

JOHN LORD

BEACON LIGHTS OF
HISTORY, VOLUME 13:
GREAT WRITERS

John Lord

**Beacon Lights of History,
Volume 13: Great Writers**

«Public Domain»

Lord J.

Beacon Lights of History, Volume 13: Great Writers / J. Lord —
«Public Domain»,

Содержание

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE	5
JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU	6
SIR WALTER SCOTT	18
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	39

John Lord
Beacon Lights of History, Volume 13: Great
Writers / Dr Lord's Uncompleted Plan,
Supplemented with Essays by Emerson,
Macaulay, Hedge, and Mercer Adam

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

This being the last possible volume in the series of "Beacon Lights of History" from the pen of Dr. Lord, its readers will be interested to know that it contains all the lectures that he had completed (although not all that he had projected) for his review of certain of the chief Men of Letters. Lectures on other topics were found among his papers, but none that would perfectly fit into this scheme; and it was thought best not to attempt any collection of his material which he himself had not deemed worthy or appropriate for use in this series, which embodies the best of his life's work,—all of his books and his lectures that he wished to have preserved. For instance, "The Old Roman World," enlarged in scope and rewritten, is included in the volumes on "Old Pagan Civilizations," "Ancient Achievements," and "Imperial Antiquity;" much of his "Modern Europe" reappears in "Great Rulers," "Modern European Statesmen," and "European National Leaders," etc.

The consideration of "Great Writers" was reserved by Dr. Lord for his final task,—a task interrupted by death and left unfinished. In order to round out and complete this volume, recourse has been had to some other masters in literary art, whose productions are added to Dr. Lord's final writings.

In the present volume, therefore, are included the paper on "Shakspeare" by Emerson, reprinted from his "Representative Men" by permission of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., the authorized publishers of Emerson's works; the famous essay on "Milton" by Macaulay; the principal portion—biographical and generally critical—of the article on "Goethe," from "Hours with the German Classics," by the late Dr. Frederic H. Hedge, by permission of Messrs. Little, Brown & Co., the publishers of that work; and a chapter on "Tennyson: the Spirit of Modern Poetry," by G. Mercer Adam.

A certain advantage may accrue to the reader in finding these masters side by side for comparison and for gauging Dr. Lord's unique life-work by recognized standards, keeping well in view the purpose no less than the perfection of these literary performances, all of which, like those of Dr. Lord, were aimed at setting forth the services of *selected forces* in the world's life.

NEW YORK, September 15, 1902.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

1712-1778

SOCIALISM AND EDUCATION

Two great political writers in the eighteenth century, of antagonistic views, but both original and earnest, have materially affected the whole science of government, and even of social life, from their day to ours, and in their influence really belong to the nineteenth century. One was the apostle of radicalism; the other of conservatism. The one, more than any other single man, stimulated, though unwittingly, the French Revolution; the other opposed that mad outburst with equal eloquence, and caused in Europe a reaction from revolutionary principles. While one is far better known to-day than the other, to the thoughtful both are exponents and representatives of conflicting political and social questions which agitate this age.

These men were Jean Jacques Rousseau and Edmund Burke,—one Swiss, and the other English. Burke I have already treated of in a former volume. His name is no longer a power, but his influence endures in all the grand reforms of which he was a part, and for which his generation in England is praised; while his writings remain a treasure-house of political and moral wisdom, sure to be drawn upon during every public discussion of governmental principles. Rousseau, although a writer of a hundred years ago, seems to me a fit representative of political, social, and educational ideas in the present day, because his theories are still potent, and even in this scientific age more widely diffused than ever before. Not without reason, it is true, for he embodied certain germinant ideas in a fascinating literary style; but it is hard to understand how so weak a man could have exercised such far-reaching influence.

Himself a genuine and passionate lover of Nature; recognizing in his principles of conduct no duties that could conflict with personal inclinations; born in democratic and freedom-loving Switzerland, and early imbued through his reading of German and English writers with ideas of liberty,—which in those conservative lands were wholesome,—he distilled these ideas into charming literary creations that were eagerly read by the restless minds of France and wrought in them political frenzy. The reforms he projected grew out of his theories of the "rights" of man, without reference to the duties that limit those rights; and his appeal for their support to men's passions and selfish instincts and to a sentimental philosophy, in an age of irreligion and immorality, aroused a political tempest which he little contemplated.

In an age so infidel and brilliant as that which preceded the French Revolution, the writings of Rousseau had a peculiar charm, and produced a great effect even on men who despised his character and ignored his mission. He engendered the Robespierres and Condorcets of the Revolution,—those sentimental murderers, who under the guise of philosophy attacked the fundamental principles of justice and destroyed the very rights which they invoked.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was born at Geneva in the year 1712, when Voltaire was first rising into notice. He belonged to the plebeian ranks, being the son of a watchmaker; was sickly, miserable, and morbid from a child; was poorly educated, but a great devourer of novels (which his father—sentimental as he—read with him), poetry, and gushing biographies; although a little later he became, with impartial facility, equally delighted with the sturdy Plutarch. His nature was passionate and inconstant, his sensibilities morbidly acute, and his imagination lively. He hated all rules, precedents, and authority. He was lazy, listless, deceitful, and had a great craving for novelties and excitement,—as

he himself says, "feeling everything and knowing nothing." At an early age, without money or friends, he ran away from the engraver to whom he had been apprenticed, and after various adventures was first kindly received by a Catholic priest in Savoy; then by a generous and erring woman of wealth lately converted to Catholicism; and again by the priests of a Catholic Seminary in Sardinia, under whose tuition, and in order to advance his personal fortunes, he abjured the religion in which he had been brought up, and professed Catholicism. This, however, cost him no conscientious scruples, for his religious training had been of the slimmest, and principles he had none.

