ВАЛЬТЕР СКОТТ

CHRONICLES OF THE CANONGATE, 1ST SERIES

Вальтер Скотт

Chronicles of the Canongate, 1st Series

Скотт В.

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Содержание

Walter Scott
Chronicles of the Canongate, 1st Series

INTRODUCTION TO CHRONICLES OF THE CANONGATE

The preceding volume of this Collection concluded the last of the pieces originally published under the NOMINIS UMBRA of The Author of Waverley; and the circumstances which rendered it impossible for the writer to continue longer in the possession of his incognito were communicated in 1827, in the Introduction to the first series of Chronicles of the Canongate, consisting (besides a biographical sketch of the imaginary chronicler) of three tales, entitled “The Highland Widow,” “The Two Drovers,” and “The Surgeon’s Daughter.” In the present volume the two first named of these pieces are included, together with three detached stories which appeared the year after, in the elegant compilation called “The Keepsake.” “The Surgeon’s Daughter” it is thought better to defer until a succeeding volume, than to

“Begin, and break off in the middle.”

I have, perhaps, said enough on former occasions of the misfortunes which led to the dropping of that mask under which I had, for a long series of years, enjoyed so large a portion of public favour. Through the success of those literary efforts, I had been enabled to indulge most of the tastes which a retired person of my station might be supposed to entertain. In the pen of this nameless romancer, I seemed to possess something like the secret fountain of coined gold and pearls vouchsafed to the traveller of the Eastern Tale; and no doubt believed that I might venture, without silly imprudence, to extend my personal expenditure considerably beyond what I should have thought of, had my means been limited to the competence which I derived from inheritance, with the moderate income of a professional situation. I bought, and built, and planted, and was considered by myself, as by the rest of the world, in the safe possession of an easy fortune. My riches, however, like the other riches of this world, were liable to accidents, under which they were ultimately destined to make unto themselves wings, and fly away. The year 1825, so disastrous to many branches of industry and commerce, did not spare the market of literature; and the sudden ruin that fell on so many of the booksellers could scarcely have been expected to leave unscathed one whose career had of necessity connected him deeply and extensively with the pecuniary transactions of that profession. In a word, almost without one note of premonition, I found myself involved in the sweeping catastrophe of the unhappy time, and called on to meet the demands of creditors upon commercial establishments with which my fortunes had long been bound up, to the extent of no less a sum than one hundred and twenty thousand pounds.

The author having, however rashly, committed his pledges thus largely to the hazards of trading companies, it behoved him, of course, to abide the consequences of his conduct, and, with whatever feelings, he surrendered on the instant every shred of property which he had been accustomed to call his own. It became vested in the hands of gentlemen whose integrity, prudence, and intelligence were combined with all possible liberality and kindness of disposition, and who readily afforded every assistance towards the execution of plans, in the success of which the author contemplated the possibility of his ultimate extrication, and which were of such a nature that, had assistance of this sort been withheld, he could have had little prospect of carrying them into effect. Among other resources which occurred was the project of that complete and corrected edition of his Novels and Romances (whose real parentage had of necessity been disclosed at the moment of the commercial convulsions alluded to), which has now advanced with unprecedented favour nearly to its close; but

as he purposed also to continue, for the behoof of those to whom he was indebted, the exercise of his pen in the same path of literature, so long as the taste of his countrymen should seem to approve of his efforts, it appeared to him that it would have been an idle piece of affectation to attempt getting up a new incognito, after his original visor had been thus dashed from his brow. Hence the personal narrative prefixed to the first work of fiction which he put forth after the paternity of the “Waverley Novels” had come to be publicly ascertained; and though many of the particulars originally avowed in that Notice have been unavoidably adverted to in the Prefaces and Notes to some of the preceding volumes of the present collection, it is now reprinted as it stood at the time, because some interest is generally attached to a coin or medal struck on a special occasion, as expressing, perhaps, more faithfully than the same artist could have afterwards conveyed, the feelings of the moment that gave it birth. The Introduction to the first series of Chronicles of the Canongate ran, then, in these words: —

INTRODUCTION

All who are acquainted with the early history of the Italian stage are aware that Arlecchino is not, in his original conception, a mere worker of marvels with his wooden sword, a jumper in and out of windows, as upon our theatre, but, as his party-coloured jacket implies, a buffoon or clown, whose mouth, far from being eternally closed, as amongst us, is filled, like that of Touchstone, with quips, and cranks, and witty devices, very often delivered extempore. It is not easy to trace how he became possessed of his black vizard, which was anciently made in the resemblance of the face of a cat; but it seems that the mask was essential to the performance of the character, as will appear from the following theatrical anecdote: —

An actor on the Italian stage permitted at the Foire du St. Germain, in Paris, was renowned for the wild, venturous, and extravagant wit, the brilliant sallies and fortunate repartees, with which he prodigally seasoned the character of the party-coloured jester. Some critics, whose good-will towards a favourite performer was stronger than their judgment, took occasion to remonstrate with the successful actor on the subject of the grotesque vizard. They went wilily to their purpose, observing that his classical and Attic wit, his delicate vein of humour, his happy turn for dialogue, were rendered burlesque and ludicrous by this unmeaning and bizarre disguise, and that those attributes would become far more impressive if aided by the spirit of his eye and the expression of his natural features. The actor's vanity was easily so far engaged as to induce him to make the experiment. He played Harlequin barefaced, but was considered on all hands as having made a total failure. He had lost the audacity which a sense of incognito bestowed, and with it all the reckless play of raillery which gave vivacity to his original acting. He cursed his advisers, and resumed his grotesque vizard, but, it is said, without ever being able to regain the careless and successful levity which the consciousness of the disguise had formerly bestowed.

Perhaps the Author of Waverley is now about to incur a risk of the same kind, and endanger his popularity by having laid aside his incognito. It is certainly not a voluntary experiment, like that of Harlequin; for it was my original intention never to have avowed these works during my lifetime, and the original manuscripts were carefully preserved (though by the care of others rather than mine), with the purpose of supplying the necessary evidence of the truth when the period of announcing it should arrive. [These manuscripts are at present (August 1831) advertised for public sale, which is an addition, though a small one, to other annoyances.] But the affairs of my publishers having, unfortunately, passed into a management different from their own, I had no right any longer to rely upon secrecy in that quarter; and thus my mask, like my Aunt Dinah's in "Tristram Shandy," having begun to wax a little threadbare about the chin, it became time to lay it aside with a good grace, unless I desired it should fall in pieces from my face, which was now become likely.

Yet I had not the slightest intention of selecting the time and place in which the disclosure was finally made; nor was there any concert betwixt my learned and respected friend LORD MEADOWBANK and myself upon that occasion. It was, as the reader is probably aware, upon the 23rd February last, at a public meeting, called for establishing a professional Theatrical Fund in Edinburgh, that the communication took place. Just before we sat down to table, Lord Meadowbank [One of the Supreme Judges of Scotland, termed Lords of Council and Session.] asked me privately whether I was still anxious to preserve my incognito on the subject of what were called the Waverley Novels? I did not immediately see the purpose of his lordship's question, although I certainly might have been led to infer it, and replied that the secret had now of necessity become known to so many people that I was indifferent on the subject. Lord Meadowbank was thus induced, while doing me the great honour of proposing my health to the meeting, to say something on the subject of these Novels so strongly connecting them with me as the author, that by remaining silent I must have stood convicted, either of the actual paternity, or of the still greater crime of being supposed willing to

receive indirectly praise to which I had no just title. I thus found myself suddenly and unexpectedly placed in the confessional, and had only time to recollect that I had been guided thither by a most friendly hand, and could not, perhaps, find a better public opportunity to lay down a disguise which began to resemble that of a detected masquerader.

I had therefore the task of avowing myself, to the numerous and respectable company assembled, as the sole and unaided author of these Novels of Waverley, the paternity of which was likely at one time to have formed a controversy of some celebrity, for the ingenuity with which some instructors of the public gave their assurance on the subject was extremely persevering. I now think it further necessary to say that, while I take on myself all the merits and demerits attending these compositions, I am bound to acknowledge with gratitude hints of subjects and legends which I have received from various quarters, and have occasionally used as a foundation of my fictitious compositions, or woven up with them in the shape of episodes. I am bound, in particular, to acknowledge the unremitting kindness of Mr. Joseph Train, supervisor of excise at Dumfries, to whose unwearied industry I have been indebted for many curious traditions and points of antiquarian interest. It was Mr. Train who brought to my recollection the history of Old Mortality, although I myself had had a personal interview with that celebrated wanderer so far back as about 1792, when I found him on his usual task. He was then engaged in repairing the Gravestones of the Covenanters who had died while imprisoned in the Castle of Dunnottar, to which many of them were committed prisoners at the period of Argyle's rising. Their place of confinement is still called the Whigs' Vault. Mr. Train, however, procured for me far more extensive information concerning this singular person, whose name was Patterson, than I had been able to acquire during my own short conversation with him. [See, for some further particulars, the notes to Old Mortality, in the present collective edition.] He was (as I think I have somewhere already stated) a native of the parish of Closeburn, in Dumfriesshire; and it is believed that domestic affliction, as well as devotional feeling, induced him to commence the wandering mode of life which he pursued for a very long period. It is more than twenty years since Robert Patterson's death, which took place on the highroad near Lockerby, where he was found exhausted and expiring. The white pony, the companion of his pilgrimage, was standing by the side of its dying master the whole furnishing a scene not unfitted for the pencil. These particulars I had from Mr. Train.

Another debt, which I pay most willingly, I owe to an unknown correspondent (a lady), [The late Mrs. Goldie.] who favoured me with the history of the upright and high-principled female, whom, in the Heart of Mid-Lothian, I have termed Jeanie Deans. The circumstance of her refusing to save her sister's life by an act of perjury, and undertaking a pilgrimage to London to obtain her pardon, are both represented as true by my fair and obliging correspondent; and they led me to consider the possibility of rendering a fictitious personage interesting by mere dignity of mind and rectitude of principle, assisted by unpretending good sense and temper, without any of the beauty, grace, talent, accomplishment, and wit to which a heroine of romance is supposed to have a prescriptive right. If the portrait was received with interest by the public, I am conscious how much it was owing to the truth and force of the original sketch, which I regret that I am unable to present to the public, as it was written with much feeling and spirit.

Old and odd books, and a considerable collection of family legends, formed another quarry, so ample that it was much more likely that the strength of the labourer should be exhausted than that materials should fail. I may mention, for example's sake, that the terrible catastrophe of the Bride of Lammermoor actually occurred in a Scottish family of rank. The female relative, by whom the melancholy tale was communicated to me many years since, was a near connection of the family in which the event happened, and always told it with an appearance of melancholy mystery which enhanced the interest. She had known in her youth the brother who rode before the unhappy victim to the fatal altar, who, though then a mere boy, and occupied almost entirely with the gaiety of his own appearance in the bridal procession, could not but remark that the hand of his sister was moist,

and cold as that of a statue. It is unnecessary further to withdraw the veil from this scene of family distress, nor, although it occurred more than a hundred years since, might it be altogether agreeable to the representatives of the families concerned in the narrative. It may be proper to say that the events alone are imitated; but I had neither the means nor intention of copying the manners, or tracing the characters, of the persons concerned in the real story. Indeed, I may here state generally that, although I have deemed historical personages free subjects of delineation, I have never on any occasion violated the respect due to private life. It was indeed impossible that traits proper to persons, both living and dead, with whom I have had intercourse in society, should not have risen to my pen in such works as Waverley, and those which followed it. But I have always studied to generalize the portraits, so that they should still seem, on the whole, the productions of fancy, though possessing some resemblance to real individuals. Yet I must own my attempts have not in this last particular been uniformly successful. There are men whose characters are so peculiarly marked, that the delineation of some leading and principal feature inevitably places the whole person before you in his individuality. Thus, the character of Jonathan Oldbuck, in the Antiquary, was partly founded on that of an old friend of my youth, to whom I am indebted for introducing me to Shakespeare, and other invaluable favours; but I thought I had so completely disguised the likeness that his features could not be recognized by any one now alive. I was mistaken, however, and indeed had endangered what I desired should be considered as a secret; for I afterwards learned that a highly-respectable gentleman, one of the few surviving friends of my father, and an acute critic, [James Chalmers, Esq., Solicitor at Law, London, who (died during the publication of the present edition of these Novels. Aug. 1831.)] had said, upon the appearance of the work, that he was now convinced who was the author of it, as he recognized in the Antiquary of Monkbarns traces of the character of a very intimate friend of my father's family.

