Ballantyne & Co. for their heavy investments in unsound ventures. The *Edinburgh Annual Register,* meant as a rival to the *Edinburgh Review,* though Scott engaged Southey to write for it and wrote for it largely himself, proved a failure. In a very short time the warehouses of the firm were filled with unsaleable stock. By the end of three years Scott began to write to his partners about the propriety of “ reefing sails.” But apparently he was too much occupied to look into the accounts of the firm, and, so far from understanding the real state of their affairs, he considered himself rich enough to make his first purchase of land at Abbotsford. But he had hardly settled there in the spring of 1812, and begun his schemes for building and planting and converting a bare moor into a richly wooded *pleasaunce,* than his business troubles began, and he found himself harassed by fears of bankruptcy. Rigdumfunnidos concealed the situation as long as he could, but as bill after bill came due he was obliged to make urgent application to Scott, and the truth was thus forced from him item by item. He had by no means revealed all when Scott, who behaved with admirable good-nature, was provoked into remonstrating, “ For heaven’s sake, treat me as a man and not as a milch-cow.” The proceeds of *Rokeby* (January 1813) and of other labours of Scott’s pen were swallowed up, and bankruptcy was inevitable, when Constable, still eager at any price to secure Scott’s services, came to the rescue. With his help three crises were tided over in 1813.

It was in the midst of these embarrassments that Scott opened up the rich new vein of the Waverley novels. He chanced, upon the manuscript of the opening chapters of *Waverley* which he had written in 1805, and resolved to complete the story. Four weeks in the summer of 1814 sufficed for the work, and *Waverley* was published by Constable without the author’s name in July. The notes and introductions first appeared in the edition of 1829. Many plausible reasons might be given and have been given for Scott’s resolution to publish anonymously. The reason given by Lockhart is that he considered the writing of novels beneath the dignity of a grave clerk of the Court of Session. Why he kept up the mystification, though the secret, which was formally divulged in 1827, was an open one to all his Edinburgh acquaintances, is easily understood. He enjoyed it, and his formally initiated coadjutors enjoyed it; it relieved him from the annoyances of foolish compliment; and it was not unprofitable—curiosity about “ the Great Unknown ” keeping alive the interest in his works. The secret was so well kept by all to whom it was definitely entrusted, and so many devices were used to throw conjecture off the scent, that even Scott’s friends, who were certain of the authorship from internal evidence, were occasionally puzzled. He kept on producing in his own name as much work as seemed humanly possible for an official who was to be seen every day at his post and as often in society as the most fashionable of his professional brethren. His treatises on chivalry, romance and the drama, besides an elaborate work in two volumes on Border antiquities, appeared in the same year with *Waverley,* and his edition of Swift in nineteen volumes in the same week. In 1813 he published the romantic tale of *The Bridal of Triermain* in three cantos, enlarged from an earlier poem, printed in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* of 1809. The *Lord of the Isles* was published in January 1815; *Guy Mannering,* written in “ six weeks about Christmas,” in February; and *The Field of Waterloo* in the same year. *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk* and *The Antiquary* appeared in 1816; the first series of the *Tales of My Landlord,* edited by “ Jedediah Cleishbotham ’’—*The Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality*—in the same year; *Harold the Dauntless@@*1 in 1817; the two volumes of *The Border Antiquities of England and Scotland* in 1814 and 1817. No wonder that the most positive interpreters of internal evidence were mystified. It was not as if he had buried himself in the country for the summer half of the year. On the contrary, he kept open house at Abbotsford in the fine old feudal fashion and was seldom without visitors. His own friends and many

strangers from a distance, with or without introductions, sought him there, and found a hearty hospitable country laird, entirely occupied to all outward appearance with local and domestic business and sport, building and planting, adding wing to wing, acre to acre, plantation to plantation, with just leisure enough for the free-hearted entertainment of his guests and the cultivation of friendly relations with his humble neighbours. How could such a man find time to write two or three novels a year, besides what was published in his own name? Even the few intimates who knew how early he got up to prepare his packet for the printer, and had some idea of the extraordinary power that he had acquired of commanding his faculties for the utilization of odd moments, must have wondered at times whether he had not inherited the arts of his ancestral relation Michael Scot, and kept a goblin in some retired attic or vault.

Scott’s fertility is not absolutely unparalleled; Anthony Trollope claimed to have surpassed him in rate as well as total amount of production, having also business duties to attend to. But in speed of production combined with variety and depth of interest and weight and accuracy of historical substance Scott is unrivalled. On his claims as a serious historian\*, which Carlyle ignored in his curiously narrow and splenetic criticism, he was always, with all his magnanimity, peculiarly sensitive. A certain feeling that his antiquarian studies were undervalued seems to have haunted him from his youth. It was probably this that gave the sting to Jeffrey’s criticism of *Marmion,* and that tempted him to the somewhat questionable proceeding of reviewing his own novels in the *Quarterly* upon the appearance of *Old Mortality.* He was nettled besides at the accusation of having treated the Covenanters unfairly, and wanted to justify himself by the production of historical documents. In this criticism of himself Scott replied lightly to some of the familiar objections to his work, such as the feebleness of his heroes, Waverley, Bertram, Lovel, and the melodramatic character of some of his scenes and characters. But he argued more seriously against the idea that historical romances are the enemies of history, and he rebutted by anticipation Carlyle’s objection that he wrote only to amuse idle persons who like to lie on their backs and read novels. His *apologia* is worth quoting. Historical romances, he admits, have always been failures, but the failure has been due to the imperfect knowledge of the writers and not to the species of composition. If, he says, anachronisms in manners can be avoided, and “ the features of an age gone by can be recalled in a spirit of delineation at once faithful and striking,... the composition itself is in every point of view dignified and improved; and the author, leaving the light and frivolous associates with whom a careless observer would be disposed to ally him, takes his seat on the bench of the historians of his time and country. In this proud assembly, and in no mean place of it, we are disposed to rank the author of these works. At once a master of the great events and minute incidents of history, and of the manners of the times he celebrates, as distinguished from those which now prevail, the intimate thus of the living and of the dead, his judgment enables him to separate those traits which are characteristic from those that are generic; and his imagination, not less accurate and discriminating than vigorous and vivid, presents to the mind of the reader the manners of the times, and introduces to his familiar acquaintance the individuals of the drama as they thought and spoke and acted.” This defence of himself shows us the ideal at which Scott aimed, and which he realized. He was not in the least unconscious of his own excellence. He did not hesitate in this review to compare himself with Shakespeare in respect of truth to nature. “The volume which this author has studied is the great book of nature. He has gone abroad into the world in quest of what the world will certainly and abundantly supply, but what a man of great discrimination alone will find, and a man of the very highest genius will alone depict after he has discovered it. The characters of Shakespeare are not more exclusively human, not more perfectly men and women as they live and move, than those of this mysterious author.”

The immense strain of Scott’s double or quadruple life as

@@@1 This poem, like the *Bridal of Triermain,* did not bear his name on the title-page, but the authorship was an open secret, although he tried to encourage the idea that the author was his friend Erskine.