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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
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Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
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Sir Walter Scott (English Men of Letters Series)

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PREFATORY NOTE.

It will be observed that the greater part of this little book has been taken in one form or other from Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, in ten volumes. No introduction to Scott would be worth much in which that course was not followed. Indeed, excepting Sir Walter's own writings, there is hardly any other great source of information about him; and that is so full, that hardly anything needful to illustrate the subject of Scott's life remains untouched. As regards the only matters of controversy, — Scott's relations to the Ballantynes, I have taken care to check Mr. Lockhart's statements by reading those of the representatives of the Ballantyne brothers; but with this exception, Sir Walter's own works and Lockhart's life of him are the great authorities concerning his character and his story.

Just ten years ago Mr. Gladstone, in expressing to the late Mr. Hope Scott the great delight which the perusal of Lockhart's life of Sir Walter had given him, wrote, "I may be wrong, but I am vaguely under the impression that it has never had a really wide circulation. If so, it is the saddest pity, and I should greatly like (without any censure on its present length) to see published an abbreviation of it." Mr. Gladstone did not then know that as long ago as 1848 Mr. Lockhart did [vi] himself prepare such an abbreviation, in which the original eighty-four chapters were compressed into eighteen, — though the abbreviation contained additions as well as compressions. But even this abridgment is itself a bulky volume of 800 pages, containing, I should think, considerably more than a third of the reading in the original ten volumes, and is not, therefore, very likely to be preferred to the completer work. In some respects I hope that this introduction may supply, better than that bulky abbreviation, what Mr. Gladstone probably meant to suggest, — some slight miniature taken from the great picture with care enough to tempt on those who look on it to the study of the fuller life, as well as of that image of Sir Walter which is impressed by his own hand upon his works.

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SIR WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY, PARENTAGE, AND CHILDHOOD.

Sir Walter Scott was the first literary man of a great riding, sporting, and fighting clan. Indeed, his father—a Writer to the Signet, or Edinburgh solicitor—was the first of his race to adopt a town life and a sedentary profession. Sir Walter was the lineal descendant—six generations removed—of that Walter Scott commemorated in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, who is known in Border history and legend as Auld Wat of Harden. Auld Wat's son William, captured by Sir Gideon Murray, of Elibank, during a raid of the Scotts on Sir Gideon's lands, was, as tradition says, given his choice between being hanged on Sir Gideon's private gallows, and marrying the ugliest of Sir Gideon's three ugly daughters, Meikle-mouthed Meg, reputed as carrying off the prize of ugliness among the women of four counties. Sir William was a handsome man. He took three days to consider the alternative proposed to him, but chose life with the large-mouthed lady in the end; and found her, according to the tradition which the poet, her descendant, has transmitted, an excel [2] lent wife, with a fine talent for pickling the beef which her husband stole from the herds of his foes. Meikle-mouthed Meg transmitted a distinct trace of her large mouth to all her descendants, and not least to him who was to use his "meikle" mouth to best advantage as the spokesman of his race. Rather more than half-way between Auld Wat of Harden's times—i. e., the middle of the sixteenth century—and those of Sir Walter Scott, poet and novelist, lived Sir Walter's great-grandfather, Walter Scott generally known in Teviotdale by the surname of Beardie, because he would never cut his beard after the banishment of the Stuarts, and who took arms in their cause and lost by his intrigues on their behalf almost all that he had, besides running the greatest risk of being hanged as

a traitor. This was the ancestor of whom Sir Walter speaks in the introduction to the last canto of *Marmion*: —

"And thus my Christmas still I hold,
Where my great grandsire came of old,
With amber beard and flaxen hair,
And reverend apostolic air, —
The feast and holy tide to share,
And mix sobriety with wine,
And honest mirth with thoughts divine;
Small thought was his in after time
E'er to be hitch'd into a rhyme,
The simple sire could only boast
That he was loyal to his cost;
The banish'd race of kings revered,
And lost his land — but kept his beard."

