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HARRIET HARVEY WOOD

Scott and Jamieson: The Relationship Between Two Ballad-Collectors

The issue of Professor Edgar Johnson’s monumental life of Scott\(^1\) has been long and eagerly awaited, and its appearance in time for the Scott bicentennial celebrations has made it a worthy tribute on that occasion to a great man and a great novelist. In one respect, however, it forms an addition to an already impressive list of biographies of Scott which omit any reference to an episode in Scott’s career which, while in itself perhaps of minor importance, yet deserves a little more attention than it has yet received, since it reveals Scott in a light which is unfamiliar and since it terminated in a way which was or appeared to be uncharacteristic. Scott’s kindness and generosity towards his less fortunate literary colleagues was so marked a trait in his character that his abrupt termination of his long friendship with Robert Jamieson in 1821 at the time of the latter’s greatest need seems to require an explanation. The following examination of the relationship between the two men will, it is hoped, cast some light on Jamieson himself and serve to vindicate the essential charity of Scott’s behaviour towards him.

That a long friendship did actually exist cannot be in doubt. There was never any shortage of people who would have been happy to claim a closer relationship with Scott than Scott himself would have been prepared to acknowledge. But although Scott might not have placed Jamieson in a list of his closest friends, he does make it clear that, before the quarrel, he regarded him as a good friend of long standing. Lockhart who was, if anything, more particular about Scott’s friends than Scott himself would have been, acknowledges the relationship and Scott, when complaining to Blackwood about the Chaldean MS. articles, adds that he was “not greatly pleased with the mode in which one or two of my particular friends have been mentioned, as, for example, Playfair, Charles Sharpe and Robert Jamieson.”\(^2\) This is


[71]
not the way in which a man would speak of a mere protegé or an object of charity, however worthy.

The beginning of the acquaintance of the two men is fairly fully documented. We know that they first met in 1800, at the time when they were both at work on the collections of ballads which were in due course to appear as *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3) and *Popular Ballads and Songs* (1806). Jamieson, a native of Morayshire, had spent the summer collecting in Scotland, and presumably had heard from one of his contacts that Scott was similarly employed. The discovery prompted him to write to Scott, and although his letter has disappeared, its general content may be inferred from Scott's reply to their mutual friend, Dr. Robert Anderson:

I this day received a letter from Mr. Jamieson a friend of yours & the intended publisher of a collection of Scottish Ballads As he proposes being in Edinr. this week I hope the inclosed which I have taken the liberty of addressing to your care will find him there. I have taken the liberty of asking him to spend a day with me here [i.e. at Lasswade] to talk over the proposed publications & as far as possible prevent the possibility of interference.

Will you permit me to hope you will do me the favour of accompanying him I am disengaged every day this week & the beginning of the next & a note by the penny post over night will be sufficient notice of your intended approach. We dine at 4 but I would wish to see you early as I think Mr. Jamieson may be pleased to see some of our walks if he is not already acquainted with them.  

Jamieson and Anderson duly visited Scott at Lasswade, where Jamieson found, according to Robert Anderson, "instead of an imperious rival, . . . a friend and liberal promoter."  

Jamieson was at this time employed as a classics master at Macclesfield, a situation in which he was far from happy and which was not particularly favourable for ballad-collecting. The discovery that Scott was so much further advanced in his work appears at first to have dismayed him, for he was by temperament nervous, touchy and prone to discouragement. But the kindness with which he was received raised his spirits. He and Scott discussed their collections and agreed to a rough division of the field between them, Scott assuring Jamieson that it was his intention to confine his work to the Border raiding ballads, and Jamieson undertaking the romantic and popular ballads. An account of this gentlemen's agreement

3. *Letters*, 1, 100.

is given by Jamieson in his preface and is confirmed by a letter from Scott to Richard Heber of 19th October 1800:

Jamieson spent a day with me when he was here— he had been at Mrs. Browns of Faulkland & got one or two good poems from her, but I think I had most of the rest of his collection. You will readily believe that far from wishing to hurt his collection I did all in my power to assist him— gave him several copies & even resigned some poems I had intended myself to publish. Indeed my heart being chiefly set upon the Border raid Ballads I was less anxious about those which are merely romantick & popular of which I believe an attentive Collector who would collect from recitation in the pastoral parts of the Country & not from Libraries in great towns might still recover a very great number indeed.6

Scott has been blamed by later writers for his failure to keep to the terms of his agreement, and there is a certain amount of justice in such censure. But it should be remembered that he had no particular obligation to respect Jamieson’s claim to ballads which both men had obtained fairly and independently, and that, in a situation which most men would have regarded as open competition and a fair race, Scott turned aside out of his way to help and encourage his less fortunate rival. The case has been fairly stated by M. R. Dobie in his admirable essay, “The Development of Scott’s Minstrelsy”, although it is perhaps doubtful whether Leyden is justly charged with the responsibility of tempting Scott to break his word to Jamieson. The most persuasive argument in favour of Scott’s good conduct in the matter is the fact that Jamieson, a man constitutionally sensitive to slights and ill-usage, clearly bore him no resentment but, both in his preface and in his letters, continued to express his admiration of Scott’s achievements and his gratitude for his kindness.

Scott’s kindness to him was indeed considerable. His generosity in making Jamieson a present of ballads which he had intended to print himself would be considered by many collectors as quixotic. His kind-

5. Letters, XII, 172-73. It should, however, be noted that in a letter of 18th October 1800 to Dr. Currie of Liverpool, Scott wrote: “I do not mean entirely to limit my collection to the Riding Ballads, as they are called in our country, those namely which relate to Border feuds and forays; but, on the contrary, to admit Scottish Ballads of merit upon romantic and popular subjects, provided they have been hitherto unpublished; indeed, my second volume will consist chiefly of the latter class” (I, p. 104). In view of what the Border Minstrelsy did ultimately contain, this statement cannot but cast some doubt on the sincerity of his assurance to Jamieson.

ness and patience in his dealings with him, his encouragement during the years 1803-05 when Jamieson, having left his fairly comfortable job at Macclesfield for reasons which are not explained, was shunted from pillar to post in search of employment, and his attempts to find him a congenial place deserved Jamieson's unqualified gratitude and should now be properly recorded. In the end, after various experiments, Jamieson was obliged to go to Riga as tutor in the family of a Scottish merchant by the name of Mitchell. The prospect was not one which delighted him:

Do, my dear Sir, write to me immediately—And may I presume to hope that you will now and then condescend to let me hear from you during my exile—for such I cannot but consider it—It will do me good; & perhaps I may be able to pick up some German & Slavonic curiosities that may amuse you.—I shall certainly have more leisure time upon my hands than I shall know well how to dispose of in such a place as Riga. Exer tions of Genius, (if I had Genius) I am afraid are not to be looked for. The imagination would be vigorous indeed that could soar any considerable height, white [sic] a man was groaning under all the horrors of St. Patrick's Purgatory; grilled between stoves with his doors, and if he ventured out, cast in riba of ice from frost that wd. split a stone.

