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978-1-108-06430-9 - The Journal of Sir Walter Scott: From the Original Manuscript at Abbotsford: Volume 2

Edited by David Douglas

Excerpt

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SIR WALTER SCOTT'S JOURNAL.

 JULY.

July 1, [Abbotsford].—A most delicious day, in the course of which I have not done

“The least right thing.”

Before breakfast I employed myself in airing my old bibliomaniacal hobby, entering all the books lately acquired into a temporary catalogue, so as to have them shelved and marked. After breakfast I went out, the day being delightful—warm, yet cooled with a gentle breeze, all around delicious; the rich luxuriant green refreshing to the eye, soft to the tread, and perfume to the smell. Wandered about and looked at my plantations. Came home, and received a visit from Sir Adam. Loitered in the library till dinner-time. If there is anything to be done at all to-day, it must be in the evening. But I fear there will be nothing. One can't work always *nowther*.

“*Neque semper arcum tendit Apollo.*”

There's warrant for it.

July 2.—Wrote in the morning, correcting the Essay on the Highlands, which is now nearly completed. Settled accounts with Tom and Bogie. Went over to Huntly Burn at two o'clock, and reconnoitred the proposed plantation to be called Jane's Wood. Dined with the Fergusons.

July 3 —Worked in the morning upon the Introduction to the *Chronicles*; it may be thought egotistical. Learned a bad accident had happened yesterday. A tinker (drunk I suppose) entered the stream opposite to Faldonside with an ass bearing his children. The ass was carried down by the

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force of the stream, and one of the little creatures was drowned; the other was brought out alive, poor innocent, clinging to the ass. It had floated as far down as Dead-water-heugh. Poor thing, it is as well dead as to live a tinker! The Fergusons dine with us *en masse*; also Dr. Brewster.

July 4, [Edinburgh].—Worked a little in the morning, and took a walk after breakfast, the day so delicious as makes it heart-breaking to leave the country. Set out, however, about four o'clock, and reached Edinburgh a little after nine. Slept part of the way; read *De Vere* the rest.¹ It is well written, in point of language and sentiment, but has too little action in it to be termed a pleasing novel. Everything is brought out by dialogue—or worse: through the medium of the author's reflections, which is the clumsiest of all expedients.

July 5.—This morning worked, and sent off to J. B. the Introduction to the *Chronicles*, containing my Confessions,² and did something, but not fluently, to the Confessions themselves. Not happy, however; the black dog worries me. Bile, I suppose. "But I will rally and combat the reiver." Reiver it is, that wretched malady of the mind; got quite well in the forenoon. Went out to Portobello after dinner, and chatted with little Johnnie, and told him the history of the Field of Prestonpans. Few remain who care about these stories.

July 6.—This morning wrought a good deal, but scarce a task. The Court lasted till half-past three; exhausting work in this hot weather. I returned to dine alone, Anne going to Roslin with a party. After noon a Miss Bell broke in upon me, who bothered me some time since about a book of hers, explaining and exposing the conduct of a Methodist Tartuffe, who had broken off (by anonymous letters) a match

¹ Written by R. Plumer Ward, published in 1850, in two vols. 8vo, author of *Tremaine* and other edited by Hon. E. Phipps. works. Mr. Ward's *Political Life*, including a *Diary* to 1820, was

² See *post*, p. 60, note.

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betwixt her and an accepted admirer. Tried in vain to make her comprehend how little the Edinburgh people would care about her wrongs, since there was no knowledge of the parties to make the scandal acceptable. I believe she has suffered great wrong.¹ Letter from Longman and Co. to J. B. grumbling about bringing out the second edition, because they have, forsooth, 700 copies in hand out of 5000, five days after the first edition² is out. What would they have? It is uncomfortable, though.

July 7.—Night dreadfully warm, and bilious; I could not be fool enough surely to be anxious for these wise men of the East's prognostication. Letters from Lockhart give a very cheerful prospect; if there had been any thundering upsetting broadside, he would have noticed it surely more or less. R. Cadell quite stout, and determined to go on with the second edition. Well, I hope all's right—thinking won't help it. Charles came down this morning penniless, poor fellow, but we will soon remedy that. Lockhart remits £100 for reviewing; I hope the next will be for Sophia, for cash affairs loom well in the offing, and if the trust funds go right, I was never so easy. I will take care how I get into debt again. I do not like this croaking of these old owls of Saint Paul's when all is done. The pitcher has gone often to the well. But— However, I worked away at the *Chronicles*. I will take pains with them. I will, by Jove!

