.

Tweed! let thy murmuring waters flow
 In sympathising notes of woe
 While thro' thy green and pastoral dale
 The winds in mournful cadence wail
 Lament, pure stream! thy lover dead
 While Scotland mourns her glory fled!
 Let those who boast poetic fires
 Awake to loftier strains their lyres –
 The spotless mind – the soul sincere –
 The virtues which the good revere
 Demand my frequent silent tear
 While o'er the lowly tomb I bend
 That holds my lov'd and honored friend!⁸

⁷ 23 October 1832, according to the document mentioned in the next footnote.

⁸ These verses are printed as they appear in the manuscript. The Macrone papers at Guelph, however, include another copy, also in Macrone's handwriting, and headed 'Lines on the Death of Sir Walter Scott, presented to JMC. by M^{rs} Grant', which contains the following variants: 'woe, –' for 'woe', 'wail!' for 'wail', 'dead –' for

‘dead’, ‘fire’ for ‘fires’, ‘loftiest’ for ‘loftier’, ‘the lyre’ for ‘their lyres’, ‘frequent –’ for ‘frequent’, ‘tear!’ for ‘tear’, and ‘shrine’ for ‘tomb’.

CHAPTER II**1771-1797**

**Ancestry – Lameness in Infancy – A Schoolboy Acquaintance – Legal Studies and
Romantic Aspirations – Marriage**

The Metropolis of Scotland is fitly honoured in being the birthplace of one of the greatest men who have adorned the pages of her history in ancient or modern times. Sir Walter Scott, the Author of *Waverley*, was born on the fifteenth day of August 1771, the same day which gave birth to Napoleon Buonaparte. A worshipper of coincidences might discern something like fate in this circumstance. It is certainly singular that two men, each destined to rise to the very highest pinnacle of glory in their respective pursuits, should claim the same day of the year as the date which ushered them into a world in which they were doomed to make so much sensation. The historian of the imperial Corsican seemed to have little pleasure in this reminiscence. I am not aware that he has alluded to it in any part of his published autobiography.

His father, Walter Scott, was a highly respectable and respected Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, a man who, without pretensions to literary or scientific acquirement, amassed, by strict attention to business, and much professional ability, a decent fortune, upon which he reared in comfort and independence his large family, consisting of [*blank in manuscript*]¹ sons and daughters, of whom the illustrious subject of my memoir was third. We know little of this amiable and worthy individual, saving what his gifted son has chosen to communicate. It would appear that he looked with an evil eye upon the bias which Walter betrayed for literary pursuits. Himself a strict disciplinarian of the old school, one who deemed every

¹ Twelve.

moment wasted that was not devoted to the duties of his laborious profession, it may be presumed that he looked upon a defalcation from his own tenets with an impatience and dislike which took away much of the reverence with which he would otherwise have been regarded by his progeny. He was besides for many years, says Mr Chambers in his late ingenious and useful memoir, ‘an elder in the parish church of Old Greyfriars’² during the distinguished ministry of Doctors Robertson and Erskine. Another biographer remarks that ‘in his politics he was a Whig, such as Whigs then were, jealous of the superior pretensions of the aristocracy’,³ and, as such, diametrically opposed to those opinions which the poet chose to adopt. For the rest, says the same authority, ‘he was a strict Calvinistic Presbyterian – an honest man, and fond of a sly, quiet joke’.⁴

Of the mother of Sir Walter much more is known, and much has been related by her distinguished son, who seemed to look back upon his maternal tutelage with much pride and affection. She appears to have been versed in all the accomplishments which the seminaries of the North at that time afforded, and although not (as has been asserted) of literary talents herself, yet she was evidently in no small degree familiar with the reading of the day, and doubtless impressed upon the minds of her children the sentiments which she herself entertained. It is probable that young Walter received fewer of those maternal instructions than his brothers and sisters, being sent a very early age [*sic*], on account of the precarious state of his health, to the residence of his grandfather at ‘Sandy Knowe’.

² Robert Chambers, ‘Life of Sir Walter Scott’, *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 36 (6 October 1832), Supplement, 289.

³ This observation, with ‘political sentiments’ for ‘politics’, reprinted in George Allan and William Weir, *Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Thomas Ireland, Junior, 1834), 2, must have appeared in the first number of Weir’s unfinished *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, which, as we have seen (67), was available to Macrone by December 1832.

⁴ ‘[H]e was a strict Calvinistic Presbyterian. He was withal an honest man, and fond of a sly quiet joke’ (Allan and Weir, 2).

He was descended, not remotely, from some of the most conspicuous and honourable names in Scottish history. ‘Sir Walter Scott’, says Mr Cunningham, ‘could claim descent from a long line of martial ancestors. Through his father, whose name he bore, he reckoned kin with those great families who scarcely count the Duke of Buccleuch their head; and through his mother, Elizabeth Rutherford, he was connected with the warlike family of Swinton of Swinton, long known in the Scottish wars’.⁵ It matters, however, very little for the fame of the poet that his fathers were – to quote from the inscription round the stately walls of the Abbotsford armoury – ‘*Menne of name quha keepit the Scottish Marches in y^e days of auld – worthie in thair tyme – and in thair defens – God thaim defendit*’. It may certainly be pleasing to the high-born descendants of English and Scotch chivalry to boast that the greatest poets of modern times – Byron and Scott – were of their own ‘order’. It may be a gratification to his children, and I have good reason to believe that he was himself more proud of the distinction than of having been the creator of the Waverley Novels; but it matters very little to those who are accustomed to consider genius as essentially heaven-born, and to revere its glorious attributes, whether displayed in the prince or peasant. The ducal family of Buccleuch will be prouder of boasting through future generations that Scott belonged to their house, than his fame will ever be enhanced by the chance circumstance of his distant connection with nobility.

Nevertheless, this is a besetting weakness which belonged not alone to Scott, but to many other eminently gifted men. ‘Byron’, says his talented biographer Mr Moore, ‘was prouder of being a descendant of those Byrons of Normandy who accompanied William the Conqueror into England, than of having been the author of *Childe Harold* and *Manfred*'.⁶

⁵ Allan Cunningham, ‘Some Account of the Life and Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.’, *The Athenaeum*, No. 258 (6 October 1832), 641.

⁶ Thomas Moore, *Notices of the Life of Lord Byron* (Murray, 1873), 1.

Pope deemed that even his connection by marriage with a noble house would dignify and exalt his name above the contemned gifts of literature, but his high-born bride saw his weakness and despised him accordingly. So highly coveted is distinguished birth. Scott might safely have challenged a nobler reputation.

Without, therefore, entering minutely upon the genealogical tree of Scott, it is more pleasing to record that he was nearly related to names deservedly high in the roll of Scottish genius. His maternal grandfather, Dr John Rutherford, filled the honourable office of Professor of Physic in the Edinburgh university for nearly forty years, and left behind him a name only inferior to his immediate and celebrated successor, Dr Gregory. His son filled the Botanic Chair in the same college, and rivalled, if not exceeded, his father's fame in many useful and important discoveries. It was through the mother of this learned professor that the subject of my memoir was connected with the chivalrous family of Swinton, a name which he has immortalised in the drama of *Halidon Hill*. I have heard also that he was related to Dr Robertson, the renowned historian of America and Charles the Fifth.

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In his second year, while he gave every promise of being a strong and healthful child, he was deprived of the use of his right limb, whether by accident or disease, has not been ascertained. He does not seem fond of alluding to the circumstance directly himself, although no one possessed less sensitiveness to the defect in his appearance, and biographers differ in assigning causes for the malformation. By some it is stated that it was the result of accident, occasioned by a careless nurse letting her young charge

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reverse exhibited in the deportment of Scott. That which excited in the former a jealous and often savage spirit of discontent, had quite the opposite effect on the mind of his equally talented but better dispositioned friend. He would often jest on the subject with all the good nature in the world. ‘What you are pleased to observe regarding the comparative merits of Lord Byron and myself is, no doubt, very flattering’, observes he in a letter filled with pleasantry to a friend, who had been complimenting him upon the extraordinary success of the rival bards. ‘To have completed your picture, you ought, however, to have recorded that we are both *lamiters*, and that, too, of the same foot, which, no doubt, is a special indication of genius’.⁷ His happy disposition to make light of that which is usually a source of vexation to the afflicted, shows ‘his heart was in the right place’, and that he seemed above the petty consideration of the mere outward defect; thus ‘in the tiniest trifles’, says an acute writer, ‘the mind is best displayed’.⁸

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Another valued correspondent in Edinburgh, who was one of Scott’s classmates in the High School, writes thus of those early days: ‘When first I saw young Walter Scott, he appeared to me a poor, weak, sickly boy, timid and retiring, shy with his fellows and fond of retirement: by retirement I mean that he shunned participating in our horseplay. This disposition, if I remember aright, procured him for a time the name of ‘Missey Scott’, but a short time wrought a wonderful alteration in his character. As he acquired confidence, he became one of the most stirring boys in the class, loud, boisterous, and roistering, and, even

⁷ This letter has not been traced.

⁸ This quotation has not been traced.

at that early age, had a sly gravity about him that invariably, when telling his stories – for he was, as he confessed, an early romancer – threw his fellows into a paroxysm of delight. Many an excursion have I made with him in the calm Saturday evenings to the summit of Arthur's Seat, and, enjoying the seaward breeze, would watch the London vessels clearing out and up Leith Harbour, and wish ourselves aboard, that we might visit that wonderful place we had read so much of. I cannot', continues my respected correspondent, 'give you anything more interesting regarding this extraordinary man. I certainly could discover nothing in the conduct of the boy as prophetic of his future excellence. He was, it is true, occasionally absent and dull: characteristics which our boyish ideas set down to the score of stupidity. Time flew on, and we separated with mutual regret, to pursue our unequal walks of life; and I never saw my schoolfellow till on my return from distant climes, and the name of Walter Scott was bruited far and wide as the author of *Marmion* and of *The Minstrelsy*. Our occasional intercourse was afterwards much interrupted. I do not think I can add aught to these recollections of half a century'.⁹

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During this early period, while buried in body among dusky and dry folios, pondering with vacant mind over long-forgotten acts and institutes, conning obsolete and quaint offerings to the shrine of Themis, it may be presumed that his mind would insensibly wander from his task and carry him in fancy to the days of the barbarous and feudal laws which he was studying. It pictured to him, doubtless, the jealously-warded keep, the dark, noisome donjon, and the life of the poor victim to feudal usages. It would show forth to him, 'as in a

⁹ Macrone's 'respected correspondent' has not been identified.

glass darkly',¹⁰ a moving panorama of the strange and unnatural state of society when the strong were against the weak, and men looked on and were silent spectators of the most foul oppression enacted in the outraged house of justice. Thus were rich materials insensibly forming in his brain, which, sifted and purified by years and experience, afterward burst upon the admiring world in the refined gold of his narrative.

Occasionally, too, would other cogitations diversify his musings. I have seen many of his earlier law-papers covered with sketches of towers and Gothic buttresses, visions of

‘that mountain tower

Which charmed his fancy’s wakening hour’.¹¹

Was he dreaming of his future Abbotsford – his own loved creation? What would the world *not* give for a real epitome of the musings which actuated the early ambitions of a poet! But his own modesty has drawn a veil over everything that to his sensitive mind might seem to savour of personal vanity, and we are deprived of that which would teach ambition how to comfort herself when she has attained even the loftiest elevation which fame allots to her successful worshippers.

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¹⁰ ‘For now we see through a glass, darkly’ (*I Corinthians* 13. 12).

¹¹ ‘Then rise those crags, that mountain tower / Which charmed my fancy’s wakening hour’ (*Marmion*, Introduction to Canto Third, 158-9, in *The Complete Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by Horace E. Scudder (Houghton Mifflin, 1900), 108).

– ‘Thy glorious parts
Ill suited law’s dry, musty arts’

– Burns¹²

After having passed the ordeal of public official examinations, composed his thesis ‘De Cadaveribus Damnatorum’, and addressed the whole court from the bench in an introductory Latin speech, Walter Scott, Esq., was formally admitted, upon the tenth of July, 1792, one of the worshipful and learned fraternity of advocates, and, enviable distinction, was privileged to annex ‘W. S.’ to his name. This was, I believe, a rank but rarely conferred upon so young a probationer, he having wanted three months of his twenty-first year.

He now appeared to have sate himself down with the full determination to follow the honorable profession of his father. That his studies were incessant and severe, he has himself informed us; and though he was not precisely in the situation of his poorer brethren whose bread was to win, yet he appears to have comported himself in all respects as if this had been the case. The principal difficulty which he had to surmount in his new pursuit seems to have been the acquirement of a free and graceful delivery, and this, from the slight impediment in his speech, and the natural timidity attendant on a bashful and modest demeanour, was an obstacle which he never wholly surmounted; his personal appearance, too, heavy and unpretending at the best, and with none of the dignity of deportment for which he was so eminently distinguished in his later years, militated against him in his attempts at creating a sensation in a court where it was, at that time, the fashion to trust so much to oratorical display in influencing the minds of a jury. To a mind constituted like his, this must have been

¹² ‘O Ferguson! thy glorious parts, / Ill-suited law’s dry, musty arts!’ (‘To W. S*****n, Ochiltree’, 19-20, in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, edited by James Kinsley, 3 vols (Oxford, 1968), I, 94).

a peculiar source of vexation, and must have aided in the apathy with which he soon began to regard the profession. His father's labours had placed him in easy, if not in independent, circumstances, and he had not the usual motives, therefore, to incite him to extend his connexion. Whether these motives would have swayed him, had his exertions been followed with success, it is now useless to conjecture. He had already begun to coquet with another mistress, whose smiles were soon to win him from the society of her severe and forbidding rival: a rival too, who, to use his own words, 'is of a peculiarly jealous disposition. She will not readily consent to share her authority, and sternly demands from her votaries, not only that real duty be carefully attended to and discharged, but that a certain air of business shall be observed even in the midst of total idleness'; and again: 'It is prudent, if not absolutely necessary, in a young barrister, to appear completely engrossed by his profession; however destitute of employment he may be, he ought to preserve, if possible, the appearance of full occupation'.¹³ This last sentence appears to me to contain the keystone of the whole fabric; he had found out that, in spite of all his severe studies, it was unlikely, from his aptitude to other and more easy pursuits, he ever could attain eminence as a lawyer; and here was a new mistress inviting him with open arms to rank himself under her banners, where 'his yoke would be easy and his burden light'.¹⁴

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In the year 1797, while on an excursion 'over the border', he chanced to be introduced at Gilsland in Cumberland to his future wife, Miss Margaret Carpenter or Charpentier, the daughter of John Carpenter, Esq., of Lyons, a French merchant. who fell a victim to the

¹³ These lines are taken from Scott's 1830 Preface to *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, as quoted in Chambers, 293.

¹⁴ 'For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' (Matthew 12. 30).

horrors of the French Revolution. Accompanied by her mother, the young lady fled into England, where they were received and welcomed with all the warmth due to misfortune; and the personal attractions of the young lady, not to mention the peculiar circumstances under which he beheld her, soon captivated the romantic young lawyer, and their intercourse soon ripened into reciprocal affection. Miss Charpentier was then a young lady of very considerable fascinations, sprightly and piquant in her conversation, and withal possessed of much wit and talent. Her figure was petite, but beautifully moulded, and she had a profusion of dark ringlets clustering on her neck. These beauties, added to a light, laughter-loving countenance and volatile girlish demeanour, completed the conquest of the susceptible poet, and on Christmas Day (Sunday, the twenty-fifth of December 1797),¹⁵ after mutual explanation with Lord Downshire, the young lady's guardian, Mr Scott led his bride to the altar.

¹⁵ Scott's marriage took place on Christmas Eve, 1797, which was, however, a Sunday (Edgar Johnson, *Sir Walter Scott: The Great Unknown*, 2 vols (Macmillan, 1970), I, 155).

CHAPTER III

1797-1815

Ballad-Hunting – First Meeting with Hogg – ‘Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border’

Published and Praised – Imitation Ballads – Poetic Diction – Settlement at Abbotsford – ‘The Field of Waterloo’ – ‘Paul’s Letters to His Kinsfolk’ – Friendship with Byron

Sir Walter now contemplated a new book, namely, a collection of the unpublished ballads of Scotland. In the course of official and other journeys, he would lose no opportunity of making himself acquainted with the meanest of the peasantry, and, seated familiarly at their turf fires, would delight to draw from the garrulous old crones interminable and merciless [*sic*] long songs about all-but-forgotten battles or border raids. He would listen, I am credibly informed, with the most laudable attention, and seldom failed, if the subject struck him as being novel, to retain the whole upon his mind and commit it to paper afterwards without misplacing a word. On leaving the cottage, he would generally slip a douceur into the hand of the youngest child and, patting its head, delight the parents by prophesying it would be ‘a braw bairn yet’.

A longer version of this passage runs as follows:

Scott saw that the genius of Goethe and Burger had raised the rude and uncouth German legends high in the ranks of the literature of their country; that they had given to gross matter a new spirit, and had clad the vulgar staple of nursery and boorish minstrelsy in rich and becoming apparel. An ambition to do the same for Scotland, a land rich in legendary lore and teeming with local tradition, possessed his mind; and, conscious of his own strength

and deep antiquarian research, not only into recorded history, but into the fireside legend [*sic*], he set about his gigantic task with all the ardour of a pursuit congenial to his feelings. ‘He performed’, to quote the living poetry of Burns, ‘leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia, sat on the fields of her battles, wandered on the romantic banks of her rivers, mused by stately towers and venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes’;¹ and such was the mine of antiquity into which he thrust his daring hand. What wonder, then, that he, as it were, completely identified himself with the ‘iron men’ of the distant ages

‘Whose cross it was their noble sword,
Whose [*illegible*] was the fray’.²

He lived and breathed only among the knights, the heroes, the monks, and the robbers of the olden time, and drank deep of the stream of their history. The lilting of the blooming country maiden at her wheel, the croon of the withered beldame at her knitting, the tale of the garrulous old soldier, who, delighted to find such a listener, ‘told all his battles o’er again’;³ all was listened to and committed to the eternal archives of his memory. The meanest shieling on the lone mountain, the proudest castle of the fertile valley, each contributed its quota to swell the rich stock of materials wherewithal [*sic*] he enriched the land.

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¹ ‘I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which, Heaven knows, I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles, to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers, and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes’ (Robert Burns to Frances Dunlop, 22 March 1787: quoted in J. G. Lockhart, *Life of Robert Burns* (Constable, 1830), 145).

² This quotation has not been traced.

³ ‘Sooth’d with the Sound the King grew vain; / Fought all his Battails o’er again’ (‘Alexander’s Feast’, 66-7, in *The Poems of John Dryden*, edited by John Sargeaunt (Oxford, 1910), 199).

It was in the course of one of these rambles that he first met the Ettrick Shepherd, so long ago as 1801. Mr. Hogg then ‘watched sheep’ on the farm of Ettrick House, and, with the exception of a limited circle of admirers, who greeted his flattered ear with the title of ‘Jamie the Poeter’, was totally unknown to the world. His first and most popular song of ‘Donald Macdonald’ had, it is true, appeared some time before the date of which I write, but the author was never inquired for: a neglect of which, by the bye, he bitterly complains. His fame, however, limited as it was, had reached the ears of the Sheriff, and he paid him a visit accompanied by his future amanuensis, Mr William Laidlaw. The reminiscence, as given by the Shepherd in his *Altrive Tales*, is highly characteristic.⁴

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having completed his labours in the spring of 1802. His work was committed to the care of his early and attached friend and schoolfellow, Mr James Ballantyne,⁵ then a printer in Kelso, by whom it was published in two volumes, containing the original matter which he had collected, illustrated by numerous notes, displaying how deep had been his research and how thorough his knowledge of the subject. The success of the work was such as to induce him to add another volume to the second edition, which consisted principally of imitations by himself and others of the ancient ballad style of poetry. The popularity which his labours

⁴ The passage which Macrone did not trouble to copy will be found in *Altrive Tales*, edited by Gillian Hughes (Edinburgh, 2003), 60-65. It is not clear how much of it would have been included in Macrone’s biography.

