The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club

1894

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DEDICATION

9th March 2009

The reprinting of this first ever edition of the Club Bulletin has been sponsored by Lee A. Simpson (Hon. Treasurer) to celebrate not just the 100th Dinner, but a truly remarkable and wonderful friendship which was born out of a devotion to Sir Walter Scott. This volume is dedicated to the Club's retiring Hon. Secretary, Fraser Elgin. For over 25 years he has kept the Club alive.

REPORT of the FIRST ANNUAL MEETING and DINNER of THE EDINBURGH SIR WALTER SCOTT CLUB, held on 7th November 1894.

THE First Annual Meeting and Dinner of the Club took place in the Waterloo Rooms on the evening of Wednesday, the 7th November.

Mr. CHARLES A. COOPER, President of the Club, occupied the chair at the business meeting.

The Secretary (Mr. KENNETH SANDERSON, W.S.) read the Minute of Meeting constituting the Club, which was held on 13th June last, and the same was approved of. He reported that the membership to date numbered 496.

The Treasurer (Mr. ELLIOT R. SMAIL) submitted an Interim Balance-Sheet, and mentioned that the financial year closed on 31st May, when a regular account would be made up and audited. The receipts to date of the meeting were £248:14s., and the expenditure £26:3s., thus showing a credit balance of £222:11s.

The CHAIRMAN said the statement was eminently satisfactory, considering that the Club had only been in existence for about half a year. He then moved the election of Sheriff Jameson as President for next year, and remarked that he would bring stores of legal lore and native humour to adorn the post. (Applause.) It might be an additional recommendation that the learned Sheriff was related to or connected with Sir Walter Scott himself, one of Sir Walter's brothers or uncles having married a M'Culloch of Ardwell, and Sheriff Jameson having also married into that family. Distant though that connection might be, it could not unfit Sheriff Jameson for the office of President. (Applause.) The motion was unanimously agreed to, and Sheriff JAMESON returned thanks for the honour conferred on him. The Council was afterwards elected, with Mr. Sanderson as Secretary, and Mr. Elliot R. Smail as Treasurer.

The company thereafter dined together. Mr. Charles A. Cooper presided. Over 160 members were present. Apologies for absence were intimated from a large number of other members.

During dinner Mr. DAMBMANN'S band played a selection of music, and after dinner a number of ladies were present in the gallery. Mr. P. GLENCORSE and Mr. A. ORROCK gave songs during the evening. The menu, which was designed by Mr. MARTIN HARDIE, R.S.A., represented on the front the finding of the Waverley manuscript by Sir Walter, while inside were sketches of various incidents in his writings.

The CHAIRMAN gave in succession the toasts of "The Queen" and "The Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family," which were duly honoured.

In proposing the toast of "The Navy, Army, and Reserve Forces," Sheriff JAMESON said this toast was always appropriate and fitting at a gathering of patriotic Britons, and it was especially appropriate at that the first dinner of the Sir Walter Scott Club, because they could not forget that Sir Walter himself was essentially a man of a martial spirit. (Applause.) The old fighting blood of the Scotts of Harden ran in his veins, and one could not read his poetry or his prose, when he was describing battles, without seeing that some of the fierce joy of war was present to the writer when he penned the words. (Applause.) In referring to the Reserve Forces, the Sheriff made allusion to the sudden death of Colonel Kinnear, remarking that he was an excellent type of the volunteer officer, thorough and energetic in all he did, and unwearying in his efforts to promote the efficiency of his corps. (Applause.)

Major-General BOSWELL, C.B., responded to the toast.