July 8.—I did little to-day but arrange papers, and put bills, receipts, etc., into apple-pie order. I believe the fair prospect I have of clearing off some encumbrances, which are like thorns in my flesh, nay, in my very eye, contribute much to this. I did not even correct proof-sheets; nay, could not, for I have cancelled two sheets, *instante Jacobo*, and I myself being of his opinion; for, as I said yesterday, we must and will take pains. The fiddle-faddle of arranging all the things was troublesome, but they give a good account

¹ See *ante*, vol. i. pp. 101-2.² *Napoleon*.

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of my affairs. The money for the necessary payments is ready, and therefore there is a sort of pleasure which does not arise out of any mean source, since it has for its object the prospect of doing justice and achieving independence. J. B. dined with me, poor fellow, and talked of his views as hopeful and prosperous. God send honest industry a fair riddance.

July 9.—Wrote in the morning. At eleven went by appointment with Colin Mackenzie to the New Edinburgh Academy. In the fifth class, Mr. Mitchell's, we heard Greek, of which I am no otherwise a judge than that it was fluently read and explained. In the rector Mr. Williams's class we heard Virgil and Livy admirably translated *ad aperturam libri*, and, what I thought remarkable, the rector giving the English, and the pupils returning, with singular dexterity, the Latin, not exactly as in the original, but often by synonymes, which showed that the exercise referred to the judgment, and did not depend on the memory. I could not help saying, with great truth, that, as we had all long known how much the pupils were fortunate in a rector, so we were now taught that the rector was equally lucky in his pupils. Of my young friends, I saw a son of John Swinton, a son of Johnstone of Alva, and a son of Craufurd Tait.¹ Dined at John Murray's; Mr. and Mrs. Philips of Liverpool, General and Charles Stuart of Blantyre, Lord Abercromby, Clerk and Thomson. Pleasant evening.

July 10.—Corrected proofs, but wrote nothing. To Court till two o'clock. I went to Cadell's by the Mound, a long roundabout; transacted some business. I met Baron Hume coming home, and walked with him in the Gardens. His remarkable account of his celebrated uncle's last moments is in these words:—Dr. Black called on Mr. D. Hume² on the morning on which he died. The patient complained of having suffered a great deal during the night, and expressed a

¹ Archibald Campbell Tait, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.

² David Hume, the historian, died August 25, 1776.

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fear that his struggle might be prolonged, to his great distress, for days or weeks longer. "No, sir," said Dr. Black, with the remarkable calmness and sincerity which characterised him, "I have examined the symptoms, and observe several which oblige me to conclude that dissolution is rapidly approaching." "Are you certain of that, Doctor?" "Most assuredly so," answered the physician. The dying philosopher extended his arm, and shook hands with his medical friend. "I thank you," he said, "for the news." So little reason there was for the reports of his having been troubled in mind when on his deathbed.

Dined at Lord Abercromby's, to meet Lord Melville in private. We had an interview betwixt dinner and tea. I was sorry to see my very old friend, this upright statesman and honourable gentleman, deprived of his power and his official income, which the number of his family must render a matter of importance. He was cheerful, not affectedly so, and bore his declension like a wise and brave man. I had nursed the idea that he had been hasty in his resignation; but, from the letters which he showed me confidentially, which passed betwixt him and Canning, it is clear his resignation was to be accomplished, not I suppose for personal considerations, but because it rendered the Admiralty vacant for the Duke of Clarence, as his resignation was eagerly snapped at. It cannot be doubted that if he had hesitated or hung back behind his friends, forcible means would have been used to compel to the measure, which with more dignity he took of his own accord—at least so it seemed to me. The first intimation which Lord Melville received of his successor was through Mr. —, who told him, as great news, that there was to be a new Duke of York.¹ Lord M. understood

¹ To please the king, Canning served so much to disconcert his appointed the Duke of Clarence as opponents. Lord Melville had held first Lord of the Admiralty, but the office from March 25, 1812, to Greville says it was a most judicious stroke of policy, and nothing April 13, 1827. The Duke resigned in the following year.—See Croker's