Scott's final kindness to Jamieson before the latter's departure in 1805 for Livonia was his offer to superintend the publication of Jamieson's volumes of ballads, completed in scrambling haste only the night before his departure for Riga. "I have just put into the hands of Longman & Rees your MSS. all carefully sealed up, & the transcript of my ballads," he wrote to Scott.

They are in a miserable state, and no wonder—I don't know that there is a single page of the prose which I wd. choose to send into the world in the exact state in which it at present is—
but what can I do? It must be published next winter, or never. Ought it to be altogether suppressed? Look over them and see. I have doubted much; but upon the whoe, I think they may be published; as the text is in as good a state as it is ever likely to be in, and surely is sufficiently curious to merit publication independent of ye. notes.

The volumes did not appear until the following year, and most of Scott's correspondence with Jamieson in the interim concerns arrangements for their production. Most of Scott's letters have unfortunately disappeared, but it is easy enough to deduce from Jamieson's much of what they must have contained, and it is clear that Scott took his self-

7. Letter of 30th May 1805, Nat. Lib. of Scot., Ms. 3875, f. 77.
appointed supervision of the publication seriously. "I have given Mr. John Ballantyne the Dedication for Jamieson's Ballads to the Duchess of Gordon," he wrote to Constable in 1806.

You will I suppose think it right to bind up a copy smartly & send it to her Grace who may do much for the work. I will write to her on the subject when I hear your packer is about to go. Copies as from the Author should be sent, to the Reverend Mr. Smythe St. Peter's College Cambridge [now Peterhouse]— to Heber—to Dr. Jamieson—and to Dr. Robert Anderson perhaps you may know farther of his wishes than I do in this particular. Do not omit to send the Bard himself a copy. I will write to him on the subject & I hope the Book will do."

Shortly after the issue of the book, he received a letter from William Smyth of Peterhouse, to whom he had been introduced by their common concern for Jamieson's future.

And now [he wrote], I cannot but say that unless Jamieson's Book will be assisted by the Notice taken of it, We had better have no Review at all; this I say from myself, not fm. Jamieson; because it is not his Fame alone that is at Issue, but perhaps his Bread—and tho' the Gentlemen who review the Work are no doubt to do what they think their Duty, & to say what they esteem just, they can surely have no Objectn. to allowing You to look at their Accnt. & consenting to throw it aside, if you do not think it will serve ..."

The review which appeared in the Scott Magazine in December 1806 indicates with what success Scott was able to fulfil this rather difficult task, and almost certainly owes much to his guiding hand.

Before the book actually came before the public, however, Jamieson had made a discovery which considerably changed the content and significance of his work. On the journey to Riga, he called in Copenhagen on the Icelandic scholar G. J. Thorkelin and received from him a present of books, "a foundation for my Northern Library," as he described it to Scott, and this included a copy of old Danish heroic ballads generally known as Kæmpe Viser.11

9. Letters, 1, 335-36.
11. Peder, Syv. Et Hundrede Udbalde Danske Viser, om allehændes mærk- lige Krigs-Bedrift og anden selsom eventyr [collected by A. S. Vedel] . . . foregæde med det andet Hundrede viser om Danske konger, Kæmper og Andre (Copenhagen 1693). It should be noted, however, that this does not seem to have been Jamieson's first introduction to continental balladry. Leyden, in a letter to Heber of 24th April 1800, tells him that Jamieson is engaged "in the publication of a series of popular ballads upon a plan almost as extensive as the Volkslieder of Herder, as it is to extend to the popular ballads of the Swedes Danes Icelanders Germans and Slavonic tribes as well as those of Scotland" (NLS, MS. 939, f. 2).
To this [he tells Scott], I immediately fell, tooth & nail, with most voracious appetite; and inspite of the tremendous obstructions which I every where met with from typographical errors, unsettled orthography, and obsolete terms, I have, by mere dint of perseverance, made my way through the greater part of the Collection."

As a result of this, he became convinced of the close relationship existing between the Scots and Scandinavian ballads and was able to assure Scott that

so striking, in their structure, manner, and even phraseology, is the resemblance between the Old Danish & Old Scottish Ballads, that I have not now the least doubt but yt. many of our popular ditties have been virum volantes per ora in the North of England and the South of Scotland ever since the Danes were in possession of Northumberland. This it certainly was very much in the way of the Translitter & Commentator of Malher’s Northern Antiquities (Dr. Percy) to have remarked; yet I do not recollect that he has done it. I have been particularly struck with innumerable idioms & even particular expressions & combinations of words which are to be met with no where else but in the Kempe Viser, & in our Ballads of the North Countries.

The deductions which he drew from this discovery were embodied in a long letter to Scott which is printed in vol. II of his collection, along with translations of four of the Danish ballads.

In spite of the stimulus of this discovery, and notwithstanding the facilities offered by Riga for further research in this hitherto unexplored field, Jamieson continued to pine for home and his letters to Scott become increasingly querulous and self-pitying in tone:

If I had leisure, I would chide you severely for neglecting me so sadly, as I have just read a letter from London thro’ the medium which I pointed [out] to you, and was sorely disappointed to find that there was none from you. . . . I’m glad to learn from Will. Smyth . . . that you have lately published a long Poem on the Battle of Flodden, which he says has met with much well-deserved applause. I wish much to see it; but I hope it is probable that I shall come to it before it can come to me.—But when I come among you, I shall feel as if I had dropped from the clouds—a stranger in my country; without house, home, money or means; hopeless and therefore almost helpless; for although I have scraped together some little acquired knowledge of one kind or another, and by conducting a Magazine, writing for a Review, publishing a half-yearly volume of a Northern Miscellany of Dissertations & Translations in prose & verse, translating from the German, Danish, Swedish, French, Italian, &c. &c. I might

in good times earn a decent subsistence; the very idea of the
 precariousness of my success, & above all, of my being that
 most miserab'e of all slaves, a Bookseller's Hack, wd. paralyse
 both my hand and my head, and produce the very evils which
 I apprehended. If I had any respectable employment, requiring
 no more than four or five hours a-day with a salary that wd.
 secure me and those who depend upon me from want, I could
 then go on cheerfully with my literary labours, and might in
 time not only better my circumstances, but, in my little way,
 get myself something like a name among the sons of my
 people."

He goes on to speak of the various possibilities open to him. Teaching
he dismisses, since

in Scotland, a spirit of Independence, such as a liberal education
& generous habits of thinking are likely to produce, would be
the most ruinous spirit by which a poor teacher could possibly
be influenced; and from my long residence in England, I should
probably be less disposed to humour the caprice of unreasonable
parents than I might otherwise have been.