The CHAIRMAN, on rising to propose the toast of the evening, "The Memory of Sir Walter Scott," was received with loud applause. He said -Jedediah Cleishbotham, that prince of story-tellers, was in the habit of prefacing his tales with an account of their origin. May I, humbly following so great an exemplar, begin what I have to say by telling the story of how you, as the Sir Walter

Scott Club of Edinburgh, came into existence. Everybody who knows Scott knows Holyrood Palace, and knows that historic gallery from the walls of which look down so many portraits of one original in different stages of inebriety. (Laughter.) Last May, when the Lord High Commissioner was in residence and giving hospitable entertainments, there entered that gallery one evening, among other guests, three men who are here to-night. One of them was Mr. James Smail; the second was Dr. Kerr; the third was the present narrator. By what afterwards came to look like design, but what for the moment seemed to be accident, the first two placed themselves at table, one on each side of the third. In the course of the dinner talk there were mysterious passages between Mr. Smail and Dr. Kerr, of which at last he who tells this story asked for an explanation. "Is it not strange," said one of them, "that while Burns is so universally and justly honoured, there is no club in Edinburgh to do honour to the memory of Sir Walter Scott, to whom Scotland and the world owes so much?" The admission was readily made that it was strange. Could the omission not be remedied? was asked. Probably it could, was the cautious reply. How was the work to be begun? I suggested that one of the two should write a letter to the *Scotsman* proposing the formation of a club, adding that presumably the editor of that paper was a man of some intelligence, who knew his Scott, and would delight to see him honoured. (Applause.) The hint was taken. Mr. Smail wrote a letter. It was printed, and it set the heather on fire. (Applause.) That was the origin of this Club, and I doubt not that everyone here will be grateful to Mr. Smail and Dr. Kerr for what they have done; while Lord and Lady Breadalbane may, as they see the Club grow and prosper, have the pleasant knowledge that it was at their hospitable board the seed of it was sown. (Applause.)

And now it would ill become me to further delay my acknowledgments of the honour done to me by my election as first President of the Club. (Applause.) Returning thanks in public for honours done to me is not much in my way. My many faults and short-comings are frequently presented for my careful consideration by candid friends; and those friends have my hearty admission

of their good intentions. (Laughter.) No doubt their comments have been of service to me, and are in themselves marks of love. But they are not the same thing as an honour conferred; and if my thanks to you seem light and lame, do not believe the fault lies in any want of feeling on my part, but know that it is due to my defective training in such thanksgiving. (Laughter.) I do not know that any greater honour than this could have been conferred upon me. Certainly I know of nothing - no position, no dignity, that to me would be more precious than the presidency of this Club. For the Club itself is, so to speak, a renaissance - an awakening of generous minds to the performance of what I do not hesitate to call a duty. (Applause.)

It has sometimes been said that the best honour done to great benefactors is that they should have the silent homage of those whom they have blessed. I am disposed to cavil against this as a general proposition. There is a danger in connection with merely silent homage. Practically it is selfish. It does nothing to give to others of what it possesses. If it be the duty of men in the interests of humanity to make known what is for the good of humanity, then silent homage which keeps to silence is a neglect of duty. There is no one here who does not know the good Walter Scott has conferred upon him. (Applause.) Is he not to share that knowledge and extend that good to others? It does not become less by being shared; rather it grows. For to the continued possession of the original blessing there is added the knowledge that others have it also, and that the first giver is honoured as he deserves more widely than ever. Such a conviction as this has led to the foundation of our Club. It is not that Walter Scott's genius has been dimmed; if that were the case, we might be poor hands at removing the dimness. It is not that his bays are faded or are fading; they are green with the freshness of immortality. It is that, with our ever-increasing population, and with pressure of ever-growing business affairs, there may be some danger of sweetness and light being narrowed, and especially of the sweetness and light which Scott has shed upon us not being shared by busy thousands. It is not for me here and now to say what the full work of this Club shall be. There are infinite possibilities for it, and the more of them

that are seized the better. But two duties it must perform; one is to honour the memory of Scott, the other is to lead those who as yet have not known him to the flower-strewn fields that he has prepared for them. (Applause.)