I may here also notice that the sort of exchange of gallantry which is represented as taking place betwixt the Baron of Bradwardine and Colonel Talbot, is a literal fact. The real circumstances of the anecdote, alike honourable to Whig and Tory, are these: —

Alexander Stewart of Invernahyle – a name which I cannot write without the warmest recollections of gratitude to the friend of my childhood, who first introduced me to the Highlands, their traditions, and their manners – had been engaged actively in the troubles of 1745. As he charged at the battle of Preston with his clan, the Stewarts of Appin, he saw an officer of the opposite army standing alone by a battery of four cannon, of which he discharged three on the advancing Highlanders, and then drew his sword. Invernahyle rushed on him, and required him to surrender. "Never to rebels!" was the undaunted reply, accompanied with a lunge, which the Highlander received on his target, but instead of using his sword in cutting down his now defenceless antagonist, he employed it in parrying the blow of a Lochaber axe aimed at the officer by the Miller, one of his own followers, a grim-looking old Highlander, whom I remember to have seen. Thus overpowered, Lieutenant-Colonel Allan Whitefoord, a gentleman of rank and consequence, as well as a brave officer, gave up his sword, and with it his purse and watch, which Invernahyle accepted, to save them from his followers. After the affair was over, Mr. Stewart sought out his prisoner, and they were introduced to each other by the celebrated John Roy Stewart, who acquainted Colonel Whitefoord with the quality of his captor, and made him aware of the necessity of receiving back his property, which he was inclined to leave in the hands into which it had fallen. So great became the confidence established betwixt them, that Invernahyle obtained from the Chevalier his prisoner's freedom upon parole; and soon afterwards, having been sent back to the Highlands to raise men, he visited Colonel Whitefoord at his own house, and spent two happy days with him and his Whig friends, without thinking on either side of the civil war which was then raging.

When the battle of Culloden put an end to the hopes of Charles Edward, Invernahyle, wounded and unable to move, was borne from the field by the faithful zeal of his retainers. But as he had been a distinguished Jacobite, his family and property were exposed to the system of vindictive destruction too generally carried into execution through the country of the insurgents. It was now

Colonel Whitefoord's turn to exert himself, and he wearied all the authorities, civil and military, with his solicitations for pardon to the saver of his life, or at least for a protection for his wife and family. His applications were for a long time unsuccessful. "I was found with the mark of the Beast upon me in every list," was Invernahyle's expression. At length Colonel Whitefoord applied to the Duke of Cumberland, and urged his suit with every argument which he could think of, being still repulsed, he took his commission from his bosom, and having said something of his own and his family's exertions in the cause of the House of Hanover, begged to resign his situation in their service, since he could not be permitted to show his gratitude to the person to whom he owed his life. The duke, struck with his earnestness, desired him to take up his commission, and granted the protection required for the family of Invernahyle.

The chieftain himself lay concealed in a cave near his own house, before which a small body of regular soldiers were encamped. He could hear their muster-roll called every morning, and their drums beat to quarters at night, and not a change of the sentinels escaped him. As it was suspected that he was lurking somewhere on the property, his family were closely watched, and compelled to use the utmost precaution in supplying him with food. One of his daughters, a child of eight or ten years old, was employed as the agent least likely to be suspected. She was an instance, among others, that a time of danger and difficulty creates a premature sharpness of intellect. She made herself acquainted among the soldiers, till she became so familiar to them that her motions escaped their notice; and her practice was to stroll away into the neighbourhood of the cave, and leave what slender supply of food she carried for that purpose under some remarkable stone, or the root of some tree, where her father might find it as he crept by night from his lurking-place. Times became milder, and my excellent friend was relieved from proscription by the Act of Indemnity. Such is the interesting story which I have rather injured than improved by the manner in which it is told in Waverley.

This incident, with several other circumstances illustrating the Tales in question, was communicated by me to my late lamented friend, William Erskine (a Scottish judge, by the title of Lord Kinedder), who afterwards reviewed with far too much partiality the Tales of my Landlord, for the Quarterly Review of January 1817. [Lord Kinedder died in August 1822. EHEU! (Aug. 1831.)] In the same article are contained other illustrations of the Novels, with which I supplied my accomplished friend, who took the trouble to write the review. The reader who is desirous of such information will find the original of Meg Merrilies, and, I believe, of one or two other personages of the same cast of character, in the article referred to.

I may also mention that the tragic and savage circumstances which are represented as preceding the birth of Allan MacAulay in the Legend of Montrose, really happened in the family of Stewart of Ardvoirlich. The wager about the candlesticks, whose place was supplied by Highland torch-bearers, was laid and won by one of the MacDonalds of Keppoch.

There can be but little amusement in winnowing out the few grains of truth which are contained in this mass of empty fiction. I may, however, before dismissing the subject, allude to the various localities which have been affixed to some of the scenery introduced into these Novels, by which, for example, Wolf's Hope is identified with Fast Castle in Berwickshire, Tillietudlem with Draphane in Clydesdale, and the valley in the Monastery, called Glendearg, with the dale of the river Allan, above Lord Somerville's villa, near Melrose. I can only say that, in these and other instances, I had no purpose of describing any particular local spot; and the resemblance must therefore be of that general kind which necessarily exists between scenes of the same character. The iron-bound coast of Scotland affords upon its headlands and promontories fifty such castles as Wolf's Hope; every county has a valley more or less resembling Glendearg; and if castles like Tillietudlem, or mansions like the Baron of Bradwardine's, are now less frequently to be met with, it is owing to the rage of indiscriminate destruction, which has removed or ruined so many monuments of antiquity, when they were not protected by their inaccessible situation. [I would particularly intimate the Kaim of Uric,

on the eastern coast of Scotland, as having suggested an idea for the tower called Wolf's Crag, which the public more generally identified with the ancient tower of Fast Castle.]

The scraps of poetry which have been in most cases tacked to the beginning of chapters in these Novels are sometimes quoted either from reading or from memory, but, in the general case, are pure invention. I found it too troublesome to turn to the collection of the British Poets to discover apposite mottoes, and, in the situation of the theatrical mechanist, who, when the white paper which represented his shower of snow was exhausted, continued the storm by snowing brown, I drew on my memory as long as I could, and when that failed, eked it out with invention. I believe that in some cases, where actual names are affixed to the supposed quotations, it would be to little purpose to seek them in the works of the authors referred to. In some cases I have been entertained when Dr. Watts and other graver authors have been ransacked in vain for stanzas for which the novelist alone was responsible.

And now the reader may expect me, while in the confessional, to explain the motives why I have so long persisted in disclaiming the works of which I am now writing. To this it would be difficult to give any other reply, save that of Corporal Nym – it was the author's humour or caprice for the time. I hope it will not be construed into ingratitude to the public, to whose indulgence I have owed my SANG-FROID much more than to any merit of my own, if I confess that I am, and have been, more indifferent to success or to failure as an author, than may be the case with others, who feel more strongly the passion for literary fame, probably because they are justly conscious of a better title to it. It was not until I had attained the age of thirty years that I made any serious attempt at distinguishing myself as an author; and at that period men's hopes, desires, and wishes have usually acquired something of a decisive character, and are not eagerly and easily diverted into a new channel. When I made the discovery – for to me it was one – that by amusing myself with composition, which I felt a delightful occupation, I could also give pleasure to others, and became aware that literary pursuits were likely to engage in future a considerable portion of my time, I felt some alarm that I might acquire those habits of jealousy and fretfulness which have lessened, and even degraded, the character even of great authors, and rendered them, by their petty squabbles and mutual irritability, the laughing-stock of the people of the world. I resolved, therefore, in this respect to guard my breast – perhaps an unfriendly critic may add, my brow – with triple brass, [Not altogether impossible, when it is considered that I have been at the bar since 1792. (Aug. 1831.)] and as much as possible to avoid resting my thoughts and wishes upon literary success, lest I should endanger my own peace of mind and tranquillity by literary failure. It would argue either stupid apathy or ridiculous affectation to say that I have been insensible to the public applause, when I have been honoured with its testimonies; and still more highly do I prize the invaluable friendships which some temporary popularity has enabled me to form among those of my contemporaries most distinguished by talents and genius, and which I venture to hope now rest upon a basis more firm than the circumstances which gave rise to them. Yet, feeling all these advantages as a man ought to do, and must do, I may say, with truth and confidence, that I have, I think, tasted of the intoxicating cup with moderation, and that I have never, either in conversation or correspondence, encouraged discussions respecting my own literary pursuits. On the contrary, I have usually found such topics, even when introduced from motives most flattering to myself, Rather embarrassing and disagreeable.

I have now frankly told my motives for concealment, so far as I am conscious of having any, and the public will forgive the egotism of the detail, as what is necessarily connected with it. The author, so long and loudly called for, has appeared on the stage, and made his obeisance to the audience. Thus far his conduct is a mark of respect. To linger in their presence would be intrusion.

I have only to repeat that I avow myself in print, as formerly in words, the sole and unassisted author of all the Novels published as works of "The Author of Waverley." I do this without shame, for I am unconscious that there is any thing in their composition which deserves reproach, either on the score of religion or morality; and without any feeling of exultation, because, whatever may have

been their temporary success, I am well aware how much their reputation depends upon the caprice of fashion; and I have already mentioned the precarious tenure by which it is held, as a reason for displaying no great avidity in grasping at the possession.

I ought to mention, before concluding, that twenty persons, at least, were, either from intimacy, or from the confidence which circumstances rendered necessary, participant of this secret; and as there was no instance, to my knowledge, of any one of the number breaking faith, I am the more obliged to them, because the slight and trivial character of the mystery was not qualified to inspire much respect in those entrusted with it. Nevertheless, like Jack the Giant-Killer, I was fully confident in the advantage of my "Coat of Darkness;" and had it not been from compulsory circumstances, I would have, indeed, been very cautious how I parted with it.

As for the work which follows, it was meditated, and in part printed, long before the avowal of the novels took place, and originally commenced with a declaration that it was neither to have introduction nor preface of any kind. This long proem, prefixed to a work intended not to have any, may, however, serve to show how human purposes in the most trifling, as well as the most important affairs, are liable to be controlled by the course of events. Thus we begin to cross a strong river with our eyes and our resolution fixed on that point of the opposite shore on which we purpose to land; but gradually giving way to the torrent, are glad, by the aid perhaps of branch or bush, to extricate ourselves at some distant and perhaps dangerous landing-place, much farther down the stream than that on which we had fixed our intentions.

Hoping that the Courteous Reader will afford to a known and familiar acquaintance some portion of the favour which he extended to a disguised candidate for his applause, I beg leave to subscribe myself his obliged humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT. ABBOTSFORD, OCTOBER 1, 1827.