A Chair in Greek or Belles Lettres in Aberdeen (his own university)
would, he thinks, be

a good thing; but these places are generally pre-engaged for the
sons or nephews of the professors, who serve a kind of ap-
prenticeship to the trade by assisting the Incumbents. This is
all as it should be; but it is against me.

Coming down to a rather lower level of employment, he would not
object to

make out a Catalogue Raisonne of the Advocates Library, or
undertake any literary job in my way for Mr. Constable, which
I may do with the more advantage, if the third Volume of my
Ballads should chance to attract some notice, & give people some
confidence in my learning & ingenuity which I have hitherto
had no opportunity of shewing.

Jamieson was to spend four years in Riga; but none of the ambitious
schemes which he conceived there, least of all this projected third
volume of his Ballads which might have done so much for him, ever
saw the light of day, in spite of all the opportunities he had for research.
The same year he wrote to Constable

I have now by me, fairly transcribed for the press, nearly thirty
romantic ballads, etc., translated from the Icelandic, Danish,
Swedish, and German, all of them curious, and all of them, so
far as I know, perfectly new, in any form or language whatev-
er, to my countrymen. These, with the notes, etc. (which I

hope will do me some credit, as they have cost me much pains), and glossary, will make a third volume, larger than those already published. . . . I have in meditation to translate for you a very entertaining and interesting work in four duodecimo volumes, of travels among the Calmucks; and as the author is a clergyman in Livonia, I shall procure such notes, drawings, etc., as will make the translation more valuable than the original, and will secure the property of it to the bookseller as certainly as if it were an original work. I'll bring it with me, and we must get rich and fat upon it.16

His general tone, however, is more despondent:

I have hitherto avoided saying anything about my Ballads, because the subject is so disagreeable. My very heart sinks within me when I think of the character of shallow prating bun- dering blockhead which they must procure me. That I am not so bad as I shall be thought, my sense of my demerits is certainly some evidence.16

If Jamieson had been less oppressed by his troubles, less conscious of his demerits and less nervously sensitive to criticism, there can be no doubt that he had it in his power to produce work which might have made a considerable difference to his chances of finding employment at home. But none of the material which he collected in Riga was used until part of it appeared in his contribution to Northern Antiquities in 1814. There is no evidence that Constable would have been unwilling to risk either a third volume or a second edition of Popular Ballads; indeed, Scott told Jamieson in a letter of 16th December 1806 that the first two volumes had been well received by the public and that Constable was pleased with the sale. But despite his reports of continuous literary and linguistic activity throughout his years abroad there is no sign that he ever managed to overcome his morbid shrinkings to the point of actually putting pen to paper with a view to publication.

His friends, however, were not idle, and as early as 1806 Scott was able to tell him of a possibility of employment in Edinburgh, where he particularly desired to be.

I wish with all my heart you were safe in Scotland [he wrote]. Mr. Thomson, who has been lately named deputy of the Lord Register, has great occasion of assistance from some person as well acquainted as you are with old hands and Scottish antiquities. He is a noble-minded fellow, and would strain a point to make your situation comfortable, if you would think of assisting him in his department, which is the Ancient Records

15. T. Constable, Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondents (Edinburgh, 1873), I, 513-16.
and Diplomata of Scotland. I suppose that, as this sort of labour is very well paid, you might be sure of from £150 to £200 a year to begin with, & every effort would be made to place you on a more permanent footing. When I say £150 or £200, I mean that as this is a kind of piece-work, Mr. Thomson would put it in your power to execute work to that amount. You could easily combine this labour with that of teaching a scholar or two, if you were so disposed. We would, of course, keep the Library in our eye, as it must open one day. In short, you would be on the spot; & although my friends are not at present in power—so that, like Noodle in Tom Thumb, I am on the side of the malcontents,—yet things may turn round again, when I will have some chance of being listened to. I am sensible this is a very small thing, but it gives you a footing in your native country, and connects you with a most admirable man, whom I am sure you would have every reason to be pleased with."

This proposal was made in 1806, but it was not until 1809 that Jamieson took advantage of the offer and returned to Edinburgh. The reasons for his delay are not easy to understand, since he had frequently stated his desire to come home on any terms, and had spoken of possibilities much less advantageous than this. His own friends were in no doubt that this was the sort of opening for which he was particularly suited.

I should think Jamieson would do extremely well & be very happy himself in the situation you mention [wrote William Smyth to Scott]. His Industry is very great and I mentioned him, for the Library at Liverpool but the salary was not sufficient—a Library is the exact place I have always wished him in—He seems to me to have no great Taste for great subjects—Metaphysics—Politics—Moral.s—but Belles Lettres Antiquities—History—Manuscripts—Biography—He would be quite equal to & be a Treasure to you, I am satisfied—naturally He is I think kind hearted obliging & friendly—and very honourable—there is no Man I wd. sooner have put in Authority over me—but He is irritable & jealous & touchy—being however, when I knew him, only an Usher at Macclesfield School, it was natural enough for him to be so, poor Man—and I am stating the Observations of others full as much as my own with respect to these Points.

I have no Doubt that He would be very polite & attentive in the Discharge of his Office & I most heartily wish h.m. possessed of it."

The wording of this letter is slightly ambiguous, since it could easily be read to imply that the post which Scott had found for Jamieson was in a Library. If this is what Smyth understood, however, it can

only mean that he had misread Scott’s letter (now lost) which may have been couched in much the same terms as his subsequent letter to Jamieson of 16th December 1806, already quoted: “We would, of course, keep the Library in our eye, as it must open one day.” This was, of course, a reference to the post on which Jamieson had preeminently set his heart, the Keepership of the Advocates’ Library; and the only possible explanation for Jamieson’s not instantly taking advantage of the offer of employment at the Register House is that he was reluctant to accept anything less than this. His first recorded reference to it occurs in the letter he wrote to Scott soon after his arrival in Riga, on 10th November 1805:

Do, my dear Sir, as soon as you find that I have acquired a respectable knowledge of the Danish, Swedish, Islandic & German Languages, try to persuade the Bonny Duchess, or some other of my able and well-disposed Country folks, to procure me some situation in the Customs, or something of that kind in Scotland, that may afford me parrich & Sowens and a little leisure among you, although an ald sang is the most that I can promise them in return—Or get the gude Earl of Buchan, & Lord Woodhouselee, or whom else you can, to endeavour with you to persuade the present Librarian of your Adv. Lib. of the incompatibility of such a trust with his other avocations, and that he ought, pro homo publico, either to die, or resign his charge, and make way for one who has a most ardent desire, not to injure him, but to sing for the amusement of his countrymen, somewhat at his ease: This request, so far as I am concerned, will be so extremely modest & reasonable, that I do not see with what face the Gentleman can make any objection to it!  