⁵ *Macrone’s footnote:* It is my mournful duty to state that this excellent and talented man did not long survive his gifted friend. Mr Ballantyne died at Edinburgh on the – – [the date which Macrone omitted is 17 January 1833], at a time when the public looked forward to him as one of the biographers of his early associate. There has been something like fatality connected with all who were connected with the publication of these far-famed works. Mr Constable fell the first victim; next, his great patron and friend, the [illegible] himself; Ballantyne did not linger long behind; and lastly, poor John Aitken, the amiable and excellent conductor of *Constable’s Miscellany*. There is not one now left. [Aitken died on 15 February 1833.]

gained him was great, and though the nature of the undertaking forbade that he could be regarded in the light of an original writer, yet it procured him the well-deserved reputation of being an unusual and successful compiler of the national lyrics of Scotland, as well as a zealous

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The very cunning, however, of the master, prevented the admirers of the genuine old ballad from observing that in many instances, great liberties had been taken with the original text, and in others, the legend had been almost entirely remodelled. Thus, while the reputation which Scott had acquired as ‘an ingenious compiler’ and no more, was universally admitted, it remained to be found out that he had given so much of the polish to the rough jewel, without diminishing its value as a gem. He had too much respect for the rude original stock to injure the felicitousness [*sic*] of their humour or the depth of their pathos by his emendations. ‘Your right natural ballad’, says Allan Cunningham, ‘will bear a gentle polishing; it is not like the gilt shield of Scriblerus, which by frequent furbishing, grew down to the lid of a saucepan’.⁶

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It may reasonably be supposed that the success of this, his first effort, amply repaid him for all the trouble which the compilation had cost him. He began to be looked on as a person of much consequence in the literary circles of the North, and though I am told he bore

⁶ Cunningham, 643. This account of the shield is inaccurate: it was rusty, not gilt; Scriblerus’s maid ‘scoured it as clean as her Andirons’ in a single afternoon; and it proved a sconce, not a saucepan-lid (Alexander Pope et al., *Memoirs of the Extraordinary Life, Works, and Adventures of Martinus Scriblerus*, edited by Charles Kerby-Miller (Yale, 1950), 102-104).

his honours meekly, yet no doubt he felt all the proud emotions of a young hero who has just achieved his spurs. Sir Andrew Halliday, one of his most intimate and early friends, who has kindly furnished me with much valuable matter,⁷ mentions that it was at this time he

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The success of the first edition suggested to the poet that another volume, in which, with several fresh acquisitions of antiquity, might be inserted his own and various other imitations of the ancient minstrelsy, would prove acceptable. Accordingly, many several poems were inserted, amongst which [*sic*] his early ballads of ‘Glenfinlas; or Lord Ronald’s Coronach’, ‘The Eve of St John’, ‘Thomas the Rymer’, Part Third, ‘The Mermaid’,⁸ the noble lyric of ‘Cadzow Castle’, ‘The Gray Brother’, and ‘The War-song of the Edinburgh Light Dragoons’, which, says Mr Chambers,⁹ excited so much merriment among Scott’s brother officers of the Yeomanry: an incident which, if true, reflects little honour on the understandings of the Corps.

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His poetry is chiefly censurable for a vein of artificial gloss, which runs through the whole of his style, saving, indeed, where the subject matter treats of the heroic and the perilous. Scott then throws off the trammels and affectations of style, and marches on in the plenitude of his power, carrying the delighted and astonished reader with him by a charm that

⁷ See Appendix V, Section 2.

⁸ This ballad is one of John Leyden’s.

⁹ Chambers, 291.

brooks no reluctance. He seems like an isolated champion, who reserves his strength until the ‘sweat of the combat’ calls forth his irresistible energies. As mere narratives and carefully managed pageants, however, his poetry will rank among the first of the school of metrical romance.

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Here, having firmly established himself with ‘his household gods’ around him, he sat down, not to enjoy his *otium cum dignitate*,¹⁰ like the Roman senator of old, but to nerve himself for greater and more laborious exertion. To maintain the rank and standing of a country gentleman, who might not seem to be too much cumbered with labour, he regularly [illegible] with all county meetings and further official business, and, by an admirable distribution of time, he succeeded in allotting to each duty and pleasure its true portion of leisure, and thus managed to get through at least the labours of any other six men. After a patient hearing of some knotty point at issue between some country claimants, he would dart into his den like [blank in manuscript], and, while the world supposed him engaged in the ordinary routine of a country life, would be penning those immortal effusions which were so soon to burst upon the admiring world.

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There was something patriarchal and dignified in the character of the poet in his seclusion. He looked from his stately towers, and might exclaim, in the language which the poet has placed in the mouth of Alexander Selkirk,

¹⁰ Cicero, *De Oratore*, 1. 1: literally ‘leisure with dignity’, here in the sense of ‘well-earned relaxation’.

‘I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute’.¹¹

The general *referee* in all matters of country business, the oracle by which men founded their thoughts, words, and actions, the authority by which, in all matters religious, social, and political, the neighbouring gentry swore by, the honoured patron of humble genius, he who could mix delicious flattery with the more unpalatable dish of discouraging criticism, was eagerly sought after by all manner of pretenders to the empire of

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In the course of the following year (1815), he became possessed of a strong desire to visit the theatre of the tremendous conflict which had decided the peace of Europe. It was a combat wherein so much personal bravery and chivalrous daring had been displayed, and so much of the self-abandoning courage depicted in the battles of the olden time, that he became fired with a desire to perpetuate the memory of the heroes whose deeds had added so much lustre to the history of their country. Whether there was not a lurking desire, also, to stem the tide of receding popularity, by producing a poem which would address itself more intimately to those feelings and excitations of the moment, it is irrelevant to consider; but the result of his tour was the immediate publication of *The Field of Waterloo*, a martial poem dedicated to the Duchess of Wellington:¹² a production which has been variously and unequally treated by

¹¹ These are the opening lines of ‘Verses, Supposed to Be Written by Alexander Selkirk’, in *The Poems of William Cowper*, edited by John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, 3 vols (Oxford, 1980-1995), I, 403.

¹² *Macrone’s footnote:* One of the *jeux de mot* [sic] provoked by the appearance of *The Field of Waterloo* has some cleverness in its wit, and, it is said, provoked the poet not a little. I quote it from this circumstance: “Of all the heroes, etc. [The squib in question, which Macrone did not transcribe in full, runs: ‘Of all the heroes who

the public. By the majority, however, it is esteemed as an unrivalled description of the pomp, terror, and circumstance of this modern Golgotha, and many of those who participated in the awful scene he has described, have concurred in expressing their admiration of the faithful manner in which the subject has been treated. In a poem of some twenty stanzas, it is unfair to expect that any moral could be adduced, or any abstracted view of the subject taken, beyond the mere mechanical description. In this, to my opinion, he has succeeded admirably. Scott always felt himself at home in the battle. The production was severely handled by the reviewers, however, and one of the most spirit-stirring pieces in the language was fairly laughed down into a third or fourth-rate class of his poesy.¹³

Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk, a series of papers written in the character of a tourist through Paris and Belgium, succeeded his verse sketch. It was published anonymously, but the secret (if it was intended as such) was but lightly kept. The book deservedly attracted a larger share of public admiration, and still retains its popularity. The graphic descriptions and faithful, undraped criticism contained in its pages, throw the first production entirely into the shade. Many good imitations of this style of writing immediately appeared, but none, saving one, had the same ‘trick of fence’. *Peter's Letters*, a work understood to be written by his talented son-in-law, approached more nearly, in its exquisite humour and powerful satire, to its prototype.

On his return from ‘the place of skulls, imperial Waterloo’,¹⁴ he had the fortune to meet in London, for the first time, his powerful rival and admirer Lord Byron, then in the full

were slain / On Waterloo's ensanguined plain, / Not one, by sabre, lance, or shot / Fell half so flat as Walter Scott’.]

¹³ Macrone's footnote: “The proceeds of this poem”, says one of his biographers, “were dedicated to the national fund for the relief of the widows and orphans of the brave men who fell at Waterloo”. It was thus his lyre was sanctified. [The biographer has not been identified.]

¹⁴ Macrone's reference, immediately afterward, to Byron, supports the possibility that he is misquoting ‘And Harold stands upon this place of skulls, / The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo!’ (*Childe Harold's*

blaze of his popularity. It is delightful to think of the cordial feelings of delight and mutual admiration which animated the meeting of the illustrious contemporaries. ‘Report had prepared me’, says Scott in the account of the interview which he sent to his friend Mr Moore, ‘to meet a man of peculiar habits and a quick temper, and I had some doubts whether we were likely to suit each other in society. I was most agreeably disappointed in this respect. I found Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, and even kind.’¹⁵

This is one instance out of many reports that attributed to Byron the possession of every passion and vice which disgrace humanity. Had they never met each other, these distorted impressions might in some degree have accompanied Scott to his grave; but a few minutes of the society of the noble Childe, were sufficient to convince the shrewd, discriminating nature of the former, that report had mistaken his real character. The puerile, but bitter and undeserved, satire which Byron, in a moment of universal bile, lavished on Scott and others, had long been repented of. Whatever soreness the author of *Marmion* felt on the subject, he himself informs us, was amply counterbalanced by the praises bestowed upon him; ‘and¹⁶ I must’, says he, ‘have been more irritable than I have ever felt upon such subjects, not to sit down contented, and think no more of the matter’.¹⁷ Their meeting was the homage of one great mind to another, and the result was a firm and lasting friendship, cemented, like the heroes of old, by mutual presents.¹⁸ It was not one of those friendships, on the part of the younger bard, which consisted in at least as often vilifying as eulogising the characters of those with whom he associated, but the respectful reverence due to lofty

Pilgrimage, 3, 18.1-2, in Lord Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, edited by Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford, 1980-1993), II, 83).

¹⁵ Moore, 280.

¹⁶ ‘[A]nd’ is ‘that’ in Moore.

¹⁷ Moore, 279.

¹⁸ Macrone’s footnote: “Like the old heroes in Homer”, says Scott, “we exchanged gifts” [Moore, 280].

attributes and amiable feelings, a reverence which only terminated with the noble poet's life. On the part of Scott, a warm feeling of admiration for the extraordinary talents of the youthful bard, modified the regret which he might otherwise have felt for the follies and errors of the man; he saw, with that perception for which he always was so remarkable, that, under the thin gloss of fashionable affectation and aristocratic pride which Byron displayed, beat a heart replete with every capability of being admired, and talents which, properly directed, might have gloried in doing honor to human nature. Scott saw this, and knew the keystone to the better nature of Byron. He is said to have often lamented that the illustrious Childe ever succeeded to the empty honours of nobility, 'as from that very circumstance much of the advantage of associating with men of kindred spirits was denied him'.

It is pleasing to contemplate the steady, unaltered friendship between Britain's chiefest sons of song, which succeeded to this brief association. While Scott continued in London, they were seldom separate, and when they parted, it seemed as if something which bound Byron closer to humanity had been taken from him. A correspondence ensued,¹⁹ which was fatally interrupted by the untimely death of the latter; but the warm and eloquent tribute of respect which Scott poured forth to the memory of his distinguished and lamented friend, showed that their friendship, to quote the pathos of Scripture, was 'strong even in death'.²⁰ So successful, so overwhelming, a defence of his talented and suffering brother, cannot but be welcome to every honest and unprejudiced mind. I willingly quote the whole article,²¹ written

¹⁹ Macrone's footnote: "I saw Byron for the last time" &c – to the abstract of letter. [The passage in Moore to which he refers continues 'in 1815, when I returned from France'. Macrone would probably have inserted an ellipsis at this point, and followed it with the sentence 'Several letters passed between us – one perhaps every half year' (Moore, 280).]

²⁰ This quotation has not been traced. Macrone may have misremembered the source of 'And you! brave COHAM, to the latest breath / Shall feel your ruling passion strong in death' (*Moral Essays*, Epistle I, 262-3, in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, edited by John Butt (Yale, 1963), 559).

²¹ It appeared in *The Edinburgh Weekly Journal* on 19 May 1824.

evidently under the impulse of mental distress, and unpremeditated feeling. ‘That mighty genius’, says he, “which walked amongst men”, etc.

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Byron has often, and with some justice, been termed fickle and wavering in his friendships. True, that indomitable spirit of satire which he possessed in so eminent a degree, loved to display itself, now and then, when occasion offered, equally upon those who were most intimate with him, as upon a stranger; but I am not disposed to believe that he ever *meant* his satire should wound the feelings of those who were nearest and dearest to him. This dangerous disposition he retained to the latest year of his life, and in the case of Rogers – a poet for whom he professed to entertain the most exalted feelings of admiration – he displayed his feelings in a way that none will forgive but the object of his attack, and he, I am convinced, now that it has been impudently published by an unfriendly hand, will treat the matter with all the *bonhomie* [sic] it so eminently deserves.²²

²² Macrone is referring to ‘Question and Answer’ (Byron, IV, 165-166).

CHAPTER IV

THE NOVELIST

The State of Fiction in 1815 – *Waverley* – *Guy Mannering* – ‘Natural Characters’ – *The Antiquary* – *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* – *A Legend of Montrose* – *The Talisman* – Critical Reception – Self-Reviewing in the *Quarterly* – Authorship and Anonymity – The Prince Regent Controverted – Finances

The era of *Waverley* may well be considered the most extraordinary in the annals of literature. It was an experiment upon public taste which was no less boldly than powerfully conceived, for it is difficult to imagine the degraded condition to which that peculiar species of composition called novel-writing had, with a few splendid exceptions, [*blank in manuscript*], at the time when Sir Walter issued his celebrated work. The booksellers’ shelves groaned under the accumulated weight of mawkish translations from the French, vapid and *fusionless* specimens from the English school, romances from the German, choked full of horrors and subterranean wit; and the disgusted readers in vain turned over the leaves in search of something racy and original. This *vade mecum*¹ was destined to be filled by the author of *Marmion*, who, conscious of his own strength, and aware what the public wanted, put forth a work which at once redeemed the novel school from annihilation, routing the whole milk and water disciples of literature, and, with one leap, placed himself at the head of this species of composition, as he had formerly done in the school of poetry. He was evidently, however, cautious in this appeal to public taste. Like the Ivanhoe of his own immortal pages, he first entered the lists with his beaver down, without crest or cognisance,²

¹ Thus in the manuscript. Macrone meant to write ‘*vacuum*’.

² Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, edited by Graham Tulloch (Edinburgh, 1998), 114.

and if defeat had been the reward of his chivalrous exertions in the cause of the insulted Nine, he could at least retire from the combat with untarnished fame, and repose upon the laurels which he had already so nobly won. This probably may have been the principal cause of assuming an incognito which, in the heyday of his popularity as a novelist, he was whimsical enough to retain.

Waverley has been so often and so variously criticised by reviewers of high and low degree, that it is now somewhat late in the day to attempt a fresh opinion on its merits. I am not one of those, however, who are disposed to rank it as one of his first-rate or even second-rate novels. It was the first-born he had bestowed on the world in that shape, and his admirers are well-disposed to regard it with the most favorable impressions; a calm and dispassionate comparison of its merits, as placed in juxtaposition with his succeeding productions, might well be instituted, but as my opinion is a mere matter of private taste, which no one is bound to adopt, the matter may as well rest as it is. Indeed, I have repeatedly heard each of his novels in its turn named as the best by different admirers of his genius, and where there is naturally doubt and diversity of opinion, the breath of criticism may, in the vulgar phrase, ‘be kept to cool its porridge’.

In the succeeding year, when the effect which *Waverley* had produced upon the public mind had nothing subsided, appeared *Guy Mannering*, a work which addressed itself more closely to the every-day feelings of human nature than its predecessor. The rough but warm-hearted farmer of the Border was a character drawn from immediate nature, and many a bold and hardy yeoman was, at once, indicated as the probable prototype of his unrivalled creation. Dominie Sampson was recognised in many a poor, bashful, and neglected scholar, and Meg Merrilies and her wandering tribe were traced to many of the Egyptian amazons and warriors whose names are familiar to us as to our fathers.

Here, then, were *natural* characters, stript of all romance, and it was now that the whole mass of general readers were enabled to judge of the author's gigantic powers of delineation, and to value them accordingly. Here were no events on which the lapse of sixty years had thrown a certain air of romance: all was of yesterday. The walls of Mumps Ha' are yet indicated to the traveller over the dreary waste of Cumberland, and the dreadful curse for which the unhappy inmate suffered, is yet fresh in the recollection of the peasantry of the border.³

³ *Macrone's footnote:* While on this subject, I cannot do better than give my reader a brief recital of the horrible story which the author of *Waverley* has just hinted at in his new edition of *Guy Mannering*. It is somewhat singular that a legend combining so much atrocity with pathos of feeling, should not have been woven into his tale, or, at least, noticed in the delightful notes which he appended to the chapters. It was related to me by John Martin, Esq., painter of those magnificent productions which have long attracted general admiration, who is himself a native of the wild region so well described by the novelist, and who joins me in his expressions of surprise that Sir Walter has failed to make use of the wild material with which it abounds.

The *Tibbie* who possessed the *Houf* at least half a century ago, was exactly such a personage as the author has drawn: cunning and plausible, and withal suspected of many foul acts. The house had a suspicious name, and few cared to tarry a night under its unblest roof. She had a son, according to the story a promising and amiable young man, who, disgusted by his parent's villainies, went off to sea, and for many years was unheard of. At length he returned, and made himself known to many of the then surrounding neighbours, before going to his mother's house, being anxious to know how she had fared and acted during his absence. He determined to visit her in disguise as a wayfaring traveller, and if possible ascertain whether she had reformed during the lapse of years which intervened since he had left her. Accordingly, he presented himself at the door of Mumps Ha' late in the afternoon, and requested a lodging for the night, which Tibbie, now sunk into almost equal poverty, at once acceded to, and was as he thought, pressing in her hospitality, and the liquor [*Macrone originally wrote Whisky*] circulated freely. He, however, still unhappily preserved his incognito, and was shewn to his room, the suspected scene of many a horrible crime, and, in the middle of the night, was barbarously murdered and plundered by his unconscious mother. In the morning, many of those to whom he had communicated his consanguinity, called at the hovel, to enquire after the jovial young sailor; but Tibbie denied that any such had been there. 'Not a stout, handsome fellow in a seaman's dress!' enquired the spokesman, whose suspicions were roused. 'No', was the wretched woman's reply. 'I saw nae sailor, nor anybody else. I hae been my leefu' lane the hale night'. 'Then your own son has passed your door, Tibbie, and that's no likely on the day of his return from the sea', responded the aroused [*sic*] countryman. 'My son!' shrieked the now appalled wretch, as a thousand circumstances floated across her brain. 'My ain son! said ye - ' 'Aye, Tibbie, e'en your ain son come back to assist you wi' his earnings'. 'Then God be merciful to me', groaned the [*illegible*] mother, as she sank heavily to the ground. 'I hae *murdered* my ain bairn'. The sequel may easily be guessed. The horrified neighbours found the mangled body of her own offspring concealed under the bed whereon he had been unconsciously reposing, when thus awfully bereft of existence. The miserable culprit was shortly afterwards executed for the deed, and died in the most dreadful mental agony. Mumps Ha' thereafter became an object of terror to the surrounding country, and was suffered to go to ruin, in which state the walls are now pointed out to the traveller.