Sir Walter inherited from Beardie that sentimental Stuart bias which his better judgment condemned, but which seemed to be rather part of his blood than of his mind. And most useful to him this sentiment un [3] doubtedly was in helping him to restore the mould and fashion of the past. Beardie's second son was Sir Walter's grandfather, and to him he owed not only his first childish experience of the delights of country life, but also, — in his own estimation at least, — that risky, speculative, and sanguine spirit which had so much influence over his fortunes. The good man of Sandy-Knowe, wishing to breed sheep, and being destitute of capital, borrowed 30*l.* from a shepherd who was willing to invest that sum for him in sheep; and the two set off to purchase a flock near Wooler, in Northumberland; but when the shepherd had found what he thought would suit their purpose, he returned to find his master galloping about a fine hunter, on which he had spent the whole capital in hand. *This* speculation, however, prospered. A few days later Robert Scott displayed the qualities of the hunter to such admirable effect with John Scott of Harden's hounds, that he sold the horse for double the money he had given, and, unlike his grandson, abandoned speculative purchases there and then. In the latter days

of his clouded fortunes, after Ballantyne's and Constable's failure, Sir Walter was accustomed to point to the picture of his grandfather and say, "Blood will out: my building and planting was but his buying the hunter before he stocked his sheep-walk, over again." But Sir Walter added, says Mr. Lockhart, as he glanced at the likeness of his own staid and prudent father, "Yet it was a wonder, too, for I have a thread of the attorney in me," which was doubtless the case; nor was that thread the least of his inheritances, for from his father certainly Sir Walter derived that disposition towards conscientious, plodding industry, legalism of mind, methodical habits of work, and a [4] generous, equitable interpretation of the scope of all his obligations to others, which, prized and cultivated by him as they were, turned a great genius, which, especially considering the hare-brained element in him, might easily have been frittered away or devoted to worthless ends, to such fruitful account, and stamped it with so grand an impress of personal magnanimity and fortitude. Sir Walter's father reminds one in not a few of the formal and rather martinetish traits which are related of him, of the father of Goethe, "a formal man, with strong ideas of strait-laced education, passionately orderly (he thought a good book nothing without a good binding), and never so much excited as by a necessary deviation from the 'pre-established harmony' of household rules." That description would apply almost wholly to the sketch of old Mr. Scott which the novelist has given us under the thin disguise of Alexander Fairford, Writer to the Signet, in *Redgauntlet*, a figure confessedly meant, in its chief features, to represent his father. To this Sir Walter adds, in one of his later journals, the trait that his father was a man of fine presence, who conducted all conventional arrangements with a certain grandeur and dignity of air, and "absolutely loved a funeral." "He seemed to preserve the list of a whole bead-roll of cousins merely for the pleasure of being at their funerals, which he was often asked to superintend, and I suspect had sometimes to pay for. He carried me with him as often as he could to these mortuary ceremonies; but feeling I was not, like him, either useful or ornamental, I escaped as often as I could." This strong dash of the conventional in Scott's father, this satisfaction in seeing people fairly to the door of life, and taking his final leave of them there, with something of a ceremonious flourish [5] of observance, was, however, combined with a much nobler and deeper kind of orderliness. Sir Walter used to say

that his father had lost no small part of a very flourishing business, by insisting that his clients should do their duty to their own people better than they were themselves at all inclined to do it. And of this generous strictness in sacrificing his own interests to his sympathy for others, the son had as much as the father.