It is not always possible to honour the man as well as the genius. Somehow it has befallen that many geniuses have not been lovable outside their works. I am speaking of the real genius, not the sham variety - the wise-looking, large-eyed, small-brained kind. (Laughter and applause.) Men of real genius have often seemed to think that they have discharged their obligations to society, as far as there were any, when they had given out their works. They have not always thought or seemed to think that other people had feelings, or that society had claims upon them, or that self-respect in the ordinary sense was desirable. Perhaps Dryden found the explanation of all this when he wrote:

Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

It is not for me to settle that question, or argue it further. It has no place in connection with Scott. (Applause.) By one great authority genius has been described as an infinite capacity for taking pains. I do not profess to adopt the definition, though on one side it would be applicable to Scott. As we all know, there are men who have an infinite capacity for taking pains, and yet never light a spark of enthusiasm in any breast. They are mere plodders, jogging along, safely it may be, but spirit-stirring never. In short, they are not men of genius. Scott had the infinite capacity for taking pains, and he could arouse enthusiasm. Some men, as I have suggested, have not used such a power for good as Scott did. Once- it was, I think, in June 1818 - when Scott was suffering terrible pain, and believed himself, as others believed him to be, dying, he called his children round him and said to them, "For myself, my dears, I am unconscious of ever having done any man an injury, or omitted any fair opportunity of doing any man a benefit. I well know that no human life can appear otherwise than weak and filthy in the eyes of God; but I rely on the merits and intercession of our Redeemer." This was, not the talk of a man afraid of death, or who

had cause to be ashamed of what he had done. It was infinitely pathetic, and in its account of his life it was true. (Applause.) How many men of genius could have said, in like circumstances, what Scott said of himself ? It is what all of us, all the world, indeed, says of him now. He worked for the good alike of those around him and of all who came to know his work. He was not only a great genius, he was a good man, a brave man, a kindly man, and, above all, a man who applied his genius to wholesome, honest, and upright purposes. (Applause.) He never wrote a line that could bring a blush to any cheek. He never aroused an unworthy thought. He kindled honest, and patriotic, and chivalric aspirations. He turned what might have been for many a dull monotony of daily round into a life of cheerfulness and brightness. (Applause.)

I have said, or hinted, that there are geniuses of a sham variety. As a rule they have one fixed delusion, as well as many fine airs. It is, that for them there is no necessity for labour to obtain material for their work. They can create what they want. They are like the man who undertook to make a sack, and thought to weave the cloth of moonbeams. They do not read - why should they? They only write, or speak, or strut about a studio or in the world. To all such men of genius Scott must be an abomination. (Applause.) From his earliest days he worked to acquire knowledge. From the time when, little more than a babe, he lay upon a sunny brae at Sandyknowe, to the hour when he could work no more, he was forever filling his mind with knowledge. I have been told that there are parents who object to what they think is light reading. I am not sure but that Scott's father was one of them. Their theory is that only what they are pleased to call useful knowledge shall be offered to or taken by the youthful mind. Fiction they detest; you cannot state its good effects in figures. Poetry is a delusion and a snare. Fairy stories are vanity, and worse than useless in a practical world. Every now and then solemn owls get upon platforms and lecture on the shocking effects of desultory reading; as if anybody with a healthy mind could read anything without adding to his store of useful knowledge. Scott is a standing reproach to such wise men, who no doubt think their own lucubrations are practically the

only instructive reading. (Applause.) Scott was omnivorous as a reader. He took everything he could get, whether from books or by word of mouth. Fairy stories from ancient shepherds, tales of chivalry wherever he could find them, poetry of all kinds; Pope's *Homer*, ancient ballads, chapbooks, romances - all were devoured, and, what is more to the purpose, well assimilated. History, especially the history of Scotland, he read with avidity. School lessons were comparatively of small interest to him, though he could master them with ease when he chose - that is, when his thoughts were not occupied with ballads and the like. His mind could be likened to a great granary bursting full of corn. Thus, when he found he had the power of writing, he had full stores of knowledge to draw upon. There is a story of a singing master in Italy who for years kept a favourite pupil practising scales, and refused to allow him to sing songs. At last the young man pressed for permission to practise a song. "You foolish fellow," said the master, "sing what you like; you can do it;" and the youth found that, thanks to the long practising of scales, he could sing any song. I have often thought of this story in connection with Scott. He never stored his mind with tales of chivalry, with history, with poetry, with old ballads, that he might write the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* or the *Waverley Novels*. But his store of varied knowledge enabled him to write them. How did he discover the treasure he possessed? We know that he first wrote poetry, and only when he saw more poetic strength in Byron did he turn to prose fiction, where he was to show himself unequalled. When he found his life-work, what a source of delight it must have been to him. One can realise those composing rides on Portobello sands, with the sound of trumpet and the flash of weapons and the glow of colour. How the measure of *Marmion* must have rung in his ears, amid the stirring action of horses and men. So in quieter days, in those rooms at Ashiestiel, at Abbotsford, in Castle Street, what delight he must have had in pouring out his knowledge in *Waverley* and the stories that followed it. To us in these days they seem to be prodigious labours, and so they must seem in all time to come. Yet it is indubitable that when he was in health he wrote with ease.

