REFUTATION OF THE MISTATEMENTS AND CALUMNIES CONTAINED IN MR LOCKHART'S, LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART. RESPECTING THE MESSRS BALLANTYNE

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Trieste

REFUTATION

OF THE

MISTATEMENTS AND CALUMNIES

CONTAINED IN MR LOCKHART'S

LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

RESPECTING

THE MESSRS BALLANTYNE.

BY

THE TRUSTEES AND SON OF THE LATE
MR JAMES BALLANTYNE.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS;
AND ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK, EDINBURGH.
1838.

PREFACE.

In offering to the Public the following remarks, intended to vindicate the character and conduct of the late Mr James Ballantyne, which have been so foully aspersed by Mr John Gibson Lockhart, in his *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, the Trustees and Executors of that gentleman, acting in concert with his family, conceive that no apology is necessary on their part for the step they have thus taken, nor for the firm and decided manner in which they have repelled the Mistatements and Calumnies by means of which Mr Lockhart has attempted to fix a stain upon the memory of their departed friend. On the contrary, since the appearance of the work in question, and the full

developement of that hostile spirit by which it is pervaded, they have had but one opinion as to the course which their duty prescribed for their adoption; and, with sufficient materials in their hands for refuting all that Mr Lockhart has alleged or insinuated in disparagement of Mr Ballantyne, they feel that they would neither have done justice to themselves, nor have fulfilled, in its true spirit, the sacred trust confided to them, if they had not come forward to repel the most unjust and ungenerous attack that ever was made upon the memory of an upright and honourable man.

In acting upon these convictions of duty, however, they are aware that they have done so under several disadvantages. They have no pretensions whatever to enter into literary strife with Mr Lockhart; and they cannot stoop to engage in a mere war of words, respecting matters which must be judged and decided by the evidence of facts and documents alone. They are also fully sensible that, if Mr Ballantyne had been still alive, he would have defended himself with far greater ability, and a much more intimate knowledge of the complex transactions they have been called on to unravel, than they either possess or can in any degree pretend to;

indeed it is their firm belief that, if their excellent friend had been spared, Mr Lockhart would have put the rein upon his imagination, and hesitated to assert what he could not substantiate, and what, in such a case, might have been more easily and effectually disproved. As it is, however, his representatives humbly conceive they have produced evidence sufficient to vindicate his character and conduct, in relation to all his transactions with Sir Walter Scott; and also to convince the world that, so far from having, in any respect, injured his illustrious friend, he was himself the victim of schemes into which he was reluctantly and almost inevitably drawn.

They much regret the delay which has arisen in the appearance of this Refutation,—which, however, from various causes, was unavoidable.

EDINBURGH, *August* 1838.

REFUTATION, &c.

"Lockhart," said Sir Walter Scott, when his son-in-law was called to his deathbed, "I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous—be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."—(*Life of Sir W. Scott*, vol. vii. p. 393.)

When Sir Walter Scott, upon his deathbed, addressed this parting admonition to the gentleman destined to become his literary executor, he not only evinced a deep interest in the welfare of that individual, but at the same time impressively indicated the spirit in which he expected his son-in-law to conduct himself, even in asserting and vindicating his posthumous fame. He recommended that "goodness" which excludes all malignant thoughts or representations; that "virtue" which courageously proclaims the truth; and that "religion" "which thinketh no evil:" and he solemnly declared, that nothing else would give him any comfort when he came to lie upon the bed of death, there to take the retrospect of his past life and actions.

We are now going to enquire what effect this touching appeal produced upon the mind of the gentleman to

whom it was addressed,—not at the moment, when any human heart not altogether seared must have been softened, and disposed to receive generous impressions, but in following out the duties of the important literary trust committed to him. In doing so, however, we will keep aloof from all speculations, and adhere strictly to facts. *We* shall not concern ourselves with any enquiry into the private views, motives, feelings, or principles of Mr Lockhart, as these might be collected by inference from the *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, in which, we lament to say, the character of the dead and the feelings of the living have, in so many instances, been most wantonly assailed. The task which we propose to ourselves is one of a different description, namely, to expose the injustice of his representations in as far as two persons are concerned;—to show that his own disparaging statements are directly contradicted by the evidence which he has himself produced;—and to place in a true light before the public that series of transactions which, either from ignorance or design, he has involved in misrepresentation and perplexity.

Before this *Life* appeared, the pecuniary embarrassments of Sir Walter Scott were matter of general notoriety; and, since its publication, they have been found to constitute the staple subject of the work, and are now, in their origin, progress, and consummation, as fully before the public as Mr Lockhart has been able or willing to place them. Such matters, indeed, have but little interest to the great mass of readers, who seldom think it worth while to take the trouble to understand them, and who are, moreover, indifferent to concerns by which they can in nowise be affected. But in the present instance the case is materially different. The well-earned fame of Sir Walter Scott, and the unparalleled sums which he was generally understood to have