We next see Rousseau as a footman in the service of an Italian Countess, where he was mean enough to accuse a servant girl of a theft he had himself committed, thereby causing her ruin. Again, employed as a footman in the service of another noble family, his extraordinary talents were detected, and he was made secretary. But all this kindness he returned with insolence, and again became a wanderer. In his isolation he sought the protection of the Swiss lady who had before befriended him, Madame de Warens. He began as her secretary, and ended in becoming her lover. In her house he saw society and learned music.

A fit of caprice induced Rousseau to throw up this situation, and he then taught music in Chambéry for a living, studied hard, read Voltaire, Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Leibnitz, and Puffendorf, and evinced an uncommon vivacity and talent for conversation, which made him a favorite in social circles. His chief labor, however, for five years was in inventing a system of musical notation, which led him to Lyons, and then, in 1741, to Paris.

He was now twenty-nine years old,—a visionary man, full of schemes, with crude opinions and unbounded self-conceit, but poor and unknown,—a true adventurer, with many agreeable qualities, irregular habits, and not very scrupulous morals. Favored by letters of introduction to ladies of distinction,—for he was a favorite with ladies, who liked his enthusiasm, freshness, elegant talk, and grand sentiments,—he succeeded in getting his system of musical notation examined, although not accepted, by the French Academy, and secured an appointment as secretary in the suite of the Ambassador to Venice.

In this city Rousseau remained but a short time, being disgusted with what he called "official insolence," which did not properly recognize native genius. He returned to Paris as poor as when he left it, and lived in a cheap restaurant. There he made the acquaintance of his Thérèse, a healthy, amiable woman, but low, illiterate, unappreciative, and coarse, the author of many of his subsequent miseries. She lived with him till he died,—at first as his mistress and housekeeper, although later in life he married her. She was the mother of his five children, every one of whom he sent to a foundling hospital, justifying his inhumanity by those sophistries and paradoxes with which his writings abound,—even in one of his letters appealing for pity because he "had never known the sweetness of a father's embrace." With extraordinary self-conceit, too, he looked upon himself, all the while, in his numerous illicit loves, as a paragon of virtue, being apparently without any moral sense or perception of moral distinctions.

It was not till Rousseau was thirty-nine years of age that he attracted public attention by his writings, although earlier known in literary circles,—especially in that infidel Parisian *coterie*, where Diderot, Grimm, D'Holbach, D'Alembert, David Hume, the Marquis de Mirabeau, Helvetius, and other wits shined, in which circle no genius was acknowledged and no profundity of thought was deemed possible unless allied with those pagan ideas which Saint Augustine had exploded and Pascal had ridiculed. Even while living among these people, Rousseau had all the while a kind of sentimental religiosity which revolted at their ribald scoffing, although he never protested.

He had written some fugitive pieces of music, and had attempted and failed in several slight operettas, composing both music and words; but the work which made Rousseau famous was his essay on a subject propounded in 1749 by the Academy of Dijon: "Has the Progress of Science and the Arts Contributed to Corrupt or to Purify Morals?" This was a strange subject for a literary institution to propound, but one which exactly fitted the genius of Rousseau. The boldness of his paradox—for he

maintained the evil effects of science and art—and the brilliancy of his style secured readers, although the essay was crude in argument and false in logic. In his "Confessions" he himself condemns it as the weakest of all his works, although "full of force and fire;" and he adds: "With whatever talent a man may be born, the art of writing is not easily learned." It has been said that Rousseau got the idea of taking the "off side" of this question from his literary friend Diderot, and that his unexpected success with it was the secret of his life-long career of opposition to all established institutions. This is interesting, but not very authentic.

The next year, his irregular activity having been again stimulated by learning that his essay had gained the premium at Dijon, and by the fact of its great vogue as a published pamphlet, another performance fairly raised Rousseau to the pinnacle of fashion; and this was an opera which he composed, "Le Devin du Village" (The Village Sorcerer), which was performed at Fontainebleau before the Court, and received with unexampled enthusiasm. His profession, so far as he had any, was that of a copyist of music, and his musical taste and facile talents had at last brought him an uncritical recognition.

But Rousseau soon abandoned music for literature. In 1753 he wrote another essay for the Academy of Dijon, on the "Origin of the Inequality of Man," full of still more startling paradoxes than his first, in which he attempted to show, with great felicity of language, the superiority of savage life over civilization.

At the age of forty-two Rousseau revisited Protestant Geneva, abjured in its turn the Catholic faith, and was offered the post of librarian of the city. But he could not live out of the atmosphere of Paris; nor did he wish to remain under the shadow of Voltaire, living in his villa near the City Gate of Geneva, who had but little admiration for Rousseau, and whose superior social position excited the latter's envy. Yet he professed to hate Paris with its conventionalities and fashions, and sought a quiet retreat where he could more leisurely pursue his studies and enjoy Nature, which he really loved. This was provided for him by an enthusiastic friend,—Madame d'Épinay,—in the beautiful valley of Montmorenci, and called "The Hermitage," situated in the grounds of her Château de la Chevrette. Here he lived with his wife and mother-in-law, he himself enjoying the hospitalities of the Château besides,—society of a most cultivated kind, also woods, lawns, parks, gardens,—all for nothing; the luxuries of civilization, the glories of Nature, and the delights of friendship combined. It was an earthly paradise, given him by enthusiastic admirers of his genius and conversation.