Nobody ever found him preoccupied with his work. Visitors were always welcomed, excursions were arranged, and Scott was always there, the life and soul of the party. It is told that Cadell expressed his wonder that Scott should ever be able to write books in the country, seeing how he took part in all outdoor and indoor entertainments and amusements. "When is it," he asked Scott, "that you think?" "Oh," was the reply, "I lie simmering over things for an hour or so before I get up, and there's the time I am dressing to overhaul my half sleeping, half waking project for a chapter ; and when I get the paper before me it commonly runs off pretty easily. Besides, I often take a doze in the plantations, and while Tom marks out a dyke or a drain, as I have directed, one's fancy may be running its ain rigs in some other world." What do the wise-looking geniuses think of this? (Applause.) 'They evince their superiority by frowns and stately nods and solemn utterances. He had a smile for everybody. He was apparently the least self-conscious person in any company. I have been fortunate enough to get a piece of evidence on this point which I believe has not hitherto been published. It is contained in a letter written by David Wilkie, the artist, which has been most kindly lent to me by Mr. James Valentine Hagart,W.S. Wilkie, writing in February 1818 to Mr. Marshall of Perth, tells of a visit he paid to Scott at Abbotsford, and this is what he says;

From Edinburgh I went to pay a visit that I expected much from, to Mr. Walter Scott, who has employed his talents in a way that makes reviewing look like drudgery. I was, received by him with much kindness, and when introduced to his family was pleased to find a Scottish heartiness about them that was delightful. An old friend of Mr. Scott was also with us, who had been a campaigner in Spain, and who had a vein of humour about him quite original, and well fitted to call out the jollity of the bard. I felt as if visiting the family and friends of Shakespeare. Mr. Scott's conversation is the richest I ever met with. It is delicate, and even in a slight parenthesis there is a meaning that pictures the whole to you. His stories are admirable and without end. They are sometimes terrible in their effect, but I think his great power is in wit and humour. His laugh and the expression of his face when telling a comic story are the most exquisite specimens of hilarity I ever saw. He has also a very fine family, particularly the eldest daughter,

who is a complete Border heroine, and who I cannot help recognising as the original of the Diana Vernon in Rob Roy. While I remained with Mr. Scott, which was near a fortnight, you may believe I was on the lookout for indications of the progress of this novel. I must say, however, there was no appearance either of this or of any other literary work being in hand. From morning to the latest hour at night nothing was done but hunting and coursing, and building and superintending the labours of the field, and entertaining his visitors; and, but for this, Mr. Scott seemed of all the party the most completely at leisure. When he alluded to the novels, which was not uncommon, it never was as the author, and it was sometimes with the appearance of ignorance about them. I was most surprised, however, when his daughters told me ***they*** *could not say whether he was the author or not - that they wished he might really be the author above all things. They had taxed him with it at first, but were not now allowed to do it. The place where Mr. Scott resides is very interesting, and recalls many ideas both of warlike and of pastoral times. It is on the Tweed, opposite the Gala Water. From it you see the Eildon Hills, where the Eildon tree of Thomas the Rhymer stood. The top of the Cowden Knowes is also to be seen overtopping the hills that surround the town Abbey. Melrose is also near. Further up are the classic streams of the Ettrick and the Yarrow. What is common to every district in Scotland is here to be found in every valley, I know - the scenes of events in history and fiction. In the house where I was we had stories of battles and songs and ballads recited to us from morning to night. It seemed to be the very land of minstrelsy, which I exchanged with regret for the flourishing though unpoetical country I had to pass through as I came by Manchester and Derby to London.*