Such was the little narrative which I thought proper to put forth in October 1827; nor have I much to add to it now. About to appear for the first time in my own name in this department of letters, it occurred to me that something in the shape of a periodical publication might carry with it a certain air of novelty, and I was willing to break, if I may so express it, the abruptness of my personal forthcoming, by investing an imaginary coadjutor with at least as much distinctness of individual existence as I had ever previously thought it worth while to bestow on shadows of the same convenient tribe. Of course, it had never been in my contemplation to invite the assistance of any real person in the sustaining of my quasi-editorial character and labours. It had long been my opinion, that any thing like a literary PICNIC is likely to end in suggesting comparisons, justly termed odious, and therefore to be avoided; and, indeed, I had also had some occasion to know, that promises of assistance, in efforts of that order, are apt to be more magnificent than the subsequent performance. I therefore planned a Miscellany, to be dependent, after the old fashion, on my own resources alone, and although conscious enough that the moment which assigned to the Author of Waverley "a local habitation and a name," had seriously endangered his spell, I felt inclined to adopt the sentiment of my old hero Montrose, and to say to myself, that in literature, as in war, —

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all."

To the particulars explanatory of the plan of these Chronicles, which the reader is presented with in Chapter II. by the imaginary Editor, Mr. Croftangry, I have now to add, that the lady, termed in his narrative, Mrs. Bethune Balliol, was designed to shadow out in its leading points the interesting character of a dear friend of mine, Mrs. Murray Keith, whose death occurring shortly before, had saddened a wide circle, much attached to her, as well for her genuine virtue and amiable qualities of

disposition, as for the extent of information which she possessed, and the delightful manner in which she was used to communicate it. In truth, the author had, on many occasions, been indebted to her vivid memory for the SUBSTRATUM of his Scottish fictions, and she accordingly had been, from an early period, at no loss to fix the Waverley Novels on the right culprit.

[The Keiths of Craig, in Kincardineshire, descended from John Keith, fourth son of William, second Earl Marischal, who got from his father, about 1480, the lands of Craig, and part of Garvock, in that county. In Douglas's Baronage, 443 to 445, is a pedigree of that family. Colonel Robert Keith of Craig (the seventh in descent from John) by his wife, Agnes, daughter of Robert Murray of Murrayshall, of the family of Blackbarony, widow of Colonel Stirling, of the family of Keir, had one son – namely Robert Keith of Craig, ambassador to the court of Vienna, afterwards to St. Petersburgh, which latter situation he held at the accession of King George III. – who died at Edinburgh in 1774. He married Margaret, second daughter of Sir William Cunningham of Caprington, by Janet, only child and heiress of Sir James Dick of Prestonfield; and, among other children of this marriage were the late well-known diplomatist, Sir Robert Murray Keith, K.B., a general in the army, and for some time ambassador at Vienna; Sir Basil Keith, Knight, captain in the navy, who died Governor of Jamaica; and my excellent friend, Anne Murray Keith, who ultimately came into possession of the family estates, and died not long before the date of this Introduction (1831).]

In the sketch of Chrystal Croftangry's own history, the author has been accused of introducing some not polite allusions to respectable living individuals; but he may safely, he presumes, pass over such an insinuation. The first of the narratives which Mr. Croftangry proceeds to lay before the public, "The Highland Widow," was derived from Mrs. Murray Keith, and is given, with the exception of a few additional circumstances – the introduction of which I am rather inclined to regret – very much as the excellent old lady used to tell the story. Neither the Highland cicerone Macturk nor the demure washingwoman, were drawn from imagination; and on re-reading my tale, after the lapse of a few years, and comparing its effect with my remembrance of my worthy friend's oral narration, which was certainly extremely affecting, I cannot but suspect myself of having marred its simplicity by some of those interpolations, which, at the time when I penned them, no doubt passed with myself for embellishments.

The next tale, entitled "The Two Drovers," I learned from another old friend, the late George Constable, Esq. of Wallace-Craigie, near Dundee, whom I have already introduced to my reader as the original Antiquary of Monkbarns. He had been present, I think, at the trial at Carlisle, and seldom mentioned the venerable judges charge to the jury, without shedding tears, – which had peculiar pathos, as flowing down features, carrying rather a sarcastic or almost a cynical expression.

This worthy gentleman's reputation for shrewd Scottish sense, knowledge of our national antiquities, and a racy humour peculiar to himself, must be still remembered. For myself, I have pride in recording that for many years we were, in Wordsworth's language, —

> "A pair of friends, though I was young,
> And 'George' was seventy-two."

W. S. ABBOTSFORD, AUG. 15, 1831.

APPENDIX TO INTRODUCTION

[It has been suggested to the Author that it might be well to reprint here a detailed account of the public dinner alluded to in the foregoing Introduction, as given in the newspapers of the time; and the reader is accordingly presented with the following extract from the EDINBURGH WEEKLY JOURNAL for Wednesday, 28th February, 1827.]

THE THEATRICAL FUND DINNER.

Before proceeding with our account of this very interesting festival – for so it may be termed – it is our duty to present to our readers the following letter, which we have received from the President: —

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "EDINBURGH WEEKLY JOURNAL."

Sir, – I am extremely sorry I have not leisure to correct the copy you sent me of what I am stated to have said at the dinner for the Theatrical Fund. I am no orator, and upon such occasions as are alluded to, I say as well as I can what the time requires.

However, I hope your reporter has been more accurate in other instances than in mine. I have corrected one passage, in which I am made to speak with great impropriety and petulance, respecting the opinions of those who do not approve of dramatic entertainments. I have restored what I said, which was meant to be respectful, as every objection founded in conscience is, in my opinion, entitled to be so treated. Other errors I left as I found them, it being of little consequence whether I spoke sense or nonsense in what was merely intended for the purpose of the hour.

I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,

EDINBURGH, MONDAY. WALTER SCOTT.

The Theatrical Fund Dinner, which took place on Friday, in the Assembly Rooms, was conducted with admirable spirit. The Chairman, Sir WALTER SCOTT, among his other great qualifications, is well fitted to enliven such an entertainment. His manners are extremely easy, and his style of speaking simple and natural, yet full of vivacity and point; and he has the art, if it be art, of relaxing into a certain homeliness of manner, without losing one particle of his dignity. He thus takes off some of that solemn formality which belongs to such meetings, and, by his easy, and graceful familiarity, imparts to them somewhat of the pleasing character of a private entertainment. Near Sir W. Scott sat the Earl of Fife, Lord Meadowbank, Sir John Hope of Pinkie, Bart., Admiral Adam, Baron Clerk Rattray, Gilbert Innes, Esq., James Walker, Esq., Robert Dundas, Esq., Alexander Smith, Esq., etc.

The cloth being removed, "Non nobis, Domine," was sung by Messrs. Thorne, Swift, Collier, and Hartley, after which the following toasts were given from the chair: —

"The King" – all the honours.

"The Duke of Clarence and the Royal Family."

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing the next toast, which he wished to be drunk in solemn silence, said it was to the memory of a regretted-prince, whom we had lately lost. Every individual would at once conjecture to whom he alluded. He had no intention to dwell on his military merits. They had been told in the senate; they had been repeated in the cottage; and whenever a soldier was the theme, his name was never far distant. But it was chiefly in connection with the business of this meeting, which his late Royal Highness had condescended in a particular manner to patronize, that they were called on to drink his health. To that charity he had often sacrificed his time, and had given up the little leisure which he had from important business. He was always ready to attend on every occasion of this kind, and it was in that view that he proposed to drink to the memory of his late Royal Highness the Duke of York. – Drunk in solemn silence.

The CHAIRMAN then requested that gentlemen would fill a bumper as full as it would hold, while he would say only a few words. He was in the habit of hearing speeches, and he knew the feeling with which long ones were regarded. He was sure that it was perfectly unnecessary for him to enter into any vindication of the dramatic art, which they had come here to support. This, however, he considered to be the proper time and proper occasion for him to say a few words on that love of representation which was an innate feeling in human nature. It was the first amusement that the child had. It grew greater as he grew up; and even in the decline of life nothing amuses so much as when a common tale is told with appropriate personification. The first thing a child does is to ape his schoolmaster by flogging a chair. The assuming a character ourselves, or the seeing others assume an imaginary character, is an enjoyment natural to humanity. It was implanted in our very nature to take pleasure from such representations, at proper times and on proper occasions. In all ages the theatrical art had kept pace with the improvement of mankind, and with the progress of letters and the fine arts. As man has advanced from the ruder stages of society, the love of dramatic representations has increased, and all works of this nature have keen improved in character and in structure. They had only to turn their eyes to the history of ancient Greece, although he did not pretend to be very deeply versed in its ancient drama. Its first tragic poet commanded a body of troops at the battle of Marathon. Sophocles and Euripides were men of rank in Athens when Athens was in its highest renown. They shook Athens with their discourses, as their theatrical works shook the theatre itself. If they turned to France in the time of Louis the Fourteenth – that era which is the classical history of that country – they would find that it was referred to by all Frenchmen as the golden age of the drama there. And also in England in the time of Queen Elizabeth the drama was at its highest pitch, when the nation began to mingle deeply and wisely in the general politics of Europe, not only not receiving laws from others, but giving laws to the world, and vindicating the rights of mankind. (Cheers.) There have been various times when the dramatic art subsequently fell into disrepute. Its professors have been stigmatized, and laws have been passed against them, less dishonourable to them than to the statesmen by whom they were proposed, and to the legislators by whom they were adopted. What were the times in which these laws were passed? Was it not when virtue was seldom inculcated as a moral duty that we were required to relinquish the most rational of all our amusements, when the clergy were enjoined celibacy, and when the laity were denied the right to read their Bibles? He thought that it must have been from a notion of penance that they erected the drama into an ideal place of profaneness, and spoke of the theatre as of the tents of sin. He did not mean to dispute that there were many excellent persons who thought differently from him, and he disclaimed the slightest idea of charging them with bigotry or hypocrisy on that account. He gave them full credit for their tender consciences, in making these objections, although they did not appear relevant to him. But to these persons, being, as he believed them, men of worth and piety, he was sure the purpose of this meeting would furnish some apology for an error, if there be any, in the opinions of those who attend. They would approve the gift, although they might differ in other points. Such might not approve of going to the theatre, but at least could not deny that they might give away from their superfluity what was required for the relief of the sick, the support of the aged, and the comfort of the afflicted. These were duties enjoined by our religion itself. (Loud cheers.)