In this retreat, one of the most favored which a poor author ever had, Rousseau, ever craving some outlet for his passionate sentiments, created an ideal object of love. He wrote imaginary letters, dwelling with equal rapture on those he wrote and those he fancied he received in return, and which he read to his lady friends, after his rambles in the forests and parks, during their reunions at the supper-table. Thus was born the "Nouvelle Héloïse,"—a novel of immense fame, in which the characters are invested with every earthly attraction, living in voluptuous peace, yet giving vent to those passions which consume the unsatisfied soul. It was the forerunner of "Corinne," "The Sorrows of Werther," "Thaddeus of Warsaw," and all those sentimental romances which amused our grandfathers and grandmothers, but which increased the prejudice of religious people against novels. It was not until Sir Walter Scott arose with his wholesome manliness that the embargo against novels was removed.

The life which Rousseau lived at the Hermitage—reveries in the forest, luxurious dinners, and sentimental friendships—led to a passionate love-affair with the Comtesse d'Houdetot, a sister-in-law of his patroness Madame d'Épinay,—a woman not only married, but who had another lover besides. The result, of course, was miserable,—jealousies, piques, humiliations, misunderstandings, and the sundering of the ties of friendship, which led to the necessity of another retreat: a real home the wretched man never had. This was furnished, still in the vicinity of Montmorenci, by another aristocratic friend, the Maréchal de Luxembourg, the fiscal agent of the Prince de Condé. And nothing to me is stranger than that this wandering, morbid, irritable man, without birth or fortune, the father of the wildest revolutionary and democratic doctrines, and always hated both by the Court

and the Church, should have found his friends and warmest admirers and patrons in the highest circles of social life. It can be explained only by the singular fascination of his eloquence, and by the extreme stolidity of his worshippers in appreciating his doctrines, and the state of society to which his principles logically led.

In this second retreat Rousseau had the *entrée* to the palace of the Duke of Luxembourg, where he read to the friends assembled at its banquets his new production, "Émile,"—a singular treatise on education, not so faulty as his previous works, but still false in many of its principles, especially in regard to religion. This book contained an admirable and powerful impulse away from artificiality and towards naturalness in education, which has exerted an immense influence for good; we shall revert to it later.

A few months before the publication of "Émile," Rousseau had issued "The Social Contract," the most revolutionary of all his works, subversive of all precedents in politics, government, and the organization of society, while also confounding Christianity with ecclesiasticism and attacking its influence in the social order. All his works obtained a wide fame before publication by reason of his habit of reading them to enthusiastic and influential friends who made them known.

"The Social Contract," however, dangerous as it was, did not when published arouse so much opposition as "Émile." The latter book, as we now see, contained much that was admirable; but its freedom and looseness in religious discussion called down the wrath of the clergy, excited the alarm of the government, and finally compelled the author to fly for his life to Switzerland.

Rousseau is now regarded as an enemy to Christian doctrine, even as he was a foe to the existing institutions of society. In Geneva his books are publicly burned. Henceforth his life is embittered by constant persecution. He flies from canton to canton in the freest country in Europe, obnoxious not only for his opinions but for his habits of life. He affectedly adopts the Armenian dress, with its big fur bonnet and long girdled caftan, among the Swiss peasantry. He is as full of personal eccentricities as he is of intellectual crotchets. He becomes a sort of literary vagabond, with every man's hand against him. He now writes a series of essays, called "Letters from the Mountain," full of bitterness and anti-Christian sentiments. So incensed by these writings are the country people among whom he dwells that he is again forced to fly.

David Hume, regarding him as a mild, affectionate, and persecuted man, gives Rousseau a shelter in England. The wretched man retires to Derbyshire, and there writes his "Confessions,"—the most interesting and most dangerous of his books, showing a diseased and irritable mind, and most sophistical views on the immutable principles of both morality and religion. A victim of mistrust and jealousy, he quarrels with Hume, who learns to despise his character, while pitying the sensitive sufferings of one whom he calls "a man born without a skin."

Rousseau returns to France at the age of fifty-five. After various wanderings he is permitted to settle in Paris, where he lives with great frugality in a single room, poorly furnished,—supporting himself by again copying music, sought still in high society, yet shy, reserved, forlorn, bitter; occasionally making new friends, who are attracted by the infantine simplicity of his manners and apparent amiability, but losing them almost as soon as made by his petty jealousies and irritability, being "equally indignant at neglect and intolerant of attention."

Rousseau's declining health and the fear of his friends that he was on the borders of insanity led to his last retreat, offered by a munificent friend, at Ermenonville, near Paris, where he died at sixty-six years of age, in 1778, as some think from poison administered by his own hand. The revolutionary National Assembly of France in 1790 bestowed a pension of fifteen hundred francs on his worthless widow, who had married a stable-boy soon after the death of her husband.