What a picture this is of Scott's life. It brings out one feature upon which I may be permitted to dwell for a moment. Scott was not then known to the world at large as the author of the Waverley Novels. Wilkie knew him as the Bard, the writer of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and many other poems; he only suspected him of being the author of the novels. Yet his suspicion verged upon certainty; and it is plain that at the moment when he wrote the passage I have read many persons knew that the novels were from Scott's pen. From time to time there have been discussions as to the wisdom, if not the morality, of Scott's concealment of his authorship from the general public. To me these discussions seem as unnecessary and as purposeless as those of old relative to the

number of angels that could poise themselves on the point of a needle. (Applause.) In the beginning Scott doubted his own power as a writer of novels. He had an assured reputation as a poet, and it must not be blurred by subsequent failure in other fields. Therefore, he sent *Waverley* out to the world on its own merits, to sink or swim as it might deserve. It was not to be judged on the strength of its author's reputation. It succeeded, and the veil of anonymity did not disguise its power. So with the books that followed in rapid succession. Scott never denied the authorship when taxed with it; he humorously evaded the question till the time came when to retain the veil would have been sheer folly. That seems to me to be the whole story. It is all to Scott's honour. (Applause.) In some ways it might have been a gain to him to avow his authorship from the first. There would have been less inclination on the part of thoughtful friends to intrude upon his time it they had believed him to be engrossed in his work. As I have said, he had the power of concentration. He was engrossed in his work while he was, doing it. He never carried it into his social relations. Yet it may be hinted that he was always doing something with it. The stories he told to friends at his table, the ballads he recited, the adventures he recalled, were all so much strengthening of his mind for the time when he had the pen in his hand. He never allowed it to obtrude at other times. He was the best guide for a country ride or walk; he was the most cheerful man at a dinner-party; he had not an enemy among his neighbours. He knew how to combine authority with geniality in dealing with subordinates. He could join heartily in their amusements, take part in their feasts, applaud their songs, and never lose an atom of that dignity which made the rudest respect him. (Applause.)

Perhaps I may be permitted at this point to notice an accusation which has been hinted, if not expressly made, against Scott. It is, in effect, that he was a snob; for that his chief object in life was to establish a lairdship for himself and his successors. Most of you know the bilious quarter in which this accusation or sneer originated. What surprises me is, not that the inventor of it should have put it abroad, but that two or three men of learning and

position still with us should have given it their implied if not expressed sanction. Surely there never in this world was a man against whom a charge of snobbery could with less justice be made than against Scott. (Applause.) If ever there was a gentleman in the best and fullest sense of the word he was one. (Applause.) No doubt he did desire to own an estate and to found a family - if the current slang may be pardoned. No doubt he had reverence for authority and believed in dignities. Do all these things constitute snobbery?

If it be competent for the man who never got, and perhaps did not desire to get, a landed estate, to accuse one more fortunate in this respect of snobbery, is it not competent to retort that there is want of charity in the accusation? (Applause.) One man is a Republican, another a Monarchist. Does their difference of opinion justify them in calling each other snobs? Am I a snob because I wish for something you do not care for or cannot have? It would be preposterous to say so. Yet it is really on no better grounds that Scott has been accused of snobbery. I am not defending him-he needs no defence. But I am inclined to say that Scott's personal aspirations were all to his credit. (Applause.) They were, too, the inevitable outcome of his studies, his surroundings, and his imagination. He was a Border man who knew what Border men had been - how they had been led, how they had fought, the long trials of all but incessant warfare through which they had come. Could he throw aside his respect for the leaders or their representatives? Ought he to have tried to do so? Might he not honourably and fairly desire to have a share in that Borderland as his forbears had had in Border story? There is but one answer possible. Scotland was to him the best-loved country in the world; and the Borderland was the best-loved part of Scotland. If he had not desired to make himself a foremost place in that land he would not have deserved the unstinted praise which is so worthily bestowed upon him. (Applause.)