Pursuing the same delightful and happy vein, the author next gave forth *The Antiquary* to the greedy acception of the world. The materials upon which the plot arose, are slight, as compared with many others of the same class, but the interest is kept up throughout, and many passages of extraordinary pathos, intense feeling, and irresistible drollery [*sic*]. The character of Edie Ochiltree is drawn from nature, and, with the exception that the real Edie rode an excellent horse, on which he used to perform his *mumping* round, is exactly similar to the bedesman of the fable. *The Antiquary* was a happy hit at many disciples of that eccentric school, the author himself included – who boast

‘a fouth o’ auld nick-nackets,
Rusty airn caps, and jingling jackets’.⁴

Once fairly launched in this new channel, with the applauding breath of millions to fill his sails, the Author of *Waverley* wrote and published fresh works with the rapidity of magic. From the year 1814, when *Waverley* made its appearance, to 1820 inclusive, he gave forth no less than nine novels, and enjoyed, doubtless, behind his incognito, the amazement of the world thereat vastly. So strictly did he continue in his secrecy, however, that not only were copies made of his manuscripts for the compositors, but even the members of his own family, his own sons and daughters, were ignorant in ignorance of the author for a very considerable time. I speak this advisedly, though doubtless they may and must have had shrewd guesses as to the real delinquent. On one occasion, his son Charles, when a mere stripling, being asked what he would like best in all the world, returned the spirited answer: ‘I

⁴ ‘He has a fouth o’ auld nick-nackets: / Rusty airn caps and jinglin jackets’ (*On the Late Captain Grose’s Peregrinations thro’ Scotland*, 31-2, in Burns, I, 494). The stanza from which these lines are taken is the epigraph to the third chapter of *The Antiquary*.

would like that Papa might turn out to be the Author of *Waverley*, better than anything in the world'.

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In the formation of the character of Jeanie Deans, the author seems to have exhausted his powers of delineation, prodigious as they were. There is no parallel in the language to compare with the sublime exertions, the unshaken probity, the meek spirit of love and endurance, and the heroic spirit, displayed at once in this wonderful conception; and yet she is not a heroine of romance: with all the attributes of a Roman matron, she yet continues to be the humble, unpretending daughter of the Presbyterian cow-feeder, and nature is not violated, but adorned by the junction. Douce Davie Deans, a modification of the sterner sect depicted in *Old Mortality*, proudly humble; the worthy Laird of Dumbiedikes, a character which may yet be traced, though fast disappearing, among the Scottish bonnet lairds, whose maxim is to 'take life easy', and whose disposition 'canna be fashed'; the maniac, but still interesting Madge; the beautiful and unhappy Effie, and her wild scream of agony when

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A Legend of Montrose was another of the productions which he conceived while under the pressure of severe bodily suffering. The whole tale, like that of *Ivanhoe*, was dictated from the uneasy couch of sickness, and it may seem hardly credible that under these circumstances, when, in ordinary cases, the faculties of the mind are completely paralysed, or, at best, fitful and peevish, that a character like the doughty Rittmaster Dalgetty could have been formed. For quiet rich humour, for soldierly tactic, daring courage, gross selfishness,

and quaint scholarship – a motley mixture – this creation has been rarely equalled, excepting by him of Avon. Yet true it was, that this rare compound was created under the most extreme bodily and mental pain. 'I have lately been dictating', says he himself in a letter that he wrote to an intimate friend after his convalescence, 'part of *The Legend* to my friend Mr William Laidlaw. It may seem a strange thing, but I found that the exertion required to depict the character intended to be embodied in Major Dalgetty took from me the sense of my mental sufferings, and I found myself free from pain while my mind was at work'.⁵ There is a [illegible] and beauty in many parts of this production which speaks of anything but the sickbed.

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The Author of *Waverley* seems to have arrived at the very zenith of perfection as a novelist when he wrote his *Tales of the Crusades*, and I particularly refer to that part of the tales denominated *The Talisman* as an illustration of my hypothesis. There is a freshness and vigour and breadth of painting in some of the chapters which is perfectly enchanting. Let anyone, for instance, read the passages of the combat between the Knight of the Leopard and the Saracen Emir in the first chapter, and their refection afterward, under 'the burning sun of Syria',⁶ at the well of the desert. There is nothing in the language, in my opinion, so exquisitely true to nature in all its parts! The torrid sands spreading in dun billows to the horizon – the heaven-smitten and accursed solitude of the Dead Sea – the fierce rush and onset of the wanderers of the desert: all are depicted with a truth and a beauty that has no parallel, even in his own writings. From that era, his compositions gradually sunk in interest.

⁵ This letter has not been traced.

⁶ These are the opening words of *The Talisman*.

The mighty fountain of inspiration, from which he drew such floods of eloquent thoughts, seems imperceptibly to have drained off its rich treasures, and to the unfortunate date of his last series of *Tales of my Landlord* (alas! how different to the former!), the ‘wine of life’ seems indeed ‘on the lees’.⁷ I have often lamented that no kind friend could have had the triumph and success of diverting his attention from the latter publication; but the rich diadem of beauty and value he had already made unto himself might well bear the stigma of an inferior jewel on its carcanet.

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Sir Walter’s style, unadorned by flowery metaphor on the one hand, or deep metaphysical research on the other, was vivid, powerful, and flowing. He possessed in an eminent, perhaps unequalled degree, the power of fascinating and absorbing the attention of his readers, and, without exhibiting any very extraordinary pretensions, fairly dazzled them with the truth and power of his descriptions. In this respect, it perhaps would be difficult to say wherein the *strength* of Scott lay. He had not the pathos or elegance of Mackenzie, nor the critical acumen of [blank in manuscript], nor the wit and brilliancy of Rousseau or Voltaire. His descriptions are supposed inferior to Fielding’s, his humour to Smollett’s; and yet it is no less universally acknowledged that he equalled or surpassed all these illustrious names in their various gifts. Were any particular passage of his works to be analyzed – the celebrated speech of Jeanie Deans to Queen Caroline, for instance, where she implores her sister’s life with all the agony and earnestness of real passion – this passage, unrivalled as it is confessed to be, will not bear the test of critical investigation. Where then consisted its charm? It is conceived in the very spirit of simplicity. The author placed himself, as it were,

⁷ ‘The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees / Is left this vault to brag of’ (*Macbeth* II. iii. 94-5).

in the same circumstances with the humble *cowfeeder's* daughter; without losing sight of her low origin and defective attainments for one moment, he has clothed her with a spirit of heroism equal to a Roman matron, and we are obliged to confess that nature is not outraged but exalted and purified.

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It may be a matter of interest and amusement to the reader, and, in some degree, a lesson to those who place their confidence in critical acumen, to place before them the recorded sentiments of those guardians of public taste who sat in judgment over the productions of the Author of *Waverley*. In these latter days, when everyone has formed an opinion for himself, and all concur in one sentiment, it can do no harm to look back upon the praises and censures bestowed with a liberal hand upon each succeeding production. To offer anything like original critical remark *now*, would, unless from a practised and powerful pen, savour of vanity on the part of the author, more especially as it has been the fate of the works in question to have received a greater share of this species of observation than any productions since the time when the *chef d'œuvre* of the immortal Cervantes ‘laughed Spain's chivalry away’.⁸

These critical remarks will be culled principally from the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly*, and *Blackwood's Magazine*, with an occasional article from journals of less note, the matter presumed to emanate from the pens of a Jeffrey, a Gifford, and the redoubted Christopher North, being conceived to form the *ne plus ultra* of taste and discernment. Where these ‘learned doctors differ’ – the conclusion to which the charitable

⁸ Macrone is misquoting Byron's line ‘Cervantes smiled Spain's Chivalry away’ (*Don Juan*, 13, 11.1, in Byron, V, 528).

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In the [*blank in manuscript*] number of the *Quarterly*,⁹ appeared an elaborate review of the *Tales of my Landlord* which rumour gave to the pen of Sir Walter Scott. It is now indisputable that the article emanated from his pen; but to prevent any imputation of vanity, a stigma which even the most malignant could never fasten on Sir Walter, it may be right to mention that the article was contributed principally to blind the shrewd and penetrating editor, who would not otherwise be dispossessed of his opinion with regard to the paternity of the works. The bait, it is unnecessary to say, was swallowed, and Gifford, I am informed, lived and died under the belief that Sir Walter was not the ‘real Simon Pure’.¹⁰

As a specimen of critical *management*, it may prove amusing to see with what perfect ease Sir Walter treats of the stories, glancing more at contemporary writing than praising or blaming the (presumed) unknown author.

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During the incognito of the Waverley Novels, the detractors from Sir Walter’s fame were wont to say, in support of their favourite doctrine (namely, that he was *not* the author of the works in question), that it was impossible for one man to achieve so many duties as he was represented to perform: that he could be clerk of session, with all its labours, and sheriff of a county, that he could have written so many acknowledged works, to say nothing of the immense labour bestowed upon the management of his [*illegible*] and lands, and, at the same

⁹ Vol. XVI, January 1817, 430-480.

¹⁰ ‘I do affirm that I am Simon Pure’ (Susanna Centlivre, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (Stirling & Kenney, 1829), 49).

time, be author of those numerous and stupendous productions, was impossible and improbable; and upon this, on the whole, feasible-*like* ground, they took their stand, and even to the very moments when a divulgement of the secret by Sir Walter himself became necessary, these worthies continued to father the works in question upon many flattered individuals, who bore their undeserved honours, it must be confessed, very meekly. The venerable and excellent Mrs Grant of Laggan, in particular, was the chosen author of this sapient choice, and as if the total dissimilarity of her productions to the style of the novels were not enough, they maintained their ground long after she herself had, in the most urgent manner, disclaimed all participation in the honour. A worthy radical in the west of Scotland, in particular, maintains his opinion even to this day, amid the contempt and scorn of the few who will listen to his absurd doctrines.

The question, were it *now* worthy of discussion, to use the common phrase, ‘lies in a nutshell’. If Sir Walter Scott wrote *The Lady of the Lake* and *The Lord of the Isles*, then was he no less the author of *Rob Roy* and *Waverley*; for the action of the pageants in these productions is essentially similar, and the moving, melodramatic effect is preserved throughout in every respect, in short, the same style, and only varied in the single circumstance that one specimen of composition is in heroic verse, and the other in plain prose. Who, for instance, does not recognise, in the fierce outlawed chieftain Roderick Dhu, the germ of the future Rob Roy and Fergus MacIvor; who, in the beautiful and purely feminine creation of his Ellen, does not see all the soft and devoted affection, and the gentle graces, of his Rose Bradwardine, his Lucy Bertram, or his Rebecca; or who, in his glorious and living descriptions of mountain scenery, his still solitudes, his rush of the proud host to battle, the fierce and far clamour of the heady flight, does not see, realised to the very letter, the same vivid colouring, the same glowing, graphic description of flood and fall, which abound in his prose writings? Miserable indeed, then, must the judgment and discrimination

be, and paltry and contemptible their oft-repeated, oft-contradicted assertions, who could persist in the face of truth itself in their vague and absurd theory. To many of my readers it may seem strange that I write on this subject with the shadow of an angry feeling, but they may not be aware that the detractors and abusers of Sir Walter's fame still live, and still continue to promulgate their falsehoods and pour out their venom on the dead, which they dare not utter to the living. But it is time to leave a subject which can now, at least, only serve to 'point a moral', *not* 'adorn a tale'.¹¹

While on this subject, it may be as well to mention that upon one occasion, while dining at the Regent's table at Carlton House with the Prince himself and a select circle of bon vivants, among whom, I believe, was the celebrated Brinsley Sheridan, and others of the same convivial kidney, Sir Walter (then Mr Scott) was in high glee among his courtly and royal associates, and related numberless stories about the rebellion of 1745, always taking care to style Prince Charles as 'the Pretender' or 'the Chevalier', though the Regent gave him his proper title. In the midst of their orgies, the Prince rose to propose a toast, and said: 'Though we are not at *Luckie Macleary's public*, yet we can boast of a *tappit hen*:'¹² so let us drink to our distinguished guest, the Author of *Waverley*'. It was, of course, enthusiastically received. Scott rose up, as it was supposed, to return thanks, and said: 'Your Royal Highness, I am fully aware of the honour you have done me by associating my name with those ingenious productions, but I beg leave most distinctly to say, *I am not the author of any part of them*'. This *brusque* denial, says my informant, threw a damp over all the after conversation.

It is said that Sir Walter, on being rallied afterwards on his flat denial to his sovereign, alleged, in alleviation, that no one had a right to worry him out of his secret. 'Besides', added

¹¹ 'To point a moral, or adorn a tale' (*The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 222, in *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, edited by E. L. McAdam, Jr. and George Milne, 18 vols (Yale, 1958 et seq.), VI, 102).

¹² Walter Scott, *Waverley*, edited by Claire Lamont (Oxford, 1981), 47.

he, ‘the hale [*illegible*] o’ them were mair than half fou!’ I perfectly agree with the poet on the propriety of withholding his secret, considering the blissful state of his audience, but I am not disposed to credit the concluding part of the anecdote.

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The enormous sums realised by the sales of the far-famed novels would appear fictions, were they related of the success of any other works than those of the Author of *Waverley*. The first *impression*, to use a bookselling phrase, ran to ten thousand copies, which constituted only one edition, and for this impression alone, the author received, as his share of the profit, nearly four thousand pounds. A singular article appeared in a late number of one of the periodicals upon the subject, to which we refer the curious reader.¹³ Allowing, therefore, that the sale of the work never exceeded that number – and I have good reason to believe that, in many instances in the earlier novels, the number printed was repeatedly doubled and trebled – the author must have realized upon the *old issue* of his novels something better than one hundred and twenty thousand pounds sterling!!!

This may seem incredible to those who are ignorant of the craft and mystery of bookselling; but certain it is, and there is little wonder that Sir Walter Scott, presuming upon this inexhaustible mine of wealth, deemed he had driven a nail into the proverbially inconstant wheel of fortune, and bought, and planted, and built, and said, ‘Go to, I will increase my goods’.¹⁴ Little could he have foreseen the sudden and blasting stroke which, in one moment, reduced him to beggary, and eventually broke his proud heart. Little did he foresee, when he sat down under his own glorious roof-tree, and looked forward to an

¹³ This article has not been traced.

¹⁴ This quotation has not been traced.

honourable and peaceful evening of life, surrounded by the family he loved, and for whom, in idea, he had so amply provided, that those children would be forced to make an appeal to public sympathy, and that the home he had reared for them, might come under the auctioneer's hammer. It is painful to contemplate the reverses of genius at all times, but doubly so when misfortune alights upon the head of the deserving, and such, in every sense of the comprehensive word, was Sir Walter Scott. Stung by an acute sense of the shame and dishonour attached to a bankrupt name, he, with a design almost godlike in its nature, prepared himself to pay off the mighty debt, which he could not strictly be said to have contracted. Years rolled on, years to him of incessant labour and drudgery; work after work appeared: what wonder, under the circumstances, that there was a falling off in merit? and in the short space of three twelvemonths, he had paid the almost incredible sum of sixty thousand pounds to the estate of his booksellers, and not only this, but he had in every possible way retrenched his expenditure, given up his town house and sold off the furniture, retired to a second-rate lodging in an obscure street, and placed Abbotsford itself (his own cherished Abbotsford! saddest blow of all!) at the disposal of the creditors. To the eternal honour of those gentleman, however, be it said that, not only was the house and its valuable contents returned to their owner, but the possession, I believe, was forever secured to the family, accompanied by a cheering letter, expressing the utmost reliance upon the honor of Sir Walter, and obligation for his labours. Alas! that he lived not to complete the task which weighed so heavily upon his soul, and which, I doubt not, was the ultimate cause of his death.

CHAPTER V
SCOTT AT ABBOTSFORD

**City and Country – ‘A Silent Abstracted Mood’ – The Composition of ‘Donald Caird’ –
Hospitality – Busts and Portraits – Rural Occupations – ‘Turn-again’ – The Original of
Oldbuck – Antique Splendour – Poetical Ephemera – The Abbotsford Library**

With the exception of these occasional attacks, Scott may be said to have been remarkably fortunate in regard to bodily health. No doubt his temperate habits, uniform course of living, and evenness of disposition contributed materially to confirm that most inestimable of all earthly blessings. To judge by his works, one would naturally suppose that most of his life was spent in the most laborious study and close confinement, and yet it is well known that no man ever had, or seemed to have, so much of leisure on his hands. Strong, robust, and healthful as he was by nature, he required violent and constant exercise to stimulate his powerful frame and reduce a tendency to grossness, which, previous to his illness in 1818, his constitution manifested. In Edinburgh, during the annual official labours which occupied his time in the Court of Session, he never felt himself so much in the disposition to native health. In a crowded metropolis, amid all the bustle of business on the one hand and the harassing attentions of well-meaning but troublesome friends on the other, he was deprived of much of that exercise of the imagination which was to him as the vital atmosphere. In the country, on the contrary, taking exercise on ‘his own ground’, he was at all times in *proper trim*. ‘The Muse’, says Burns, and no poet ever benefited more by the inspirations of solitude:

‘The Muse – nae poet ever fand her

Till by himsel' he learned to wander
 Alang some wrinkling burn's meander
 And no think lang'.¹

Scott composed much in the open air, was often met with in a silent abstracted mood, and would pass his most intimate friend without seeming to recognise him, or once lifting his shaggy grey eyebrows from their downward contemplation. Then, with 'his barmy noddle working prime',² to quote from the same shrewd authority, it was dangerous to address him: he was not to be called from the days of Cœur-de-Lion charging the Moslemah or sitting by the still well of the desert, to attend to a mere modern conversation.

Apropos of mental abstraction, I remember an incident communicated to me by Laidlaw, which may be interesting. Sir Walter had, somehow or another [*sic*], taken an extraordinary fancy to the fine old Highland air of 'Highland Harry back again', to which he afterwards adapted his song of 'Donald Caird'. So much was he possessed with this melody that he could not rest until he had, as he expressed it, given 'the auld strain a blither sang', and was observed by Laidlaw absolutely leaping up and down one of the fields and making the most extraordinary gesticulations. Laidlaw addressed him; he answered not, saving in the words of the song, which he vociferated at the top of his powerful but unmusical voice:

'Donald Caird can drink a gill
 'Fast as hostler-wife can fill;
 'Drink till the gudeman be blin',

¹ 'The Muse, nae Poet ever fand her, / Till by himsel he learn'd to wander, / Adown some trottin burn's meander, / An' no think lang' ('To W. S*****n, Ochiltree', 85-8, in Burns, I, 95).

² 'My barmie noddle's working prime' ('To J. S****', 20, in Burns, I, 179).

‘Fleech till the gudewife be kin’!’³

He had composed the whole of this exquisitely humorous song in the course of a few perambulations up and down in the field, in a state of much excitement, and this done, he made no more of the matter.

*

He was easy of access to a degree, and his native sweetness of disposition would not allow him to refuse an interview to the humblest of his visitors. Thus his kindness was often abused, and his most intimate friends, and such as he would have been glad to have had under his roof, have often been compelled to sleep at Melrose and other places, from the crowded condition of Abbotsford; not unfrequently, too, has he been forced to remove his numerous party from the dining room to the ampler accomodations of the great hall itself, and it was a favourite remark of Lady Scott’s that their house, in every respect, resembled an hotel, except in the trifling matter of no money being asked for the entertainment. Sir Walter Scott’s outlay must, therefore, have been enormous in the single article of his princely housekeeping.