The performers are in a particular manner entitled to the support or regard, when in old age or distress, of those who have partaken of the amusements of those places which they render an ornament to society. Their art was of a peculiarly delicate and precarious nature. They had to serve a long apprenticeship. It was very long before even the first-rate geniuses could acquire the mechanical knowledge of the stage business. They must languish long in obscurity before they can avail themselves of their natural talents; and after that they have but a short space of time, during which they are fortunate if they can provide the means of comfort in the decline of life. That comes late, and lasts but a short time; after which they are left dependent. Their limbs fail – their teeth are loosened – their voice is lost and they are left, after giving happiness to others, in a most disconsolate

state. The public were liberal and generous to those deserving their protection. It was a sad thing to be dependent on the favour, or, he might say, in plain terms, on the caprice, of the public; and this more particularly for a class of persons of whom extreme prudence is not the character. There might be instances of opportunities being neglected. But let each gentleman tax himself, and consider the opportunities THEY had neglected, and the sums of money THEY had wasted; let every gentleman look into his own bosom, and say whether these were circumstances which would soften his own feelings, were he to be plunged into distress. He put it to every generous bosom – to every better feeling – to say what consolation was it to old age to be told that you might have made provision at a time which had been neglected – (loud cheers) – and to find it objected, that if you had pleased you might have been wealthy. He had hitherto been speaking of what, in theatrical language, was called STARS; but they were sometimes falling ones. There was another class of sufferers naturally and necessarily connected with the theatre, without whom it was impossible to go on. The sailors have a saying, Every man cannot be a boatswain. If there must be a great actor to act Hamlet, there must also be people to act Laertes, the King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern, otherwise a drama cannot go on. If even Garrick himself were to rise from the dead, he could not act Hamlet alone. There must be generals, colonels, commanding-officers, subalterns. But what are the private soldiers to do? Many have mistaken their own talents, and have been driven in early youth to try the stage, to which they are not competent. He would know what to say to the indifferent poet and to the bad artist. He would say that it was foolish, and he would recommend to the poet to become a scribe, and the artist to paint sign-posts. (Loud laughter.) But you could not send the player adrift; for if he cannot play Hamlet, he must play Guildenstern. Where there are many labourers, wages must be low and no man in such a situation can decently support a wife and family, and save something off his income for old age. What is this man to do in later life? Are you to cast him off like an old hinge, or a piece of useless machinery, which has done its work? To a person who had contributed to our amusement, this would be unkind, ungrateful, and unchristian. His wants are not of his own making, but arise from the natural sources of sickness and old age. It cannot be denied that there is one class of sufferers to whom no imprudence can be ascribed, except on first entering on the profession. After putting his hand to the dramatic plough, he cannot draw back, but must continue at it, and toil, till death release him from want, or charity, by its milder influence, steps in to render that want more tolerable. He had little more to say, except that he sincerely hoped that the collection to-day, from the number of respectable gentlemen present, would meet the views entertained by the patrons. He hoped it would do so. They should not be disheartened. Though they could not do a great deal, they might do something. They had this consolation, that everything they parted with from their superfluity would do some good. They would sleep the better themselves when they had been the means of giving sleep to others. It was ungrateful and unkind that those who had sacrificed their youth to our amusement should not receive the reward due to them, but should be reduced to hard fare in their old age. We cannot think of poor Falstaff going to bed without his cup of sack, or Macbeth fed on bones as marrowless as those of Banquo. (Loud cheers and laughter.) As he believed that they were all as fond of the dramatic art as he was in his younger days, he would propose that they should drink “The Theatrical Fund,” with three times three.

Mr. MACKAY rose, on behalf of his brethren, to return their thanks for the toast just drunk. Many of the gentlemen present, he said, were perhaps not fully acquainted with the nature and intention of the institution, and it might not be amiss to enter into some explanation on the subject. With whomsoever the idea of a Theatrical Fund might have originated (and it had been disputed by the surviving relatives of two or three individuals), certain it was that the first legally constituted Theatrical Fund owed its origin to one of the brightest ornaments of the profession, the late David Garrick. That eminent actor conceived that, by a weekly subscription in the theatre, a fund might be raised among its members, from which a portion might be given to those of his less fortunate brethren, and thus an opportunity would be offered for prudence to provide what fortune had denied

– a comfortable provision for the winter of life. With the welfare of his profession constantly at heart, the zeal with which he laboured to uphold its respectability, and to impress upon the minds or his brethren, not only the necessity, but the blessing of independence, the Fund became his peculiar care. He drew up a form of laws for its government, procured at his own expense the passing of an Act of Parliament for its confirmation, bequeathed to it a handsome legacy, and thus became the father of the Drury Lane Fund. So constant was his attachment to this infant establishment, that he chose to grace the close of the brightest theatrical life on record by the last display of his transcendent talent on the occasion of a benefit for this child of his adoption, which ever since has gone by the name of the Garrick Fund. In imitation of his noble example, funds had been established in several provincial theatres in England; but it remained for Mrs. Henry Siddons and Mr. William Murray to become the founders of the first Theatrical Fund in Scotland. (Cheers.) This Fund commenced under the most favourable auspices. It was liberally supported by the management, and highly patronized by the public. Notwithstanding, it fell short in the accomplishment of its intentions. What those intentions were, he (Mr. Mackay) need not recapitulate, but they failed; and he did not hesitate to confess that a want of energy on the part of the performers was the probable cause. A new set of Rules and Regulations were lately drawn up, submitted to and approved of at a general meeting of the members of the Theatre, and accordingly the Fund was remodelled on the 1st of January last. And here he thought he did but echo the feelings of his brethren, by publicly acknowledging the obligations they were under to the management for the aid given and the warm interest they had all along taken in the welfare of the Fund. (Cheers.) The nature and object of the profession had been so well treated of by the President that he would say nothing; but of the numerous offspring of science and genius that court precarious fame, the actor boasts the slenderest claim of all – the sport of fortune, the creatures of fashion, and the victims of caprice, they are seen, heard, and admired, but to be forgot. They leave no trace, no memorial of their existence – they “come like shadows, so depart.” (Cheers.) Yet humble though their pretensions be, there was no profession, trade, or calling where such a combination of requisites, mental and bodily, were indispensable. In all others the principal may practise after he has been visited by the afflicting hand of Providence – some by the loss of limb, some of voice, and many, when the faculty of the mind is on the wane, may be assisted by dutiful children or devoted servants. Not so the actor, He must retain all he ever did possess, or sink dejected to a mournful home. (Applause.) Yet while they are toiling for ephemeral theatric fame, how very few ever possess the means of hoarding in their youth that which would give bread in old age! But now a brighter prospect dawned upon them, and to the success of this their infant establishment they looked with hope, as to a comfortable and peaceful home in their declining years. He concluded by tendering to the meeting, in the name of his brethren and sisters, their unfeigned thanks for their liberal support, and begged to propose “The Health of the Patrons of the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund.” (Cheers.)

Lord MEADOWBANK said that, by desire of his Hon. Friend in the chair, and of his Noble Friend at his right hand, he begged leave to return thanks for the honour which had been conferred on the Patrons of this excellent institution. He could answer for himself – he could answer for them all – that they were deeply impressed with the meritorious objects which it has in view, and of their anxious wish to promote its interests. For himself, he hoped he might be permitted to say that he was rather surprised at finding his own name as one of the Patrons, associated with so many individuals of high rank and powerful influence. But it was an excuse for those who had placed him in a situation so honourable and so distinguished, that when this charity was instituted he happened to hold a high and responsible station under the Crown, when he might have been of use in assisting and promoting its objects. His Lordship much feared that he could have little expectation, situated as he now was, of doing either; but he could confidently assert that few things would give him greater gratification than being able to contribute to its prosperity and support. And indeed, when one recollects the pleasure which at all periods of life he has received from the exhibitions of the stage, and the exertions of the meritorious individuals for whose aid this Fund has been established, he must be divested both

of gratitude and feeling who would not give his best endeavours to promote its welfare. And now, that he might in some measure repay the gratification which had been afforded himself, he would beg leave to propose a toast, the health of one of the Patrons, a great and distinguished individual, whose name must always stand by itself, and which, in an assembly such as this, or in any other assembly of Scotsmen, can never be received, not, he would say, with ordinary feelings of pleasure or of delight, but with those of rapture and enthusiasm. In doing so he felt that he stood in a somewhat new situation. Whoever had been called upon to propose the health of his Hon. Friend to whom he alluded, some time ago, would have found himself enabled, from the mystery in which certain matters were involved, to gratify himself and his auditors by allusions which found a responding chord in their own feelings, and to deal in the language, the sincere language, of panegyric, without intruding on the modesty of the great individual to whom he referred. But it was no longer possible, consistently with the respect to one's auditors, to use upon this subject terms either of mystification or of obscure or indirect allusion. The clouds have been dispelled; the DARKNESS VISIBLE has been cleared away; and the Great Unknown – the minstrel of our native land – the mighty magician who has rolled back the current of time, and conjured up before our living senses the men and the manners of days which have long passed away – stands revealed to the hearts and the eyes of his affectionate and admiring countrymen. If he himself were capable of imagining all that belonged to this mighty subject – were he even able to give utterance to all that, as a friend, as a man, and as a Scotsman, he must feel regarding it – yet knowing, as he well did, that this illustrious individual was not more distinguished for his towering talents than for those feelings which rendered such allusions ungrateful to himself, however sparingly introduced, he would, on that account, still refrain from doing that which would otherwise be no less pleasing to him than to his audience. But this his Lordship, hoped he would be allowed to say (his auditors would not pardon him were he to say less), we owe to him, as a people, a large and heavy debt of gratitude. He it is who has opened to foreigners the grand and characteristic beauties of our country. It is to him that we owe that our gallant ancestors and the struggles of our illustrious patriots – who fought and bled in order to obtain and secure that independence and that liberty we now enjoy – have obtained a fame no longer confined to the boundaries of a remote and comparatively obscure nation, and who has called down upon their struggles for glory and freedom the admiration of foreign countries. He it is who has conferred a new reputation on our national character, and bestowed on Scotland an imperishable name, were it only by her having given birth to himself. (Loud and rapturous applause.)

Sir WALTER SCOTT certainly did not think that, in coming here to-day, he would have the task of acknowledging, before three hundred gentlemen, a secret which, considering that it was communicated to more than twenty people, had been remarkably well kept. He was now before the bar of his country, and might be understood to be on trial before Lord Meadowbank as an offender; yet he was sure that every impartial jury would bring in a verdict of Not Proven. He did not now think it necessary to enter into the reasons of his long silence. Perhaps caprice might have a consider able share in it. He had now to say, however, that the merits of these works, if they had any, and their faults, were entirely imputable to himself. (Long and loud cheering.) He was afraid to think on what he had done. "Look on't again I dare not." He had thus far unbosomed himself and he knew that it would be reported to the public. He meant, then, seriously to state, that when he said he was the author, he was the total and undivided author. With the exception of quotations, there was not a single word that was not derived from himself, or suggested in the course of his reading. The wand was now broken, and the book buried. You will allow me further to say, with Prospero, it is your breath that has filled my sails, and to crave one single toast in the capacity of the author of these novels; and he would dedicate a bumper to the health of one who has represented some of those characters, of which he had endeavoured to give the skeleton, with a degree of liveliness which rendered him grateful. He would propose "The Health of his friend Bailie Nicol Jarvie" – (loud applause) – and he was sure that when the author of Waverley and Rob Roy drinks to Nicol Jarvie, it would be received with that

degree of applause to which that gentleman has always been accustomed, and that they would take care that on the present occasion it should be PRODIGIOUS! (Long and vehement applause.)

Mr. MACKAY, who here spoke with great humour in the character of Bailie Jarvie. – My conscience! My worthy father the deacon could not have believed that his son could hae had sic a compliment paid to him by the Great Unknown!

Sir WALTER SCOTT. – The Small Known now, Mr. Bailie.

Mr. MACKAY. – He had been long identified with the Bailie, and he was vain of the cognomen which he had now worn for eight years; and he questioned if any of his brethren in the Council had given such universal satisfaction. (Loud laughter and applause.) Before he sat down, he begged to propose "The Lord Provost and the City of Edinburgh."

Sir WALTER SCOTT apologized for the absence of the Lord Provost, who had gone to London on public business.

Tune – "Within a mile of Edinburgh town."

Sir WALTER SCOTT gave "The Duke of Wellington and the army."

Glee – "How merrily we live."

"Lord Melville and the Navy, that fought till they left nobody to fight with, like an arch sportsman who clears all and goes after the game."

Mr. PAT. ROBERTSON. – They had heard this evening a toast, which had been received with intense delight, which will be published in every newspaper, and will be hailed with joy by all Europe. He had one toast assigned him which he had great pleasure in giving. He was sure that the stage had in all ages a great effect on the morals and manners of the people. It was very desirable that the stage should be well regulated; and there was no criterion by which its regulation could be better determined than by the moral character and personal respectability of the performers. He was not one of those stern moralists who objected to the theatre. The most fastidious moralist could not possibly apprehend any injury from the stage of Edinburgh, as it was presently managed, and so long as it was adorned by that illustrious individual, Mrs. Henry Siddons, whose public exhibitions were not more remarkable for feminine grace and delicacy than was her private character for every virtue which could be admired in domestic life. He would conclude with reciting a few words from Shakespeare, in a spirit not of contradiction to those stern moralists who disliked the theatre, but of meekness: "Good, my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time." He then gave "Mrs. Henry Siddons, and success to the Theatre Royal of Edinburgh."