Sir Walter's mother, who was a Miss Rutherford, the daughter of a physician, had been better educated than most Scotchwomen of her day, in spite of having been sent "to be finished off" by "the honourable Mrs. Ogilvie," whose training was so effective, in one direction at least, that even in her eightieth year Mrs. Scott could not enjoy a comfortable rest in her chair, but "took as much care to avoid touching her chair with her back, as if she had still been under the stern eyes of Mrs. Ogilvie." None the less Mrs. Scott was a motherly, comfortable woman, with much tenderness of heart, and a well-stored, vivid memory. Sir Walter, writing of her, after his mother's death, to Lady Louisa Stewart, says, "She had a mind peculiarly well stored with much acquired information and natural talent, and as she was very old, and had an excellent memory, she could draw, without the least exaggeration or affectation, the most striking pictures of the past age. If I have been able to do anything in the way of painting the past times, it is very much from the studies with which she presented me. She connected a long period of time with the present generation, for she remembered, and had often spoken with, a person who perfectly recollected the battle of Dunbar and Oliver Cromwell's subsequent entry into Edinburgh." On the day before the stroke of paralysis which carried her off, she [6] had told Mr. and Mrs. Scott of Harden, "with great accuracy, the real story of the Bride of Lammermuir, and pointed out wherein it differed from the novel. She had all the names of the parties, and pointed out (for she was a great genealogist) their connexion with existing families." [1] Sir Walter records many evidences of the tenderness of his mother's nature, and he returned warmly her affection for himself. His executors, in lifting up his desk, the evening after his burial, found "arranged in careful order a series of little objects, which had obviously been so placed there that his eye might rest on them every morning before he began his tasks. These were the old-fashioned boxes that had garnished his mother's toilette, when he, a sickly child, slept in her dressing-room,—the silver ta-

per-stand, which the young advocate had bought for her with his first five-guinea fee,—a row of small packets inscribed with her hand, and containing the hair of those of her offspring that had died before her,—his father's snuff-box, and etui-case,—and more things of the like sort." [2] A story, characteristic of both Sir Walter's parents, is told by Mr. Lockhart which will serve better than anything I can remember to bring the father and mother of Scott vividly before the imagination. His father, like Mr. Alexander Fairford, in *Redgauntlet*, though himself a strong Hanoverian, inherited enough feeling for the Stuarts from his grandfather Beardie, and sympathized enough with those who were, as he neutrally expressed it, "out in '45," to ignore as much as possible any phrases offensive to the Jacobites. For instance, he always called Charles Edward not *the Pretender* [7] but *the Chevalier*,—and he did business for many Jacobites:—

"Mrs. Scott's curiosity was strongly excited one autumn by the regular appearance at a certain hour every evening of a sedan chair, to deposit a person carefully muffled up in a mantle, who was immediately ushered into her husband's private room, and commonly remained with him there until long after the usual bed-time of this orderly family. Mr. Scott answered her repeated inquiries with a vagueness that irritated the lady's feelings more and more; until at last she could bear the thing no longer; but one evening, just as she heard the bell ring as for the stranger's chair to carry him off, she made her appearance within the forbidden parlour with a salver in her hand, observing that she thought the gentlemen had sat so long they would be better of a dish of tea, and had ventured accordingly to bring some for their acceptance. The stranger, a person of distinguished appearance, and richly dressed, bowed to the lady and accepted a cup; but her husband knit his brows, and refused very coldly to partake the refreshment. A moment afterwards the visitor withdrew, and Mr. Scott, lifting up the window-sash, took the cup, which he had left empty on the table, and tossed it out upon the pavement. The lady exclaimed for her china, but was put to silence by her husband's saying, 'I can forgive your little curiosity, madam, but you must pay the penalty. I may admit into my house, on a piece of business, persons wholly unworthy to be treated as guests

by my wife. Neither lip of me nor of mine comes after Mr. Murray of Broughton's.'

"This was the unhappy man who, after attending Prince Charles Stuart as his secretary throughout the greater part of his expedition, condescended to redeem his own life and fortune by bearing evidence against the noblest of his late master's adherents, when—

"Pitied by gentle hearts, Kilmarnock died,
The brave, Balmerino were on thy side." [3]

[8]