Scott presumably replied equally lightheartedly, proposing at the same time that there might be employment for him in making out a Catalogue Raisonné of the Library; but in his letter of 9th May 1806, Jamieson replies:

As to the Cat. Rais. of the Adv. Lib. I should be very glad to undertake it, if circumstances wd. admit: but at present, till I be more master of the German, &c. I should not like to quit Riga for any thing that were not permanent. But if (what is not likely) the Librarian’s place should become vacant, I hope you’ll not forget to recommend me as a Librarian who might perform that task in Virtue of his office.—The Adv. Lib. wd. be just the thing for me. As I believe constant attendance is not required, I might during the vacations make little excursions on a highland poney into the highlands, & even to Ireland, where my Runic lore might enable me to do something towards ascertaining how far the language, manners, superstitions, &c. of the Highlanders have been influenced by their subjection to, & intercourse

with, the Danes & other Nor-men. My knowledge of the Gaelic would much facilitate my investigations in that respect; and the highlanders wd. trust me with a confidence which an Englishman, or even a Lowid. Scotsman that were not acquainted with their language, could not expect to meet with.—But the Duchess of Gordon might, if so disposed, get me provided for in many ways that wd. admit of all this—as a collector of the Customs in Lochaber, Badenoch, Inverness, &c.—as a Barrack-master in some of the Ports—although I frankly confess that, with all my Celtic enthusiasm, I should account myself very unfortunate to be rooted to a bleak hill, never to thrive in the highlands. Such a country is pleasant enough for a visit, but dreadful as a residence, for a man who has no landed property in it, & who has known a better."

In short, the inference is inescapable that although Jamieson was not backward in proposing various kinds of employment which he might be prevailed upon to consider, he was not, at this point, really interested in anything less than his real goal, the Keepership. It is to this exchange, therefore, that Scott refers when he assures him that acceptance of Thomson’s offer would not preclude their keeping "the Library in their eye". In spite of this, it was three years before Jamieson became resigned to the fact that there was no probability of a vacancy at the Advocates’ Library and returned home to take up the place at the Register House, faute de mieux. He could have returned earlier if he had wished. Smyth, one of the friends with whom he was on the most intimate and confidential terms, was clearly at a loss to know why he had not done so:

... the place You mention will surely be every thing that could be wished for our fd. [he wrote to Scott]—and I hope You have Care notwithstanding my omission of writing to You, to notify to him the situation that thro’ the Fd.ship of Mr Thomson to You, with the Assistance of yr. own to him, may be ready for him, as soon as He can with Propriety turn fr. his present Engagements—this I shd. think He cd. do very soon—the Engagement having been I understand for a Term of two Years."

In fact, as we have seen, Scott had told Jamieson of the opening in December 1806, by which date Jamieson had already fulfilled over a year of his engagement, and when Smyth wrote this letter in February 1807, there was still no word of Jamieson’s intended return. A year later, in June 1808, he is clearly so far from thinking of taking up Thomson’s offer that he speaks of the other various sorts of employment open to him (see above), adding, "If no other person has undertaken

20. NLS, MS. 3875, f. 190.

the task, I may make out a Catalogue Raisonné of the Advocates Library . . .", a possibility which he had earlier rejected. If the unlikely possibility that Scott's letter of December 1806 went astray be excluded, it can only be supposed that Jamieson did not return at the end of 1807 (the earliest date, according to William Smyth, at which he could be released from his contract with the Mitchells) either because he did not consider the post at the Register House worth returning for or because he was still hoping for the Keepership of the Advocates' Library.22 In fact, there is no mention of his return until he announced his arrival in Britain in September 1809; and it is possible that it may ultimately have been prompted rather by political considerations than by his desire to take advantage of the opening which had been offered to him.23

Whatever may have been Jamieson's motives for delaying so long his return to Britain, he did in fact arrive, as we have seen, in September 1809 and wrote to Scott from London to announce his arrival. Scott in turn wrote to Thomson:

I had yesterday a letter from Robert Jamieson who is at length arrived in London. I answered in course that I had every hope you still required his assistance & indeed from anything I have seen or heard he is the very man for the records sedulous anxious sober and skillful. His temper is somewhat querulous but one cannot have everything even in the Register Office besides he will be under your absolute controul & dismissable at pleasure. I own myself much interested in this 'wandering knight so fair' & hope you can open a corner for him. If he is what I believe him he will be of very great use to you indeed & supercede much personal trouble . . . Will you let me know whether you still have room for Jamieson & to what extent a peu prés you think he may be able to realize Guerdon or remuneration. I think you said about £200 a year might be earned by such a person.

22. Even if he had not received Scott's letter, he must have heard of the possibility through William Smyth, with whom he was also corresponding and who could hardly have failed to mention it.

23. In the first letter written by Jamieson to G. J. Thorkelin after his return to Scotland (Edinburgh University Library, Laing III. 379, no. 468), he tells him that he lost all his books on his return to Britain. This could, of course, have been due to an ordinary accident at sea; but it could also imply that he had had to abandon them when he left Riga in a hurry. War broke out between Sweden and Russia over the Russian annexation of Finland in 1808, and since Livonia was Russian territory and Britain, who had important trading links with Sweden, sent forces to her help, British residents in Riga may have felt it wiser to leave. In the absence of any conclusive evidence, however, this must remain pure conjecture.
I also wish to know when he should come down; if your general proposals are likely I suppose the sooner the better.\textsuperscript{24}

In view of the correspondence which had passed between Scott and Jamieson during the past four years, Scott can hardly be blamed for referring to his somewhat difficult protegé in this rather guarded way, nor should the rather grating phrase, “dismissible at pleasure” blind one to the fact that, but for Scott’s efforts, Jamieson might have been left to languish in Riga for the rest of his life. Thomson presumably replied to Scott’s letter in satisfactory terms, and Jamieson was in due course installed at the Register House. Until 1818, he seems to have been reasonably contented there. His correspondence with Scott, though naturally not as voluminous as when he was exiled in a foreign country, still continued, as did Scott’s usefulness to him. The first work he produced after his return to Edinburgh was his contribution to \textit{Northern Antiquities},\textsuperscript{25} a large miscellaneous volume which he edited together with another protegé of Scott’s, Henry Weber. In Jamieson’s part of this work are to be found many of the Danish translations which he had made from the \textit{Kampe Viser} while he was in Riga, and also versions of some Latvian folk-songs from which it may be inferred that he had acquired a certain knowledge of this language also during his residence in that country.\textsuperscript{26} Scott also contributed to this work an abstract of \textit{Eyrbyggja Saga}, and his motives for supporting the work are described in a letter to the Cornish antiquary, Richard Polwhele, in a letter of 30th December 1810:

\begin{flushright}
In short, our plan is entirely miscellaneous, and embraces anything curious that is allied to the study of history, or more particularly to that of poetry. This is our plan, my good friend, and if you have any thing lying by you which you would intrust to this motley caravan, we will be much honoured. But I hope
\end{flushright}