Such was the checkered life of Rousseau. As to his character, Lord Brougham says that "never was so much genius before united with so much weakness." The leading spring of his life was egotism. He never felt himself wrong, and the sophistries he used to justify his immoralities are both ludicrous and pitiable. His treatment of Madame de Warens, his first benefactor, was heartless, while the

abandonment of his children was infamous. He twice changed his religion without convictions, for the advancement of his fortunes. He pretended to be poor when he was independent in his circumstances. He supposed himself to be without vanity, while he was notoriously the most conceited man in France. He quarrelled with all his friends. He made war on society itself. He declared himself a believer in Christianity, but denied all revelation, all miracles, all inspiration, all supernaturalism, and everything he could not reconcile with his reason. His bitterest enemies were the atheists themselves, who regarded him as a hypocrite, since he professed to believe in what he undermined. The hostility of the Church was excited against him, not because he directly assailed Christianity, but because he denied all its declarations and sapped its authority.

Rousseau was, however, a sentimentalist rather than a rationalist, an artist rather than a philosopher. He was not a learned man, but a bold thinker. He would root out all distinctions in society, because they could not be reconciled with his sense of justice. He preached a gospel of human rights, based not on Christianity but on instinct. He was full of impracticable theories. He would have no war, no suffering, no hardship, no bondage, no fear, and even no labor, since these were evils, and, according to his notions of moral government, unnecessary. But in all his grand theories he ignored the settled laws of Providence,—even those of that "Nature" he so fervently worshipped,—all that is decreed concerning man or woman, all that is stern and real in existence; and while he uttered such sophistries, he excited discontent with the inevitable condition of man, he loosened family ties, he relaxed wholesome restraints, he infused an intense hatred of all conditions subject to necessary toil.

The life of this embittered philanthropist was as great a contradiction as were his writings. This benevolent man sends his own children to a foundling hospital. This independent man lives for years on the bounty of an erring woman, whom at last he exposes and deserts. This high-minded idealizer of friendship quarrels with every man who seeks to extricate him from the consequences of his own imprudence. This affectionate lover refuses a seat at his table to the woman with whom he lives and who is the mother of his children. This proud republican accepts a pension from King George III., and lives in the houses of aristocratic admirers without payment. This religious teacher rarely goes to church, or respects the outward observances of the Christianity he affects. This moral theorizer, on his own confession, steals and lies and cheats. This modest innocent corrupts almost every woman who listens to his eloquence. This lofty thinker consumes his time in frivolity and senseless quarrels. This patriot makes war on the institutions of his country and even of civilized life. This humble man turns his back on every one who will not do him reverence.

Such was this precursor of revolutions, this agitator, this hypocrite, this egotist, this lying prophet,—a man admired and despised, brilliant but indefinite, original but not true, acute but not wise; logical, but reasoning on false premises; advancing some great truths, but spoiling their legitimate effect by sophistries and falsehoods.

Why, then, discuss the ideas and influence of so despicable a creature? Because, sophistical as they were, those ideas contained truths of tremendous germinant power; because in the rank soil of his times they produced a vast crop of bitter, poisonous fruit, while in the more open, better aërated soil of this century they have borne and have yet to bear a fruitage of universal benefit. God's ways seem mysterious; it is for men patiently to study, understand, and utilize them.

Let us turn to the more definite consideration of the writings which have given this author so brilliant a fame. I omit any review of his operas and his system of musical notation, as not bearing on the opinions of society.

The first work, as I have said, which brought Rousseau into notice was the treatise for the Academy of Dijon, as to whether the arts and sciences have contributed to corrupt or to purify morals. Rousseau followed the bent of his genius, in maintaining that they have done more harm than good; and he was so fresh and original and brilliant that he gained the prize. This little work contains the germ of all his subsequent theories, especially that in which he magnifies the state of nature over

civilization,—an amazing paradox, which, however, appealed to society when men were wearied with the very pleasures for which they lived.

Rousseau's cant about the virtues engendered by ignorance, idleness, and barbarism is repulsive to every sound mind, Civilization may present greater temptations than a state of nature, but these are inseparable from any growth, and can be overcome by the valorous mind. Who but a madman would sweep away civilization with its factitious and remediable evils for barbarism with its untutored impulses and animal life? Here Rousseau makes war upon society, upon all that is glorious in the advance of intellect and the growth of morality,—upon the reason and aspirations of mankind. Can inexperience be a better guide than experience, when it encounters crime and folly? Yet, on the other hand, a plea for greater simplicity of life, a larger study of Nature, and a freer enjoyment of its refreshing contrasts to the hot-house life of cities, is one of the most reasonable and healthful impulses of our own day.

What can be more absurd, although bold and striking, than Rousseau's essay on the "Origin of Human Inequalities"! In this he pushes out the doctrine of personal liberty to its utmost logical sequence, so as to do away with government itself, and with all regulation for the common good. We do not quarrel with his abstract propositions in respect to political equality; but his deductions strike a blow at civilization, since he maintains that inequalities of human condition are the source of all political and social evils, while Christianity, confirmed by common-sense, teaches that the source of social evils is in the selfish nature of man rather than in his outward condition. And further, if it were possible to destroy the inequalities of life, they would soon again return, even with the most boundless liberty. Here common-sense is sacrificed to a captivating theory, and all the experiences of the world are ignored.

This shows the folly of projecting any abstract theory, however true, to its remote and logical sequence. In the attempt we are almost certain to be landed in absurdity, so complicated are the relations of life, especially in governmental and political science. What doctrine of civil or political economy would be applicable in all ages and all countries and all conditions? Like the ascertained laws of science, or the great and accepted truths of the Bible, political axioms are to be considered in their relation with other truths equally accepted, or men are soon brought into a labyrinth of difficulties, and the strongest intellect is perplexed.