Mr. MURRAY. – Gentlemen, I rise to return thanks for the honour you have done Mrs. Siddons, in doing which I am somewhat difficulted, from the extreme delicacy which attends a brother's expatiating upon a sister's claims to honours publicly paid – (hear, hear) – yet, gentlemen, your kindness emboldens me to say that, were I to give utterance to all a brother's feelings, I should not exaggerate those claims. (Loud applause.) I therefore, gentlemen, thank you most cordially for the honour you have done her, and shall now request permission to make an observation on the establishment of the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund. Mr. Mackay has done Mrs. Henry Siddons and myself the honour to ascribe the establishment to us. But no, gentlemen, it owes its origin to a higher source – the publication of the novel of Rob Roy – the unprecedented success of the opera adapted from that popular production. (Hear, hear.) It was that success which relieved the Edinburgh Theatre from its difficulties, and enabled Mrs. Siddons to carry into effect the establishment of a fund she had long desired, but was prevented from effecting from the unsettled state of her theatrical concerns. I therefore hope that in future years, when the aged and infirm actor derives relief from this fund, he will, in the language of the gallant Highlander, "Cast his eye to good old Scotland, and not forget Rob Roy." (Loud applause.)

Sir WALTER SCOTT here stated that Mrs. Siddons wanted the means but not the will of beginning the Theatrical Fund. He here alluded to the great merits of Mr. Murray's management,

and to his merits as an actor, which were of the first order, and of which every person who attends the Theatre must be sensible; and after alluding to the embarrassments with which the Theatre had been at one period threatened, he concluded by giving "The Health of Mr. Murray," which was drunk with three times three.

Mr. MURRAY. – Gentlemen, I wish I could believe that in any degree I merited the compliments with which it has pleased Sir Walter Scott to preface the proposal of my health, or the very flattering manner in which you have done me the honour to receive it. The approbation of such an assembly is most gratifying to me, and might encourage feelings of vanity, were not such feelings crushed by my conviction that no man holding the situation I have so long held in Edinburgh could have failed, placed in the peculiar circumstances in which I have been placed. Gentlemen, I shall not insult your good taste by eulogiums upon your judgment or kindly feeling, though to the first I owe any improvement I may have made as an actor, and certainly my success as a manager to the second. (Applause.) When, upon the death of my dear brother, the late Mr. Siddons, it was proposed that I should undertake the management of the Edinburgh Theatre, I confess I drew back, doubting my capability to free it from the load of debt and difficulty with which it was surrounded. In this state of anxiety, I solicited the advice of one who had ever honoured me with his kindest regard, and whose name no member of my profession can pronounce without feelings of the deepest respect and gratitude. I allude to the late Mr. John Kemble. (Great applause.) To him I applied, and with the repetition of his advice I shall cease to trespass upon your time – (hear, hear) – "My dear William, fear not. Integrity and assiduity must prove an overmatch for all difficulty; and though I approve your not indulging a vain confidence in your own ability, and viewing with respectful apprehension the judgment of the audience you have to act before, yet be assured that judgment will ever be tempered by the feeling that you are acting for the widow and the fatherless." (Loud applause.) Gentlemen, those words have never passed from my mind; and I feel convinced that you have pardoned my many errors, from the feeling that I was striving for the widow and the fatherless. (Long and enthusiastic applause followed Mr. Murray's address.)

Sir WALTER SCOTT gave "The Health of the Stewards."

Mr. VANDENHOFF. – Mr. President and Gentlemen, the honour conferred upon the Stewards, in the very flattering compliment you have just paid us, calls forth our warmest acknowledgments. In tendering you our thanks for the approbation you have been pleased to express of our humble exertions, I would beg leave to advert to the cause in which we have been engaged. Yet, surrounded as I am by the genius – the eloquence – of this enlightened city, I cannot but feel the presumption which ventures to address you on so interesting a subject. Accustomed to speak in the language of others, I feel quite at a loss for terms wherein to clothe the sentiments excited by the present occasion. (Applause.) The nature of the institution which has sought your fostering patronage, and the objects which it contemplates, have been fully explained to you. But, gentlemen, the relief which it proposes is not a gratuitous relief, but to be purchased by the individual contribution of its members towards the general good. This Fund lends no encouragement to idleness or improvidence, but it offers an opportunity to prudence in vigour and youth to make provision against the evening of life and its attendant infirmity. A period is fixed at which we admit the plea of age as an exemption from professional labour. It is painful to behold the veteran on the stage (compelled by necessity) contending against physical decay, mocking the joyousness of mirth with the feebleness of age, when the energies decline, when the memory fails! and "the big, manly voice, turning again towards childish treble, pipes and whistles in the sound." We would remove him from the mimic scene, where fiction constitutes the charm; we would not view old age caricaturing itself. (Applause.) But as our means may be found, in time of need, inadequate to the fulfilment of our wishes – fearful of raising expectations which we may be unable to gratify – desirous not "to keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the hope" – we have presumed to court the assistance of the friends of the drama to strengthen our infant institution. Our appeal has been successful beyond our most sanguine

expectations. The distinguished patronage conferred on us by your presence on this occasion, and the substantial support which your benevolence has so liberally afforded to our institution, must impress every member of the Fund with the most grateful sentiments – sentiments which no language can express, no time obliterate. (Applause.) I will not trespass longer on your attention. I would the task of acknowledging our obligation had fallen into abler hands. (Hear, hear.) In the name of the Stewards, I most respectfully and cordially thank you for the honour you have done us, which greatly overpays our poor endeavours. (Applause.)

[This speech, though rather inadequately reported, was one of the best delivered on this occasion. That it was creditable to Mr. Vandenhoff's taste and feelings, the preceding sketch will show; but how much it was so, it does not show.]

Mr. J. CAY gave "Professor Wilson and the University of Edinburgh, of which he was one of the brightest ornaments."

Lord MEADOWBANK, after a suitable eulogium, gave "The Earl of Fife," which was drunk with three times three.

Earl FIFE expressed his high gratification at the honour conferred on him. He intimated his approbation of the institution, and his readiness to promote its success by every means in his power. He concluded with giving "The Health of the Company of Edinburgh."

Mr. JONES, on rising to return thanks, being received with considerable applause, said he was truly grateful for the kind encouragement he had experienced, but the novelty of the situation in which he now was renewed all the feelings he experienced when he first saw himself announced in the bills as a young gentleman, being his first appearance on any stage. (Laughter and applause.) Although in the presence of those whose indulgence had, in another sphere, so often shielded him from the penalties of inability, he was unable to execute the task which had so unexpectedly devolved upon him in behalf of his brethren and himself. He therefore begged the company to imagine all that grateful hearts could prompt the most eloquent to utter, and that would be a copy of their feelings. (Applause.) He begged to trespass another moment on their attention, for the purpose of expressing the thanks of the members of the Fund to the Gentlemen of the Edinburgh Professional Society of Musicians, who, finding that this meeting was appointed to take place on the same evening with their concert, had, in the handsomest manner, agreed to postpone it. Although it was his duty thus to preface the toast he had to propose, he was certain the meeting required no further inducement than the recollection of the pleasure the exertions of those gentlemen had often afforded them within those walls, to join heartily in drinking "Health and Prosperity to the Edinburgh Professional Society of Musicians." (Applause.)

Mr. PAT. ROBERTSON Proposed "The Health of Mr. Jeffrey," whose absence was owing to indisposition. The public was well aware that he was the most distinguished advocate at the bar. He was likewise distinguished for the kindness, frankness, and cordial manner in which he communicated with the junior members of the profession, to the esteem of whom his splendid talents would always entitle him.

Mr. J. MACONOCHIE gave "The Health of Mrs. Siddons, senior, the most distinguished ornament of the stage."

Sir W. SCOTT said that if anything could reconcile him to old age, it was the reflection that he had seen the rising as well as the setting sun of Mrs. Siddons. He remembered well their breakfasting near to the Theatre – waiting the whole day – the crushing at the doors at six o'clock – and their going in and counting their fingers till seven o'clock. But the very first step – the very first word which she uttered – was sufficient to overpay him for all his labours. The house was literally electrified; and it was only from witnessing the effects of her genius that he could guess to what a pitch theatrical excellence could be carried. Those young gentlemen who have only seen the setting sun of this distinguished performer, beautiful and serene as that was, must give us old fellows, who have seen its rise and its meridian, leave to hold our heads a little higher.

Mr. DUNDAS gave “The Memory of Home, the author of Douglas.”

Mr. MACKAY here announced that the subscriptions for the night amounted to L280, and he expressed gratitude for this substantial proof of their kindness. [We are happy to state that subscriptions have since flowed in very liberally.]

Mr. MACKAY here entertained the company with a pathetic song.

Sir WALTER SCOTT apologized for having so long forgotten their native land. He would now give “Scotland, the land of Cakes.” He would give every river, every loch, every hill, from Tweed to Johnnie Groat’s house – every lass in her cottage and countess in her castle – and may her sons stand by her, as their fathers did before them; and he who would not drink a bumper to his toast, may he never drink whisky more!

Sir WALTER SCOTT here gave “Lord Meadowbank,” who returned thanks.

Mr. H. G. BELL said that he should not have ventured to intrude himself upon the attention of the assembly, did he not feel confident that the toast he begged to have the honour to propose would make amends for the very imperfect manner in which he might express his sentiments regarding it. It had been said that, notwithstanding the mental supremacy of the present age – notwithstanding that the page of our history was studded with names destined also for the page of immortality – that the genius of Shakespeare was extinct, and the fountain of his inspiration dried up. It might be that these observations were unfortunately correct, or it might be that we were bewildered with a name, not disappointed of the reality; for though Shakespeare had brought a Hamlet, an Othello, and a Macbeth, an Ariel, a Juliet, and a Rosalind, upon the stage, were there not authors living who had brought as varied, as exquisitely painted, and as undying a range of characters into our hearts? The shape of the mere mould into which genius poured its golden treasures was surely a matter of little moment, let it be called a Tragedy, a Comedy, or a Waverley Novel. But even among the dramatic authors of the present day, he was unwilling to allow that there was a great and palpable decline from the glory of preceding ages, and his toast alone would bear him out in denying the truth of the proposition. After eulogizing the names of Baillie, Byron, Coleridge, Maturin, and others, he begged to have the honour of proposing “The Health of James Sheridan Knowles.”

Sir WALTER SCOTT. Gentlemen, I crave a bumper all over. The last toast reminds me of a neglect of duty. Unaccustomed to a public duty of this kind, errors in conducting the ceremonial of it may be excused, and omissions pardoned. Perhaps I have made one or two omissions in the course of the evening for which I trust you will grant me your pardon and indulgence. One thing in particular I have omitted, and I would now wish to make amends for it by a libation of reverence and respect to the memory of SHAKESPEARE. He was a man of universal genius, and from a period soon after his own era to the present day he has been universally idolized. When I come to his honoured name, I am like the sick man who hung up his crutches at the shrine, and was obliged to confess that he did not walk better than before. It is indeed difficult, gentlemen, to compare him to any other individual. The only one to whom I call at all compare him is the wonderful Arabian dervise, who dived into the body of each, and in this way became familiar with the thoughts and secrets of their hearts. He was a man of obscure origin, and, as a player, limited in his acquirements; but he was born evidently with a universal genius. His eyes glanced at all the varied aspects of life, and his fancy portrayed with equal talents the king on the throne and the clown who crackles his chestnuts at a Christmas fire. Whatever note he takes, he strikes it just and true, and awakens a corresponding chord in our own bosoms, Gentlemen, I propose “The Memory of William Shakespeare.”

Glee – “Lightly tread, ‘tis hallowed ground.”