26. The existence in the British Museum of a manuscript collection of Latvian folklore, translated into German, the bulk of which is probably in Jamieson’s writing, has been taken as proof that he was himself the translator of this collection. The title-page of this collection, however, makes it quite clear that it was made on Jamieson’s behalf by his friend, the clergyman Gustav Bergmann, who would have had no difficulty in translating from Latvian to German, and it is likely that in this instance, Jamieson acted only as copyist. (B. M. Add. MS. 17,519). This is not to deny the possibility that Jamieson did learn the language; his linguistic gifts seem to have been extraordinary, and he was later described by the Icelander, T. G. Repp, as “a gentleman who, in knowledge of northern tongues, probably has no equal in the British empire.”
soon to send you the first volume, when you will judge how far we deserve your countenance. I will take care you have it so soon as published, and perhaps you may like to review it for the Quarterly. I have little share in it, excepting my wish to promote the interest of the prime conductors, whose knowledge is rather more extensive than their financial resources."

At this stage it would seem that the editors envisaged *Northern Antiquities* as a periodical publication; but by the time it appeared in 1814, this idea had been abandoned, perhaps in consequence of Weber's insanity, and only one large volume ever appeared. Scott did all in his power to promote the work, sending copies of it to various friends, at home and abroad, and praising the learning and resource of the editors. Similarly, in 1817 he passed on to Jamieson a commission from the publishers, Gaine and Fenner, to produce a new edition of Edward Burt's *Letters from the North*, which he felt unable to undertake himself, and gave him some manuscript material in his possession to add to the interest of the work. He also seems to have borne with exemplary patience the not unmixed blessing of Jamieson's continued correspondence, andJamieson, with his touchiness and his determined inferiority complex, could undoubtedly be very trying.

If "Ribold & Guldberg" will be acceptable, & can find a place at a Ballad, in the Poetical department of the Register, I'll transcribe it—If that department is already filled, so much the better for the readers of the work, who would not fail to wonder at finding me in company so much above the sphere already assigned to me;"

he wrote in one undated letter. In another, we find him kindly and officiously offering Scott's assistance to Wilhelm Grimm in Cassel:

From some mistakes in translating the Scottish . . . I think he will be the better of some hints from this Country, and as he deserves them, I am thinking of writing to him via Hamburg, and offering him my services, and yours—if you permit me. . . . I am sure he will be very glad of any original communications from this country, as they will add much to the confidence with which his work will be received in Germany. We can send him different copies of things already printed; solve difficulties; and give him many little hints which will be of infinite use to a foreigner, and enable him to proceed with a confidence in his resources which will give him many advantages."

29. NLS, MS. 3878, f. 246.
Since Grimm had already written direct to Scott to ask permission to correspond with him occasionally on matters of mutual interest, Jamieson's interference on this occasion must have been irritating.

In the meantime, the matter of the Keepership of the Advocates' Library was at last beginning to be agitated in the Faculty. At this time the post was held, to the increasing dissatisfaction of the Advocates, by Alexander Manners, and as early as 1815 there is evidence of complaints having been made by members of the Faculty about the running of the Library. These were crystallised by a special meeting of the Curators which was called to consider a motion by Samuel Sterling that an investigation should be made into the hours of opening of the Library, and the attendance of the Librarian and his staff; and this culminated in the resignation of Manners from the Keepership on grounds of health.

In fact, this motion of censure did not necessarily reflect discredit on Manners. During the years which had passed since the passing of the Copyright Act in 1709, the volume of work which devolved on the Librarian and his staff had increased to proportions which made it impossible that that staff should be able to deal efficiently with it. There was a vast backlog of uncatalogued acquisitions; members of the Faculty were aware that many publications to which, under the Act, they were entitled, were eluding them, owing to the unsatisfactory arrangements existing between the booksellers and the copyright libraries; the building in which the Library was housed had not unnaturally become quite inadequate to accommodate the greatly increased size of the collection; and the advocates were indignant that Manners' casual attendance at the Library closed it to them for many hours of the day and were becoming uneasily aware that the alteration in the library's status from a private to a national collection called for a corresponding reappraisal of the qualifications and experience of the man who administered it. They were well aware that a state of crisis existed in the Library; as the Library Committee itself summarized the matter, that

the Library ... is computed to consist of about 80,000 printed works and volumes; and 1000 or 1100 vols. in Manuscript, embracing several thousand articles: That considerable disorder prevails: But that [a new Librarian] is expected to render the whole accessible by a complete and accurate survey and to render the Library more useful by the formation of a systematic catalogue of its contents. That the facilities afforded for such a survey and systematic catalogue, by previous operations, consist principally of a printed alphabetical catalogue, according to the names of Authors, closing in 1807, and comprehending about three fourths of the Library; and a Manuscript Catalogue compre-
hending the acquisitions of the Library between 1807 and 1816, under similar arrangement: also a later catalogue of the progressive acquisitions, but neither so complete nor so minutely arranged; for, by a deviation from all former practice, even under the most unfavourable circumstances, no correct catalogues have been made for some time of the works purchased by the Faculty.  

Manners had been appointed to his post, as had all his predecessors, on terms which had been formulated at the Library's foundation; the place was regarded as a genteel and tolerably easy-going sinecure, suited to literary men of small means, such as Thomas Ruddiman and David Hume had been during their incumbencies. Manners had been paid a salary of £100 a year and had indeed, as Mr. John A. Murray pointed out at a Committee meeting, officiated for several years without any salary at all. This style of appointment had no doubt been suited to the Library's needs when it was first founded in the 1680s under the aegis of Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh as a good general library, such as that described by Scott in the person of Advocate Pleydell: a collection containing "the best editions of the best authors. 'These,' said Pleydell, 'are my tools of trade. A lawyer without history or literature is a mechanic, a mere walking mason; if he possesses some knowledge of these, he may call himself an architect.' " It was only after this liberal foundation had become the copyright library of Scotland that it became gradually clear that the previous terms of appointment were no longer sufficient to maintain order and guarantee accessibility.

As early as 1815, therefore, dissatisfaction with the running of the Library was rife in the Faculty of Advocates, and Jamieson, with the hopes and ambitions which we have already noted, waited on tenterhooks for the first definite move. In November 1815, Scott, writing to another indigent protegé, a Mr. James Bailey of Trinity College, Cambridge, tells him:

There is likely one day soon to be an opening for a librarian in the Advocates Library here and I believe our body will proceed as far as they can on the principle of Detur digniori. A friend of mine whose wishes I am much inclined to favour has had views on the situation which I think will not be effectual. But at any rate there can be no impropriety in your keeping the matter in your view. The collection is a most princely one and we talk of making the emolument £300 or £400. Close attendance is however required in the morning. The worst is that the place is not vacant as yet though soon expected to be so.  