Not for his genius alone was he great and worthy of our admiration. Look at his manliness at all times, and especially at his courage in adversity. It has been said of him that he was too ready to give his confidence, and too lax in taking care that it was not

abused. There is some foundation for the reproach. But it may be said that his very faults in this direction were lovable, and assuredly it is true that they led to a development of character that won for him for all time the esteem and admiration of every honest man. (Applause.) He befriended the Ballantynes; he trusted them too much; and he suffered terribly. But who can look upon him in his hour of adversity without reverence? (Applause.) He found himself penniless, in debt, and threatened with bankruptcy. Many of the dreams of his life were shattered. And he set himself to retrieve his fortunes and to pay his creditors by his pen. Somebody has said that you cannot harness Pegasus to a breadwagon - genius will not survive drudgery. This is the favourite apothegm of the wise-looking geniuses. They ought to be cared for by the State, and on no account be required to work for their living. Walter Scott thought otherwise, and acted upon his conviction. His genius did not fail him when he was working to pay his debts. He set an example to all men. Just as through his life he had put the performance of his duty before his pleasures, and had only gratified his innocent though expensive tastes when he had reason to believe that he had abundant means, so in the hour of his adversity he worked as he had not worked before, and deprived himself of many enjoyments that he might prove himself an honest man. (Applause.) But for these trials the full nobleness of his character might never have been adequately realised. I know of no story more pathetic than that of the closing years of Scott's life. We see what he was and what he thought in the Diary which he only began far on in his career. I am not going to dwell on the revelations of himself that he makes in that Diary. I can only think of him in those later days as a great luminary gradually paling as the hand of death came stealthily upon him, but to the last giving out light. He was great to the end-great in his love, great in his patience, great in the example he set to all mankind. (Applause.)

So far I have been talking more of Scott the man than of Scott the author. What need is there for me to enlarge on his work? You are all here to honour him for it. You know it from first to last. You know the pleasure and the profit it has given to you. Not one of

you would thank me if I were to enter upon what, in the literary slang of the day, is called a critical estimate of Scott's work. I confess that I have never been able to appreciate the value of such critical estimates. If I know that a book pleases me, what will it profit my literary soul to ask why it pleases me? The child that takes his toy to pieces to see how the machinery in it works is the original critic of the school I have in my mind. He brings his watch to silence, his steam engine to pieces of metal, and though he may be proud of his power of destruction, he is conscious of having lost the source of his previous happiness. To me it seems that such a result must follow in almost every case when the works of a great writer are subjected to "critical estimates." You cannot get much pleasure out of an exercise in parsing. (Applause.) But there are reasons on the surface why Scott captured the esteem of the world and kept it. There is nothing artificial in what he did - except in the sense of the art that conceals art. Take up the books of any novelist of thirty years ago, and you find in them a kind of staleness that is more or less distasteful. Take up the Waverley Novels and there is nothing of the kind, just as there is nothing of the kind in Shakespeare's plays. The reason is that Scott drew actual men and women. It was given to him to understand human nature, and he wrote of what he knew. His men and women were not puppets dressed up in the fashion of his day and framing their thoughts in the society mould of his time. They were real, true to nature and to the period in which they lived. It was because they were natural that they have endured, and will endure, so long as the world lasts. (Applause.)

Sometimes it is said, in apparent contradiction of, or opposition to, this proposition, that Scott is not so much read now as he used to be. If this were true it would not militate against the endurance of his fame: for popularity is not the sole or the chief test of greatness. But I doubt the accuracy of the statement. So far as my inquiries have gone they lead me to the conclusion that the Waverley Novels have lost none of their popularity in so far as that is shown by the demand for them in printed form. It may be that in proportion to the population as many people do not know Scott as formerly was the case. This is almost inevitable with our greatly

