

**SOME RECENT
STATEMENTS AND OTHER
MATTER, CONCERNING:
SIR WALTER SCOTT**

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Some recent statements and other matter, concerning: Sir Walter Scott by Miss Jane Russell

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MISS JANE RUSSELL

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Some Recent Statements

and other Matter

CONCERNING

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

BY

Jane
MISS RUSSELL, of Ashiesteel.

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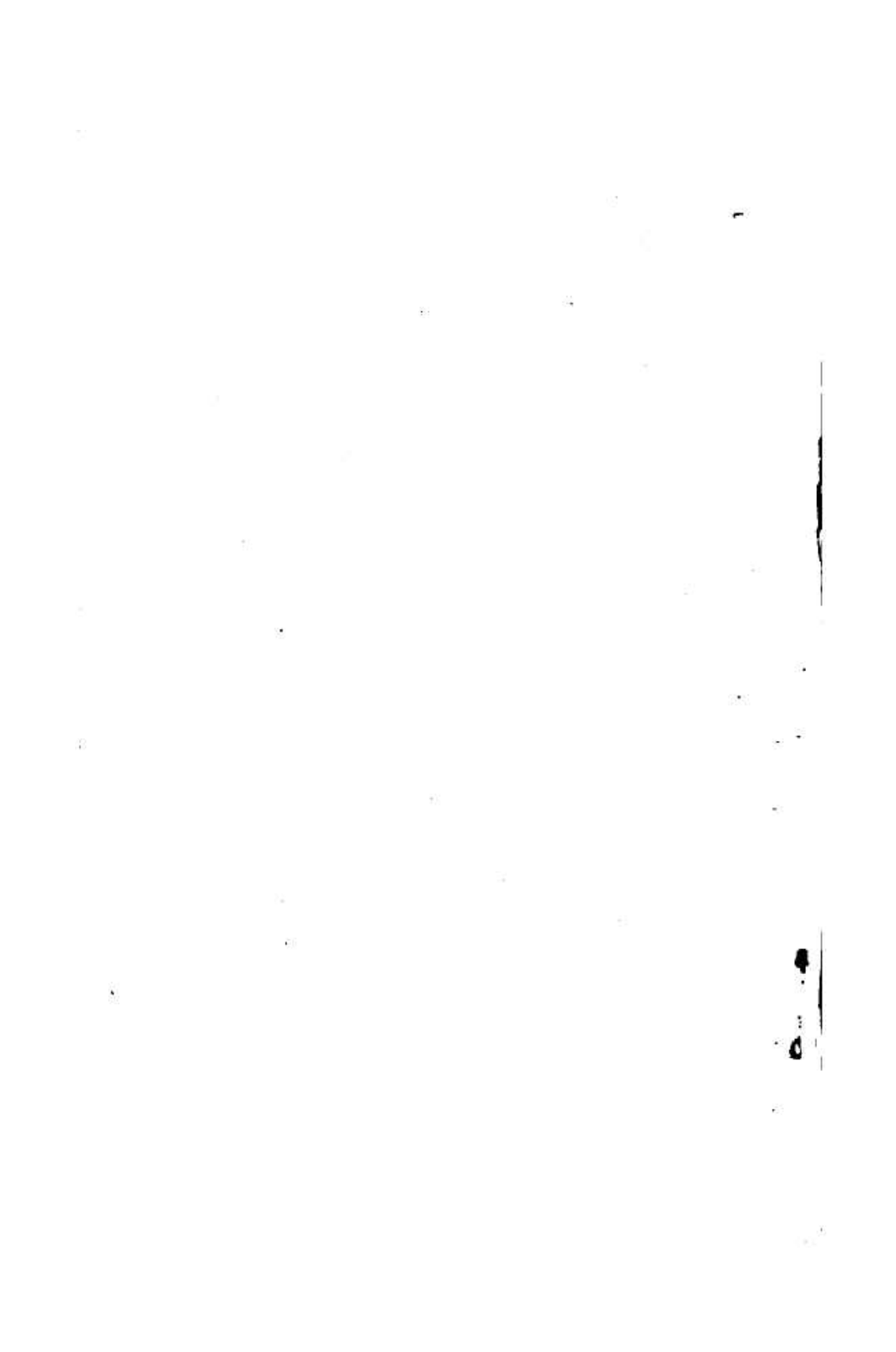
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FOLDING CHAIR, GIVEN BY SIR WALTER SCOTT TO HIS COUSIN, MISS JANE RUSSELL, DURING A LONG ILLNESS, AND PROCURED BY HIM FROM LONDON AT A COST OF FORTY-SEVEN POUNDS. IT WAS SENT TO ABBOTSFORD DURING HIS LAST ILLNESS.



*Some recent Statements and other Matter concerning
Sir Walter Scott.*

By MISS RUSSELL of Ashiesteel.