No poet has sat more frequently to artists than the Author of *Waverley*; indeed, I am assured that he never refused an application of that nature, and they were numerous enough, provided he had time to bestow upon the applicant, and even then, the sitting was only deferred for a season. Numberless, therefore, are the portraits with which the world has been favored from time to time for the last thirty years, but very few, indeed, have much pretension to likeness. In my humble estimation, there are only two artists who have caught

³ This is a conflation of two couplets in ‘Donald Caird’s Come Again’ (Scott, *Complete Poetical Works*, 440), the first couplet being that of the third stanza and the second that of the first. The printed text has ‘blind’ and ‘kind’. Laidlaw may have been indicating Scott’s pronunciation.

the perfect expression of his ever-varying countenance. I refer to Raeburn's well-known full-length portrait, first, the original of which is in the Duke of Buccleuch's collection: it has been frequently engraved. He is represented in a contemplative mood, sitting by a patch of ruin with his favorite dogs around him; of course, it has not the expression of his later years, but it still retains more of his peculiar expression than any other of its numerous contemporaries. The other is Chantrey's bust, which is too well-known to be described by me. There are one or two good pictures, also, by Allan and Gordon of Edinburgh, but they are deficient in that peculiarly comic expression of his eyes, which, so far as I know, has not been successfully caught but by the two artists formerly mentioned. 'He was', to use the words of a young artist of my own acquaintance to whom the bard sat, 'he was one of the most delightful sitters I ever had, and in five minutes I felt myself as much at my ease with him as if he had been my own father; but I found it impossible to catch the expression I wanted, in consequence of the repeated change of the whole character of his face and constant play of the muscles of his eyes'. Latterly, I am informed that his features had altered very considerably for the worse; care and fatigue had done their work upon him, and I am told by William Laidlaw that, in the months from the era of the unfortunate bankruptcy of his publishers, he looked older by as many years. My personal opinion on those matters must, of course, be limited to the very short time I had the happiness of seeing him before he went to Italy in the summer of last year,⁴ but I am borne out in these remarks by the Ettrick Shepherd, his own secretary, and many others of his earliest friends.

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⁴ This remark appears to contradict Macrone's earlier admission of never having known Scott (71); but before his Italian journey, Scott spent nearly a month at Lockhart's house in London, arriving on 28 September 1831 and leaving on 23 October, and Macrone may well have caught sight of him during this period. '[S]ummer' is a slip for 'autumn' (Johnson, II, 1195-8).

No poet of such splendid reputation had ever less of the vanity of literary fame about him than the truly illustrious subject of these memoirs. He was ever impatient and testy when the subject happened to be introduced; but if his house and grounds were praised, his management and skill as a farmer or arboriculturist extolled, or his shrewdness and research in antiquarian matters lauded, then would he listen with gratified ears, and forthwith would enter into a learned disquisition on the nature and properties of Cheviot sheep, or of the most approved mode of draining a moss, or pruning a patch of wood; and, were a tree to be felled, a hedge clipped, a field to be manured, or a walk to be weeded, he would leave his study in the midst of his cogitations, and sally forth to the superintendence of the alteration in person, and no change was sanctioned which had not received his fullest consideration in all its points. He had a rough, shaggy old pony, upon which, accompanied by his servant, he would perform the circuit of his estate several times in the course of a week, armed with a pruning knife or a hatchet at his saddle bow, with which he committed fearful devastation on the trees in his avenues. If he came to a point from which the landscape struck him as being more beautiful than at another, he would immediately make root and branch work of the trees which obstructed the view; it is thus that, from many places in his grounds, the most enchanting glimpses of the country may be obtained, and my attention was particularly directed to one pet spot, where he erected a rude stone dial, to which he has given the quaint name of ‘Turn-again’, this point being generally the termination of his *walk*. Here he would loll for hours, contemplating the varied beauties of the Vale of Tweed, or dream fresh and beautiful creations into being; and here, I have been told, he would often remain till called home by the sound of the dinner bell, when he would hastily shut up his note-book, call to his trusty terrier Spicy (the estimable parent of many of the redoubted Pepper and Mustard

breed),⁵ and limp home with marvellous facility. I looked on the spot with veneration, for it was here, no doubt, that many of his most beautiful pictures of nature were drawn.

I do not wish to insinuate that he himself sat *to himself* for the far-famed Antiquary, Jonathan Oldbuck, Esquire, of Monkbarns; but, certes, he, in more respects than one, resembled that original creation of his fancy. Indeed, I am not sure that the well-known incident of the prætorium of Agricola was not realised upon his own domain; there is, at all events, a certain park on the estate, in which there is a certain circle and fosse, and which field, it is reported, he gave an extravagant price for, upon the supposition of its being, *bona fide*, a veritable Roman camp. Whether ‘*Aiken Drum’s Long Ladle*’⁶ was found there, I know not, but the field went out of favour very soon after the purchase.

It is evident, from the situation, exposure, and soil of Abbotsford, that more attention was paid by him, in the purchase, to picturesque situation, than good arable qualities; the major part of the property has been thickly planted, to the extent, I believe, of some thousand acres, and the rest is chiefly let out in pasture to his various tacksmen. The estate, therefore, can never, at any time, support itself and the expensive mansion, but the possessor will require a handsome independence to support it. A property yielding a baronial rental was not, however, coveted by Sir Walter, who was life-renter of the rich fields of Parnassus, upon which umquhile barren spot he derived his immense revenue; his terrestrial lands were but his hobby, and he spent a great deal more money on them than they will ever yield.

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⁵ Pepper and Mustard are Dandie Dinmont’s terriers, introduced in *Guy Mannering*, edited by P. D. Garside (Edinburgh, 1999), 119.

⁶ Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, edited by David Hewitt (Edinburgh, 1995), 31.

With regard to the ‘romance in stone and lime’, as Abbotsford is aptly designated by some French tourist,⁷ it has been so often and so ably described by visitors of every degree and every pretension, that it might betray a lack of judgement, as well as a very considerable share of vanity, to attempt a further description of that which has employed the pens of the most celebrated men of our time. The more it is examined, the more must the most inconsiderate person agree that to create such another edifice would require a whole and undivided lifetime of consideration. The exquisite taste and selection of the interior ornaments, is only equalled by the classic, although eccentric, ensemble of the building itself, which already assumes much of the air and appearance of an antique monastic pile, as if the insensible stones were themselves aiding the genius of its creator in the beautiful delusion he reared. The high-storied hall, with its ‘dim religious light’⁸ – the relics of the ‘days of the years that are gone’⁹ – the plumed knight, of his own gorgeous chivalry – the puissant battle axe – the dark instruments of torture, and the baronial insignia of the olden time, are mixed and varied in his own exquisite taste, and form a whole the like of which is only to be found in his own *Ivanhoe*.

*

‘Never mind him’, said the placable bard.¹⁰ ‘Just let the body scribble on; the more he says, the better I’m kenn’d, and the better *he*’s kenn’d’. Well indeed it would be for literature, if

⁷ ‘It is the realization of dreams: some Frenchman called it, I hear, “a romance in stone and lime”’ (‘Abbotsford described, by a distinguished American’, *The Anniversary: or, Poetry and Prose for MDCCXXIX* (Sharpe, 1829), 100).

⁸ ‘And storied Windows richly dight, / Casting a dimm religious light’ (*Il Penseroso*, 159-160, in *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, edited by Helen Darbishire (Oxford, 1958), 428).

⁹ This quotation, the cadence of which has an air of Ossian about it, has not been traced.

¹⁰ “He’ll soon find his own level; the weeds grow apace, and wither as soon” is here deleted.

everyone received and returned an affront like Sir Walter Scott. To the humble aspirant for poetic fame, he was ever encouraging and lenient; every poor worshipper of the Nine had his [illegible] praised to his heart's content. These applications soon multiplied to such a degree that it must have taken up a considerable portion of the good-natured bard's time to notice their works and write encouraging, and even flattering, letters; this in some degree, however, was an evil, and many an excellent shoemaker and man-milliner were for ever spoiled as good tradesmen by 'the great' Sir Walter Scott's assurances that they were possessed of much original genius; his library at Abbotsford has an enormous collection of these poetical ephemera, the majority of which, I believe, are to be found nowhere else, saving on the unhappy booksellers' shelves. His [illegible] was a failing, it is true, but it was a failing which leaned to virtue's side, and if the gods did not make them poetical, it was no fault of Sir Walter. Apropos of the Abbotsford library, I found it arranged by his own hand, in the most admirable and classic order. The *heavy* works he has, with much prudence, placed near the ground, both with a view to convenient migration, and as a ground to the safety of his upper shelves. The race or *Genus Irritabile*, the poets,¹¹ he has classed according to their several pretensions and grades, and they fill nearly all the northern department of the library. Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Byron, Campbell, Moore, Rogers, Wordsworth, Southey, Hogg, *et hoc genus omne*, are disposed in one particular place, and quite within arm's length, while those of a humbler calibre are more difficult of access, from the infrequency, probably, of reference. The rest of this noble collection, amounting to nearly twenty thousand volumes, are placed on the shelves with an equal regard to their merits and usefulness, and each volume numbered and labeled with his own hand; a light graceful gallery runs round the whole hall, which is accessible by a moveable staircase, and this terminates my reminiscence of the Abbotsford library. I may add that, since his death, his own bust by Chantrey has been

¹¹ 'Genus irritabile vatum' (Horace, *Epistles II. II. 102*): 'the fretful race of bards'.

placed in the opposite niche to that of Shakespeare, a mode of disposal which he never would sanction while alive, but which nevertheless struck me, in that region of well-classed authors, as being the most appropriately disposed pair in the room.

I find I am insensibly being beguiled into a description of ‘the lion’s den’ after all; and, indeed, once upon this hobby, I find I can with difficulty give up the detail, albeit perfectly conscious of my inability to do the subject anything like justice. The indulgent reader, therefore, must e’en bear with me in my wayward infirmity, and pardon me if I revel a little longer in a region which was another fairyland to me.

CHAPTER VI

MISCELLANEOUS TRAITS AND ANECDOTES

Politics – Failure as a Dramatist – Laidlaw on the Writing of *Ivanhoe* – David Constable on M. Petizon – Love of Song – Clemency to Poachers – Powers of Memory – Humility – Morality – Religion – Proofreading – Authorship Denied Again – Portraits – Maida – Advice to Young Authors – A Bold Appeal Rewarded – Joanna Baillie at Abbotsford – The Crisis – The Death of Lady Scott – Her Charity – A Visit to Paris – Revolution and Reform

In his politics, he was a firm and unflinching friend of his country and our common good: his love for our ancient institutions was intense, but it was, in some points, mistaken and abstract in its character. His love for feudal times and feudal manners displayed itself in his every heroic line, and it may be that he carried more of feudal politics into the vortex of reform displayed in the nineteenth century, than was consistent with the character of an actual lover of freedom. It is thus that an eminent scholar of the present day, himself most violently opposed to Toryism, felicitously and aptly denominated Sir Walter's political bias ‘the politics of a poet, who lived, moved and had his being in a gorgeous world of his own creating; who saw nothing but ruin consequent on any change which had, for its object, the placing of uncontrolled power in the hands of the people’.¹

Probably, had Sir Walter lived to behold the working of the measure he dreaded, and dreaded from a love of his country's welfare alone, he might have been induced to retract the opinions which he, somewhat hastily, expressed at a popular meeting, and which brought his name, at the time, into public disrepute. Be that as it may, however, it is evident that no

¹ This quotation has not been traced.

political stigma of illiberality can ever attach itself to the fame of a poet, who, in every page of his immortal writings, painted the loves and joys and trials of the meanest of his countrymen with as true a hand as he painted the despotism of their lords of the soil with an unsparing one. Where so many examples to illustrate the remark occur in his writings, it would be invidious to single out one, but I may just remind the reader of the haughty expulsion of honest Cuddie Headrigg and the righteous Mause from their ‘biel downset’ by the bigoted Lady Bellenden, because the conscientious scruples of the aforesaid Mause run counter to a display of her son’s equestrian skill in the cause of the ungodly.²

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As a dramatist, Scott, like Lord Byron, has failed, more from a want of the peculiar knowledge required to produce stage effect, than for any deficiency in their several powers of conception. Writing for public representation is a walk of literature so entirely dissimilar to other branches, that a lifetime of study is often insufficient to produce a perfect tragedy. It is thus that the appearance of a great dramatist is hailed as an epoch in the literary world. There can be no doubt, however, that the elements of this species of composition were deeply implanted in Scott’s mind, and had he given it more of his attention, it is impossible to say what might have been the result. No one will deny that the germ for one of the finest tragedies in the English language may be found in *Kenilworth* or *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

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² Walter Scott, *The Tale of Old Mortality*, edited by Douglas Mack (Edinburgh, 1993), 51-5.

The day while at Abbotsford [*sic*], musing on the wonderful power he possessed in identifying himself, in every instance, so peculiarly with his characters, I inquired of Mr Laidlaw, if he never observed any particular emotion displayed by Sir Walter, while writing or dictating his works: if he never, as it were, seemed astonished at his own boundless imaginings, or betrayed any outward enthusiasm while writing his heroic passages. He informed me that never in any instance, to his observation, had his demeanour changed while writing ‘to grave, or gay, or lively, or severe’,³ but that he preserved the same inflexibility of countenance throughout. ‘Often’, said Mr. Laidlaw, ‘have I involuntarily looked up from my book in astonishment and awe at the wonderful being, who could thus pour out his mighty inspirations like a running stream, and yet never betray the least symptom that he was doing anything out of the common; he would *hitch* up and down in his study, pausing patiently for my finishing a sentence, then away again in the regions of romance, as if it were the most commonplace thing in the world.

‘Once, and only once’ (I quote from my recollection of Mr Laidlaw’s conversation with me on the subject) ‘did he seem to feel completely satisfied and carried away from his equanimity with his character [*sic*]; it was but for a moment, but the impression will remain with me for life. Sir Walter was recovering from a painful illness at the time he composed *Ivanhoe*, which he dictated to me from his sickbed. We had come to that sublime passage of the siege and destruction of Torquilstone Castle, and the horrible death of its haughty lord, who exclaims, in the midst of his maniac ravings, ‘Who laughs!’,⁴ as the fearful echo of his own mirth re-echoed on his ears. Sir Walter’, continued Mr Laidlaw, ‘started up in bed, and, assuming the wild look and cry of the savage baron, shouted ‘Who laughs!’, till the roof rung again. I was too much overcome by my own enthusiasm at the moment, to notice the action much, but I thought of it afterwards as a singular, because novel, circumstance’.

³ ‘From grave to gay, from lively to severe’ (*An Essay on Man*, Epistle IV, in Pope, 547).

⁴ *Ivanhoe*, 257-8.

How I envied Mr Laidlaw in his glorious occupation! To hear daily, for years, that deep mellow voice pouring its mighty periods upon his tympanum, and have the proud consciousness that he was assisting to give forth to the world the result of this labour [*sic*].⁵

Sir Walter never thought of looking at his work after it was fairly down upon paper. Still less did he ever think of opening one of his novels after it was printed. Mr. Laidlaw informed me that he fully believed the author was more ignorant of the matter contained in his writings than any one in the country, and as a proof of this, mentioned that Sir Walter, one day, by the merest chance, took up a volume which happened to lie upon the table, and exclaimed, after skimming a few pages, ‘Od, this is no that ill, Willie: I didna think I had written onything sae gude’, and thereupon, he coolly laid down the book (whose name I have forgotten, but I think it was *The Antiquary*) and went on his way.

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Shrewd as he was, and he possessed much of that necessary ingredient in a Scotchman’s character, he was occasionally over-reached, and one instance of this, which was communicated to me by Mr David Constable, has so much of the *vis comica*, that I willingly give it insertion.

About the time that *Peveril of the Peak* appeared, Sir Walter received a letter from some professing worshipper of his genius in France, named Monsieur Petizon, which contained, among many soft and flattering compliments, a proposal that they should have an exchange of gifts in their respective professions: in other words, the wily Frenchman offered, provided Sir Walter would send him a complete edition of all his works, to return him a corresponding quantity of champagne of the best vintage in France. This proposal Sir Walter,

⁵ Macrone was evidently unaware that Scott never dictated his novels, except when, as in the case of *Ivanhoe*, physical weakness made it impossible for him to write them in longhand.

simply enough, agreed to, and not only gave Mr Constable orders to send him all his avowed works, but the novels into the bargain. This very handsome present, amounting at the time to no less than some sixty volumes, beautifully bound, was sent to the admiring Monsieur Petizon, leaving the promised return to his honor, and in due time the donor received, to his infinite chagrin and disappointment, not the expected ‘rich and rare’ addition to his cellar, but some two or three dozen of very inferior champagne, which he could in no wise present to his guests, without bringing a stigma upon his hospitality. Sir Walter, I am inclined to think, answered no more applications on the score of his *génie divin*, after this *ruse* of the clever Frenchman, who thus not only succeeded in cheating him out of his books, but (negatively) wormed his secret out of him into the bargain. I have no doubt that M. Petizon chuckled amazingly at the success of his negotiation with *La Veritable Author des nouvelles divin [sic]*.

*

Voice he had none. He could not even boast with Burns that

‘Crooning to a body’s sel’

Did well eneugh’,⁶

for the author of ‘Anna-Marie’ and ‘Jock o’ Hazeldean’ could not even ‘croon to himself’. Once, and only once, I believe, was he ever guilty of singing, or rather attempting to sing in public; and although upon ‘that memorable occasion’, as he says of Dominie Sampson’s cacchination, the landlady did *not* miscarry,⁷ yet, I am veritably informed, the effect produced

⁶ ‘Yet crooning to a body’s sel, / Does weel eneugh’ (‘Epistle to J. L*****k, An Old Scotch Bard’, 47-48, in Burns, I, 86).

⁷ *Guy Mannering*, 16.

by Sir Walter's 'Tarry woo' upon the cacchinary powers of his audience was long remembered. He after used to remark, with reference to this debut, that he was 'nae speaker, and it was a desperate thing to hae naething either to sing or say'. He was, however, distractedly fond of hearing music performed or sung by others; a plaintive old Scottish ballad would bring tears into his eyes, and the martial airs of the border never failed to excite in him a corresponding degree of enthusiasm; often would he lean for hours over Mrs Lockhart, who used to chant the sweet border airs with great sweetness and expression. To have a little musical party 'got up' at Abbotsford in the evening, never failed to rouse him effectually, and as his daughters sang and played delightfully, it was not difficult to get up.

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His well-known forbearance and lenity towards that numerous and predatory class denominated blackfishers and poachers, has often been commented upon. Hogg mentions that 'he had a little of the old outlaw blood in him, and, if he had been able, would have been a desperate blackfisher himself'.⁸ This hypothesis may seem a little too startling; but, certes, his predilection for those who adhered to the 'good old rule

That they should take who have the power

And they should keep who can'⁹

⁸ 'If he has a feeling of partiality in his whole disposition, it is for the poachers and fishers, at least I know that they all think he has a fellow-feeling with them, – that he has a little of the old outlaw blood in him, and, if he had been able, would have been a desperate poacher and black-fisher' (Hogg, 'Statistics of Selkirkshire', *Prize Essays and Transactions of the Highland Society of Scotland: New Series, Vol. III* (Blackwood and Cadell, 1832), 305).

⁹ 'For why? – because the good old rule / Sufficeth them, the simple plan, / That they should take, who have the power, / And they should keep who can' (Wordsworth, 'Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803', XI ('Rob Roy's Grave'), 37-40, in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, edited by E. De Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford, 1952-9), 3, 80).

embroiled him occasionally, I believe, with some of the neighbouring gentry, who complained loudly to him for [*illegible*], as Sheriff, with the delinquents. He would soon disarm them of their resentment, and turn the matter off with some good-natured remark, such as ‘O, Sir, we must not be too hard with the poor rogues – mony a gude kipper they hae gien us’: an appeal to the consciences of the complainers which seldom failed to convince them that, after all, there were worse neighbours than the blackfishers.

*

It has been asserted in several quarters that Sir Walter’s gift of memory was so extraordinary, that it enabled him to repeat the whole of *The Pleasures of Hope* after one reading, the manuscript of that celebrated poem being, it was stated, placed in his hands for inspection previous to publication. I am authorised on Mr Campbell’s own statement to contradict this: it was not until some years after the poem was published that Mr Campbell was introduced to his brother poet. Mr Campbell informs me that the rumour had its origin probably from the circumstance of Sir Walter having been much struck with the wild originality of ‘Lochiel’, and reciting it after one perusal to the author.

