To “ engraft modem refinement on ancient simplicity,” to preserve the energy of the old ballad without\* its rudeness and bareness of poetic ornament, was Scott’s avowed aim. He adhered to the poetic diction against which Wordsworth pro­tested. His rough Borderers are “ dressed to advantage ’’ in the costume of romantic chivalry. The baronial magnificence of Branksome, Deloraine’s “ shield and jack and acton, ” the elaborate ceremony of the combat between the pseudo-Deloraine and Musgrave, are concessions to the taste of the 18th century. Further, he disarmed criticism by putting his poem into the mouth of an ancient minstrel, thus pictorially emphasizing the fact that it was an imitation of antiquity, and providing a scapegoat on whose back might be laid any remaining sins of rudeness or excessive simplicity. And, while imitating the antique romance, he was careful not to imitate its faults of rambling, discursive, disconnected structure. He was scrupu­lously attentive to the classical unities of time, place and action. The scene never changes from Branksome and its neighbourhood ; the time occupied by the action (as he pointed out in his preface) is three nights and three days; and, in spite of all that critics have said about the superfluity of the goblin page, it is not difficult to trace unity of intention and regular progressive development in the incidents.

The success of the *Lay* decided finally, if it was not decided already, that literature was to be the main business of Scott’s life, and he proceeded to arrange his affairs accordingly. It would have been well for his comfort, if not for his fame, had he adhered to his first plan, which was to buy a small mountain- farm near Bowhill, with the proceeds of some property left to him by an uncle, and divide his year between this and Edinburgh, where he had good hopes, soon afterwards realized, of a salaried appointment in the Court of Session. This would have given him ample leisure and seclusion for literature, while his private means and official emoluments secured him against dependence on his pen. He would have been laird as well as sheriff of the cairn and the scaur, and as a man of letters his own master. Since his marriage in 1797 with Charlotte Charpentier, daughter of a French refugee, his chief residence had been at Lasswade, about six miles from Edinburgh. But on a hint from the lord- lieutenant that the sheriff must live at least four months in the year within his county, and that he was attending more closely to his duties as quartermaster of a mounted company of volunteers than was consistent with the proper discharge of his duties as sheriff, he had moved his household in 1804 to Ashestiel. When his uncle’s bequest fell in, he determined to buy a small property on the banks of the Tweed within the limits of his sheriffdom. There, within sight of Newark Castle and Bowhill, he proposed to live like his ancient minstrel, as became the bard of the clan, under the shadow of the great ducal head of the Scotts. But this plan was deranged by an accident. It so happened that an old schoolfellow, James Ballantyne (1772-1833), a printer in Kelso, whom he had already befriended, transplanted to Edinburgh, and furnished with both work and money, applied to him for a further loan. Scott declined to lend, but offered to join him as sleeping partner. Thus the intended purchase money of Broadmeadows became the capital of a printing concern, of which by degrees the man of letters became the overwrought slave, milch-cow and victim.

When the *Lay* was off his hands, Scott’s next literary enterprise was a prose romance—a confirmation of the argument that he did not take to prose after Byron had “ *bet* him,” as he put it, in verse, but that romance writing was a long-cherished purpose. He began *Waverley,* but a friend to whom he showed the first chapters—which do not take Waverley out of England, and describe an education in romantic literature very much like Scott’s own—not unnaturally decided that the work was deficient in interest and unworthy of the author of the *Lay.* Scott accordingly laid *Waverley* aside. We may fairly conjecture that he would not have been so easily diverted had he not been occupied at the time with other heavy publishing enterprises calculated to bring grist to the printing establishment. His active brain was full of projects for big editions, which he

undertook to carry through on condition that the printing was done by Ballantyne & Co., the “ Co. ” being kept a profound secret, because it might have injured the lawyer and poet professionally and socially to be known as partner in a commercial concern.

In 1806 he collected from different publications his *Ballads and Lyrical Pieces.* Between 1806 and 1812, mainly to serve the interests of the firm, though of course the work was not in itself unattractive to him, Scott produced his elaborate editions of Dryden (18 vols., 1808), Swift (19 vols., 1818), the Somers Tracts (13 vols., 1809-1815), and the *State Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler* (2 vols., 1809). Incidentally these laborious tasks contributed to his preparation for the main work of his life by extending his knowledge of English and Scottish history.

*Marmion,* begun in November 1806 and published in February 1808, was written as a relief to “ graver cares,” though in this also he aimed at combining with a romantic story a solid picture of an historical period. It was even more popular than the *Lay.* Scott’s resuscitation of the four-beat measure of the old “ gestours ” afforded a signal proof of the justness of their instinct in choosing this vehicle for their recitations. The four-beat lines of *Marmion* took possession of the public like a kind of madness: they not only clung to the memory but they would not keep off the tongue: people could not help spouting them in solitary places and muttering them as they walked about the streets. The critics, except Jeffrey, who may have been offended by the pronounced politics of the poet, were on the whole better pleased than with the *Lay,* Their chief complaint was with the “ introductions ” to the various cantos, which were objected to as vexatiously breaking the current of the story.

The triumphant success of *Marmion,* establishing him as *facile princeps* among living poets, gave Scott such a *heeze,* to use his own words, “ as almost lifted him off his feet.” He touched then the highest point of prosperity and happiness. Presently after, he was irritated and tempted by a combination of little circumstances into the great blunder of his life, the establishment of the publishing house of John Ballantyne & Co. A coolness arose between him and Jeffrey, chiefly on political but partly also on personal grounds. They were old friends, and Scott had written many articles for the *Review,* but its political attitude at this time was intensely unsatisfactory to Scott. To complete the breach, Jeffrey reviewed *Marmion* in a hostile spirit. A quarrel occurred also between Scott’s printing firm and Constable, the publisher, who had been the principal feeder of its press. Then the tempter appeared in the shape of Murray, the London publisher, anxious to secure the services of the most popular *littérateur* of the day. The result of negotiations was that Scott set up, in opposition to Constable, “ the crafty, ” “ the grand Napoleon of the realms of print, ” the publishing house of John Ballantyne & Co., to be managed by John Ballantyne (d. 1821), James’s younger brother, whom Scott nicknamed “ Rigdumfunnidos, ” for his talents as a mimic and low comedian. Scott interested himself warmly in starting the *Quarterly Review,* and in return Murray constituted Ballantyne & Co. his Edinburgh agents. Scott’s trust in Rigdumfunnidos and his brother, “ Aldiborontiphos- cophomio, ” and in his own power to supply all their deficiencies, is as strange a piece of infatuation as any that ever formed a theme for romance or tragedy. Their devoted attachment to the architect of their fortunes and proud confidence in his powers helped forward to the catastrophe, for whatever Scott recommended they agreed to, and he was too immersed in multifarious literary work and professional and social engagements to have time for cool examination of the numerous rash speculative ventures into which he launched the firm.

The *Lady of the Lake* (May 1810) was the first great publication by the new house, and next year the *Vision of Don Roderick* followed. The *Lady of the Lake* was received with enthusiasm, even Jeffrey joining in the chorus of applause. It made the Perthshire Highlands fashionable for tourists, and raised the post-horse duty in Scotland. But it did not make up to