After the glee, Sir WALTER rose and begged to propose as a toast the health of a lady, whose living merit is not a little honourable to Scotland. The toast (said he) is also flattering to the national vanity of a Scotchman, as the lady whom I intend to propose is a native of this country. From the public her works have met with the most favourable reception. One piece of hers, in particular, was often acted here of late years, and gave pleasure of no mean kind to many brilliant and fashionable

audiences. In her private character she (he begged leave to say) is as remarkable as in a public sense she is for her genius. In short, he would in one word name – "Joanna Baillie."

This health being drunk, Mr. THORNE was called on for a song, and sung, with great taste and feeling, "The Anchor's Weighed."

W. MENZIES, Esq., Advocate, rose to propose the health of a gentleman for many years connected at intervals with the dramatic art in Scotland. Whether we look at the range of characters he performs, or at the capacity which he evinces in executing those which he undertakes, he is equally to be admired. In all his parts he is unrivalled. The individual to whom he alluded is (said he) well known to the gentlemen present, in the characters of Malvolio, Lord Ogleby, and the Green Man; and in addition to his other qualities, he merits, for his perfection in these characters, the grateful sense of this meeting. He would wish, in the first place, to drink his health as an actor. But he was not less estimable in domestic life, and as a private gentleman; and when he announced him as one whom the chairman had honoured with his friendship, he was sure that all present would cordially join him in drinking "The Health of Mr. Terry."

Mr. WILLIAM ALLAN, banker, said that he did not rise with the intention of making a speech. He merely wished to contribute in a few words to the mirth of the evening – an evening which certainly had not passed off without some blunders. It had been understood – at least he had learnt or supposed from the expressions of Mr. Pritchard – that it would be sufficient to put a paper, with the name of the contributor, into the box, and that the gentleman thus contributing would be called on for the money next morning. He, for his part, had committed a blunder but it might serve as a caution to those who may be present at the dinner of next year. He had merely put in his name, written on a slip of paper, without the money. But he would recommend that, as some of the gentlemen might be in the same situation, the box should be again sent round, and he was confident that they, as well as he, would redeem their error.

Sir WALTER SCOTT said that the meeting was somewhat in the situation of Mrs. Anne Page, who had L300 and possibilities. We have already got, said he, L280, but I should like, I confess, to have the L300. He would gratify himself by proposing the health of an honourable person, the Lord Chief Baron, whom England has sent to us, and connecting with it that of his "yokefellow on the bench," as Shakespeare says, Mr. Baron Clerk – The Court of Exchequer.

Mr. Baron CLERK regretted the absence of his learned brother. None, he was sure, could be more generous in his nature, or more ready to help a Scottish purpose.

Sir WALTER SCOTT, – There is one who ought to be remembered on this occasion. He is, indeed, well entitled to our grateful recollection – one, in short, to whom the drama in this city owes much. He succeeded, not without trouble, and perhaps at some considerable sacrifice, in establishing a theatre. The younger part of the company may not recollect the theatre to which I allude, but there are some who with me may remember by name a place called Carrubber's Close. There Allan Ramsay established his little theatre. His own pastoral was not fit for the stage, but it has its admirers in those who love the Doric language in which it is written; and it is not without merits of a very peculiar kind. But laying aside all considerations of his literary merit, Allan was a good, jovial, honest fellow, who could crack a bottle with the best. "The Memory of Allan Ramsay."

Mr. MURRAY, on being requested, sung "'Twas merry in the hall," and at the conclusion was greeted with repeated rounds of applause.

Mr. JONES. – One omission I conceive has been made. The cause of the Fund has been ably advocated, but it is still susceptible, in my opinion, of an additional charm —

"Without the smile from partial beauty won,
Oh, what were man? – a world without a sun!"

And there would not be a darker spot in poetry than would be the corner in Shakespeare Square, if, like its fellow, the Register Office, the Theatre were deserted by the ladies. They are, in fact, our most attractive stars. “The Patronesses of the Theatre, the Ladies of the City of Edinburgh.” This toast I ask leave to drink with all the honours which conviviality can confer.

Mr. PATRICK ROBERTSON would be the last man willingly to introduce any topic calculated to interrupt the harmony of the evening; yet he felt himself treading upon ticklish ground when he approached the region of the Nor’ Loch. He assured the company, however, that he was not about to enter on the subject of the Improvement Bill. They all knew that if the public were unanimous – if the consent of all parties were obtained – if the rights and interests of everybody were therein attended to, saved, reserved, respected, and excepted – if everybody agreed to it – and, finally, a most essential point, if nobody opposed it – then, and in that case, and provided also that due intimation were given, the bill in question might pass – would pass – or might, could, would, or should pass – all expenses being defrayed. (Laughter.) He was the advocate of neither champion, and would neither avail himself of the absence of the Right Hon. the Lord Provost, nor take advantage of the non-appearance of his friend, Mr. Cockburn. (Laughter.) But in the midst of these civic broils there had been elicited a ray of hope that, at some future period, in Bereford Park, or some other place, if all parties were consulted and satisfied, and if intimation were duly made at the kirk doors of all the parishes in Scotland, in terms of the statute in that behalf provided – the people of Edinburgh might by possibility get a new Theatre. (Cheers and laughter.) But wherever the belligerent powers might be pleased to set down this new Theatre, he was sure they all hoped to meet the Old Company in it. He should therefore propose “Better Accommodation to the Old Company in the new Theatre, site unknown.” – Mr. Robertson’s speech was most humorously given, and he sat down amidst loud cheers and laughter.

Sir WALTER SCOTT. – Wherever the new Theatre is built, I hope it will not be large. There are two errors which we commonly commit – the one arising from our pride, the other from our poverty. If there are twelve plans, it is odds but the largest, without any regard to comfort, or an eye to the probable expense, is adopted. There was the College projected on this scale, and undertaken in the same manner, and who shall see the end of it? It has been building all my life, and may probably last during the lives of my children, and my children’s children. Let not the same prophetic hymn be sung when we commence a new Theatre, which was performed on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of a certain edifice, “Behold the endless work begun.” Playgoing folks should attend somewhat to convenience. The new Theatre should, in the first place, be such as may be finished in eighteen months or two years; and, in the second place, it should be one in which we can hear our old friends with comfort. It is better that a moderate-sized house should be crowded now and then, than to have a large theatre with benches continually empty, to the discouragement of the actors and the discomfort of the spectators. (Applause.) He then commented in flattering terms on the genius of Mackenzie and his private worth, and concluded by proposing “The Health of Henry Mackenzie, Esq.”

Immediately afterwards he said: – Gentlemen, it is now wearing late, and I shall request permission to retire. Like Partridge, I may say, “NON SUM QUALIS ERAM.” At my time of day I can agree with Lord Ogilvie as to his rheumatism, and say, “There’s a twinge.” I hope, therefore, you will excuse me for leaving the chair. – The worthy Baronet then retired amidst long, loud, and rapturous cheering.

Mr. PATRICK ROBERTSON was then called to the chair by common acclamation.

Gentlemen, said Mr. Robertson, I take the liberty of asking you to fill a bumper to the very brim. There is not one of us who will not remember, while he lives, being present at this day’s festival, and the declaration made this night by the gentleman who has just left the chair. That declaration has rent the veil from the features of the Great Unknown – a name which must now merge in the name of the Great Known. It will be henceforth coupled with the name of SCOTT, which will become familiar like a household word. We have heard the confession from his own immortal lips – (cheering)

– and we cannot dwell with too much or too fervent praise on the merits of the greatest man whom Scotland has produced.

After which several other toasts were given, and Mr. Robertson left the room about half-past eleven. A few choice spirits, however, rallied round Captain Broadhead of the 7th Hussars, who was called to the chair, and the festivity was prolonged till an early hour on Saturday morning.

The band of the Theatre occupied the gallery, and that of the 7th Hussars the end of the room, opposite the chair, whose performances were greatly admired. It is but justice to Mr. Gibb to state that the dinner was very handsome (though slowly served in), and the wines good. The attention of the stewards was exemplary. Mr. Murray and Mr. Vandenhoff, with great good taste, attended on Sir Walter Scott's right and left, and we know that he has expressed himself much gratified by their anxious politeness and sedulity.

CHRONICLES OF THE CANONGATE – INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I. MR. CHRYSTAL CROFTANGRY'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF

Sic itur ad astra

"This is the path to heaven." Such is the ancient motto attached to the armorial bearings of the Canongate, and which is inscribed, with greater or less propriety, upon all the public buildings, from the church to the pillory, in the ancient quarter of Edinburgh which bears, or rather once bore, the same relation to the Good Town that Westminster does to London, being still possessed of the palace of the sovereign, as it formerly was dignified by the residence of the principal nobility and gentry. I may therefore, with some propriety, put the same motto at the head of the literary undertaking by which I hope to illustrate the hitherto undistinguished name of Chrystal Croftangry.

The public may desire to know something of an author who pitches at such height his ambitious expectations. The gentle reader, therefore – for I am much of Captain Bobadil's humour, and could to no other extend myself so far – the GENTLE reader, then, will be pleased to understand that I am a a Scottish gentleman of the old school, with a fortune, temper, and person, rather the worse for wear. I have known the world for these forty years, having written myself man nearly since that period – and I do not think it is much mended. But this is an opinion which I keep to myself when I am among younger folk, for I recollect, in my youth, quizzing the Sexagenarians who carried back their ideas of a perfect state of society to the days of laced coats and triple ruffles, and some of them to the blood and blows of the Forty-five. Therefore I am cautious in exercising the right of censorship, which is supposed to be acquired by men arrived at, or approaching, the mysterious period of life, when the numbers of seven and nine multiplied into each other, form what sages have termed the Grand Climacteric.

Of the earlier part of my life it is only necessary to say, that I swept the boards of the Parliament-House with the skirts of my gown for the usual number of years during which young Lairds were in my time expected to keep term – got no fees – laughed, and made others laugh – drank claret at Bayle's, Fortune's, and Walker's – and ate oysters in the Covenant Close.

Becoming my own master, I flung my gown at the bar-keeper, and commenced gay man on my own account. In Edinburgh, I ran into all the expensive society which the place then afforded. When I went to my house in the shire of Lanark, I emulated to the utmost the expenses of men of large fortune, and had my hunters, my first-rate pointers, my game-cocks, and feeders. I can more easily forgive myself for these follies, than for others of a still more blamable kind, so indifferently cloaked over, that my poor mother thought herself obliged to leave my habitation, and betake herself to a small inconvenient jointure-house, which she occupied till her death. I think, however, I was not exclusively to blame in this separation, and I believe my mother afterwards condemned herself for being too hasty. Thank God, the adversity which destroyed the means of continuing my dissipation, restored me to the affections of my surviving parent.

My course of life could not last. I ran too fast to run long; and when I would have checked my career, I was perhaps too near the brink of the precipice. Some mishaps I prepared by my own folly, others came upon me unawares. I put my estate out to nurse to a fat man of business, who

smothered the babe he should have brought back to me in health and strength, and, in dispute with this honest gentleman, I found, like a skilful general, that my position would be most judiciously assumed by taking it up near the Abbey of Holyrood. [See Note 1. – Holyrood.] It was then I first became acquainted with the quarter, which my little work will, I hope, render immortal, and grew familiar with those magnificent wilds, through which the Kings of Scotland once chased the dark-brown deer, but which were chiefly recommended to me in those days, by their being inaccessible to those metaphysical persons, whom the law of the neighbouring country terms John Doe and Richard Roe. In short, the precincts of the palace are now best known as being a place of refuge at any time from all pursuit for civil debt.

Dire was the strife betwixt my quondam doer and myself; during which my motions were circumscribed, like those of some conjured demon, within a circle, which, "beginning at the northern gate of the King's Park, thence running northways, is bounded on the left by the King's garden-wall, and the gutter, or kennel, in a line wherewith it crosses the High Street to the Watergate, and passing through the sewer, is bounded by the walls of the Tennis Court and Physic Gardens, etc. It then follows the wall of the churchyard, joins the north west wall of St Ann's Yards, and going east to the clackmill-house, turns southward to the turnstile in the King's Park wall, and includes the whole King's Park within the Sanctuary."