And especially will this be the case when a theory under consideration is not a truth but an assumption. That was the trouble with Rousseau. His theories, disdainful of experience, however logically treated, became in their remotest sequence and application insulting to the human understanding, because they were often not only assumptions, but assumptions of what was not true, although very specious and flattering to certain classes.

Rousseau confounded the great truth of the justice of moral and political equality with the absurd and unnatural demand for social and material equality. The great modern cry for equal opportunity for all is sound and Christian; but any attempt to guarantee individual success in using opportunity, to insure the lame and the lazy an equal rank in the race, must end in confusion and distraction.

The evil of Rousseau's crude theories or false assumptions was practically seen in the acceptance of their logical conclusions, which led to anarchy, murder, pillage, and outrageous excess. The great danger attending his theories is that they are generally half-truths,—truth and falsehood blended. His writings are sophistical. It is difficult to separate the truth from the error, by reason of the marvellous felicity of his language. I do not underrate his genius or his style. He was doubtless an original thinker and a most brilliant and artistic writer; and by so much did he confuse people, even by the speciousness of his logic. There is nothing indefinite in what he advances. He is not a poet dealing in mysticisms, but a rhetorical philosopher, propounding startling theories, partly true and partly false, which he logically enforces with matchless eloquence.

Probably the most influential of Rousseau's writings was "The Social Contract,"—the great textbook of the Revolution. In this famous treatise he advanced some important ideas which undoubtedly are based on ultimate truth, such as that the people are the source of power, that might does not make right, that slavery is an aggression on human rights; but with these ideal truths he combines the assertion that government is a contract between the governor and the governed. In a perfect state of society this may be the ideal; but society is not and never has been perfect, and certainly in all the early ages of the world governments were imposed upon people by the strong hand, irrespective of their will and wishes,—and these were the only governments which were fit and useful in that elder day. Governments, as a plain matter of fact, have generally arisen from circumstances and relations with which the people have had little to do. The Oriental monarchies were the gradual outgrowth of patriarchal tradition and successful military leadership, and in regard to them the people were never consulted at all. The Roman Empire was ruled without the consent of the governed. Feudal monarchies in Europe were based on the divine rights of kings. There was no state in Europe where a compact or social contract had been made or implied. Even later, when the French elected Napoleon, they chose a monarch because they feared anarchy, without making any stipulation. There were no contracting parties.

The error of Rousseau was in assuming a social contract as a fact, and then reasoning upon the assumption. His premises are wrong, or at least they are nothing more than statements of what abstractly might be made to follow from the assumption that the people actually are the source of power,—a condition most desirable and in the last analysis correct, since even military despots use the power of the people in order to oppress the people, but which is practically true only in certain states. Yet, after all, when brought under the domain of law by the sturdy sense and utilitarian sagacity of the Anglo-Saxon race, Rousseau's doctrine of the sovereignty of the people is the great political motor of this century, in republics and monarchies alike.

Again, Rousseau maintains that, whatever acquisitions an individual or a society may make, the right to this property must be always subordinate to the right which the community at large has over the possessions of all. Here is the germ of much of our present-day socialism. Whatever element of truth there may be in the theory that would regard land and capital, the means of production, as the joint possession of all the members of the community,—the basic doctrine of socialism,—any forcible attempt to distribute present results of individual production and accumulation would be unjust and dangerous to the last degree. In the case of the furious carrying out of this doctrine by the crazed French revolutionists, it led to outrageous confiscation, on the ground that all property belonged to the state, and therefore the representatives of the nation could do what they pleased with it. This shallow sophistry was accepted by the French National Convention when it swept away estates of nobles and clergy, not on the tenable ground that the owners were public enemies, but on the baseless pretext that their property belonged to the nation.

From this sophistry about the rights of property, Rousseau advanced another of still worse tendency, which was that the general will is always in the right and constantly tends to the public good. The theory is inconsistent with itself. Light and truth do not come from the universal reason, but from the thoughts of great men stimulated into growth among the people. The teachers of the world belong to a small class. Society is in need of constant reforms, which are not suggested by the mass, but by a few philosophers or reformers,—the wise men who save cities.

Rousseau further says that a whole people can never become corrupted,—a most barefaced assertion. Have not all nations suffered periods of corruption? This notion, that the whole people cannot err, opens the door for any license. It logically leads to that other idea, of the native majesty of man and the perfectibility of society, which this sophist boldly accepted. Rousseau thought that if society were released from all law and all restraint, the good impulses and good sense of the majority would produce a higher state of virtue and wisdom than what he saw around him, since majorities could do no wrong and the universal reason could not err. In this absurdity lay the fundamental

principle of the French Revolution, so far as it was produced by the writings of philosophers. This doctrine was eagerly seized upon by the French people, maddened by generations of oppression, poverty, and degradation, because it appealed to the pride and vanity of the masses, at that time congregated bodies of ignorance and wickedness.

Rousseau had an unbounded trust in human nature,—that it is good and wise, and will do the best thing if left to itself. But can anything be more antagonistic to all the history of the race? I doubt if Rousseau had any profound knowledge, or even really extensive reading. He was a dreamer, a theorist, a sentimentalist. He was the arch-priest of all sensationalism in the guise of logic. What more acceptable to the vile people of his age than the theory that in their collective capacity they could not err, that the universal reason was divine? What more logical than its culmination in that outrageous indecency, the worship of Reason in the person of a prostitute!