31. Minutes of the Faculty of Advocates.
32. Guy Mannering, chapt. xxxvii.
33. Letters, IV, 140.
In February 1817, he wrote again to Bailey on the same subject:

Before any new Librarian can be appointed to the Faculty of Advocates the present incumbent must be somehow provided for. This renders the probability of a vacancy there precarious & I think I mentioned to you that if a certain friend of mine stood for the office as I hope & believe he will not I reckoned myself engaged to do what I could on his behalf. There is indeed but little in my power for I have been long retired from the bar and have but few connections with the faculty. I think the election will or ought to turn very much on the literary pretensions which can be brought by each candidate which will of course be judged of better than from the certificates of those qualified to pronounce of such attainments.  

These letters have several points of interest. In the first place, they reveal that Scott hoped that Jamieson would not present himself as a candidate for the post if it became vacant, and clearly felt that his chances of success would not be great if he did. Secondly, they indicate that he was nonetheless prepared to stand by his word and support his application if necessary; and, as a Curator of the Library since 1795, he must be presumed to have had some influence and probably rather more than he implied in his second letter to Bailey. Finally, they make it clear that, long before any hint of such decisions appears in the Advocates' Minute Book, and although he was not a member of the Library Committee, he had a pretty fair idea of the changes that were to be made in the conditions of employment attached to the post.

These changes were indeed to be considerable. Manners, as we have seen, presented his first resignation in February 1818, on the understanding that he was to be assured of a pension of £100 a year (i.e., the amount of his present salary). This was considered at a meeting at which it so happened that a quorum of two-thirds of the members (the minimum required to pass any financial resolution) was not present, and the pension was consequently not agreed. It was therefore reported to the Advocates, that, since this pledge of an annuity had not been kept, Manners' resignation was no longer before the Faculty. On the 10th March, a resolution was unanimously passed that, if Manners should resign again, an annuity of £100 should be paid to him; the resignation was immediately presented for a second time by Mr. John Hope, and accepted. A further proposal by Mr. Cockburn that Manners should also receive a piece of plate worth 100 guineas in recognition of his 25 years' service was also unanimously agreed. The way was therefore clear for the Advocates to consider what should be done to cleanse the Augean stables.

34. Letters, IV, 356-57.
The results of their first deliberations are recorded in a report presented by the Curators of the Library, to the following effect:

In the month of February 1818, the Curators of the Library made a communication to the Members of the Faculty, intimating their opinion that it might be of advantage to postpone the election of a Librarian till some general arrangements should be devised as to the future Establishment requisite on the opening of the new Library; at all events till it should be seen what Candidates would come forward:—recommending at the same time to the Faculty to refrain from engaging their votes to any particular Candidate, and suggesting the impropriety of all Canvassing [sic] and the expediency of every member of the Faculty reserving his vote for the person who should be found most worthy of the situation.

In postponing, for so long a period, any farther communication to the Faculty on this subject, the Curators have been influenced by several considerations. They were in the first instance, anxious that full time and opportunity should be given to those who were desirous of presenting themselves as Candidates for the office of Librarian; that in a matter of such great importance the services of persons who might be resident at a distance, or on the Continent, should not be lost to the Faculty by a precipitate decision, and that the real and comparative merits of those who were actually known to be Candidates, should be deliberately canvassed and ascertained. The Curators were further aware that an appointment such as they have had it in their view to recommend to the Faculty, would in the present state of the Library, be attended with comparatively little advantage, until the new apartments were finished & ready for the reception of books.

The decision that the election of a new Librarian was to be indefinitely postponed would no doubt soon become a matter of general knowledge; that Jamieson at least heard of it quickly is evident from his letter to Scott of 12th March 1818:

What past at the last meeting of the Advocates has considerably damped my expectations in that quarter; and if on the present occasion I fail there, I have nothing else to look forward to in Edin. and am now much too old to launch out into the World, and begin a new course of life. My canvassing in the usual way is out of the question; I am altogether unfit for it, & should therefore do more harm than good. You and Mr. Thomson are the only gentlemen of the Faculty of whom I have any knowledge; and although I have every confidence in your kindness & zeal, & should have no doubt of success, were the more respectable members only to be attended to, I fear greatly you

35. Minutes of the Faculty of Advocates: “Report by the Curators of the Library relative to the election of a Librarian.”
will have much to do. It is, however, a great satisfaction to me that such persons take an interest in what concerns me.—The buoyancy of Hope is long since extinct in me; but as this is my last stake, although I can hardly be disappointed, I shall certainly be discouraged, if I fail. Pardon, my dear Sir, this egotism—I know you will . . . .”

It will probably never be known why Scott had thought and hoped that Jamieson would not offer himself as a candidate for the post; this letter does not give any hint that his intention of trying for it had ever wavered. Yet, the previous year, in Scott’s third letter to James Bailey, he had written,

I wish I could say I saw any prospect of assisting your views here but at present there is not any opening in the Advocates Library and I fear in the first that may occur my assistance will be expected by an old friend who I was once in hopes had other & better views. I mentioned the possibility of this in my first letter to you but did not then think it probable; now it seems more likely that he will be a candidate than that the opening will occur soon."

There is no indication in any of Scott’s or Jamieson’s letters what this better opening may have been, if indeed it ever existed, and there is every reason to suppose from Jamieson’s letters that his single-minded determination to become the Advocates’ Librarian had never faltered. No one can now know whether or to what extent Scott tried to discourage him or to persuade him not to consider the election a foregone conclusion. It seems extremely likely that he did try, since it is clear that he knew that there would be formidable competition against which Jamieson, with all his undoubted ability, was likely to be at a disadvantage. In January 1820 the question of the election of the new Librarian came again before the Faculty, and in the two years which had intervened since Manners’ resignation, the Committee had been able to draw up a comprehensive list of the qualifications to be looked for in the successful candidate:

... the Curators ... are of opinion, that in addition to the advantages of a liberal education, and gentlemanlike habits and manners, he ought to be possessed of great ardour in the pursuit of those studies which are subservient to Bibliography; of habits of indefatigable industry, and of practical knowledge and experience in the arrangement & management of Great Libraries.

