The Chronology of the Waverley Novels.

THERE is no writer of fiction who has spread his works over so large a period of time as Sir Walter Scott. The plots of his stories are laid in sixteen different reigns. Beginning with William II., and ending with George III., the total time occupied is from 1090 to 1800, say 710 years. The twenty-seven Waverley novels arranged chronologically would fall into the following order :—

William II.	...	Count Robert of Paris.
Henry II.	...	The Betrothed.
Richard I.	...	The Talisman.
do.	...	Ivanhoe.
Edward I.	...	Castle Dangerous.
Henry IV.	...	The Fair Maid of Perth.
Edward IV.	...	Quentin Durward.
do.	...	Ann of Geierstein.
Elizabeth	...	The Monastery.
do.	...	The Abbot.
do.	...	Kenilworth.
James I.	...	Fortunes of Nigel.
Charles I.	...	A Legend of Montrose.
Cromwell	...	Woodstock.
Charles II.	...	Peveril of the Peak.
do.	...	Old Mortality.
William III.	...	The Bride of Lammermoor.
do.	...	The Pirate.
Anne	...	The Black Dwarf.
George I.	...	Rob Roy.
George II.	...	The Heart of Midlothian.
do.	...	Waverley.
do.	...	The Surgeon's Daughter.
George III.	...	Guy Mannering.
do.	...	Red Gauntlet.
do.	...	The Antiquary.
do.	...	St. Ronan's Well.

Some of them are not historical novels. Some that are historical deal slightly or not at all with English history; *Quentin Durward* and *Ann of Geierstein*, for instance, are almost entirely continental. But taking them altogether, we may say that those who are well up in Scott, other things being equal, will pass an English history examination far more brilliantly than those who know nothing of him. The *Waverley* novels give the perspective of the different periods, and surround the events with their appropriate scenery. In presence of such excellence, if one might dare to criticize, we might whisper that the beginning of *Waverley* is heavy reading, especially for boys; and that it is a long while before *Peveril of the Peak* becomes interesting. In *Guy Mannering*, the letters of Julia to her silly friend are a nuisance, as also the idea kept going in *Rob Roy* that Frank Osbaldistone is writing to his friend, Will Tresham. *Ivanhoe* should not have a sentence omitted. *Kenilworth* begins splendidly with a conversational scene at an inn. *The Betrothed* is a short story that takes a long time in the telling, and does not give the vivid impression of old times that Sir Walter's other stories convey. Alice in *Wonderland* speaks on behalf of a very large class of readers when she asks, "What is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?" At any rate she is right as to conversations. The conversations may not all be brilliant, but somehow, there is a hopeful element in them; the dead level of narrative or description frightens us if it extends over many pages.

All peddling criticism aside, the *Waverley* novels are a priceless boon, and the education of the man, woman, or child who has not read them is incomplete.

JOHN FOSTER.