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the allusion so little, as to inquire whether his informant meant that the Duke of Cambridge had taken the Duke of York's situation, when it was explained to refer to the Duke of Clarence getting the Admiralty. There are some few words that speak volumes. Lord Melville said that none of them suspected Canning's negotiations with the Whigs but the Duke of Wellington, who found it out through the ladies ten days before. I asked him how they came to be so unprepared, and could not help saying I thought they had acted without consideration, and that they might have shown a face even to Canning. He allowed the truth of what I said, and seemed to blame Peel's want of courage. In his place, he said, he would have proposed to form a government disclaiming any personal views for himself as being Premier and the like, but upon the principle of supporting the measures of Lord Castlereagh and Lord Liverpool. I think this would have been acceptable to the King. Mr. Peel obviously feared his great antagonist Canning, and perhaps threw the game up too soon. Canning said the office of Premier was his inheritance; he could not, from constitution, hold it above two years, and then it would descend to Peel. Such is ambition! Old friends forsaken—old principles changed—every effort used to give the vessel of the State a new direction, and all to be Palinurus for two years!

July 11, [Abbotsford].—Worked at proofs in the morning; composed nothing. Got off by one, and to this place between six and seven. Weather delicious.

July 12.—Unpacking and arranging; the urchins are stealing the cherries in the outer garden. But I can spare a thousand larch-trees to put it in order with a good fence for next year. It is not right to leave fruit exposed; for if Adam in the days of innocence fell by an apple, how

Correspondence, vol. i. pp. 264 in the Duke of Wellington's administration in 1828, and again First (letter to Blomfield), 427, 429; also Lord from Sept. 17 of the same *ante*, vol. i. p. 262. Lord Melville was President of the India Board year until Nov. 22, 1830.

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much may the little *gossoon* Jamie Moffatt be tempted by apples of gold in an age of iron! Anne and I walked to Huntly Burn—a delicious excursion. That place is really become beautiful; the Miss Fergusons have displayed a great deal of taste.

July 13.—Two agreeable persons—Rev. Mr. Gilly,¹ one of the prebendaries of Durham, with his wife, a pretty little woman—dined with us, and met Mr. Scrope. I heard the whole history of the discovery of St. Cuthbert's² body at Durham Cathedral. The Catholics will deny the identity, of course; but I think it is *constaté* by the dress and other circumstances. Made a pleasant day of it, and with a good conscience, for I had done my task this morning.

July 14.—Did task this morning, and believe that I shall get on now very well. Wrote about five leaves. I have been baking and fevering myself like a fool for these two years in a room exposed to the south; comfortable in winter, but broiling in the hot weather. Now I have removed myself into the large cool library, one of the most refreshing as well as handsomest rooms in Scotland, and will not use the study again till the heats are past. Here is an entry as solemn as if it respected the Vicar of Wakefield's removal from the yellow room to the brown. But I think my labours will advance greatly in consequence of this arrangement. Walked in the evening to the lake.

July 15.—Achieved six pages to-day, and finished volume i. of *Chronicles*. It is rather long; but I think the last story interesting, and it should not be split up into parts. J. B. will, I fear, think it low; and if he thinks so, others will. Yet—vamos. Drove to Huntly Burn in the evening.

July 16.—Made a good morning's work of the *Tales*. In the day-time corrected various proofs. J. B. thinks that

¹ The Rev. William Stephen Gilly, D.D., Vicar of Norham, author of *Narrative of an Excursion to the Mountains of Piemont*, 1823; *Researches among the Vaudois or Waldenses*, 1827-31. See Raine's *St. Cuthbert*, 4to, Durham, 1828.

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in the proposed introduction I contemn too much the occupation by which I have thriven so well, and hints that I may easily lead other people to follow my opinion in vilipending my talents, and the use I have made of them. I cannot tell. I do not like, on the one hand, to suppress my own opinion of the *floci-paruci-nihili-pilification* with which I regard these things; but yet, in duty to others, I cannot afford to break my own bow, or befoul my own nest, and there may be something like affectation and *nolo episcopari* in seeming to underrate my own labours; so, all things considered, I will erase the passage. Truth should not be spoke at all times. In the evening we had a delightful drive to Ashestiel with Colonel and Miss Ferguson.