"Broughton's saucer"—i. e. the saucer belonging to the cup thus sacrificed by Mr. Scott to his indignation against one who had redeemed his own life and fortune by turning king's evidence against one of Prince Charles Stuart's adherents,—was carefully preserved by his son, and hung up in his first study, or "den," under a little print of Prince Charlie. This anecdote brings before the mind very vividly the character of Sir Walter's parents. The eager curiosity of the active-minded woman, whom "the honourable Mrs. Ogilvie" had been able to keep upright in her chair for life, but not to cure of the desire to unravel the little mysteries of which she had a passing glimpse; the grave formality of the husband, fretting under his wife's personal attention to a dishonoured man, and making her pay the penalty by dashing to pieces the cup which the king's evidence had used,—again, the visitor himself, perfectly conscious no doubt that the Hanoverian lawyer held him in utter scorn for his faithlessness and cowardice, and reluctant, nevertheless, to reject the courtesy of the wife, though he could not get anything but cold legal advice from the husband:—all these are figures which must have acted on the youthful imagination of the poet with singular vivacity, and shaped themselves in a hundred changing turns of the historical kaleidoscope which was always before his mind's eye, as he mused upon that past which he was to restore for us with almost more than its original freshness of life. With such scenes touching even his own home, Scott must have been constantly taught to balance in his own mind, the more romantic, against the more sober

and rational considerations, which had so recently divided house against house, even in the same family and clan. That the stern Calvinistic lawyer should have retained so much of [9] his grandfather Beardie's respect for the adherents of the exiled house of Stuart, must in itself have struck the boy as even more remarkable than the passionate loyalty of the Stuarts' professed partisans, and have lent a new sanction to the romantic drift of his mother's old traditions, and one to which they must have been indebted for a great part of their fascination.

Walter Scott, the ninth of twelve children, of whom the first six died in early childhood, was born in Edinburgh, on the 15th of August, 1771. Of the six later-born children, all but one were boys, and the one sister was a somewhat querulous invalid, whom he seems to have pitied almost more than he loved. At the age of eighteen months the boy had a teething-fever, ending in a life-long lameness; and this was the reason why the child was sent to reside with his grandfather—the speculative grandfather, who had doubled his capital by buying a racehorse instead of sheep—at Sandy-Knowe, near the ruined tower of Smailholm, celebrated afterwards in his ballad of *The Eve of St. John*, in the neighbourhood of some fine crags. To these crags the housemaid sent from Edinburgh to look after him, used to carry him up, with a design (which she confessed to the housekeeper)—due, of course, to incipient insanity—of murdering the child there, and burying him in the moss. Of course the maid was dismissed. After this the child used to be sent out, when the weather was fine, in the safer charge of the shepherd, who would often lay him beside the sheep. Long afterwards Scott told Mr. Skene, during an excursion with Turner, the great painter, who was drawing his illustration of Smailholm tower for one of Scott's works, that "the habit of lying on the turf there among the sheep and the lambs had given his mind a peculiar tenderness for [10] these animals, which it had ever since retained." Being forgotten one day upon the knolls when a thunderstorm came on, his aunt ran out to bring him in, and found him shouting, "Bonny! bonny!" at every flash of lightning. One of the old servants at Sandy-Knowe spoke of the child long afterwards as "a sweet-tempered bairn, a darling with all about the house," and certainly the miniature taken of him in his seventh year confirms the impression thus given. It is sweet-