*

Shenstone’s celebrated observation that ‘humility has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame’,¹⁰ might be considered to be reversed in the case of

¹⁰ ‘Humility has depressed many a genius into an hermit; but never yet raised one into a poet of eminence’ (‘On allowing MERIT in OTHERS’, *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone*, 2 vols (Dodsley, 1764), II, 15). The altered version quoted by Macrone will be found in Burns’s preface to *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Woodstock, 1991), v.

Scott. Literary pride he had none; he never bent the knee to the *Baal* of public opinion. Criticism did not appal him; blame he heeded not; praise he never acknowledged. We can scarcely believe that so much humility with intellect so prodigious [*sic*]. Yet it is a veritable fact that he was in the constant habit of speaking of many living (!) literary men ‘the latch of whose shoes he was unworthy to loose’.¹¹ We might smile at this, if we doubted Scott’s sincerity. Of Miss Edgeworth, he says in his General Introduction ‘that it was with a *faint hope*, etc.’¹² Without disparagement of the many and brilliant laurels this accomplished lady has won, it must have been somewhat painful to her feelings to hear Scott’s [*illegible*] comparisons of their respective productions.

*

Throughout the whole of his writings there breathes a tone of the most exalted morality, as well as a pure feeling of religious and [*blank in manuscript*]

It is this that stamps him as a writer of the first class in that noble brotherhood of genius which may be denominated the benefactors of mankind. The besotted zealot who discerns in moral truth clothed in the garb of agreeable and instructive fiction, nothing but frivolous and unprofitable results, is no judge of the writings of Sir Walter Scott, and yet this

¹¹ *Macrone’s footnote*: This may remind some readers of Burns’s stanza, wherein, writing of contemporary and departed genius with all the apparent humility in the world, he says:

‘Oh for a spunk o’ Allan’s glee
Or Fergusson’s, the bauld and slee,
Or bright Lapraik’s, my friend to be,’ etc. etc.

[‘Epistle to J. L*****k, An Old Scotch Bard’, 79-81, in Burns, I, 87]

¹² This last phrase is not in the General Preface to the Waverley Novels. Dr Jane Stabler has suggested to me that Macrone may have been thinking of Scott’s desire ‘to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth’, which he mentions in the last chapter of *Waverley*, 364.

is the only class that has hitherto presumed to hold up this great and good man as a scoffer at religion. They are too blind to discover that under the irresistible raillery and playful satire of his pen, have fled the demons of bigotry and intolerance, which, to the disgrace of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, has [*sic*] long stained her annals. A hundred and a hundred homilies may be preached, and the weapons of spiritual warfare will continue to be levelled at the follies and vices of the world for ages to come, but none will contain more maxims for the guidance of mankind, more lessons for the benefit of the world, than those writings which have been denominated vain and frivolous by the ‘unco guid and rigidly righteous’¹³ of the land.

*

Sir Walter seems to have had a strong bias to the aristocratic and high-church principles in religion as well as in politics. The set of Presbyterians to whom his father and all his immediate relatives belonged, seemed to him to profess in their creed too many of the *levelling principles* which from his earliest youth were his aversion. With a mind moulded like his, it might be easily foreseen that he would *secede* from the Kirk whose very being was engendered by the march of reformation, and attach himself to the more lofty and *more ancient* hierarchy which succeeded the pomp of Roman worship. His secession, it is well known, gave great offence to many of the poet’s warmest admirers, who therefore did not scruple to attack even his imputed irreligion. To this length, however, I am not prepared to go. Sir Walter was, in every sense of the word, a religious man; he could not have been otherwise, and though he did not worship God in the simple, unpretending temples of his fathers, he no less adored him in the closet, and in the family [*sic*]. Mr Hogg, albeit that he is

¹³ See the ‘Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous’ (Burns, I, 52-54).

tainted with the received opinion that Presbyterianism was a laughing-stock to the Author of *Waverley*, acknowledges that in the family exercises of the Church he was frequent and regular.

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The following I give on the authority of a literary friend, who states that he had it from Mr Ballantyne himself. Sir Walter one day, in the printing shop of the latter, happened to take up a proof copy of *Ivanhoe* wherein a celebrated critic of the day had ‘queried’ some passages which appeared to him to be deficient in lucidity. ‘Ha!’ said the novelist. ‘What have we here, Jamie?’ ‘Oh!’ answered the Caxtonite. ‘It’s only criticism’. ‘Criticism!’ echoed the Great Unknown. ‘How dare *he* make corrections. You ought to have told him that the author of *Waverley* belonged to the ‘black [illegible]’ of literature and will neither *take* nor *give* criticism’.

*

Mr Hogg informed me that on one occasion, while Sir Walter chanced to be on a visit at Mount Benger, and being ushered into the Shepherd’s library, he saw his prose works, each labelled ‘Scott’s Novels’, the shrewd binder having taken it as a matter of course that they could be no one’s else. ‘Sir Walter gave a great *hitch* round the room’, relates Mr Hogg, ‘and merely said, ‘What a stupid fellow your binder must be, Jamie, to spell *Scots* with two t’s’’.

*

If the mental portraits of Sir Walter have been unnumbered, the outward man has no less been the object of innumerable pictorial representations. Of the thousand likenesses [illegible] given to the world, there have been few which have been successful in representing him ‘in his habit as he lived’.¹⁴ His face was indeed a true index of his mind, ever varying ‘from grave to gay, from lively to severe’.¹⁵ Posterity will have an abundance to pick and choose from. It is not for me, therefore, to say which will remain the historical likeness. He has been repeatedly painted by Raeburn, Allan, Wilkie, Gordon, and others of his intimate friends of the North. Raeburn’s portraits will probably bear a comparison with any others which have yet been produced.¹⁶ Of the artists of the South, Chantrey’s immortal bust was far beyond its fellows. Lawrence, true to the aristocracy, has depicted him with a countenance which the amiable original seldom wore, haughty and austere.

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This noble animal, one of the most magnificent dogs ever seen in the country, was a gift to Sir Walter from the redoubted Glengarry, the Lord of the Isles, and named Maida by him in commemoration of the affray in which The MacDonald [*sic*] fought. It was long

‘unmatched for courage, strength, and speed’,¹⁷

¹⁴ ‘My father, in his habit as he lived!’ (*Hamlet* III. iv. 133).

¹⁵ The source of this quotation from Pope is given in the third footnote to this chapter.

¹⁶ *Macrone’s footnote*: Since the above was written, Landseer’s picture of the Bard in his favourite glen, has been produced, and has attracted very great admiration. I should do the artist much injustice if I did not class this portrait among the first of those which have, from time to time, been given. Like the rest of his works, it is [*incomplete*]

¹⁷ Macrone is quoting from memory: the line is properly ‘Unmatched for courage, breath, and speed’ (*The Lady of the Lake*, Canto First, VII, 121, in Scott, *Complete Poetical Works*, 157).

and was a prodigious favourite with its master, who was never seen without this trusty attendant.¹⁸ Its nightly post was at the door of its master's bedroom, and woe betide the disturber of his slumbers.

Poor Maida died of sheer old age at Abbotsford, and was buried at the door of the house, where some rude churl has raised a stone Maida over the true one, and the Author of *Waverley* has dignified it with a motto to this purport:

‘Maidæ marmorea dormis sub imagine Maida’.¹⁹

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Sir Walter, as may be readily supposed, was repeatedly applied to for his opinion of the merits of their works, by young authors. On these occasions he always displayed the utmost [*illegible*], but in no instance would he flatter them, as doubtless many of them expected he would, by commending their productions, unless to the extent to which he really thought they deserved such commendation. He invariably expressed his actual opinion, however unfavourable it might be, coupled with the advice he thought the circumstances called for. On this topic, the following letter²⁰ written by Sir Walter to a young aspirant for

¹⁸ Macrone here writes “Its great beauty” says Sir W. &c. – see acc^t. of pointers’. The passage in question has not been traced.

¹⁹ The second and last line of Scott's epitaph, which Macrone does not quote, is *Ad januam domini sit tibi terra levius*. The whole may be roughly translated as ‘You sleep under a marble effigy of yourself, Maida, at your master's door; may the earth lie softly on you’.

²⁰ *Macrone's footnote*: Extracted from the Dublin University Magazine for February 1833. The young gentleman who is here honoured with Sir Walter's advice was, says the arbiter, ‘formerly distinguished as a successful candidate for the Vice-Chancellor's prizes in our University’. He had sent ‘the modern Ariosto’ a copy of one of his poems, accompanied by a note, to which the above feeling and admirable answer was immediately returned, although, at the time, the illustrious novelist was beset on all hands with the exuberance of Irish hospitality. [The letter will be found in ‘Random Poetics’, *The Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. I, No.

poetical honours, while on his short visit to Dublin, will say more for his kindly feelings and generous philanthropy than a thousand strictures on moral usefulness.

‘I am obliged with your letter’, begins he. ‘I generally am unwilling to correspond on the [*blank in manuscript*] art of poetry,²¹ because one must give pain by criticism or perhaps excite false hopes by complaisance, and neither alternative is pleasant. But youth is a sacred word with me, and has at all times a right to the best advice which experience enables me to offer. Your early composition shews I think both spirit and thought, and expression, but it has many of the faults incident to early composition, in particular the language is at times too flowery to express the author’s precise meaning. But I have had only time to look at the verses, otherwise I should find more to censure and more to applaud.²²

‘I greatly approve of your resolution to work hard at your studies, there is no rising to any permanent eminence in literature, without knowing a great deal more than others do, and Horace you know tells us

‘*Sapere est principium et fons*’.²³

‘There is, beside, this weighty consideration, that if you should ever fail of becoming an eminent poet, a matter which may depend upon chance as well as merit, you cannot fail of becoming a learned, accomplished, and respectable man. The cultivation of the understanding will be in this case to you what the diligent digging of their father’s garden was to the peasants in the fable, they did not find the treasure which his dying words led them to seek, but they raised an excellent crop, which was as good a thing’.

II (February 1833), 209-210. Macrone’s text is inaccurate; it may be that he could not find a copy of the issue in question, and innocently reproduced someone else’s transcription.]

²¹ The *University Magazine* text has ‘the subject of Poetry’.

²² The *University Magazine* text has ‘as well as to applaud’.

²³ ‘Scribendi recte sapere est principium et fons’ (*Ars Poetica*, 309): ‘knowledge is the foundation and source of good writing’.

The conclusion of this admirable letter ought to be printed in characters of gold.

‘Let me hope’, continues he, ‘that your studies tend to some profession; that of literature alone, and for subsistence, is the most miserable thing in the world, you must either be a slave of the daily press and sell your daily thoughts for your daily bread, or you must court the caprice of the Public by compositions, adopted not at your own choice, but that of the booksellers, and sacrifice²⁴ both literary and personal independence: whereas having a profession you may use literature as a staff to support you occasionally, not as a crutch to lean upon, and write *when* you please and *how* you please.²⁵

‘To these few hints I can only add the propriety of abstaining from dissipations of every kind, which seldom fail, when habitually practised, to deprave the imagination, and destroy the powers designed for higher purposes. I can only add, that I remain your sincere friend and well-wisher as well as obliged servant,

‘Walter Scott.

‘10, Stephen’s-green,

‘Wednesday, —— 1825.

‘P. S. – The kindness of my Dublin friends has scarce left me a moment to write these lines’.

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²⁴ The *University Magazine* text has ‘sacrifice of course literary and even personal’.

²⁵ The *University Magazine* text does not italicise ‘when’ and ‘how’.

A friend, who enjoyed much of Sir Walter's esteem and confidence, related to me the circumstance [*sic*], which, were it not that many similar could be recorded upon the most unquestionable authority, would savor more of romance than reality.

My friend, who often entertained Scott at his table and was entertained by him in return, had invited, upon one occasion, a number of gentlemen to dine with Sir Walter at his house, previous to a visit of the latter to London. Upon the forenoon of the appointed evening, a stranger, whose name my friend never remembered to have heard, was announced, and addressed him in words to the following purport: 'Mr * * *, my name is * * *. You do not know me, but I am going to make a very odd request. I have come five hundred miles to see Sir Walter Scott, and though I have frequented all places described to me as likely to find him in, I have been disappointed. I have heard that you are on terms of the utmost familiarity with him, and that he is to be in your house this night. Will you, dear sir, excuse my boldness if I beg of you that I may be one of the party? I entreat, I implore you may indulge me'. My friend, although somewhat startled at this strange mode of invitation, perceived that the stranger was a gentleman, and politely granted his request. My friend, previous to the meeting, mentioned this to the poet, who laughed heartily at the curiosity of the unknown, saying 'Oh, man, gin Johnny Ballantyne ken'd this, he wad bamboozle the chiel!' During the ceremonial of introduction, the stranger trembled very violently; but Sir Walter's gracious demeanour and bland address soon restored him to his wits. Before parting, the good-natured bard was so pleased with the young gentleman's conversation, that he gave him a warm invitation to come 'down and see him at Abbotsford before he went²⁶ south', an invitation which doubtless the enthusiastic stranger, afterwards discovered to be a young Englishman of birth and family, joyfully accepted.

²⁶ Macrone originally wrote 'gae'd' for 'went'.

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There is a clump of trees near the mansion, denominated ‘Joanna Baillie’s grove’, the history of which is somewhat interesting. It is said that the venerable and highly talented lady whose name it bears, sat on a chair in the middle of the space allotted for the grove until her friend had fairly walled her round with young trees, planted by his own hand, and gave it the name which doubtless it will bear so long as there is a stick remaining of the original wood. Miss Baillie he regarded with high respect and veneration, and it well may be a source of pride to this excellent lady that Sir Walter Scott himself acknowledged her superiority of talents over all her contemporaries.²⁷

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His bookseller, the ‘far kenn’d and noted’²⁸ bibliophile Mr Archibald Constable, eventually involved Sir Walter to no large [*illegible*]. He had been most useful to Sir Walter as a publisher. Himself possessing in no ordinary degree a deep and extensive research [*sic*] into the history and antiquities of his country, and a shrewd penetrating mind, his advice and assistance were invaluable to his illustrious coadjutor, who rarely entered into a fresh undertaking without consulting his friend upon points which he was unable to elucidate, and he rarely asked in vain. Mr Constable was also an *honest* man in the kindest sense of the word, and gave his opinions frankly on matters wherein he deemed Sir Walter defective. These counsels were received and adopted in the same good spirit in which they were

²⁷ This paragraph is derived from James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Scott*, edited by Jill Rubenstein (Edinburgh, 2004), 30.

²⁸ ‘Far ken’d, an’ noted is thy name’ (‘Address to the Deil’, 14, in Burns, I, 169). Macrone’s application of this line is clearly a small joke at Constable’s expense.

tendered. ‘Authors *make* booksellers, it is true’, was the astute remark of Sir Walter to a friend, ‘but Mr Archibald Constable has done much for Scotch authorship’.²⁹ To this well-merited elogium, little can be added. Much cruel obloquy was thrown upon this unfortunate gentleman at the time of his bankruptcy, and the result, it is much to be feared, hastened his decease. We have, however, his great patron’s recorded testimony that in all his dealings, Mr Constable was actuated towards him by a spirit of honour and probity, and the blow which fell upon the poet with so much rigour, descended with no less force on the bookseller; and the grave soon covered his misfortunes. In pausing upon this melancholy portion of my narrative, it may not be irrelevant to remark in defence of the imputed imprudence of Mr Constable, that the shock which mercantile credit received in the disastrous year 1825 was alike unforeseen as it was sudden, and the pecuniary engagements under which the firm of Constable & Co. was involved were of such a nature as in the ordinary course of business could easily have been met. In this matter, I am perfectly aware that Sir Walter blamed himself only. No odium, therefore, can be attached to the memory of a most useful and amiable man, and one of the most active promoters of Scottish literature. Mr Constable, it may be, calculated too much upon the apparently inexhaustible resources of the poet’s genius, and launched out into speculations incompatible with the character of a man of prudence.

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²⁹ Amédée Pichot, *Historical and Literary Tour of a Foreigner in England and Scotland*, 2 vols (Saunders and Otley, 1825), II, 417.

In this year³⁰ Lady Scott died. She had been for a long time ailing, and the management of the household concerns had devolved upon her daughters. Her loss, therefore, did not leave that gap in the family of the poet which, in other circumstances, it would have occasioned. She was, however, much and justly lamented by all those who had an opportunity of duly estimating her goodness of heart, her simplicity, and above all, her love for her husband, which almost amounted to adoration: nothing gave her more pain than any allusion, however slight, derogatory to his fame, and in everything that tended to extend that fame, she took the most lively interest. He would often smile at her almost infinite eagerness to obtain all the reviews and remarks of the day upon the theme that was dearest to her heart.

In her youth, she had been eminently beautiful and graceful of person, and she retained much of her attractions to the last. The peculiar and strict attention which she paid to dress and appearance often annoyed Sir Walter, who, himself one of the most careless in attire, esteemed over-much attention to dress in one whose years more than approached the meridian of life, as frivolous. Mr Hogg informed me that he was so much struck with her extremely youthful appearance upon an occasion of his visiting Abbotsford, that he could not help complimenting her in his familiar and naive strain. Her head-attire peculiarly attracted the Shepherd's admiration: 'Why, dear me, Leddy Scott, but ye hae wonderfu' bonny curls. They're just extraordinary fine'. 'Aha! Mr. Hogg', said the candid lady, 'it is de wig'. I suspect the Shepherd might, in the nautical phrase, have been entirely 'thrown aback' by this answer to his compliment.

Sir Walter lived as happily with his lady as might be supposed capable [*sic*] for one whose tastes and habits were so essentially dissimilar. Born and bred among a proverbially voluble and versatile people, she imbibed many of their habits, which after life did not assuage; and this, doubtless, occasioned many interruptions of that happiness which she

³⁰ 1826.

would otherwise have shared with her gifted husband. In the few hours of ease which severe study and labour afforded his mind and temper, alike harassed by incessant exertions, he required the soothing attentions of kindred intellect, instead of the frivolities of artificial life: but in a subject necessarily so delicate, it is best to say little, and that little as gentle as may be. The attentions of his amiable family amply compensated him for any other grievances which

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In other respects the excellent and amiable lady was universally beloved, not only for her numerous private charities, but for the sympathy with which she accompanied her bounty. Her memory is adored by the rustic population, and the ‘gude Leddy Scott’ is a name never mentioned but with humble affection and gratitude.

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In Paris,³¹ Sir Walter was received with the most extraordinary attentions ever bestowed, I believe, on mortal poet. The generous and volatile nation seemed to vie with each other who should pay for the most extravagant compliments, and wherever he went, in the magnificent *Salons* of royalty as in the humbler coteries of the commoners, he received the same reverential adoration. The newspapers in England teemed with extracts from the French journals, whose editors thought that their space could not be more laudably employed than in

³¹ Scott arrived in Paris on 29 October 1826 and left on 7 November (*The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by W. E. K. Anderson (Oxford, 1972), 223, 234).

watching the motions of ‘Walter Scott’. The grave reader smiled at the minutiae of these lion-hunters: did Sir Walter utter the most commonplace expression in the hearing of any of his open-mouthed admirers, it was straightway chronicled as the most important information; a remark on the weather became proverbial, but an opinion on *la grand nation* was as the law of the land. All this worship, however, moved not our imperturbable bard, who, though grateful to it, was not elated by it,³² and he modestly [*illegible*] through the furnace of the trial with that meekness of deportment which always formed so distinguishing a feature of his character. Cooper, the American novelist – the ‘Walter Scott of the waters’ – happened to be there at the time, and a shrewd, nervous writer has depicted in graphic language the totally dissimilar deportment of the novelists in society: Cooper all bustle, pride, and conscious greatness; Scott, too lofty to be proud, receiving the attentions of society as if he were the *custodian* of another, and not the proper recipient of a nation’s admiration.