increased population, though that increase ought to be counterbalanced by the greater cheapness of books. Still, when all these things have been taken into account, I fear that many who would be the happier for a knowledge of Scott, have not been led to know him. Not long ago a friend of mine engaged in teaching asked me how it was that Scott was so little known by the young folks in schools. He said, and he had accurate knowledge, that in Germany Scott was used as a text-book, and that in almost any school it would be found that every scholar who could read with any fluency knew Scott's novels; whereas, in this city of Edinburgh, you might question any advanced class without finding more than a stray member of it who had read what Scott had written. If this be so, there is room for this Club to do some good work. (Applause.) Can any of you desire for his own children that they should be in ignorance of Scott? It is not merely that such ignorance involves deprivation of great and wholesome pleasure; it is that Scott, who never wrote what is called a novel with a purpose, was always purposeful in his novels and in his poems. If he wrote to amuse, he wrote to instruct. He teaches the best lessons and the highest and noblest sentiments. Let anyone try to think what Scotland would have been without Scott. For myself I have made the effort times without count and have failed. He is part of Scotland. He expressed the genius of Scotland. The key to his work can be found in his own lines -

Breathes there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself bath said,
This is my own, my native land.
Whose heart bath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he bath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand.

(Applause.) He revelled in the beauties of Scottish scenery; he filled his mind and filled the minds of others with the traditions of Scottish history; he taught patriotism and patriotic endurance; he made Scotsmen prouder than ever of their country. (Applause.) What he has done for hundreds of thousands of Scotsmen he will do for hundreds of thousands more. In these days, when "the

world is too much with us late and soon," there is danger of men and women neglecting those things that make for intellectual growth. There may be engrossment in the sordid details of party fights, or a great running after strange political, commercial, and social gods. The danger can best be counteracted by wholesome literature, and there is none more wholesome than Scott's works. (Applause.) Both in verse and in prose they nourish the imagination and kindle in us that better part which we call sentiment. In their own sphere they are unsurpassed, nay unequalled. And when they are read and the story of the writer is remembered, they can produce nothing but good. On all grounds, then, it is right that Scott's memory should be honoured, and that we should be grateful for the benefits he has given us. This, after all, is the first cause of the existence of this Club, though it may not be the limit of what it will do. Its opportunities are great, its field wide. It is for us to seize the opportunities and cultivate the field. Let us take care that the work is done. Let us show that

Ours is no sapling chance sown by the fountain,
Blooming at Beltane, in winter to fade;

but "moored in the rifted rock" of our gratitude to Scott, and "proof 'gainst the tempest shock" of adverse criticism or deadly apathy; so that as years roll on it shall ever be more firmly rooted, and continue "gaily to bourgeon and broadly to grow"; while under its spreading branches generations yet unborn may enter into that wondrous region of intellectual enchantments and delights discovered and disclosed for them by him to whom we do honour - the mighty, the beneficent Wizard of the North, to whose immortal memory I ask you to pledge this toast. (Loud applause.)

Professor SHIELD NICHOLSON, in proposing "Literature and the Press," said Scott took the very widest view of literature, and in his introductions to his novels, as in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, he gave his views on literature. Complaints were made nowadays that literature was too abundant, but Scott had shown that there was the same complaint in former ages; and one of the most remarkable things in the literature of our own day was the constant recovery

from the waste-heaps of former ages of certain precious things. They were told that a good deal of what was written at the present day was done from purely commercial motives. That was an objection raised to Scott; but Scott had most distinctly said that no man, in any grade of life, need be ashamed to accept just recompense for his work. (Applause.) That was the true spirit in reference to the commercial element in journalism. (Applause.) No one would say that Scott was not entitled to all his recompense; their regret was that he had not got more. (Applause.) Then it was said that the writers of the present day only aimed at popularity. Taking the case of their youngest poet - he did not mean the Emperor of Germany - (laughter) - but the latest effort of that young literary genius, Mr. Gladstone -(laughter and applause)- they were told in his translation of *Horace* that his great object was to set before them the work in as clear a manner as possible and in the briefest possible space. (Laughter.) If Mr. Gladstone had simply wished to aim at popularity in his literary effort, he could have done nothing more popular than take the speeches which he had delivered for so many years, and apply that principle of compression to them. (Laughter.) Turning to the press, Professor Nicholson gave statistics of the number of newspapers and magazines in the country, and said the improvement in quality had probably been more marked than the tremendous advance in quantity. They must all admit that one branch of literature had always been specially cultivated in Scotland; and had achieved great success - the literature connected with the various towns and counties - and he coupled with the toast the name of Provost Craig Brown, the author of *The History of Selkirk*. (Applause.)