July 17.—I wrote a laborious task; seven pages of *Tales*. Kept about the doors all day. Gave Bogie £10 to buy cattle to-morrow at St. Boswell's Fair. Here is a whimsical subject of affliction. Mr. Harper, a settler, who went from this country to Botany Bay, thinking himself obliged to me for a recommendation to General M'Allister and Sir Thomas Brisbane, has thought proper to bring me home a couple of Emus. I wish his gratitude had either taken a different turn, or remained as quiescent as that of others whom I have obliged more materially. I at first accepted the creatures, conceiving them, in my ignorance, to be some sort of blue and green parrot, which, though I do not admire their noise, might scream and yell at their pleasure if hung up in the hall among the armour. But your emu, it seems, stands six feet high on his stocking soles, and is little better than a kind of cassowary or ostrich. Hang them! they might [eat] up my collection of old arms for what I know. It reminds me of the story of the adjutant birds in Theodore Hook's novel.¹ No; I'll no Emuses!

July 18.—Entered this morning on the history of Sir William Wallace. I wish I may be able to find my way

¹ See *Danvers* in First Series of *Sayings and Doings*.

between what the child can comprehend and what shall not yet be absolutely uninteresting to the grown readers. Uncommon facts I should think the best receipt. Learn that Mr. Owen Rees and John Gibson have amicably settled their differences about the last edition of *Napoleon*, the Trustees allowing the publishers nine months' credit. My nerves have for these two or three last days been susceptible of an acute excitement from the slightest causes; the beauty of the evening, the sighing of the summer breeze, brings the tears into my eyes not unpleasingly. But I must take exercise, and caseharden myself. There is no use in encouraging these moods of the mind. It is not the law we live on.

We had a little party with some luncheon at the lake, where Mr. Bainbridge fished without much success. Captain Hamilton and two Messrs. Stirling, relatives of my old friend Keir, were there, and walked with me a long round home. I walked better than I had done for some days. Mr. Scrope dined with us; he was complaining of gout, which is a bad companion for the stag-shooting.

July 19.—I made out my task this forenoon, and a good deal more. Sent five or six pages to James Ballantyne, *i.e.* got them ready, and wrote till the afternoon, then I drove over to Huntly Burn, and walked through the glens till dinner-time. After dinner read and worked till bed-time. Yet I have written well, walked well, talked well, and have nothing to regret.

July 20.—Despatched my letters to J. B., with supply of copy, and made up more than my task—about four leaves, I think. Offered my Emuses to the Duke of Buccleuch. I had an appointment with Captain Hamilton and his friends the Stirlings, that they were to go up Yarrow to-day. But the weather seems to say no.

My visitors came, however, and we went up to Newark. Here is a little misfortune, for Spice left me, and we could not find her. As we had no servant with us on horseback,

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I was compelled to leave her to her fate, resolving to send in quest of her to-morrow morning. The keepers are my *bonos socios*, as the host says in the Devil of Edmonton,¹ and would as soon shoot a child as a dog of mine. But there are scamps and traps, and I am ashamed to say how reluctantly I left the poor little terrier to its fate.

She came home to me, however, about an hour and a half after we were home, to my great delectation. Our visitors dined with us.

July 21.—This morning wrote five pages of children's history. Went to Minto, where we met, besides Lord M. and his delightful countess, Thomas Thomson, Kennedy of Dunure,² Lord Carnarvon, and his younger son and daughter-in-law; the dowager Lady Minto also, whom I always delight to see, she is so full of spirit and intelligence. We rubbed up some recollections of twenty years ago, when I was more intimate with the family till Whig and Tory separated us for a time. By the way, nobody talks Whig or Tory just now, and the fighting men on each side go about muzzled and mute like dogs after a proclamation about canine madness. Am I sorry for this truce or not? Half and half. It is all we have left to stir the blood, this little political brawling; but better too little of it than too much.

July 22, [Abbotsford].—Rose a little later than usual, and wrote a letter to Mrs. Joanna Baillie. She is writing a tragedy³ on witchcraft. I shall be curious to see it. Will it be real witchcraft—the *ipsissimus diabolus*—or an impostor, or the half-crazed being who believes herself an ally of condemned spirits, and desires to be so? That last is a sublime subject. We set out after breakfast, and reached this about

¹ *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, a play by "T. B.," which has also been attributed to Anthony Brewer.

² Right Hon. Thomas Francis Kennedy, M.P. for Ayr Burghs, 1818-34. Died at the age of ninety

at Dalquharran in 1879.

³ This powerful drama, entitled *Witchcraft: a Tragedy in Prose*, was suggested, as the author says in her preface, by reading a scene in *The Bride of Lammermoor*.