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The sudden and tremendous revolution which overthrew the French monarchy, and shook half the European thrones to their foundations, fell upon the head of our staunch ‘Church and King’ poet with a withering presage that it was the beginning of an end alike fearful and disastrous to the common interests of mankind. Partaking largely in the feeling that England might be the next offering to anarchy, he looked forward with gloomy forebodings to the consequences which even a partial extension of the elective franchise might cause in the minds of an excited populace. ‘Aye, aye’, remarked he bitterly to a friend who had presumed to expostulate with him on this topic, ‘ye may e’en say as ye like: let them

³² For ‘though grateful to it, was not elated by it’, Macrone originally wrote ‘received it as a matter of right or of indifference’.

but get in their wee finger, sir, and ye'll see how soon they'll work in the whole hand. We have seen the best days, Sir, of our country, take ye Walter Scott's word for it'. To such a degree were his spirits affected on this subject, that it is said it was a primary cause of his illness.

CHAPTER VII

1831-2

Illness – The Final Journey – Malta – Naples – A Tremulous Signature – Rome – Venice
– Art Criticism – Collapse on the Rhine – London – Crowds of Spectators – Departure
for Scotland – Exhaustion at Abbotsford – Death

and soon lost the strong deep tone for which in better years, it was so remarkable. His limb, too, shrunk more and more under him, and his beloved walks soon became more contracted and fatiguing. Occasional severe strokes of paralysis gradually undermined his powerful constitution, and gave melancholy forebodings to his family that the pitcher was soon indeed to be ‘broken at the fountain’.¹ He would still, however, struggle manfully against affliction, and his cheerful, bland temper never for a moment forsook him. I have the sorrowing testimonials of many of those who surrounded him to the last, and they concur in their expressions of admiration of his powers of benign endurance, even when most afflicted. He continued sanguine in his hopes of recovery, only for the sake of his family, and redeeming his name from the heavy responsibility under which it had fallen. ‘Time and I against any two’ was his cheerful proverb, and it was not until the last that spirits failed him.

As the winter of 1831 approached, it became evident to his medical attendants and family that, unless he could be removed to a warmer climate, the inclement air of the North might prove too strong for his exhausted frame. Close confinement he could not brook, and to attempt anything like his usual recreation out of doors, might be attended with dangerous results. For a long time, he withstood the tender solicitations of his own children, and the

¹ ‘Remember now thy Creator [...] / Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. / Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it’ (Ecclesiastes 12. 1, 6-7).

anxious wishes of his medical advisers. He evidently feared to die in a foreign land, far from those beloved scenes which seemed to link his nature closer to mortality [*sic*]. In vain was he told, it was a paramount necessity that the ‘sweet South’² should breathe calmly and healthfully into his wearied system, that he could no longer face the mountain storm as he was wont to do: the thoughts of parting from his fondly-cherished hills and streams, perhaps never to return, weighed heavily upon his spirit, and filled him with sad forebodings. The beautiful and touching address to the reader in the fourth series of the *Tales of my Landlord* – the last, as stated, he was ever destined to pen – is filled with those presentiments, which were too soon to be realised in their fullest extent. Alas! the feeble hope which he here expressed of again approaching the public in a new walk of literature, was soon doomed to be overshadowed, and the nucleus of his fresh imaginings never formed itself into a palpable shape.

Wearied out with the incessant wishes of his friends, the Author of *Waverley* at last consented to seek health in milder scenes, and left Abbotsford on the [*blank in manuscript*] of [*blank in manuscript*]³ accompanied by his affectionate family. When he arrived in London, whither the news of his growing illness had anticipated him, he was received with the warm sympathies and warm inquiries of all classes of society; but he was no longer able to respond to the honours paid him. On the [*blank in manuscript*] of October,⁴ he left London for Portsmouth, to join the *Barham* sloop of war, commanded by [*blank in manuscript*],⁵ and on the twenty-seventh,⁶ the ship, with its illustrious freight, left the shores of England. The

² ‘O, it came o’er my ear like the sweet sound / That breathes upon a bank of violets’ (*Twelfth Night*, I. i. 5-6), as corrected by Pope to ‘the sweet south’ (*Twelfth Night*, edited by John Dover Wilson (Cambridge, 1949), 106).

³ 23 September (Johnson, II, 1194).

⁴ 23 October (*Journal*, 669).

⁵ Captain Pigot (*Journal*, 668).

⁶ Properly 29 October (*Journal*, 673).

weather was propitious, and, after a pleasant passage of [*blank in manuscript*],⁷ which he seemed to enjoy considerably, being, a great part of the day, upon deck, supported by his Sons, he landed at Malta,⁸ and sanguine hopes were entertained that his health had undergone a considerable change for the better. Here he rested some weeks, during which time, accompanied by his sons and daughter, who never left his side, he visited all that was worthy of observation in this celebrated island, paying the most particular attention to everything celebrated in holy writ, and evidently preparing matter in his mind for future triumphs in the field of literature. On the [*blank in manuscript*],⁹ he left Malta and sailed for Naples, where he arrived on the seventeenth of December.

Here he was received with almost regal honors; the palazzo where he abode was besieged from morn till night by anxious crowds of respectable people, who could not otherwise obtain a sight of the illustrious bard. Even the veriest lazzaroni seemed to catch the popular enthusiasm, and beset his carriage whenever he stirred abroad. The king and royal family vied with the lower ranks in their respect for the universal idol, and, in his excursions to the classic ruins of Pompeii, he was attended by his majesty and court [sic], anxious to shew him everything that might pique his curiosity. His health seemed slowly to mend, and he seldom allowed a day to pass without adding something to his information, or seeing some new spot, renowned in classic song. At the time, he expressed a desire to be able to visit Vesuvius, then showing decided symptoms of an eruption; but it was not deemed advisable that he should undergo the immense fatigue; his domestics, however, were suffered to go up

⁷ Twenty-four days.

⁸ 22 November (*Journal*, 683).

⁹ 13 December (*Journal*, 690).

the mountain, and his attendant Nicolson¹⁰ described the scene to me as one of the most sublime he had ever witnessed.

During this period, it was universally reported in England that he was so far recovered as to be engaged on a new novel, the scenes of which were to be laid in Malta,¹¹ but I am not aware that he ever commenced a fresh work. His hand got fatigued with the least exertion in writing, and I have seen a letter to a friend in Edinburgh which is dated ‘Naples’ [sic], and which, in matter and manner, is all but unintelligible. The lines are rambling and unconnected, and the whole appearance of the composition struck me as if it had been penned by a blind man: the tremulous signature, in particular – W. Sc – is thus abruptly terminated, as if the power of holding the pen had ceased with the formation of the last letter. The address is in another hand. I grieve that I cannot give the substance of the letter in question, but it would, after all, be a melancholy sight to the reader, and it is better that I should not have it in my power. It is to be presumed, therefore, that whatever matter he may have committed to paper while on his tour, will not be given to the public, or, at least, will not be published until it undergoes a careful revision by a friendly hand. I need not inform the reader that that hand is to be found in the poet’s own family, and I agree with Mr Cunningham, that nowhere can there be found a fitter or a gentler.

Before leaving Naples, he suffered the winter to pass fairly over, and it was not till the Italian skies gave ruddy promise of a glowing summer, that he addressed himself to visiting Rome, where he arrived, I believe, somewhere about the twenty-first of April.¹² What his emotions were when he first came in view of the Eternal City, I leave the reader to imagine.

¹⁰ Macrone writes Nicholson throughout, probably from never having seen his informant’s name in writing.

¹¹ *The Siege of Malta*, edited by J. H. Alexander, Judy King, and Graham Tulloch (Edinburgh, 2008). ‘[I]n Malta’ was originally ‘in Malta, among banditti and corsairs’.

¹² Properly 18 April (*Journal*, 712).

Here also, novelty seemed, for a time, to influence his health and spirits and with no ordinary feelings of enthusiasm, I am told, did he first visit the sublime ruins of imperial splendour:

‘Towering in air, the deep blue sky of Rome’.¹³

The Coliseum, the mightiest fragment of the labours of a mighty people; the more modern, but more august masterpiece of Michael Angelo, St Peter’s; the storied shores of the Tiber; the tower of Hadrian; the classic environs of the Frascati and Albani: each and all, by turns, engaged his deepest attention, and we sigh to contemplate what might have been the result of his musings among the scenes which first rendered the name of his only equal, Byron, immortal.

On his return from Rome, he was prevailed [*sic*] to stay a few days (four, I believe) in Venice, where he was received with the warmest hospitality by [*blank in manuscript*] Money,¹⁴ Esq., the English consul, in whose house he abode. Mrs Money exerted herself to procure him everything that might stimulate his failing appetites, and among other luxuries, I am told, she gave him a truly English dinner of boiled mutton and turnips, of which he partook very heartily. Some excellent wines, too, amply compensated for the sharp Venetian wines, whose peculiar nature it is to reduce the system. On his visit to the [*blank in manuscript*],¹⁵ he was received with a royal salute by the commandant, and on every occasion of his appearing in public, he [*illegible*] the same high reception. Assisted by Mr Heaphy,¹⁶ who, at that time happened to be making copies from the *chefs d’œuvre* of Titian and Guido,

¹³ Macrone is misquoting ‘Buried in air, the deep blue sky of Rome’ (*Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, 4, 111.1, in Byron, II, 161).

¹⁴ William Taylor Money.

¹⁵ The Arsenal.

¹⁶ Thomas Heaphy. See Appendix V, Section 3.

he walked with difficulty through those splendid specimens of ancient art , but seemed to be but little impressed with their beauties. With reference to a picture by Titian, which Mr Heaphy chanced to be then engaged in copying, he urged, in answer to an objection by the latter gentleman, who observed that one of the figures, a hideous old woman, was out of keeping with the rest of the performance: ‘Aye, Mr Heaphy, but do ye no ken the value o’ *contrast?* Titian, no doubt, put in the auld carline as a foil to the rest’.

Notwithstanding that the ‘Ocean Queen’ abounds in those localities which, it may be presumed, would have been interesting to the Author of *Waverley*, he took his departure on the fourth day, much gratified by his hospitable reception, and pursued his homeward route to

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Nature, however, asserted her arbitrary sway, and ere he had been long in Rome, he felt himself gradually weakening, and an overwhelming desire to return to his own Tweed, succeeded to his delight to visit the Tiber. So completely does this inclination seem to have possessed the illustrious wanderer, that he insisted on travelling literally night and day for more than a week, refusing even the necessary rest required for a healthy person; and the evil consequences of this rapid migration were soon observed upon his shattered frame. In sailing down the Rhine, he had a severe and instantaneous fit of paralytic torpor, whilst reclining on a couch in the cabin. So unexpected was the attack, that no one was with the sufferer, saving Miss Scott, who, horrified at the death-like appearance of her father, could scarcely muster strength enough to scream for assistance. Life seemed fled forever, and but for the admirable presence of mind of Nicolson, his faithful attendant, he certainly could never have recovered. In the midst of the tears and exclamations of agony of Sir Walter’s friends, Nicolson immediately opened a vein on the back of the hand, after the fashion of the Italian leeches;

and it was long ere the blood flowed from the wound. By dint of the greatest exertions in rubbing and chafing the arm, a few drops at length made their appearance, and finally some ounces were taken from the patient. Poor Nicolson informed me that he was sadly apprehensive he would not be able to hit on the right vein, being almost blinded with his tears.

This partial relief did not, however, restore him to consciousness; he continued in his torpor, and but for his regular and heavy breathing, and the shade of colour that revisited his once ruddy cheek, he seemed as if the spirit were strong within him for emancipation, and the light of reason, that better part of the soul, had fled forever. He was all insensible to the caresses and tears of his family, as he was with regard to the nourishment he received; and when the melancholy remains of him who once was Scott arrived in London, the most eminent members of the physical world thronged around him, and gave it as their decided opinion he could not survive many hours. It was deemed proper he should be taken to a hotel in Jermyn Street in preference to the house of his son-in-law, both with regard to its being a more centrical [*sic*] situation, and having more extensive accomodation for his retinue. Here, in St James's Hotel, did he linger for several weeks, in a state of such utter exhaustion and mental imbecility as is painful even to think of. He no longer recognised his own children and attendants, and he was lifted about, and raised like an infant. Public sympathy never ran higher; his name was in every mouth, and many ardent prayers were breathed for the speedy restoration of the distinguished sufferer; hundreds of carriages rolled softly over the straw-covered street daily to enquire how the night had been spent, and all ranks, high and low, seemed to vie with each other in their anxious inquiries at the door of the inn.¹⁷ But there he

¹⁷ *Macrone's footnote:* Among the anxious inquirers on this occasion, there was one with whose conduct I was particularly struck. I one day observed a poor Frenchman, whom I had repeatedly before seen, making inquiries after the health of the illustrious sufferer, stoop gradually down on the street, opposite the door of Sir Walter's hotel, pick up a small portion of the straw which had been laid there to lessen the noise caused by carriages, wrap it up in an envelope, and, with that humble memorial of Scott, walk away with a kind of melancholy

lay, alike insensible to honour and sympathy, a melancholy illustration of his own unrivalled description of the disease as applied to one of his fictitious characters. ‘Alas! to see him who could so well describe what this malady was in others, a prey himself to its infirmities!’¹⁸ It soon became apparent to the eminent medical men who were constant in their attendance upon him, that his recovery was far beyond the power of their art; a partial oblivion from pain was all the relief that could be afforded, and he frequently slept long and soundly. He gathered more strength, however, as he recovered from the fatigues of his harassing journey, and, in his more lucid intervals, he once more expressed an anxious wish to go to his own land: home! home! was the only, the all-absorbing theme. Preparations were accordingly made, and, in obedience to the wish of the dying bard, he left London on Saturday, the seventh of July, 1832, to return to Scotland by sea, and embarked with the prayers of a nation for his recovery.

I well remember his removal from the hotel into the carriage, which was waiting to receive him. It was whispered that he was to leave London in the afternoon, and patient crowds of all conditions assembled round the inn door, all anxious to have a last glimpse of the Author of *Waverley*. I, among the rest, with two enthusiastic young friends, waited long within the portico; but two hours flew as minutes, for we were to have another look on the face of him whose fame fills the world. The crowd increased; a slight bustle was heard on the stair. The noise of servants running to and fro with luggage, and the preparing of a pallet in the open carriage for his reception, led us to expect his immediate appearance, and accordingly the sufferer was borne down from his room in the arms of his faithful Nicolson, assisted by his affectionate son-in-law Mr Lockhart, and carried to the vehicle. Every head

gratification. I could not have laughed at that man; nay, I envied him his feelings. It afforded a striking proof of his sympathy with suffering genius, and it bespoke an amiable, if not an intellectual, mind, thus to revere the very straw, because it had contributed to soothe the pillow of the illustrious afflicted.

¹⁸ Walter Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate*, edited by Claire Lamont (Edinburgh, 2000), 19-20.

was involuntarily uncovered, and not a few shed tears when they looked upon that face where the light of reason was indeed dimmed forever! He was extended on the pallet, and supported in the arms of his servant; the rest of the family occupied another conveyance; and thus he left London, never to return, amid the blessings, ‘not loud but deep’,¹⁹ of the reverential crowd who surrounded him.

In his appearance on that afternoon, he seemed to me to be less altered than I could have anticipated from his serious illness. The same ruddy hue seemed to have revisited his cheek, which it wore when I last saw him, and but for the cold, dull apathy of that once seeing and intelligent eye, and the vacancy of his features, I could not have deemed that he was a sufferer. The same dress, even to the cap which he constantly appeared in,²⁰ was on him, and the evening breezes slightly kissed the reverend gray locks which floated over his neck; but they brought no healing on their wings for him.

On the ninth of July, the *James Wall* arrived at Newhaven with its precious cargo, after a rough passage, during which Sir Walter remained undisturbed and tranquil. The most intense desire prevailed on board, among the numerous passengers, to obtain, if possible, a glimpse of the great novelist, but he was, of course, kept strictly private. The same curiosity [*illegible*] prevailed, to a great degree, when he was removed from the vessel and taken to a hotel in Edinburgh, whence, after a stay of only one day, to rest after the fatigues of the sea, he was taken by easy stages to Abbotsford, where he arrived on the twelfth,²¹ after an absence

¹⁹ ‘Curses, not loud, but deep’ (*Macbeth* V. iii. 27).

²⁰ *Macrone’s footnote*: This cap, which he wore during the whole of his journey, and until within a few days of his death, is now in my possession, a treasured and invaluable relic of the bard. I received it, while at Abbotsford, from Nicolson, along with a portion of his hair, through the instrumentality of Mr Laidlaw, to whom I can never be grateful enough for his kindness and attention to me while under his roof, or the urbanity with which he conversed upon that which he knew would give me most pleasure.

²¹ Properly the eleventh (Johnson, II, 1265).

of [*blank in manuscript*] months and [*blank in manuscript*] days,²² never to journey more, saving to that bourne whence no traveller ever returns.

He does not appear to have shown any particular symptoms of delight upon his arrival at the home whereunto all his hopes centered. Nature seemed to have done with feelings in his breast, and not the beauty of his own creations – for Abbotsford was then beautiful as Paradise in its gay summer robes – could rouse him from that lethargy, the too fatal precursor of dissolution. He recovered, however, so far as to recognise some of the domestics, for each of whom he seemed, at times, to express a kind word. He would otherwise sit for hours in total abstraction, or murmuring some inarticulate words as his attendants ministered to his comfort. Mr Laidlaw seems to have been the only one whom he perfectly recognised, and on that gentleman's visiting him at Abbotsford, immediately on his return, he smiled with something of his former intelligence, as he addressed him by the familiar appellation of ‘Willie’, adding ‘I ken I’m at hame *now*’.

What could be done for him as to medical assistance was amply attended to by his adviser, Dr Clarkson of Melrose, a gentleman of much skill and gentleness of deportment. He could but order that the patient should be sedulously attended to, and, in a family where he was all but worshipped, this advice might seem superfluous. Nightly by turns did his children sit up watching him, and his admirable daughters, in particular, scarcely ever left his side, until they were spent with watching. I must not except poor Nicolson, whose exertions and fatigue, both on the journey and at the deathbed, were almost superhuman; and when I visited Abbotsford, nearly two months after the poet’s death, I found this affectionate young man

²² Nine months and eighteen days.

slowly recovering from the effects of a severe inflammation, brought on by anxiety for his master and sorrow for his loss.²³

The last scene of this tragedy was now speedily to be consummated. The illustrious patient lingered on, till death would have been almost as much a relief to his friends, as it would have been a blessing to himself. Day by day, however, did his vigorous constitution battle stoutly with the last enemy. At times he would rave, with frantic gestures, and, anon, would sink into lassitude, when slumber would visit his worn frame,²⁴ and, I am told, he slept, on one occasion, for twenty-eight hours without intermission. His children fondly deemed that this extraordinary symptom might be the turn of his disorder, and many fond hopes were even formed that he might rally. But it is time to draw a veil over a scene of family agony and disappointment. Mortification rapidly spread itself over his wasted body, and on the twenty-first day of September, at two in the afternoon – a day that will henceforward be named as the date of a natural calamity – Sir Walter Scott died.

No event of a public nature ever excited so much public sorrow as the death of the great national bard. Although all had expected that each day or hour might announce the afflicting intelligence, yet the blow fell with not the less violence than it was expected. The feeling evinced by the nation was not of that loud, boisterous nature which announces the *exit* of a monarch or other titled dignity, but it was the quiet feeling of inward grief, the subdued emotion which the heart experiences when it

²³ *Macrone's footnote:* I cannot take my leave of this part of the subject without mentioning that, through the kindness of Mr Lockhart, a situation in the post office has been procured for this faithful and attached person, to whom the family have expressed much gratitude, as well as attention during his illness. He who has been so faithful to one master, can hardly fail of giving satisfaction in whatever circumstances he may be placed.

²⁴ After ‘his worn frame’, Macrone originally wrote ‘and he thus died, as it were, by inches’.