These limits, which I abridge from the accurate Maitland, once marked the Girth, or Asylum, belonging to the Abbey of Holyrood, and which, being still an appendage to the royal palace, has retained the privilege of an asylum for civil debt. One would think the space sufficiently extensive for a man to stretch his limbs in, as, besides a reasonable proportion of level ground (considering that the scene lies in Scotland), it includes within its precincts the mountain of Arthur's Seat and the rocks and pasture land called Salisbury Crags. But yet it is inexpressible how, after a certain time had elapsed, I used to long for Sunday, which permitted me to extend my walk without limitation. During the other six days of the week I felt a sickness of heart, which, but for the speedy approach of the hebdomadal day of liberty, I could hardly have endured. I experienced the impatience of a mastiff who tugs in vain to extend the limits which his chain permits.

Day after day I walked by the side of the kennel which divides the Sanctuary from the unprivileged part of the Canongate; and though the month was July, and the scene the old town of Edinburgh, I preferred it to the fresh air and verdant turf which I might have enjoyed in the King's Park, or to the cool and solemn gloom of the portico which surrounds the palace. To an indifferent person either side of the gutter would have seemed much the same, the houses equally mean, the children as ragged and dirty, the carmen as brutal – the whole forming the same picture of low life in a deserted and impoverished quarter of a large city. But to me the gutter or kennel was what the brook Kidron was to Shimei: death was denounced against him should he cross it, doubtless because it was known to his wisdom who pronounced the doom that, from the time the crossing the stream was debarred, the devoted man's desire to transgress the precept would become irresistible, and he would be sure to draw down on his head the penalty which he had already justly incurred by cursing the anointed of God. For my part, all Elysium seemed opening on the other side of the kennel; and I envied the little blackguards, who, stopping the current with their little dam-dykes of mud, had a right to stand on either side of the nasty puddle which best pleased them. I was so childish as even to make an occasional excursion across, were it only for a few yards, and felt the triumph of a schoolboy, who, trespassing in an orchard, hurries back again with a fluttering sensation of joy and terror, betwixt the pleasure of having executed his purpose and the fear of being taken or discovered.

I have sometimes asked myself what I should have done in case of actual imprisonment, since I could not bear without impatience a restriction which is comparatively a mere trifle; but I really could never answer the question to my own satisfaction. I have all my life hated those treacherous expedients called MEZZO-TERMINI, and it is possible with this disposition I might have endured more patiently an absolute privation of liberty than the more modified restrictions to which my residence in the

Sanctuary at this period subjected me. If, however, the feelings I then experienced were to increase in intensity according to the difference between a jail and my actual condition, I must have hanged myself, or pined to death – there could have been no other alternative.

Amongst many companions who forgot and neglected me, of course, when my difficulties seemed to be inextricable, I had one true friend; and that friend was a barrister, who knew the laws of his country well, and tracing them up to the spirit of equity and justice in which they originate, had repeatedly prevented, by his benevolent and manly exertions, the triumphs of selfish cunning over simplicity and folly. He undertook my cause, with the assistance of a solicitor of a character similar to his own. My quondam doer had ensconced himself chin-deep among legal trenches, hornworks, and covered ways; but my two protectors shelled him out of his defences, and I was at length a free man, at liberty to go or stay wheresoever my mind listed.

I left my lodgings as hastily as if it had been a pest-house. I did not even stop to receive some change that was due to me on settling with my landlady, and I saw the poor woman stand at her door looking after my precipitate flight, and shaking her head as she wrapped the silver which she was counting for me in a separate piece of paper, apart from the store in her own moleskin purse. An honest Highlandwoman was Janet MacEvoy, and deserved a greater remuneration, had I possessed the power of bestowing it. But my eagerness of delight was too extreme to pause for explanation with Janet. On I pushed through the groups of children, of whose sports I had been so often a lazy, lounging spectator. I sprung over the gutter as if it had been the fatal Styx, and I a ghost, which, eluding Pluto's authority, was making its escape from Limbo lake. My friend had difficulty to restrain me from running like a madman up the street; and in spite of his kindness and hospitality, which soothed me for a day or two, I was not quite happy until I found myself aboard of a Leith smack, and, standing down the Firth with a fair wind, might snap my fingers at the retreating outline of Arthur's Seat, to the vicinity of which I had been so long confined.

It is not my purpose to trace my future progress through life. I had extricated myself, or rather had been freed by my friends, from the brambles and thickets of the law; but, as befell the sheep in the fable, a great part of my fleece was left behind me. Something remained, however: I was in the season for exertion, and, as my good mother used to say, there was always life for living folk. Stern necessity gave my manhood that prudence which my youth was a stranger to. I faced danger, I endured fatigue, I sought foreign climates, and proved that I belonged to the nation which is proverbially patient of labour and prodigal of life. Independence, like liberty to Virgil's shepherd, came late, but came at last, with no great affluence in its train, but bringing enough to support a decent appearance for the rest of my life, and to induce cousins to be civil, and gossips to say, "I wonder whom old Croft will make his heir? He must have picked up something, and I should not be surprised if it prove more than folk think of."

My first impulse when I returned home was to rush to the house of my benefactor, the only man who had in my distress interested himself in my behalf. He was a snuff-taker, and it had been the pride of my heart to save the IPSA CORPORA of the first score of guineas I could hoard, and to have them converted into as tasteful a snuff-box as Rundell and Bridge could devise. This I had thrust for security into the breast of my waistcoat, while, impatient to transfer it to the person for whom it was destined, I hastened to his house in Brown Square. When the front of the house became visible a feeling of alarm checked me. I had been long absent from Scotland; my friend was some years older than I; he might have been called to the congregation of the just. I paused, and gazed on the house as if I had hoped to form some conjecture from the outward appearance concerning the state of the family within. I know not how it was, but the lower windows being all closed, and no one stirring, my sinister forebodings were rather strengthened. I regretted now that I had not made inquiry before I left the inn where I alighted from the mail-coach. But it was too late; so I hurried on, eager to know the best or the worst which I could learn.

The brass-plate bearing my friend's name and designation was still on the door, and when it was opened the old domestic appeared a good deal older, I thought, than he ought naturally to have looked, considering the period of my absence. "Is Mr. Sommerville at home?" said I, pressing forward.

"Yes, sir," said John, placing himself in opposition to my entrance, "he is at home, but – "

"But he is not in," said I. "I remember your phrase of old, John. Come, I will step into his room, and leave a line for him."

John was obviously embarrassed by my familiarity. I was some one, he saw, whom he ought to recollect. At the same time it was evident he remembered nothing about me.

"Ay, sir, my master is in, and in his own room, but – "

I would not hear him out, but passed before him towards the well-known apartment. A young lady came out of the room a little disturbed, as it seemed, and said, "John, what is the matter?"

"A gentleman, Miss Nelly, that insists on seeing my master."

"A very old and deeply-indebted friend," said I, "that ventures to press myself on my much-respected benefactor on my return from abroad."

"Alas, sir," replied she, "my uncle would be happy to see you, but – "

At this moment something was heard within the apartment like the falling of a plate, or glass, and immediately after my friend's voice called angrily and eagerly for his niece. She entered the room hastily, and so did I. But it was to see a spectacle, compared with which that of my benefactor stretched on his bier would have been a happy one.

The easy-chair filled with cushions, the extended limbs swathed in flannel, the wide wrapping-gown and nightcap, showed illness; but the dimmed eye, once so replete with living fire – the blabber lip, whose dilation and compression used to give such character to his animated countenance – the stammering tongue, that once poured forth such floods of masculine eloquence, and had often swayed the opinion of the sages whom he addressed, – all these sad symptoms evinced that my friend was in the melancholy condition of those in whom the principle of animal life has unfortunately survived that of mental intelligence. He gazed a moment at me, but then seemed insensible of my presence, and went on – he, once the most courteous and well-bred – to babble unintelligible but violent reproaches against his niece and servant, because he himself had dropped a teacup in attempting to place it on a table at his elbow. His eyes caught a momentary fire from his irritation; but he struggled in vain for words to express himself adequately, as, looking from his servant to his niece, and then to the table, he laboured to explain that they had placed it (though it touched his chair) at too great a distance from him.

The young person, who had naturally a resigned Madonna-like expression of countenance, listened to his impatient chiding with the most humble submission, checked the servant, whose less delicate feelings would have entered on his justification, and gradually, by the sweet and soft tone of her voice, soothed to rest the spirit of causeless irritation.

She then cast a look towards me, which expressed, "You see all that remains of him whom you call friend." It seemed also to say, "Your longer presence here can only be distressing to us all."

"Forgive me, young lady," I said, as well as tears would permit; "I am a person deeply obliged to your uncle. My name is Croftangry."

"Lord! and that I should not hae minded ye, Maister Croftangry," said the servant. "Ay, I mind my master had muckle fash about your job. I hae heard him order in fresh candles as midnight chappit, and till't again. Indeed, ye had aye his gude word, Mr. Croftangry, for a' that folks said about you."

"Hold your tongue, John," said the lady, somewhat angrily; and then continued, addressing herself to me, "I am sure, sir, you must be sorry to see my uncle in this state. I know you are his friend. I have heard him mention your name, and wonder he never heard from you." A new cut this, and it went to my heart. But she continued, "I really do not know if it is right that any should – If my uncle should know you, which I scarce think possible, he would be much affected, and the doctor says that any agitation – But here comes Dr. – to give his own opinion."

Dr. – entered. I had left him a middle-aged man. He was now an elderly one; but still the same benevolent Samaritan, who went about doing good, and thought the blessings of the poor as good a recompense of his professional skill as the gold of the rich.

He looked at me with surprise, but the young lady said a word of introduction, and I, who was known to the doctor formerly, hastened to complete it. He recollected me perfectly, and intimated that he was well acquainted with the reasons I had for being deeply interested in the fate of his patient. He gave me a very melancholy account of my poor friend, drawing me for that purpose a little apart from the lady. "The light of life," he said, "was trembling in the socket; he scarcely expected it would ever leap up even into a momentary flash, but more was impossible." He then stepped towards his patient, and put some questions, to which the poor invalid, though he seemed to recognize the friendly and familiar voice, answered only in a faltering and uncertain manner.

The young lady, in her turn, had drawn back when the doctor approached his patient. "You see how it is with him," said the doctor, addressing me. "I have heard our poor friend, in one of the most eloquent of his pleadings, give a description of this very disease, which he compared to the tortures inflicted by Mezentius when he chained the dead to the living. The soul, he said, is imprisoned in its dungeon of flesh, and though retaining its natural and unalienable properties, can no more exert them than the captive enclosed within a prison-house can act as a free agent. Alas! to see HIM, who could so well describe what this malady was in others, a prey himself to its infirmities! I shall never forget the solemn tone of expression with which he summed up the incapacities of the paralytic – the deafened ear, the dimmed eye, the crippled limbs – in the noble words of Juvenal, —

"'Omni
Membrorum damno major, dementia, quae nec
Nomina servorum, nec vultum agnoscit amici.'"

As the physician repeated these lines, a flash of intelligence seemed to revive in the invalid's eye – sunk again – again struggled, and he spoke more intelligibly than before, and in the tone of one eager to say something which he felt would escape him unless said instantly. "A question of death-bed, a question of death-bed, doctor – a reduction EX CAPITE LECTI – Withering against Wilibus – about the MORBUS SONTICUS. I pleaded the cause for the pursuer – I, and – and – why, I shall forget my own name – I, and – he that was the wittiest and the best-humoured man living – "

The description enabled the doctor to fill up the blank, and the patient joyfully repeated the name suggested. "Ay, ay," he said, "just he – Harry – poor Harry – " The light in his eye died away, and he sunk back in his easy-chair.