Again, Rousseau's notion of the limitations of law and the prerogative of the people, carried out, would lead to the utter subversion of central authority, and reduce nations to an absolute democracy of small communities. They would divide and subdivide until society was resolved into its original elements. This idea existed among the early Greek states, when a state rarely comprised more than a single city or town or village, such as might be found among the tribes of North American Indians. The great political question in Ancient Greece was the autonomy of cities, which kept the whole land in constant wars and dissensions and quarrels and jealousies, and prevented that centralization of power which would have made Greece unconquerable and the mistress of the world. Our wholesome American system of autonomy in local affairs, with a common authority in matters affecting the general good, is organized liberty. But the ancient and outgrown idea of unregulated autonomy was revived by Rousseau; and though it could not be carried out by the French Revolutionists who accepted nearly all his theories, it led to the disintegration of France, and the multiplication of offices fatal to a healthy central power. Napoleon broke up all this in his centralized despotism, even if, to keep the Revolutionary sympathy, he retained the Departments which were substituted for the ancient Provinces.

The extreme spirit of democratic liberty which is the characteristic of Rousseau's political philosophy led to the advocacy of the wildest doctrines of equality. He would prevent the accumulation of wealth, so that, to use his words, "no one citizen should be rich enough to buy another, and no one so poor as to be obliged to sell himself." He would have neither rich people nor beggars. What could flow from such doctrines but discontent and unreasonable expectations among the poor, and a general fear and sense of insecurity among the rich? This "state of nature," moreover, in his view, could be reached only by going backward and destroying all civilization,—and it was civilization which he ever decried,—a very pleasant doctrine to vagabonds, but likely to be treated with derisive mockery by all those who have something to conserve.

Another and most dangerous principle which was advocated in the "Social Contract" was that religion has nothing to do with the affairs of civil and political life; that religious obligations do not bind a citizen; that Christianity, in fact, ignores all the great relations of man in society. This is distinct from the Puritan doctrine of the separation of the Church from the State, by which is simply meant that priests ought not to interfere in matters purely political, nor the government meddle with religious affairs,—a prime doctrine in a free State. But no body of men were ever more ardent defenders of the doctrine that all religious ideas ought to bear on the social and political fabric than the Puritans. They would break up slavery, if it derogated from the doctrine of the common brotherhood of man as declared by Christ; they would use their influence as Christians to root out all evil institutions and laws, and bring the sublime truths of the Master to bear on all the relations of life,—on citizens at the ballot-box, at the helm of power, and in legislative bodies. Christianity was to them the supreme law, with which all human laws must harmonize. But Rousseau would throw out Christianity altogether, as foreign to the duties and relations of both citizens and rulers, pretending that it ignored all connection with mundane affairs and had reference only to the salvation of the soul,—as if all Christ's teachings

were not regulative of the springs of conduct between man and man, as indicative of the relations between man and God! Like Voltaire, Rousseau had the excuse of a corrupt ecclesiasticism to be broken into; but the Church and Christianity are two different things. This he did not see. No one was more impatient of all restraints than Rousseau; yet he maintained that men, if calling themselves Christians, must submit to every wrong and injustice, looking for a remedy in the future world,—thus pouring contempt on those who had no right, according to his view of their system, to complain of injustice or strive to rise above temporal evils. Christianity, he said, inculcates servitude and dependence; its spirit is favorable to tyrants; true Christians are formed to be slaves, and they know it, and never trouble themselves about conspiracies and insurrections, since this transitory world has no value in their eyes. He denied that Christians could be good soldiers,—a falsehood rebuked for us by the wars of the Reformation, by the troops of Cromwell and Gustavus Adolphus, by our American soldiers in the late Civil War. Thus he would throw away the greatest stimulus to heroism,—even the consciousness of duty, and devotion to great truths and interests.

I cannot follow out the political ideas of Rousseau in his various other treatises, in which he prepared the way for revolution and for the excesses of the Reign of Terror. The truth is, Rousseau's feelings were vastly superior to his thinking. Whatever of good is to result from his influence will arise out of the impulse he gave toward the search for ideals that should embrace the many as well as the few in their benefits; when he himself attempted to apply this impulse to philosophic political thought, his unregulated mind went all astray.

Let us now turn to consider a moment his doctrines pertaining to education, as brought out in his greatest and most unexceptionable work, his "Émile."

In this remarkable book everything pertaining to human life appears to be discussed. The duties of parents, child-management, punishments, perception and the beginning of thinking; toys, games, catechisms, all passions and sentiments, religion, friendship, love, jealousy, pity; the means of happiness, the pleasures and profits of travel, the principles of virtue, of justice and liberty; language, books; the nature of man and of woman, the arts of conventional life, politeness, riches, poverty, society, marriage,—on all these and other questions he discourses with great sagacity and good sense, and with unrivalled beauty of expression, often rising to great eloquence, never dull or uninteresting, aiming to present virtue and vice in their true colors, inspiring exalted sentiments, and presenting happiness in simple pleasures and natural life.

This treatise is both full and original. The author supposes an imaginary pupil, named Émile, and he himself, intrusted with the care of the boy's education, attends him from his cradle to his manhood, assists him with the necessary directions for his general improvement, and finally introduces him to an amiable and unsophisticated girl, whose love he wins by his virtues and whom he honorably marries; so that, although a treatise, the work is invested with the fascination of a novel.