‘feels the more that fruitlessly it feels’.²⁵

He was gone, who had filled the hearts of all ranks; death had selected the noblest offering of the flock, and he could go no higher.

Fast and far flew the news of ill omen, and the land looked forward to the last sad tribute of respect that can be paid to inanimate clay, with the hope that public honors would be bestowed on the illustrious dead, and that hundreds of his admirers from all quarters would swell the mournful procession. But that spirit of meek, retiring modesty, which characterised his nature through life, dictated that his last obsequies should be as quiet and unobtrusive as his public life had been.

Such was the state of public feeling when, according to the Scottish custom, letters were sent to the intimate friends of the deceased, by his eldest son, inviting them to attend the mournful ceremony of interment in Dryburgh Abbey, only four days after the fatal event. About three hundred attended. The cavalcade moved slowly along through the linns which he

²⁵ ‘I feel the more that fruitlessly I feel’ (Thomas Campbell, ‘Lines on Poland’, 10, in *The Poetical Works of Thomas Campbell*, edited by W. A. Hill (Little, Brown, 1860), 262).

CHAPTER VIII**EULOGY**

General Appearance – Temperament Compared with Byron’s – Kindness to Hogg –

Quarrel and Reconciliation – Cunningham’s Praise – Peroration

In person, he was tall, more than six feet, and possessed a frame which corresponded to his height in muscular proportions and strong, sinewy limbs. Had he not been lame, he must have been a very powerful man, and as it was, he, I am told, could display much vigour and strength. His appearance altogether, when I first saw him, reminded me much of a stout Border farmer of the better class, for he was habited in a short green coat with bright buttons, yellow waistcoat, and drab trousers; a black handkerchief was carelessly thrown round his neck, and his long white hairs flowed down upon the collar of his coat. A nearer observe, however, convinced me that there was much of Nature’s true nobility stamped on his countenance: his eye, bright, piercing, and deep-set, but almost concealed by his overhanging eyebrows: his mouth expressing firmness and determination, mingled with much capability of humour: but his forehead was the feature that first struck the beholder, lowering in its noble profundity like the dome of some storied temple, and it was thus that he always looked most to advantage when uncovered. It was unlike any brow I ever remember to have seen, and irresistibly reminded me of that usually represented in portraits of Shakespeare. There was something in the ‘lofty height’ of his glorious brow that bespoke reverence and awe in the beholder, and few could look upon him without being irresistibly impressed with the majesty and dignity of true genius.

Of late years, misfortune and anxiety, as already hinted, preyed much upon his independent spirit, and their ravages were speedily visible upon his iron frame. His hair grew thinner and whiter on his forehead, and his voice grew feebler

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It is a peculiarly pleasing and grateful task to the biographer when the subject which employs his pen has betrayed in his character none of the darker shades of passion and misplaced feeling which have been but too often the accompaniment of genius; and rare indeed have the instances been, when in one person exalted attainments have been combined with quiet domestic natures, with humility and good will to all mankind. The sun of Byron's genius, while it illuminated the land with its bright and proud radiance, had many dark spots on its disc, which the honest historian, with all his lenity to the memory of the great deceased, could not efface. His humble brother in power, in pathos, and in feeling, the misguided child of song, Burns, has also left behind him a name which we name with as much pity for his failings as admiration for his talent, and the lesser poets of this day have each shown in their life and conversation at least as much of misguided petulance and foward passions as genius in their effusions. This may arise, in a great measure, from disappointed ambition, from overweening confidence in their own abilities, as also from a dread of the neglect of the world and ill-requited exertions. They are not altogether to be blamed, then, who, like Burns, fled from cold neglect and apathy to the allurements and forgetfulness of dissipation, and we drop a tear of compassion to the memory of the man who, had he been favoured by the solid gratitude of the world as much as by its empty praise, might have rivalled Scott himself in those quiet domestic feelings of the heart which made home a world to him.

Such, then, what Burns *might have been*, was Scott:¹ gifted in a particular manner from his earliest childhood with a happy, contented mind, and a disposition to be satisfied with his lot in whatever circumstances it might please Providence to place him, his humility advanced with his fame, and the envy of criticism, the praise of friends, the open attacks of enemies, or the applause of the admiring world, were each and all alike to him: he neither replied to the one, nor cared for the others; to use his own expression, ‘he never read a review of his works in his life’, and consequently cared neither for the praise nor the blame of his reviewers. He was in good humour with all the world, and the consequence was that the world was in good humour with him. The tenor of his even way was therefore unbroken by the petty squabbles which, to the disgrace of our literary men, are too often displayed; the most severe retort that Sir Walter was ever known to utter was in reply to some foolish attack made on him by an indiscreet scribbler of great pretensions and little genius,

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In the various relative situations of domestic life, he was much and justly beloved. In his friendships, he was faithful, affectionate, and sincere, nay, something more. His professions were never limited to lip-love. He watched, as it were, for an opportunity of conferring a solid benefit upon those whom he honoured with his intimacy, and it is pleasing to record that these testimonials have been received and cherished with becoming gratitude on the part of the recipients. Towards humble, unaided genius, in particular, he was ever an enlightened adviser and munificent patron, and it would have been well at this day for literature, had many others of our eminent men of letters comported themselves towards their

¹ Here Macrone’s handwriting becomes extremely quick and careless: the rest of the paragraph, with its high proportion of repetitions and clichés, is probably a first draught.

humble brethren like Sir Walter Scott. To the worthy bard of Ettrick, he has been generous and warm-hearted to a degree, and during a long friendship of more than thirty years, ‘the shadow of a cloud’, to use the Shepherd’s own expression, never crossed their intimacy, at least on the part of the subject of this memoir. It is true that at one time, when Mr Hogg formed the notion of getting up a work consisting of contributions from every eminent man of the day, Sir Walter refused to contribute an article, alleging, as his motive for so doing, the pithy adage, ‘every herring should hang by its ain tail’, which may be thus rendered: every poet should stand on his own merits. This refusal, however, sorely galled the worthy Shepherd’s self-love: but I shall give the affair in his own words, and the relation reflects at least as much credit on Mr Hogg’s candour and honesty as it does upon Sir Walter’s generosity and placability: as a piece of composition, the passages I am about to quote, are among the best, because the most natural, of the Shepherd’s writings, and throughout, his spirit of naïve humour is truly characteristic.

Macrone here makes the following note: “But to return to my publication &c. – ”
(Here take in the passage at page lxvi of The Autobiography – and turn to page lxxxiv for the remaining part of the anecdote.)²

I know of nothing in the whole annals of literature which displays a nobler feeling of disinterestedness and forbearance than the foregoing. It cannot be read without calling to mind the sublime passage of Scripture wherein we are enjoined to ‘return good for evil – to bless them that curse us – and do good to them which despitefully use us’.³

² The passages in question will be found in *Altrive Tales*, 40 and 48-9.

³ ‘But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you’ (Matthew 5. 44).

This is but one instance, however, out of many benefits conferred in the same quarter: his generosity ceased only with his life, and truly might the Shepherd exclaim, when the mournful tidings were communicated to him: ‘I have lost the best friend man ever had: almost the only friend I ever had’.

The same honourable testimony is borne to his character by another of his friends, who, though he did not enjoy his intimacy for so long a space, shared in no ordinary degree in his esteem. ‘He was’, says Mr Cunningham, ‘widely and generally beloved: – his great genius hardly equalled the kindness of his heart and the generosity of his nature. I do not mean that he stood foremost in all subscriptions which were likely to be advertised: I mean that he aided the humble and the deserving; he assumed no patronizing airs, and wished rather to be thought doing an act of kindness to himself, than obliging others. To his friendship I owe so much, that I know not the extent of what I owe: through him, two of my sons are Engineer officers in the East India service, and he did this, because, said he, complimenting and obliging me in the same sentence, ‘One Scottish Makker (Poet) should aid another’. I never heard him say an unkind word of any one: and if he said a sharp one, which on some occasions he did, he instantly softened the impression by relating some kindly trait. The sternest words I ever heard him utter were concerning a certain poet: ‘That man’, he said, ‘has had much in his power, but he never befriended rising genius yet’. I could not say anything to the contrary’.⁴ To these proud testimonials, I add that the sons of Burns are indebted to the same gracious spirit for many acts of useful and unwearied assistance bestowed in that feeling wherein the right hand ‘knoweth not what the left hand doeth’.⁵ I have communicated enough to aver that we ought to be no less proud of his character as a man than of his fame as a bard. No one, in short, ever united so many great, almost godlike

⁴ Cunningham, 652.

⁵ ‘But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: / That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly’ (Matthew 6. 3-4).

qualities, and employed them so generously for the benefit of the living. But the character of the Author of *Waverley* needs no defence, and least of all from such an humble pen as mine own. The mists of prejudice are already fast clearing away, and the voice of a grateful people is already lifted up in common acclaim: ‘What shall be done for the man whom we delight to honour?’;⁶ and his name and fame are already sacred and embalmed in the hearts of an admiring and grateful world, and when years have rolled away, our sons will teach their children to look back on the character of this great and good man, with as much admiration for his blameless life as for his gifted attributes. It is not to us, therefore, that the character of the Author of *Waverley* belongs, and what Shakespeare seems to this generation, will he be throughout all time.

I have now come to a conclusion of these desultory and, it may be, uninteresting remarks. If I have contributed little to the fame which his name has already achieved, it is because my means of information have been more limited than my inclinations; if I have added, however, but one stone to the great national cairn of feeling, the proud satisfaction of having done so, will more than amply repay me for the labour I have bestowed in considering the subject. I take my leave of the reader, with a grateful feeling of the attention he has been pleased to bestow upon my maiden efforts in biography. Many powerful succeeding efforts from other and better-known pens, on the same inexhaustible subject, will doubtless soon engage his attention, the perusal of which, I hope, may, in some measure, atone for the little edification he may have received from this attempt to do honor to the memory of Sir Walter Scott.

FINIS

⁶ ‘What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour?’ (Esther 6. 6).

APPENDIX I

CUNNINGHAM AND MACRONE

One cannot help feeling that Cochrane had the worst of it in all matters involving Macrone. Cunningham ‘& all others who value their character’, he had written to Brydges on 13 October 1834, ‘have indignantly spurned the viper from their doors’¹. By February 1835, however, Cunningham was on good terms with Macrone once again,² as we learn from a series of letters³ about Brydges’s life of Milton, which Macrone had sent him in manuscript. ‘The opening of Sir Egertons life of Milton, like the opening of the first flower in spring now in the sunshine under my window – is at once welcome and beautiful’, Cunningham wrote to Macrone on 9 February. ‘In all the authors sentiments I concur: he is brilliant and concise: elegant as well as natural [...] I never met with any critic – or rather genius with such healthy notions and wholesome tastes’. He returned the manuscript with pencilled recommendations to St James’s Square on 20 February, signing himself ‘yours in haste and truth’. All the same, there were limits to his cordiality. On trying, a few days afterward, to enlist Cunningham in his quarrel with Cochrane over Brydges’s papers, Macrone met with a blunt refusal. ‘I cannot comply with your request’, Cunningham wrote on 23 February. ‘I think indeed that matters have been pushed quite far enough, and that it would be well for both sides to let bygones be bygones. But this it seems is not to be: *I am [illegible] to be neutral* were it but for my own peace’. There was another incident of this kind as late as the spring of 1836. ‘My dear Mac’, Cunningham wrote on 12 March. ‘If you have half an hour to spare tomorrow bestow it on

¹ MS. Beinecke, OSB MS File 3446.

² Valpy, who had been another of Cochrane’s counsellors, was to print various books for Macrone, including Brydges’s Milton.

³ All of the letters from Cunningham to Macrone quoted in this Appendix will be found in OSB MS File 17157, the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, Yale University.

me at *three* or at *seven* – for I wish to speak to you about books. It may be as well however if we perfectly understand each other before we meet. If you are of opinion that my conduct was unjust and illiberal towards you in those sad differences which took place between you and your late partner why then it will be better for us not to meet. But if you think – which I hope you do – that my estrangement arose from feelings which on reflection you cannot but approve why then come for I have to speak to you both about verse and prose'.⁴ Macrone must have acknowledged that he was in the wrong, since Cunningham's next and last surviving letters to him, written on 26 April and 9 August, bear no trace of ill feeling.

⁴ The prose in question was probably Cunningham's novel *Lord Roldan*, which Macrone published in July 1836 (*The Literary Gazette*, Vol. 20, No. 1019 (30 July 1836), 495).

APPENDIX II

A FRAGMENT OF ANOTHER PREFACE

But while he has largely availed himself of the numerous sources of information which have been already laid before the public, he has observed the utmost caution in making the selection, and, by diligent and painful inquiry, succeeded in extracting, he trusts, a cupful of truth from the ocean of fiction.

That much remains to be told of this [*illegible*] individual, and that, too, of the most important nature, the author is perfectly aware, nor would he vainly and boastfully thrust forward his little volume as the only channel by which public inquiry can be gratified. The vast stores of *His* own accumulated mind are yet to be gathered into the public [*illegible*], and a digest of the whole will form the task of some future biographer, for it were vain to suppose that undisguised truth can be looked for from the present generation, who are resolutely bent on applauding and worshipping the popular idol, and who turn a deaf ear to all that does not savour of adoration.

It may be deemed a bold undertaking for one with pretensions so humble to write upon a subject so important. Without aspiring, however, to the high dignity of biography, he may be permitted to add his humble quota

APPENDIX III

ANOTHER CONCLUSION

I entered upon my task with delight, and I leave it with regret. Upon the easy stream of my narrative I have been borne along, leisurely and pleasantly plucking a richly-scented flower as I sailed past, which, thrown upon the current, gave interest and variety to its still, small prattle. A thousand and a thousand coronals might be woven with equal [*illegible*] talent; the humble author, however, dares the most potent of his rivals to twine one in equal sincerity and love. In these qualifications he will yield to none; and if the work which he has given forth to the world, with all its imperfections on its head,¹ give one feeling of delight to the admirers of the great bard – and that means all mankind – he will be richly and amply recompensed.

To return to the first person – and it is pleasing in person to return gratitude for undeserved and partial favours – I bid thee farewell, gentle and patient reader; and it must be a farewell long and limitless. Having started forth and proved my maiden armour, it remains for the authority to decide whether the unknown squire deserves his spurs, or whether he must abide a longer probation. At all events, he may be allowed to retire from the lists with honor, and carry with him a due sense of the magnanimity of his judges.

JMC

¹ ‘With all my imperfections on my head’ (*Hamlet*, I. v. 75).

APPENDIX IV

HOGG'S ANECDOTES INTRODUCED

It is with great delight that I am enabled to present to my reader in these pages, much and varied original information from the pen of the deceased poet's intimate and long-tried friend, one who knew the inmost sentiments and feelings of Sir Walter's heart for more than thirty years. I allude to Mr James Hogg, the celebrated Ettrick Shepherd. One delightful sketch from the same prolific and graphic pen has already appeared on this inexhaustible subject in his *Altrive Tales*, conceived and expressed in a style that made us regret the brevity of the notice. A continuation was, however, promised. 'There are not above five people in the world', observes the good old Shepherd, 'who, I think, know Sir Walter better, or understand his character better than I do, and *if I outlive him, which is likely, as I am five months and ten days younger*,¹ I shall draw a mental portrait of him, the likeness of which to the original shall not be disputed'.² If anything could add to my own feelings on this subject, it is the satisfaction that I am the favoured channel through which the warm-hearted poet has chosen to give his promised sentiments to the public eye.

It will be seen in these notices from Mr Hogg's pen, which I shall make use of in the proper places, that he has, while he admits all the lights which belong to so glorious a picture as that which he has painted, he has [*sic*] not spared the darker tints which give effect to a composition of mere mortality, and thus, in his faithful narrative, the character of the subject of this memoir will be represented as it really was: 'nothing is extenuated, or aught set down

¹ *Macrone's footnote*: Little did 'the mountain bard' imagine when he penned the above pleasantry, that he would indeed survive his lamented friend, and draw so faithful a picture!

² *Altrive Tales*, 64.

in malice'.³ It will be nothing new to the reader to know that Sir Walter [*illegible*] with his fellow man, many of the faults inseparable from human nature, and that, amid all the vast intellectual capabilities which he developed, lurked many weaknesses which he seemed to have been unconscious of. These preliminary remarks are necessary, because it has been the fashion to portray the immortal Author of *Waverley* as a perfect being, untainted by any weakness or frailty. The exuberant praises of his admirers do more to weaken the faith of his real friends as to their truth, than the collected attacks of a thousand miscellaneous enemies. Mr Hogg has written of him in a manly spirit of candour, and the impression which, it will be seen, his unsophisticated narrative leaves upon the mind of the reader, is renewed admiration of the wonderful being on whose private character he has been employed, not the sickly feeling of satiety with which we rise from the contemplation of an individual on whose character the biographer has exhausted the language of encomium and fulsome flattery.

In penning these remarks, I am

³ ‘Nothing extenuate, / Nor set down aught in malice’ (*Othello*, V. ii. 335-6).

APPENDIX V

THREE WITNESSES

Three eyewitness accounts of Scott have been preserved among Macrone's papers: namely, his notes of a conversation with Galt, which, as we have seen, were transcribed, not quite accurately, and published by Hamilton Baird Timothy in 1972,¹ and a pair of short memoirs, which do not appear to have been published, by the physician Sir Andrew Halliday and the watercolourist Thomas Heaphy, evidently copied from the originals by someone other than Macrone. Apart from a few deleted words in Macrone's notes which could not be deciphered, the following transcriptions are literal.

¹ Hamilton B. Timothy, 'Galt on Scott', *Library Review*, Vol. 23 (1972), No. 8, 323-5.

1

John Galt

In the year [blank in manuscript] I happened to be at Edin^r and calling on W^m Erskine – it came on so heavy a shower that I was unable to go out for some time. – When Erskine to amuse me, mentioned that he had a play of Scotts which had been offered to one of the London theatres, and rejected:¹ launching at the same time into some animadversions on the manner in which the great theatres were conducted. – The MSS I perfectly recollect was [*sic*] lying on his table.² – he took it up, and read several scenes which he thought uncommonly fine. Every body knows, who knew the man that W^m Erskine (afterwards Lrd Kinedder) was full of taste and possessed a singular and elegant elocution. – The scene³ that I chiefly remember was that in which the heir of Aspen endeavours to discover if his mother was concerned in the murder of his father – and we both agreed that with M^{rs} Siddons it would have been very sublime, and was certainly very dramatic – The play has since been pub^d in one of the annuals – but in this case, (I speak from recollection) for I have never seen the production in print. – The play was then called *The Legend of Aspen*. –

Sometime [*sic*] after I was one morning at Erskines and he mentioned that Scott had sold Halidon Hill and another tragedy to Constable⁴ and had rec^d two bills for the price – amounting a thousand pounds [*sic*] – I perfectly recollect saying to Erskine that I was sorry to hear it – because Constable could not afford to give such a sum: and it looked bad that he had

¹ *The House of Aspen*, rejected by Kemble in October 1800 (Johnson, I, 179).

² There appears to be a superscription at the end of this word, which, if not a mere slip of the pen, makes it, properly, ‘tabletop’.

³ Macrone originally wrote ‘chief scene’.