He was to have a previous knowledge of books in general, including

36. NLS, MS. 3889, ff. 36-37.
37. Letters, IV, 466.
38. Minutes of the Faculty of Advocates.
acquaintance with the best editions, spurious books, etc.; to be skilled in Greek, Latin and French, with, if possible, some German and Italian; to possess a sufficient knowledge of literature to be able to decide in which departments the Library was defective; to be an experienced cataloguer; and to be acquainted with such matters as manuscripts and bookbinding. It was agreed that the staff of the Library should be increased to four, consisting of the Keeper, his Deputy and two Assistant Keepers; the salary of the Keeper was fixed at £400, and the salaries of his subordinates together totalled another £400, and it was stated clearly and firmly that the Keeper's post was a full-time appointment. As far as knowledge of literature, languages and manuscripts was concerned, Jamieson was likely to be as competent as any other applicant; his zeal, diligence and activity were never in question; his age (48) fell comfortably within the limits of 25 to 60 stipulated by the Committee; but in the matter of experience in the management of great libraries he was woefully deficient, and it was this aspect which particularly concerned the Curators, faced as they were with the appalling confusion which had accumulated during the previous century, and the necessity of removing to new premises. Some of the questions put to Archibald Constable, the publisher, about another applicant by Mr. Graham Dalyley, one of the Committee members, sufficiently reveal the emphasis laid by the Advocates on professional experience:

Does he understand the formation of alphabetical or systematic catalogues these being the ground-work of the utility of a Library?

Does he understand the various kinds of bookbinding?

Has he the means of establishing a direct foreign correspondence between the Library and the Continent?

Is he well acquainted with the nature of the relations between Booksellers and the privileged Libraries[i.e. the system by which the copyright libraries were entitled to copies of books advertised by the booksellers]?

As it will prove expedient to remove not less than 50,000 volumes from their present situation, do you conceive that [he] understands the transfer and arrangement of books . . . ?

By March 1820, the Committee were so far from being satisfied with the testimonials of any of the applicants who had presented themselves, that Sir William Hamilton wrote to the Librarian of the University of Göttingen (then considered to have a model library) to offer the post to him on any conditions; but Benecke, at sixty, felt himself

39. This list of questions forms part of a collection of papers relative to the election of the Librarian made by the Advocate James Maitland, and now in the British Museum (B.M. Catalogue, 11902 L 8).
too old to start life in a foreign country, although he offered to give
two years training to any librarian appointed by the Advocates who
came to study at Göttingen. Benecke would have been a formidable
applicant if he had accepted the invitation; and Constable has recorded
that on this occasion Jamieson offered to accept a subordinate post
under him, since he could not presume to put himself forward as a
rival to him. But Benecke’s refusal of the post threw the Advocates
back upon the candidates who had already offered themselves, and the
election was finally fixed for the date already agreed, 5th June 1820.
Jamieson’s agitation mounted, and in February 1820 he wrote again
to Scott:

I had a conversation with Mr. Thomson yesterday about the
Advocates’ Library, and I suppose he has told you, or will tell
you, what he told me.—I wished to withdraw my name as a
Candidate for the Keeper’s Place, unless I had such assurance of
support from you and him, as might afford at least a probability
of success.—He dissuaded me, for reasons which he will tell
you. The names and letters of recommendation of all the can-
didates are to be laid on the table; but the Gentlemen of the
Faculty will all come there with particular impressions upon
their minds; and such recommendations will be little attended to.
For twenty years back, I have been given to understand, that if
a vacancy occurred, that place was not only the most eligible
for me, but I was also the most eligible for it. The hour of
trial now approaches. If you and Mr. Thomson still entertain
an opinion so flattering to me, which I hope I have done
nothing to forfeit, I am confident that your exertions will be
made, if opportunity offers, in the way most likely to produce
the desired effect. Your letter, if laid on the table, will be con-
founded with the common mass of recommendations; but, if
printed & circulated among the Faculty, they will be read; and
anything you may be able with a good conscience to say in my
behalf, received with respectful attention. Speaking of me in the
meantime to a few of the most respectable of your friends and
his, will have a good effect.

It is presumed that my knowledge of languages and MSS.
might be particularly useful to the gentlemen of the Faculty
in many cases.—As to my literary courtesy, and disposition to
oblige, if you cannot speak, I cannot. Have the goodness to send
this to Mr. Thomson for his consideration; ..."

Whether or not Jamieson’s testimonials were ever printed and cir-
culated among the Faculty as he suggests, we do not know. The collec-
tion of papers relating to the election made by James Maidment
(already referred to) contains copies of printed testimonials circulated
by other candidates, but none by Jamieson. This collection, if it gives

40. Letter of 2nd February 1820, NLS, MS. 672, ff. 31-32.
us no direct light on Jamieson himself, does at least make it clear how stiff the competition was for this coveted post. Practically all the other serious applicants were professional book-men;—that is, they were either booksellers, like J. G. Cochrane and David Laing, or had library experience, like Dr. Philip Bliss of Oxford, or had legal qualifications, like Dr. David Irving—a circumstance which, for a post in the Advocates' Library, could not fail to add weight. The testimonials submitted by these gentlemen make impressive reading even now and, when compared with anything which Jamieson could have mustered, make it quite clear that in this case, at least, God could not fail to be on the side of the big battalions. The only support on which Jamieson could rely was that of Scott and Thomson, and on the latter, as we shall see, he would have been well advised not to lean too heavily. Scott's loyalty to him at least was beyond question; none of the other candidates produced a testimonial from him, although many years later, after Scott's death, Laing was to claim that Scott had supported him in his application for this post. But there is no proof of this in Laing's application at the time. Scott's recommendation of Jamieson, on the other hand, has survived, although not in the Maidment Collection, and is a generous attempt to make the most of the qualifications which Jamieson did possess:

I have the most sincere pleasure in giving my testimony to your personal merit and literary qualifications, which many years' friendly intercourse has perfectly authorized me to do.

I do not pretend to be a judge of your classical attainments, but I know they have been held in high estimation by those who were fully competent to estimate them; and that they are proved, by your having held, with great approbation, an important situation in the great Seminary at Macclesfield, which has sent forth so many good scholars.

Your researches as an Antiquary have been equally extensive and profound; and I conceive few persons, if any, are now alive, possessed of such complete acquaintance with the Antiquities, Language, and Literature of the North of Europe, so intimately connected with those of Great Britain. The various works edited by you on these subjects, and particularly that entitled "Northern Antiquities," will vindicate what I have said in the eyes of every competent judge. Your late constant employment among our Records must necessarily have enlarged your knowledge of the History of Scotland, and qualified you peculiarly for the important and difficult task of superintending any of our great literary institutions. I ought to add, with reference to your present object, that your acquaintance with General bibliography always appeared to me extensive; that your knowledge of modern languages has been enlarged by foreign travel and domestic
study; and that I know no one more willing to give assistance to others, and to communicate the knowledge he has acquired. Without pretending to decide upon the claims of others, I have never had any hesitation in saying, that I thought your talents and habits perfectly qualified you for the charge of such a Library as that of the Faculty; and I am convinced you would discharge the office with credit to yourself, and advantage to that important institution.