"You have now seen more of our poor friend, Mr. Croftangry," said the physician, "than I dared venture to promise you; and now I must take my professional authority on me, and ask you to retire. Miss Sommerville will, I am sure, let you know if a moment should by any chance occur when her uncle can see you."

What could I do? I gave my card to the young lady, and taking my offering from my bosom – "if my poor friend," I said, with accents as broken almost as his own, "should ask where this came from, name me, and say from the most obliged and most grateful man alive. Say, the gold of which it is composed was saved by grains at a time, and was hoarded with as much avarice as ever was a miser's. To bring it here I have come a thousand miles; and now, alas, I find him thus!"

I laid the box on the table, and was retiring with a lingering step. The eye of the invalid was caught by it, as that of a child by a glittering toy, and with infantine impatience he faltered out inquiries of his niece. With gentle mildness she repeated again and again who I was, and why I came, etc. I was about to turn, and hasten from a scene so painful, when the physician laid his hand on my sleeve. "Stop," he said, "there is a change."

There was, indeed, and a marked one. A faint glow spread over his pallid features – they seemed to gain the look of intelligence which belongs to vitality – his eye once more kindled – his lip coloured

– and drawing himself up out of the listless posture he had hitherto maintained, he rose without assistance. The doctor and the servant ran to give him their support. He waved them aside, and they were contented to place themselves in such a position behind as might ensure against accident, should his newly-acquired strength decay as suddenly as it had revived.

"My dear Croftangry," he said, in the tone of kindness of other days, "I am glad to see you returned. You find me but poorly; but my little niece here and Dr. – are very kind. God bless you, my dear friend! We shall not meet again till we meet in a better world."

I pressed his extended hand to my lips – I pressed it to my bosom – I would fain have flung myself on my knees; but the doctor, leaving the patient to the young lady and the servant, who wheeled forward his chair, and were replacing him in it, hurried me out of the room. "My dear sir," he said, "you ought to be satisfied; you have seen our poor invalid more like his former self than he has been for months, or than he may be perhaps again until all is over. The whole Faculty could not have assured such an interval. I must see whether anything can be derived from it to improve the general health. Pray, begone." The last argument hurried me from the spot, agitated by a crowd of feelings, all of them painful.

When I had overcome the shock of this great disappointment, I renewed gradually my acquaintance with one or two old companions, who, though of infinitely less interest to my feelings than my unfortunate friend, served to relieve the pressure of actual solitude, and who were not perhaps the less open to my advances that I was a bachelor somewhat stricken in years, newly arrived from foreign parts, and certainly independent, if not wealthy.

I was considered as a tolerable subject of speculation by some, and I could not be burdensome to any. I was therefore, according to the ordinary rule of Edinburgh hospitality, a welcome guest in several respectable families. But I found no one who could replace the loss I had sustained in my best friend and benefactor. I wanted something more than mere companionship could give me, and where was I to look for it? Among the scattered remnants of those that had been my gay friends of yore? Alas!

"Many a lad I loved was dead,
And many a lass grown old."

Besides, all community of ties between us had ceased to exist, and such of former friends as were still in the world held their life in a different tenor from what I did.

Some had become misers, and were as eager in saving sixpence as ever they had been in spending a guinea. Some had turned agriculturists; their talk was of oxen, and they were only fit companions for graziers. Some stuck to cards, and though no longer deep gamblers, rather played small game than sat out. This I particularly despised. The strong impulse of gaming, alas! I had felt in my time. It is as intense as it is criminal; but it produces excitation and interest, and I can conceive how it should become a passion with strong and powerful minds. But to dribble away life in exchanging bits of painted pasteboard round a green table for the piddling concern of a few shillings, can only be excused in folly or superannuation. It is like riding on a rocking-horse, where your utmost exertion never carries you a foot forward; it is a kind of mental treadmill, where you are perpetually climbing, but can never rise an inch. From these hints, my readers will perceive I am incapacitated for one of the pleasures of old age, which, though not mentioned by Cicero, is not the least frequent resource in the present day – the club-room, and the snug hand at whist.

To return to my old companions. Some frequented public assemblies, like the ghost of Beau Nash, or any other beau of half a century back, thrust aside by tittering youth, and pitied by those of their own age. In fine, some went into devotion, as the French term it, and others, I fear, went to the devil; a few found resources in science and letters; one or two turned philosophers in a small way,

peeped into microscopes, and became familiar with the fashionable experiments of the day; some took to reading, and I was one of them.

Some grains of repulsion towards the society around me – some painful recollections of early faults and follies – some touch of displeasure with living mankind – inclined me rather to a study of antiquities, and particularly those of my own country. The reader, if I can prevail on myself to continue the present work, will probably be able to judge in the course of it whether I have made any useful progress in the study of the olden times.

I owed this turn of study, in part, to the conversation of my kind man of business, Mr. Fairscribe, whom I mentioned as having seconded the efforts of my invaluable friend in bringing the cause on which my liberty and the remnant of my property depended to a favourable decision. He had given me a most kind reception on my return. He was too much engaged in his profession for me to intrude on him often, and perhaps his mind was too much trammelled with its details to permit his being willingly withdrawn from them. In short, he was not a person of my poor friend Sommerville's expanded spirit, and rather a lawyer of the ordinary class of formalists; but a most able and excellent man. When my estate was sold! he retained some of the older title-deeds, arguing, from his own feelings, that they would be of more consequence to the heir of the old family than to the new purchaser. And when I returned to Edinburgh, and found him still in the exercise of the profession to which he was an honour, he sent to my lodgings the old family Bible, which lay always on my father's table, two or three other mouldy volumes, and a couple of sheepskin bags full of parchments and papers, whose appearance was by no means inviting.

The next time I shared Mr. Fairscribe's hospitable dinner, I failed not to return him due thanks for his kindness, which acknowledgment, indeed, I proportioned rather to the idea which I knew he entertained of the value of such things, than to the interest with which I myself regarded them. But the conversation turning on my family, who were old proprietors in the Upper Ward of Clydesdale, gradually excited some interest in my mind and when I retired to my solitary parlour, the first thing I did was to look for a pedigree or sort of history of the family or House of Croftangry, once of that Ilk, latterly of Glentanner. The discoveries which I made shall enrich the next chapter.

CHAPTER II. IN WHICH MR. CROFTANGRY CONTINUES HIS STORY

"What's property, dear Swift? I see it alter
From you to me, from me to Peter Walter."

"Croftangry – Croftandrew – Croftanridge – Croftandgrey for sa mony wise hath the name been spellit – is weel known to be ane house of grit antiquity; and it is said that King Milcolumb, or Malcolm, being the first of our Scottish princes quha removit across the Firth of Forth, did reside and occupy ane palace at Edinburgh, and had there ane valziant man, who did him man-service by keeping the croft, or corn-land, which was tilled for the convenience of the King's household, and was thence callit Croft-an-ri, that is to say, the King his croft; quhilk place, though now coverit with biggings, is to this day called Croftangry, and lyeth near to the royal palace. And whereas that some of those who bear this auld and honourable name may take scorn that it ariseth from the tilling of the ground, quhilk men account a slavish occupation, yet we ought to honour the pleugh and spade, seeing we all derive our being from our father Adam, whose lot it became to cultivate the earth, in respect of his fall and transgression.

"Also we have witness, as weel in holy writt as in profane history, of the honour in quhilk husbandrie was held of old, and how prophets have been taken from the pleugh, and great captains raised up to defend their ain countries, sic as Cincinnatus, and the like, who fought not the common enemy with the less valiancy that their alms had been exercised in halding the stilts of the pleugh, and their bellicose skill in driving of yauds and owsen.

"Likewise there are sindry honorable families, quhilk are now of our native Scottish nobility, and have clombe higher up the brae of preferment than what this house of Croftangry hath done, quhilk shame not to carry in their warlike shield and insignia of dignity the tools and implements the quhilk their first forefathers exercised in labouring the croft-rig, or, as the poet Virgilius calleth it eloquently, in subduing the soil, and no doubt this ancient house of Croftangry, while it continued to be called of that Ilk, produced many worshipful and famous patriots, of quhom I now praetermit the names; it being my purpose, if God shall spare me life for sic ane pious officium, or duty, to resume the first part of my narrative touching the house of Croftangry, when I can set down at length the evidents and historical witness anent the facts which I shall allege, seeing that words, when they are unsupported by proofs, are like seed sown on the naked rocks, or like an house biggit on the flitting and faithless sands."

Here I stopped to draw breath; for the style of my grandsire, the inditer of this goodly matter, was rather lengthy, as our American friends say. Indeed, I reserve the rest of the piece until I can obtain admission to the Bannatine Club, [This Club, of which the Author of Waverley has the honour to be President, was instituted in February 1823, for the purpose of printing and publishing works illustrative of the history, literature, and antiquities of Scotland. It continues to prosper, and has already rescued from oblivion many curious materials of Scottish history.] when I propose to throw off an edition, limited according to the rules of that erudite Society, with a facsimile of the manuscript, emblazonry of the family arms surrounded by their quartering, and a handsome disclamation of family pride, with HAEC NOS NOVIMUS ESSE NIHIL, or VIX EA NOSTRA VOCO.

In the meantime, to speak truth, I cannot but suspect that, though my worthy ancestor puffed vigorously to swell up the dignity of his family, we had never, in fact, risen above the rank of middling proprietors. The estate of Glentanner came to us by the intermarriage of my ancestor with Tib Sommeril, termed by the southrons Sommerville, a daughter of that noble house, but, I fear, on what my great-grandsire calls "the wrong side of the blanket." [The ancient Norman family of

the Sommervilles came into this island with William the Conqueror, and established one branch in Gloucestershire, another in Scotland. After the lapse of seven hundred years, the remaining possessions of these two branches were united in the person of the late Lord Sommerville, on the death of his English kinsman, the well-known author of "The Chase."] Her husband, Gilbert, was killed fighting, as the INQUISITIO POST MORTEM has it, "SUB VEXILLO REGIS, APUD PRAELIUM JUXTA BRANXTON, LIE FLODDDEN-FIELD."

We had our share in other national misfortunes – were forfeited, like Sir John Colville of the Dale, for following our betters to the field of Langside; and in the contentious times of the last Stewarts we were severely fined for harbouring and resetting intercommuned ministers, and narrowly escaped giving a martyr to the Calendar of the Covenant, in the person of the father of our family historian. He "took the sheaf from the mare," however, as the MS. expresses it, and agreed to accept of the terms of pardon offered by Government, and sign the bond in evidence he would give no further ground of offence. My grandsire glosses over his father's backsliding as smoothly as he can, and comforts himself with ascribing his want of resolution to his unwillingness to wreck the ancient name and family, and to permit his lands and lineage to fall under a doom of forfeiture.

"And indeed," said the venerable compiler, "as, praised be God, we seldom meet in Scotland with these belly-gods and voluptuaries, whilk are unnatural enough to devour their patrimony bequeathed to them by their forbears in chambering and wantonness, so that they come, with the prodigal son, to the husks and the swine-trough; and as I have the less to dreid the existence of such unnatural Neroes in mine own family to devour the substance of their own house like brute beasts out of mere gluttonie and Epicurishnesse, so I need only warn mine descendants against over-hastily meddling with the mutations in state and in religion, which have been near-hand to the bringing this poor house of Croftangry to perdition, as we have shown more than once. And albeit I would not that my successors sat still altogether when called on by their duty to Kirk and King, yet I would have them wait till stronger and walthier men than themselves were up, so that either they may have the better chance of getting through the day, or, failing of that, the conquering party having some fatter quarry to live upon, may, like gorged hawks, spare the smaller game."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.