⁴ As Robert Hay Carnie points out in an annotation to Timothy’s article (323), it was Cadell, not Constable, to whom Scott sold *Halidon Hill* (Johnson, II, 786).

given it – It was a proof to me, as a mercantile man, that the plays⁵ were a covert to an *accommodation* transaction – and Erskine did acknowledge that latterly Scotts poetry did not take with his public. –

When Scott had published the Min. of y^e Border he was engaged on the Lay of [*an illegible abbreviation signifying 'the Last Minstrel'*] in the Spenserian stanza, which it would appear he afterwards changed for a more loose and it must be said original manner, in as much as Scotts irregular stanza is superior in [*obscure*]⁶ and melody to Spensers. – It was not till a considerable time near twelve months after that The Lay was pub^d – but however as to this fact of time I will not be particular only this I know – that I heard of the composition of The Lay at Greenock and read the work itself in London but whether in my first or second visit to London I will not undertake to say. –

When Marmion was published I happened to be at Greenock, and I recollect reading through [*sic*] at one sitting and afterwards expressing my opinion in four anonymous stanzas which I sent to the Greenock newspaper. – Scott it appears was pleased with the comp^t and wrote a letter of thanks to the editor of the paper, M^r John Davidson, He sent the letter to me & I gave it to someone who gave it to M^r Murray the book^s & I think it is still in his possession – at least I saw it there some time ago.

With Scott himself, personally, I was not much acquainted. – We corresponded occasionally, and the last letter I had from him was respecting a box of cigars that M^r Isaac Hone of New York requested me to transmit to him – In the letter of acknowledgement for the cigars, he requested me to look to a nephew of his⁷ on the wrong side of the blanket, as he

⁵ '[*Illegible*] of the' is deleted before 'plays'.

⁶ Timothy transcribes this word as 'modulation'.

⁷ The nephew is identified by Carnie (Timothy, 324) as 'Scott's brother Daniel's son, William'.

called it, who came out to Canada soon after I came home, but I saw the young man. – I consider this incident as a proof of Scott's belief that blood was thicker than water. –

Long before Scott was at all celebrated he pub^d a translation of Schiller's play of The Man with the Iron hand,⁸ and he read the MS to a friend in a public room at Edin^r I understand while he was reading, he observed a person who annoyed him exceedingly by his scrutiny – to so great a degree that he shifted the house on going to another the same individual came in, and he moved again and on going to a third – the visitation was repeated with which he was greatly annoyed but thought it somewhat ominous. –

After the pubⁿ of the Life of Byron, Bentley applied to me to write the Life of Scott – but I felt myself incompetent for such a task – and in consequence declined it. –

Scott has been very much praised for his knowledge of the customs of chivalry – perhaps deservedly – but in several of his works the grossest blunders may be detected – in what may be called the grammar of Heraldry such as describing metal upon metal and colour upon colour which everyone who knows anything of that science of gentility must know a Herald could never commit. – a glaring instance of this occurs in Marmion.⁹

⁸ ‘Galt’s memory plays him false [...] The author of this work, usually called *Goetz of Berlichingen*, was Goethe’, Carnie explains (Timothy, 324).

⁹ ‘[F]or instance’ is here deleted. Galt is probably referring to the colour-on-colour solecism of ‘E’en such a falcon, on his shield, / Soared sable in an azure field’ (*Marmion*, Canto First, VI, 85-6, in Scott, *Complete Poetical Works*, 92).

Scott had suffered by his previous shock which occasioned him to go abroad. – I breakfasted with him on the day before he left London¹⁰ at M^r Lockharts – It did not appear that his outward manner was much changed but unquestionably he spoke less. – When however he did speak, the aptitude of his memory for stories and anecdotes still continued very conspicuous. – I think however that his memory in these kind of relations was much more remarkably than his humour. – No man from all accounts told a story more correctly – many said better – but I sh^d doubt from his manner if he possessed that inflection¹¹ of personation as distinguished from mimicry that constitutes a good story teller. – It did not appear to me that he possessed in any very eminent degree the faculty of the mime – but his memory was very extroardinary. – He had however sustained an obvious shattering of his frame, and his mind undoubtedly partook of the infirmity. – He was not in a condition certainly to be seen to advantage and it was impossible not to feel regret at seeing a man with so many endowments in the “sere and yellow leaf.” – He asked me when we were alone after breakfast on what I was engaged, and goodhumouredly remarked that I put him in mind of the volunteer who had overcharged his gun and supposed the four or five extra cartridges remained entire after it had been fired off. – Except the manner in which he gave this particular sally there was nothing remarkable in his manner. – I should say that he was very unaffected and natural. – One thing however was very conspicuous – although his language partook of broad Scottish he was not a common man in the choice of his words. – I had not seen him for many years and could not undertake to say that he was the same individual that I had seen, but by the felicity of his expressions I should any where have said that he was an extraordinary man. – And this¹² was Sir Walter Scott in his setting

¹⁰ In other words, on 22 October 1831 (*Journal*, 669).

¹¹ Macrone originally wrote ‘style’.

¹² Macrone originally wrote ‘And yet’.

In The Pirate he had gone round with the commissioners of the Lighthouses, and I remember that William Erskine was one and on a day when I was there at dinner and when Scott was printing the pirate the men belonging to y^e Commissioners yacht – came up and sung us one of the glees which they were in the practice of repeating on board the vessel – a particular glee was one that Erskine said Scott was very fond of I don't know myself, but it reminded me of the negroes glee about "Fire on a mountain Ho! Ho! Ho!". –

On another occasion there was a large party at Dinner at Erskines Scott was expected but did not come to meet the celebrated James Watt of Steam Engine memory who happened to be then at Edin^r 0 It would have been to me as well as others certainly a great gratification to have seen at the same board the most distinguished Engineer of his time and one of the greatest authors that had adorned any age. It was when Scott returned from France some short time before or after his publication of Pauls letters to his Kinsfolk –

By the bye Gifford as I understand requested Scott to review one of his¹³ works¹⁴ thinking he would draw out from him the authorship – Erskine was then in London and lived in lodgings next door to mine, and corrected the proof of a Review of the book¹⁵ exceedingly well done for Scott – the article was undoubtedly Scotts own and very amusing but with all its merits it did not contain one sentence in praise of¹⁶ the work though it is drawn up in such a manner that you could not rise from the perusal without being sensible that it related to a

¹³ Eye-slip led Macrone to repeat 'one of his' at the beginning of the next page.

¹⁴ *Tales of My Landlord.*

¹⁵ *The Quarterly Review*, Vol. 16, No. 32 (January 1817), 430-80, according to Carnie.

¹⁶ In another instance of eye-slip, Macrone repeated 'of' at the beginning of the next line.

very meritorious work and in a laudatory manner. – It is one of the best evasions of a home thrust that perhaps exists in the history of literature

Scott reviewed a little work of mine in Blackwood called “The omen” in which he took occasion to introduce some of his own peculiar superstitions. The article is extremely felicitously done and at the time attracted some attention but although it was the production of one of the first persons of the age, and on a subject to which he entertained a particular predilection yet from being anonymous the paper as well as the book was soon forgotten – It is worth looking at for the singular merits of the style and philosophy – It may be found in Blackwoods Mgⁿ N° [blank in manuscript]¹⁷ = The work has been commonly attributed to Lockhart – not being at all in the style for which I am best known. Sir Walter afterwards embodied the leading sentiments in his work on Demonology & Witchcraft

On the reverse of the last page, Macrone wrote:

Dictated

by

John Galt Esq

to me – for The Life

of Scott

JMC

¹⁷ *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. XX, July 1826, 52-9, according to Carnie.

Sir Andrew Halliday

Communicated by Sir Andrew Halliday.

I was first introduced to Sir Walter in 1804 & from that period till I left Edinburgh in 1806 I occasionally met him at dinner parties. He was then only known as the Border Minstrel, & having some turn myself for Border antiquities, he became an object of more than usual attraction to me. In 1805 I became very intimate with Major Scott, the eldest brother of the family – an excellent & worthy man, but who I believe, though he had risen to the rank of a field officer, had not more genius or talent than was barely sufficient to drill a company. In 1812 I spent a few months in Edinburgh & again met the Poet in society. I had then come from Spain & Portugal & could tell of battles fought & won, & I remarked that M^r Scott then generally got next to me at table & paid me more than usual attention; & though his enquiries were incessant they were usually so seasoned with remarks & stories of his own that you were led on insensibly to deposit your whole budget at his feet. In 1817 I saw a good deal of Sir Walter, but I cannot say [if] our intercourse was in any way of a literary kind. – In 1820 I often met him in the library at Carlton House, where he seemed to take a pleasure in lounging away a forenoon, & where he had an opportunity of meeting with the first characters of the day. – He had but lately recovered from a severe & lingering illness – of what he called *stitches & cramps* in the *stomach*, from *obstruction in the digestive organs*, with inflammatory symptoms, and he was still rather feeble in body, but certainly never more active or brilliant in his mental powers. Many an hour have I sat & listened to his anecdotes & stories told with all the interest & excitement of one of his own novels, while the great & mighty ones of the land were sitting around him listening in raptures. I had often heard some of his little stories told by others, but however familiar the subject might be, his way of

telling the tale made it a very different thing. – Some of his stories I recollect, as also the way & manner in which he related them, but found it quite impossible to give any idea of either by description. – For several years I did not again meet with Sir Walter; though after this period we corresponded. I was engaged in completing the annals of the House of Hanover,¹ in which he took a kind interest & of which he greatly approved, as being the only work in the English language that gave any thing like a true account of the illustrious family to which this country owes much of its greatness. But as he justly remarked “the loyalty of so many had waxed cold that I would find it a very unprofitable book.” Not even the powers of Sir Walter, I believe, could have clothed such dry bones with flesh & marrow, & even if they had been so clothed what does John Bull care about German princes or their history. –

Some few years ago the present Sir Walter Scott was quartered with his regiment – the 13th Hussars at Hampton Court, & we then had frequent visits from the *Magician*, who not only came down himself, but sometimes on a Sunday would bring a whole phalanx of poets & literary men in his train. We have² had Moore, Southey, Wordsworth, Cunningham, Campbell & others parading the beautiful walks in our most beautiful Royal Gardens here for hours & hours, with Sir Walter at their head, and acknowledged, as it appeared, by mutual & tacit consent their chief, or leader.

The present Sir Walter was then in bad health, & it was the anxiety of an affectionate parent that not only detained him in London but brought him so frequently to Hampton Court.³

The last time I saw Sir Walter was the day before he left London for Portsmouth.⁴ – When our mutual friend the late General David Stewart of Garth took leave on his

¹ Sir Andrew Halliday, *Annals of the House of Hanover*, 2 vols (William Sams, 1826).

² This is the end of a line: eye-slip on the part of the scribe led to a repetition of *We have* at the head of the next.

³ In order to save space, the scribe here marked a paragraph break with a bracket.

embarkation for S^t Lucie⁵ of which he had been appointed Governor he said “Sir Walter – the West Indians know I am honoured with your friendship, & I shall be teased to death with applications for some scrap of your writing or some other memorial – now do enable me to oblige them.” Sir Walter rose, took a large sheet of paper, & without a moment’s consideration filled it with couplets all rhyming to “Walter Scott.” I am sure there were thirty or forty of them, and all varied and all & each itself a complete sentence, a wish, a prayer, or a compliment, to General David, who alas fell a victim to the climate of the west & died two years before his illustrious friend.

I had the honour of attending the present Sir Walter in his illness, & some time after his recovery a beautiful & richly gilt silver cup came addressed to me “from a grateful & affectionate friend, Walter Scott.” – The next time I saw Sir Walter I mentioned how much I felt gratified – though I was afraid it came from the Major” – “Na – na – ” he said, “I’ll father a’ Wattie’s bairns – so consider it as mine.” & so I do consider it & ever will consider it as the most valuable heir-loom I possess.

⁴ 22 October 1831.

⁵ Stewart went to St Lucia in 1829 (E. M. Lloyd, ‘Stewart, David, of Garth’, revised by Roger T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)).

3

Thomas Heaphy

Heaphy's narrative is introduced by Macrone as follows:

To come in as a footnote during the [*illegible*] in Italy

Mr Heaphy, a gentleman whose enthusiastic veneration for the works of the ancient masters of painting has often sent him pilgrimaging to the scenes of their triumphs, happened to be in Venice when the illustrious invalid arrived, studying the *chef's d'œuvre* of the old school, and has most obligingly communicated to me his recollections of Scott at that time, and it is with great pleasure I give insertion to his remarks, which throw great light upon the [*illegible*] of the poet's character. His conception of the fine arts, it will be seen, was but limited; yet occasionally his observations displayed considerable depth of natural criticism.

“I was happy to meet with Sir Walter once more”, writes Mr. Heaphy, “although &c.

Macrone's note ends here. The transcription of Heaphy's anecdotes begins on the next page; its earlier part has evidently been omitted.

I was happy to meet with Sir Walter once more, although when his great powers had become too much for his weak frame, and all were sinking fast. It was evident that he was not long to be with us – he was almost helpless, not able to move without at least three persons – two to almost carry him, & one with a chair ready to seat him.¹

I met him at Venice in the house of that excellent & hospitable man, M^r Money – the British Consul General, whose hospitality is extended to all the English, & I might add even

¹ As in the transcript of Halliday's account, this paragraph break is marked with a bracket.

to every foreigner. Sir Walter expressed himself as particularly happy there. In addition to their cheerful company, they continued to give him everything that an Englishman likes, & what an Englishman cannot get in Italy – good British cheer. – This through the declining state of nature he stood in need of, & it refreshed him.²

Wherever he wished to go, the Consul General's gondola took him. He expressed a wish to see the Arsenal, which wish was conveyed to the Admiral commanding – by M^r Money - & the Admiral received him as a prince regretting only that etiquette would not allow him to give a salute. However a guard was drawn up, & the large gate, opened rarely upon state occasions [*sic*]. Every thing was shown him³ – for it was the depot of every antique object of interest relative to Venice in her early state, down to the present time. Had he been in his full vigour what materials would have been furnished him! He was much pleased with the attentions shown to him, but was greatly exhausted upon his return. I assisted his son in carrying him round the gallery of La Belle Arte, in which were the noblest works of Titian, Tintoretto, & Paul Veronese, with many others of the Venetian school before the time of Titian. He entered but little into the merits of those great masters – indeed he did not understand them. He was much more interested with the more feeble works of the earlier school, where costume & the peculiar manners of the people were attended to. The Dandies of the day were observable, having one leg of their pantaloons scarlet, the other green, but their jackets reversed – a right leg & left arm red; their caps & feathers put on to the exact point of fashion – the more sedate passed by unnoticed – but the Church were habited as at the present day. This particularly interested him, & evidently arose from his peculiar feeling for character. It was in vain to call his attention to the different schools – the Italian – Florentine – Bolognese, & of Parma. It was in vain to point out to him which conveyed

² Another bracket here indicates a paragraph break.

³ Through eye-slip, the scribe repeated ‘was shown him’ on the next page.

sentiment & which only gratified the eye, or the difference between an early picture of Titian & the last when he was in a similar state with himself. Coming to another picture of costume his whole attention was directed to it – I tried him upon the absurdities of the Venetian pictures & this caught him. They often in the most solemn subjects, where the Holy Family are the chief objects, bring in a crowd of Venetian senators in full costume, apparently as the wise men making their offerings. – Not so – the intention was, that when the rich men made presents to the Church, a fine picture was painted with their portraits introduced, which became a stimulus to other rich men to do so likewise. The Virgin, Child, & Joseph, supported right & left with S^t George in armour, with his sword & flag & S^t Sebastian naked with the arrows sticking in him, represented the Church, & the present was made to the Virgin (not to the Monks). This Sir Walter understood. Then one of Titian's finest & most perfect works, (an anomaly also) the Virgin at the age of twelve years, being presented at the doors of the Temple & received by the High Priest & the Sagan, a crowd of senators, of course, & all Venice in the back-ground, with its balconies decorated as in a carnival – but directly in front, in the centre; and the closest object was to appearance an old highland body – a woman selling eggs. I remarked to him the absurdity of introducing such an improper object, but he differed with me & said, "Do ye not understand the power of contrast?" "Yes," I said, "it has been my favourite study, but I thought that contrast ought to arise out of the subject & not to introduce extreme vulgarity out of its place. The strongest contrast might be given in accordance with the subject." – I also remarked the absurd treatment of the various objects & costume, such as Corinthian columns for the temple, high flights of steps, Venetian houses & habits; when done, he said – it reminded him of a dispute that took place just before he left Edinburgh, between himself & two gentlemen. The one asked what did he think would artists dress Moses in? The other said, how would they dress the wise men offering their gifts to the infant Saviour? & being warm in the argument, an old woman passing by with a pitcher

of water, put down her pitcher & said “Gentlefolks, I just tell you exactly what they wore.” “Weel, Lucky, what do you think they wore,” the gentlemen said, expecting to enjoy the joke, said he, “You know having been much in Edinburgh that the people never say that they are going to Glasgow, but that they are going west – or to Perth, but that they are going north; or to England, they then are going south, and that they are going east, when they are going to Haddington.” She said, “I’ll tell you exactly the dress they wore – Ye ken weel the dress the gude folk of the Toun of Hadinton just the now weres [sic] – weel then the wise men were exactly the same – for ye ken they a’ cam fra the East” – She took up her pitcher & waddled off. He told it with as much spirit as a boy & then flagg’d. – Passing from one gallery to another, we had to go through the Sculpture Gallery, where the finest models of Canova were the originals, with their points remaining from which the marbles were worked, but he would not notice them. Indeed, Miss Scott hinted as much & begged of us not to offer him a chair there, because he had no relish for sculpture, & I understood that it was said by her to M^r Money that he did not enjoy fine music. This morning much fatigued him, so that he could not see any more of the lions of Venice, which were chiefly pictures. Public dinners were hinted to him but he politely declined them as being incapable of enjoying their society through infirmity. Indeed his dining at M^r Moneys was strictly private at his desire, but at tea he saw their friends. –

He left us after not more than four days stay anxiously desirous of reaching Abbotsford to die there, but fearing that so great a favour would be denied him. Indeed it was not many days before we heard that he died the fourth day after leaving Venice – but this was a mistake of the press – it was that he was seized by a fit which for some hours had the appearance of death. –

We at Venice heard that when he arrived at Naples, & was recognized, he was received with the extreme marks of respect & attention by the court as well as the British.

The same attention was paid to him at Rome, by the British & foreigners - & British noblemen upon hearing of his arrival left their respective houses & posted to Rome, but too late – for he had left it privately. At Florence, Bologna & other towns he passed very private, trusting in his old character – the Unknown. But at Venice it was impossible to escape the Consul General, who must sign his passport, & whose excellent heart rejoiced at so distinguished a visitor, & it is very evident that those few days were the last happy days of his life, for he rapidly sunk afterwards. I had almost forgotten to notice that he wished to hear the gondoliers sing – for which they have been celebrated for very many centuries – which the Consul General procured every day at dinner – for the gondolas were under the windows of the dining room.

Also Sir Walter set his heart while at Malta upon seeing one of the Knights of Malta in which he was gratified. Could he have stayed a day longer at Venice he was to have seen the deposed Doge which Buonaparte ejected [*sic*];⁴ but he was too ill to stay another day, not being able to walk, & as no carriage can be in Venice, it was not possible for him to see St Mark's Cathedral or Square, both the pride of Venice, nor the Doge's Palace called the Grand Ducale – nor the Royal Palace, with the libraries & pictures – nor the prison, connected with the Bride of Sighs – nor those exquisite collections of pictures and other works of art belonging to the nobility – Indeed Italy is not the place for a lame or sick person to travel in. Sir Walter sensibly felt it – he said – its fine works or antiquities require robust health to follow them up: and how often is robust health lost, by its pernicious climate & its sour beverage, as well as the mind injured by its wit & infamous morals. Had Dr James Johnson's

⁴ Heaphy must have been misinformed about this part of Scott's programme, since Lodovico Manin, the last Doge of Venice, who resigned his office on 12 May 1797, had died in 1802 (John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice* (Penguin, 2003), 631).

valuable work on the Climate of Italy⁵ been read by Sir Walter, I think he would have preferred returning from Malta by sea.⁶

⁵ James Johnson, *Change of Air, or, the Diary of a Philosopher in Pursuit of Health and Recreation* (Highley, 1831).

⁶ These last lines, from ‘and how often’, are written in extremely small letters, in order that the end of Heaphy’s memoir may be crammed into a single page.

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