THE large leather wheel-chair, now at Ashiesteel, is undoubtedly an interesting relic of Sir Walter Scott, as having been a costly present from him to a relation who had been sorely stricken; but it is rather difficult to account for the statement which reappears, from time to time, that it had been used by himself. Anyone who has examined the chair, must see that the large wheel-guards would prevent it ever being brought up to a table for writing or any other purpose; while Lockhart's statement that the chair in which he and Laidlaw wheeled Sir Walter about, during the remarkable revival of a few days which followed his last return to Abbotsford, was a bath-chair borrowed from Huntley Burn (the Fergusons') may certainly be taken as trustworthy. (See *Life*, vol. 7th, chap. 11.)

The large leather chair was by this time at Ashiesteel, having been no doubt warehoused in Edinburgh with the Ashiesteel furniture, when the house was empty; and it was undoubtedly sent to Abbotsford, at the time in question, for Sir Walter's use.

But even if it had been at all suited for an invalid, it may be a question whether it was at Abbotsford during the time when he was able to be moved about. It is certain that, on the last day he left his room, when he insisted on being wheeled up to his desk, and making an attempt to write, it was not in this chair; for, as said before, it could not have been brought up to the table.

And as he had been lying in what seemed a half-dead state in London, it is not likely that anyone could have anticipated his having any use for a wheel-chair. No doubt it was dispatched, as soon as possible, on its being known that he seemed wonderfully better, and was being wheeled about out of doors. Distinct consciousness seemed to return on his recognising the road between Edinburgh and Gala-shiels. This was on Wednesday, 12th August 1832, and it lasted for about a week, the attempt to write being on Tuesday; and he never left his room again. For about a

week more he sat up for some time in the middle of the day, and then took to his bed entirely. Even at this time it is unlikely the leather chair was used; the arms and guards would make it extremely difficult to get a heavy, helpless invalid into it.

The journey to Italy, on the whole, seems to have done him more harm than good; and after he heard, at Naples (where his son Charles had a diplomatic appointment) of the death of Goethe, whom he had meant to visit on his way home, he thought of nothing but to get back to Abbotsford. The great German genius was old enough to have been his father, but had taken life much more easily, and was described to him as having been, the year before, quite well both in mind and body.

Sir Walter stopped for some weeks in Rome, rather to please his daughter than himself. He was interested in the Benedictine archives and similar treasures; but, as is well known, he could not be induced to take any interest in the remains of classical antiquity, in Rome or elsewhere in Italy. The one exception was perhaps hardly an exception, and is curious. At Pompeii he insisted on seeing everything that was to be seen, though he had to be carried through the ruins in a chair, which Sir William Gell had lent him; and he seemed fully occupied with what was before him, though he only said—"the city of the dead! the city of the dead!" While, no doubt, what really affected him was the perception that Pompeii is, in a very peculiar way, *the city of the living.*

The long galleries and slippery floors of the great Roman buildings tried his walking powers very much. But, when once fairly started homeward, he would have liked to travel night and day, and he did hurry the journey to an extent which no doubt hastened his complete breakdown. His son and daughter were afraid of one of the attacks of "apoplectic paralysis," of which he had had four or five, and he was bled, as he had been on other occasions, by his faithful manservant. This treatment was probably one main cause of his health failing in the way it did. He himself attributed his earlier complaints, which involved great bodily suffering, to the drinking habits of society in his earlier days; and, as everybody knows, he overworked his brain

mercilessly. He also gave up exercise too much latterly, when in Edinburgh; but frequent bleeding was probably not far behind as a cause of evil.

It has been remarked—it is only of recent times that the medical faculty have taken in what Rutherford taught—that all disease is less than health, and therefore to be met by keeping up the strength of the patient; and at this time there was no tradition of treatment which was of any use to Rutherford's grandson. Cutting off fermented liquors entirely in illness was doubtless injurious also.

I am sorry to see a recrudescence of "starving" in some recent works. One is inclined to think that the fillip given, at ruinous cost by bleeding, will follow. Nature seems quite able to provide bleeding herself when it is wanted. Lady Louisa Stuart, the last of the Traquair family in the direct line, who lived to within seven months of a hundred—dying then to the great disappointment of Dr Anderson, who had hoped to point to a centenarian among his patients, whose history could be authenticated from the peerage—about ten or twelve years previously had had a violent bleeding of the nose, which lasted for days; and, when stopped, was brought on again by a fall, so that everybody thought she must bleed to death. After about ten days altogether it stopped, and she does not seem to have been any the worse of it.

Sir Walter would hardly stop for the monuments of German chivalry at Inspruck, though they had been one of his objects; but was pleased with the scenery of the Rhine, the names connected with which were very familiar to him, and it was when they emerged into the lower country that the stroke came, which, Lockhart says, was the crowning blow. He was quite insensible at first; but as the one idea, that returned with consciousness, was to get home, he was lifted on board an English steamer at Rotterdam. At Venice he had still been sufficiently active to scramble down, though painfully enough, into the dungeons. Lockhart and his wife met him in London, and he knew them and other friends, but did not seem to know where he was.

This went on for about six weeks, when he was brought down by sea to Edinburgh.

Lockhart's account of Sir Walter's first seizure is a caution