Provost CRAIG BROWN, in replying to the toast, deprecated his claim to be regarded as a representative of either literature or the press, and remarked that he had come to the conclusion that the invitation of the committee was their delicate way of paying a compliment to Selkirk, which, after his own romantic town, was more, identified with Sir Walter Scott than any other place on the surface of the globe. (Applause.) It was no exaggeration to say that

Selkirk and all the country round about it was still haunted by that strong gray figure that was once so familiar in the streets of Edinburgh and in the district of the Scottish borders. (Applause.) He proposed that the members of the Club should visit the haunts of Scott sometime in the coming summer. (Applause.) In regard to the press, he thought he might notice one incident which bore somewhat on the purpose which had called them together that evening - he meant the announcement in the *Scotsman* of the discovery of a number of Sir Walter Scott's letters at Galashiels. That morning every man who read in Scotland knew of that discovery, and he had no doubt the evening papers had spread the knowledge of it over the length and the breadth of the land, while he would not be surprised if even at that moment in the United States and Canada there were not parties of literary men to whom the news had been flashed by telegraph, and who were waiting with eagerness the result of the find. (Applause.)

Mr. J. B. SUTHERLAND, S.S.C., in proposing "The City of Edinburgh," said there was a special appropriateness in the toast when they remembered that the illustrious son in whose honour they were gathered together lived in Edinburgh, and loved the city so well that he described it as "mine own romantic town." (Applause.) He would not point out the difference between the city of Edinburgh now and what it was when Scott knew it; but he thought all would admit that those who had had the administration of its affairs had done nothing to spoil its romantic beauty, but, on the contrary, had done a great deal to improve its sanitary conditions, and that it still lived as a place of beauty and the centre of romance. (Applause.) In the absence, through indisposition, of Bailie M'Donald, he coupled the toast with the name of Councillor Mitchell Thomson, who, although not yet in the chains -(laughter)- might at no distant date find himself in a prominent position in the Town Council. (Applause.)

Councillor MITCHELL THOMSON, in acknowledging the toast, said they did not always do what was right in the Town

Council. (Laughter,) They sometimes came under the lash of the pen of one with whom the President of the club was not unacquainted (laughter)- but he would say that every member of the Town Council was determined to do his best to preserve the beauty of Edinburgh, and hand it down to their successors unimpaired. (Applause.)

Mr. J. D. LAWRIE of Monkrigg proposed "The Ladies," which was acknowledged by Mr. GARSON, W.S.

Dr. SCOTT DALGLEISH, in proposing the health of the Chairman, said Mr. Cooper, in the noble and eloquent address which he had delivered, had more than justified his selection as the first President of the Walter Scott Club. (Applause.) By a long residence in their city Mr. Cooper had closely identified himself with Scottish interests, and they were all proud to recognise in him a fellow-countryman in the truest sense of the term. (Applause.) They also recognised Mr. Cooper as the editor of a great newspaper, which he had raised to imperial importance. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN briefly returned thanks, and intimated that the following telegram had been received in the course of the evening:- "Hastings and St. Leonards members give you good health, and drink to the immortal memory of the man who made Scotland." (Applause.) A reply had been sent assuring them that they reciprocated the good wishes. He also mentioned that a beautiful portrait of Sir Walter Scott had been presented to the Club by Colonel Joseph Laing, New York; and in conclusion he conveyed the thanks of the members to Mr. Kenneth Sanderson and Mr. Elliot R. Smail for the excellent work which they had done in connection with the Club.

The meeting, which was in every way a success, was brought to a close by the singing of "Auld Lang Syne."

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Note: Charles A. Cooper was Editor of *The Scotsman* from 1880-1905.