Something, perhaps, ought to be added respecting private and personal character, on which subject I could not use too strong expressions; but shall only say, that, from the worth and honour which you have uniformly displayed during an acquaintance of nearly twenty years, I have uniformly set the highest value on the share you have allowed me in your regard, and that I am most sincerely, dear Sir, your attached friend and faithful humble servant, Walter Scott.\textsuperscript{44}

As far as Thomson is concerned, there is less evidence of activity on Jamieson’s behalf. We can only guess at what he had told Jamieson to prompt his letter to Scott of 2nd February; probably that the day of the election had been fixed. We cannot even guess why he dissuaded Jamieson from withdrawing his name as a candidate, although we may doubt whether Jamieson was serious in his threat to do so. The day of the election approached, and the eleven candidates who had been listed in January were whittled down to a short-list of four, consisting of J. G. Cochrane, proposed by Messrs. Gordon and Jardine; Dr. Irving, proposed by Sir John Connell and Mr. William Borthwick; David Laing, proposed by Mr. Cunningham; and Dr. Philip Bliss of St. John’s College, Oxford, proposed by Thomas Thomson, on whom Jamieson had relied for support. Since no absolute majority was obtained on the first count, David Laing’s name was withdrawn by his sponsor; and on the second count, Irving was elected.

It is not difficult to imagine the blow this must have been to Jamieson. He had spoken of doubts and hesitations; but only in the terms in which a man attempts to propitiate a fate which in the past has often proved unfriendly. Inwardly, it is probable that he had no doubt of a favourable issue, or that his sponsors had it in their power to procure it. Under such a shock, his sense of proportion vanished and his mind became almost unhinged. What he said to Thomson is not known; but in October 1821 he wrote a letter to Scott, the contents of which can be imagined by the response it provoked from the man who until then had been his kindest and most loyal friend:

\textit{Sir,—I received your letter which is such in tenor and expression that I can only reply to it by declining all communication with}

\textit{41. Letters, VI, 191-3.}
you in future. If you have as you pretend legal claims against me for having endeavoured to serve you the law I suppose will make them effectual & to that I refer you. For my part I know no claims you ever had upon me except those of old acquaintance and friendship from which you have very effectually released me. I am Sir Your most obedient Servt. Walter Scott.

This exchange of letters implies over a year of frenzied brooding on Jamieson’s part. No one can know whether there had been any verbal contact between Scott and Jamieson during that time, although it would seem highly improbable that Scott should not have written to Jamieson after the issue was known, to express his regret. If he did, his letter, like almost all his letters to Jamieson, has disappeared; his final letter survived through the accident of Jamieson’s returning it to him with the following covering note:

Dear Sir Walter, I am certain that you will be satisfied that I do just what I ought to do, when I return your note, and put it in your power to destroy a document which I am sure you are by this time sorry should ever have existed. Before you can burn it, I shall have ceased to think of it; and upon looking over my letter again, I cannot doubt but you will be sensible that it deserved a very different kind of answer, and that honourable men, in their transactions with one another, can never have occasion to appeal to Law. If I stated claims, I also stated the facts upon which those claims rested.—When you have coolly considered my letter, in all its bearings, you will see them in a very different light.

Scott, in the meantime, had sent Jamieson’s original letter to Thomson, a circumstance which no doubt accounts for its absence from the Scott Letter-Books. Thomson answered him as follows:

It would not be easy for me to express to you all the painful feelings which this marvellous Epistle of Mr. Jamieson has given me. To say the least of it, it is the production of a very diseased mind, on which mortified vanity, and some temporary difficulties in finances have been acting with a frightful effect. I have done all in my power to alleviate the latter, & when I receive certain remittances from the Treasury which have been expected for many months past, I shall be able to pay him up all his arrears, which now amount to a considerable sum. Th’s, I daresay will do more than anything else to lay the foul fiend and to bring the patient to his senses & recollections. Of course, I cannot forget the footing on which at the first, you kindly interposed to procure for him his present employment; & nothing can be more absolutely monstrous than his present imaginary claims on your justice. I do not believe he will publish any

42. Letters, VII, 28.
43. Letter of 29th October 1821, NLS, MS. 3893, f. 135.
thing on the subject. If he does the consequences must be mischievous to himself & to no one else. With all my disgust at his present conduct, I cannot help being sorry for him—but he must beware of indulging his spleen to the injury of those who have been his friends—and I rather think he has sense enough not to do so.—Your answer to his letter was the only one that could with propriety be made."

Some of the background referred to in this rather distasteful letter may go some way to explain Jamieson’s almost hysterical reaction to his disappointment. Thomson, in many ways an admirable Deputy Clerk Register, was in one respect so extraordinarily inefficient that he was eventually removed from his post. His management of the Register House finances was always muddled, and his inability to distinguish between his personal and his official expenditure finally led to his bankruptcy, a situation in which he behaved himself most honourably. There can be no difficulty in understanding Jamieson’s desperation in a situation in which it was probably a matter of course that his arrears of pay amounted “to a considerable sum.” He had, after all, no other source of revenue to depend upon, and he must have looked forward to his release from so embarrassing a position with the utmost anxiety.

He remained, however, at the Register House, probably because he had nowhere else to go, until about a year before his death, which occurred in 1844. In all this period of twenty-two years, there seems to be no evidence of any kind as to his activities or his state of mind. In letters written to Thorkelin in 1823 and 1825, he does not refer to the quarrel, but his correspondence with Thorkelin also ends here, on account of the latter’s failing health and subsequent death. One last reference to him is to be found in Scott’s letters, in December 1829 when Scott was himself broken in health and struggling against his immense load of debt:

By the way we must think of the Glossary [of the Bannatyne Bock, he wrote to Cadell]. I cannot think of any so fit as Robert Jamieson if he likes to do it & you can make it agreeable to him. He quarrelled with me unnecessarily & foolishly as I think but it has no effect on my opinion of him as a learned and able man or [my wish] to do him service if it was in my power."

Whether or not Jamieson was offered and accepted this piece of work

44. Letter of 30th October 1821, NLS, MS. 3893, ff. 141-42.
45. Edinburgh University Library, Laing III.379, nos. 471e and 471f.
46. Letters, XI, 268; this letter has been dated by Grierson 3rd December 1829.
we do not know, but it is certain that he produced no further work under his own name. Nichols records that

through the kindness of Mr. Hawkins, of the British Museum, and Mr. Blevitt, secretary of the Literary Fund, Mr. Robert Jamieson was nominated by Prince Albert to be one of the Poor Brethren of the Charter House. He came from Scot'and about 1843, and died at the Charter House September 4, 1844. 47

This is not the place for an evaluation of Jamieson's services to the comparative study of the ballad, although his contribution to this field of literature has been grossly undervalued and a proper study of his work is now much overdue. This account of his relationship with one of his best and earliest friends is offered in the hope that it may produce further information about his life or character, and stimulate interest in one of the more unfortunate waifs of literary history.

London

47. Nichols, Illustrations of Literature, VIII, 669.