tempered above everything, and only the long upper lip and large mouth, derived from his ancestress, Meg Murray, convey the promise of the power which was in him. Of course the high, almost conical forehead, which gained him in his later days from his comrades at the bar the name of "Old Peveril," in allusion to "the peak" which they saw towering high above the heads of other men as he approached, is not so much marked beneath the childish locks of this miniature as it was in later life; and the massive, and, in repose, certainly heavy face of his maturity, which conveyed the impression of the great bulk of his character, is still quite invisible under the sunny ripple of childish earnestness and gaiety. Scott's hair in childhood was light chestnut, which turned to nut brown in youth. His eyebrows were bushy, for we find mention made of them as a "pent-house." His eyes were always light blue. They had in them a capacity, on the one hand, for enthusiasm, sunny brightness, and even hare-brained humour, and on the other for expressing determined resolve and kindly irony, which gave great range of expression to the face. There are plenty of materials for judging what sort of a boy Scott was. In spite of his lameness, he early taught himself to clamber about with an agility that few children could have surpassed, and to sit his first pony—a [11] little Shetland, not bigger than a large Newfoundland dog, which used to come into the house to be fed by him—even in gallops on very rough ground. He became very early a declaimer. Having learned the ballad of Hardy Knute, he shouted it forth with such pertinacious enthusiasm that the clergyman of his grandfather's parish complained that he "might as well speak in a cannon's mouth as where that child was." At six years of age Mrs. Cockburn described him as the most astounding genius of a boy, she ever saw. "He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on: it was the description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm. 'There's the mast gone,' says he; 'crash it goes; they will all perish.' After his agitation he turns to me, 'That is too melancholy,' says he; 'I had better read you something more amusing.'" And after the call, he told his aunt he liked Mrs. Cockburn, for "she was a *virtuoso* like himself." "Dear Walter," says Aunt Jenny, "what is a *virtuoso*?" "Don't ye know? Why, it's one who wishes and will know everything." This last scene took place in his father's house in Edinburgh; but Scott's life at Sandy-Knowe, including even the old minister, Dr. Duncan, who so

bitterly complained of the boy's ballad-spouting, is painted for us, as everybody knows, in the picture of his infancy given in the introduction to the third canto of *Marmion*:—

"It was a barren scene and wild,
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled:
But ever and anon between
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wall-flower grew,
And honeysuckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruin'd wall.
[12] I deem'd such nooks the sweetest shade
The sun in all its round survey'd;
And still I thought that shatter'd tower
The mightiest work of human power;
And marvell'd as the aged hind
With some strange tale bewitch'd my mind,
Of forayers, who, with headlong force,
Down from that strength had spurr'd their horse,
Their southern rapine to renew,
Far in the distant Cheviots blue,
And, home returning, fill'd the hall
With revel, wassail-rout, and brawl.
Methought that still with trump and clang
The gateway's broken arches rang;
Methought grim features, seam'd with scars,
Glared through the window's rusty bars;
And ever, by the winter hearth,
Old tales I heard of woe or mirth,
Of lovers' slights, of ladies' charms,
Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms,
Of patriot battles, won of old
By Wallace wight and Bruce the bold;
Of later fields of feud and fight,
When, pouring from their Highland height,
The Scottish clans, in headlong sway,
Had swept the scarlet ranks away.
While, stretch'd at length upon the floor,

Again I fought each combat o'er,
 Pebbles and shells in order laid,
 The mimic ranks of war display'd;
 And onward still the Scottish lion bore,
 And still the scattered Southron fled before.
 Still, with vain fondness, could I trace
 Anew each kind familiar face
 That brighten'd at our evening fire!
 From the thatch'd mansion's grey-hair'd sire,
 Wise without learning, plain and good,
 And sprung of Scotland's gentler blood;
 Whose eye in age, quick, clear, and keen,
 Show'd what in youth its glance had been;
 Whose doom discording neighbours sought,
 Content with equity unbought;
 [13] To him the venerable priest,
 Our frequent and familiar guest,
 Whose life and manners well could paint
 Alike the student and the saint;
 Alas! whose speech too oft I broke
 With gambol rude and timeless joke;
 For I was wayward, bold, and wild,
 A self-will'd imp, a grandame's child;
 But, half a plague and half a jest,
 Was still endured, beloved, caress'd."

A picture this of a child of great spirit, though with that spirit was combined an active and subduing sweetness which could often conquer, as by a sudden spell, those whom the boy loved. Towards those, however, whom he did not love he could be vindictive. His relative, the laird of Raeburn, on one occasion wrung the neck of a pet starling, which the child had partly tamed. "I flew at his throat like a wild-cat," he said, in recalling the circumstance, fifty years later, in his journal on occasion of the old laird's death; "and was torn from him with no little difficulty." And, judging from this journal, I doubt whether he had ever really forgiven the laird of Raeburn. Towards those whom he loved but had offended, his manner