In reading this book, which made so great a noise in Europe, with so much that is admirable I find but little to criticise, except three things, which mar its beauty and make it both dangerous and false, in which the unsoundness of Rousseau's mind and character—the strange paradoxes of his life in mixing up good with evil—are brought out, and that so forcibly that the author was hunted and persecuted from one part of Europe to another on account of it.

The first is that he makes all natural impulses generous and virtuous, and man, therefore, naturally good instead of perverse,—thus throwing not only Christianity but experience entirely aside, and laying down maxims which, logically carried out, would make society perfect if only Nature were always consulted. This doctrine indirectly makes all the treasures of human experience useless, and untutored impulse the guide of life. It would break the restraints which civilization and a knowledge of life impose, and reduce man to a primitive state. In the advocacy of this subtle falsehood, Rousseau pours contempt on all the teachings of mankind,—on all schools and colleges, on all conventionalities and social laws, yea, on learning itself. He always stigmatizes scholars as pedants.

Secondly, he would reduce woman to insignificance, having her rule by arts and small devices; making her the inferior of man, on whom she is dependent and to whose caprice she is bound to submit,—a sort of toy or slave, engrossed only with domestic duties, like the woman of antiquity. He would give new rights and liberties to man, but none to woman as man's equal,—thus keeping her in a dependence utterly irreconcilable with the bold freedom which he otherwise advocates. The dangerous tendency of his writings is somewhat checked, however, by the everlasting hostility with which women of character and force of will—such as they call "strong-minded"—will ever pursue him. He will be no oracle to them.

But a still more marked defect weakens "Émile" as one of the guide-books of the world, great as are its varied excellencies. The author undermines all faith in Christianity as a revelation, or as a means of man's communion with the Divine, for guidance, consolation, or inspiration. Nor does he support one of his moral or religious doctrines by an appeal to the Sacred Scriptures, which have been so deep a well of moral and spiritual wisdom for so many races of men. Practically, he is infidel and pagan, although he professes to admire some of the moral truths which he never applies to his system. He is a pure Theist or Deist, recognizing, like the old Greeks, no religion but that of Nature, and valuing no attainments but such as are suggested by Nature and Reason, which are the gods he worships from first to last in all his writings. The Confession of Faith by the Savoyard Vicar introduced into the fourth of the six "Books" of this work, which, having nothing to do with his main object, he unnecessarily drags in, is an artful and specious onslaught on all doctrines and facts revealed in the Bible,—on all miracles, all prophecies, and all supernatural revelation,—thus attacking Christianity in its most vital points, and making it of no more authority than Buddhism or Mohammedanism. Faith is utterly extinguished. A cold reason is all that he would leave to man,—no consolation but what the mind can arrive at unaided, no knowledge but what can be reached by original scientific investigation. He destroys not only all faith but all authority, by a low appeal to prejudices, and by vulgar wit such as the infidels of a former age used in their heartless and flippant controversies. I am not surprised at the hostility displayed even in France against him by both Catholics and Protestants. When he advocated his rights of man, from which Thomas Paine and Jefferson himself drew their maxims, he appealed to the self-love of the great mass of men ground down by feudal injustices and inequalities,—to the sense of justice, sophistically it is true, but in a way which commanded the respect of the intellect. When he assailed Christianity in its innermost fortresses, while professing to be a Christian, he incurred the indignation of all Christians and the contempt of all infidels,—for he added hypocrisy to scepticism, which they did not. Diderot, D'Alembert, and others were bold unbelievers, and did not veil their hostilities under a weak disguise. I have never read a writer who in spirit was more essentially pagan than Rousseau, or who wrote maxims more entirely antagonistic to Christianity.

Aside from these great falsities,—the perfection of natural impulse, the inferiority of woman, and the worthlessness of Christianity,—as inculcated in this book, "Émile" must certainly be ranked among the great classics of educational literature. With these expurgated it confirms the admirable methods inspired by its unmethodical suggestions. Noting the oppressiveness of the usual order of education through books and apparatus, he scorns all tradition, and cries, "Let the child learn direct from Nature!" Himself sensitive and humane, having suffered as a child from the tyranny of adults, he demands the tenderest care and sympathy for children, a patient study of their characteristics, a gentle, progressive leading of them to discover for themselves rather than a cramming of them with facts. The first moral education should be negative,—no preaching of virtue and truth, but shielding from vice and error. He says: "Take the very reverse of the current practice, and you will almost always do right." This spirit, indeed, is the key to his entire plan. His ideas were those of the nineteenth, not the eighteenth century. Free play to childish vitality; punishment the natural inconvenience consequent on wrong-doing; the incitement of the desire to learn; the training of sense-activity rather than reflection, in early years; the acquirement of the power to learn rather than the acquisition of learning,—in short,

the natural and scientifically progressive rather than the bookish and analytically literary method was the end and aim of "Émile."

Actually, this book accomplished little in its own time, chiefly because of its attack on established religion. Influentially, it reappeared in Pestalozzi, the first practical reformer of methods; in Froebel, the inventor of the Kindergarten; in Spencer, the great systematizer of the philosophy of development; and through these its spirit pervades the whole world of education at the present time.

