

penetrate even the Highlands—a rare thing in those days,—and repeated visits made him familiar not merely with the beautiful scenery, but with the remnants of picturesque and primitive manners and customs. As he grew to maturity, he mingled freely with the world and became intimate with a brilliant circle of young men of his own age. In 1792 he was called to the bar; and—an event, perhaps, of not much less import in his life—in the same year made his first expedition into Liddesdale, one of the most inaccessible parts of the Border country. “During seven successive years Scott made a raid, as he called it, into Liddesdale, with Mr. Shortreed for his guide, exploring every rivulet to its source, and every ruined *peel* from foundation to battlement. At this time no wheeled carriage had ever been seen in the district—the first, indeed, that ever appeared there was a gig, driven by Scott himself for a part of his way, when on the last of these seven excursions. There was no inn nor public-house of any kind in the whole valley; the travellers passed from the shepherd’s hut to the minister’s manse, and again from the cheerful hospitality of the manse to the rough and jolly welcome of the homestead, gathering wherever they went songs and tunes, and occasionally some tangible relics of antiquity. . . . To these rambles Scott owed much of the materials of his ‘Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,’ and not less of that intimate acquaintance with the living manners of these unsophisticated regions, which constitutes the chief charm of one of the most charming of his prose works.” (*Lockhart’s Life*.) He began to study German; the results are shown in the translation from that language of some romantic ballads, and of Goethe’s *Goetz von Berlichingen*, a dramatic picture of mediæval baronial life on the Rhine. These were his first published ventures in literature.

In 1797 Scott married, and this made the successful prosecution of his profession a matter of greater importance than before; but his heart was not in his barrister work, and his income from it was neither large nor likely to increase greatly. At the close of 1799, he gladly accepted the office of sheriff-depute of Selkirkshire, which was obtained for him by the influence of the head of his clan, the Duke of Buccleuch. This post not only brought a small but assured income of £300 with very light duties, but also, what Scott prized greatly, gave him another connection with the Borders. He now threw himself enthusiastically into the preparation of a collection of border ballads. Two volumes appeared in 1802, and were well received. While engaged upon the third volume, he began an imitation of an old ballad romance—a work which proved so congenial to him that it developed into a long poem,