In Rousseau's "New Héloïse" there are the same contradictions, the same paradoxes, the same unsoundness as in his other works, but it is more eloquent than any. It is a novel in which he paints all the aspirations of the soul, all its unrest, all its indefinite longings, its raptures, and its despair; in which he unfetters the imagination and sanctifies every impulse, not only of affection, but of passion. This novel was the pioneer of the sentimental romances which rapidly followed in France and England and Germany,—worse than our sensational literature, since the author veiled his immoralities by painting the transports of passion under the guise of love, which ever has its seat in the affections and is sustained only by respect. Here Rousseau was a disguised seducer, a poisoner of the moral sentiments, a foe to what is most sacred; and he was the more dangerous from his irresistible eloquence. His sophistries in regard to political and social rights may be met by reason, but not his attacks on the heart, with his imaginary sorrows and joys, his painting of raptures which can never be found. Here he undermines virtue as he had undermined truth and law. Here reprobation must become unqualified, and he appears one of the very worst men who ever exercised a commanding influence on a wicked and perverse generation.

And this view of the man is rather confirmed by his own "Confessions,"—a singularly attractive book, yet from which, after the perusal of the long catalogue of his sorrows, joys, humiliations, triumphs, ecstasies and miseries, glories and shame, one rises with great disappointment, since no great truths, useful lessons, or even ennobling sentiments are impressed upon the mind to make us wiser or better. The "Confessions" are only a revelation of that sensibility, excessive and morbid, which reminds us of Byron and his misanthropic poetry,—showing a man defiant, proud, vain, unreasonable, unsatisfied, supremely worldly and egotistic. The first six Books are mere annals of sentimental debauchery; the last six, a kind of thermometer of friendship, containing an accurate account of kisses given and received, with slights, huffs, visits, quarrels, suspicions, and jealousies, interspersed with grand sentiments and profound views of life and human nature, yet all illustrative of the utter vanity of earth, and the failure of all mortal pleasures to satisfy the cravings of an immortal mind. The "Confessions" remind us of "Manfred" and "Ecclesiastes" blended,—exceedingly readable, and often unexceptionable, where virtue is commended and vice portrayed in its true light, but on the whole a book which no unsophisticated or inexperienced person can read without the consciousness of receiving a moral taint; a book in no respect leading to repose or lofty contemplation, or to submission to the evils of life, which it catalogues with amazing detail; a book not even conducive to innocent entertainment. It is the revelation of the inner life of a sensualist, an egotist, and a hypocrite, with a maudlin although genuine admiration for Nature and virtue and friendship and love. And the book reveals one of the most miserable and dissatisfied men that ever walked the earth, seeking peace in solitude and virtue, while yielding to unrestrained impulses; a man of morbid sensibility, ever yearning for happiness and pursuing it by impossible and impracticable paths. No sadder autobiography has ever been written. It is a lame and impotent attempt at self-justification, revealing on every page the writer's distrust of the virtues which he exalts, and of man whose reason and majesty he deifies,—even of the friendships in which he sought consolation, and of the retirements where he hoped for rest.

The book reveals the man. The writer has no hope or repose or faith. Nothing pleases him long, and he is driven by his wild and undisciplined nature from one retreat to another, by persecution more fancied than real, until he dies, not without suspicion of having taken his own life.

Such was Rousseau: the greatest literary genius of his age, the apostle of the reforms which were attempted in the French Revolution, and of ideas which still have a wondrous power,—some of

which are grand and true, but more of which are sophistical, false, and dangerous. His theories are all plausible; and all are enforced with matchless eloquence of style, but not with eloquence of thought or true feeling, like the soaring flights of Pascal,—in every respect his superior in genius, because more profound and lofty. Rousseau's writings, like his life, are one vast contradiction, the blending of truth with error,—the truth valuable even when commonplace, the error subtle and dangerous,—so that his general influence must be considered bad wherever man is weak or credulous or inexperienced or perverse. I wish I could speak better of a man whom so many honestly admire, and whose influence has been so marked during the last hundred years, and will be equally great for a hundred years to come; a man from whom Madame de Staël, Jefferson, and Lamartine drew so much of their inspiration, whose ideas about childhood have so helpfully transformed the educational methods of our own time. But I must speak my honest conviction, from the light I have, at the same time hoping that fuller light may justify more leniency to one of the great oracles whose doctrines are still cherished by many of the guides of modern thought.

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771-1832

THE MODERN NOVEL

In the early decades of the nineteenth century the two most prominent figures in English literature were Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. They are still read and admired, especially Scott; but it is not easy to understand the enormous popularity of these two men in their own day. Their busts or pictures were in every cultivated family and in almost every shop-window. Everybody was familiar with the lineaments of their countenances, and even with every peculiarity of their dress. Who did not know the shape of the Byronic collar and the rough, plaided form of "the Wizard of the North"? Who could not repeat the most famous passages in the writings of these two authors?

Is it so now? If not, what a commentary might be written on human fame! How transitory are the judgments of men in regard to every one whom fashion stamps! The verdict of critics is that only some half-dozen authors are now read with the interest and glow which their works called out a hundred years ago. Even the novels of Sir Walter, although to be found in every library, kindle but little enthusiasm compared with that excited by the masterpieces of Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, and of the favorites of the passing day. Why is this? Will these later lights also cease to burn? Will they too pass away? Is this age so much advanced that what pleased our grandfathers and grandmothers has no charm for us, but is often "flat, stale, and unprofitable,"—at least, decidedly uninteresting?

I am inclined to the opinion that only a very small part of any man's writings is really immortal. Take out the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and how much is left of Gray for other generations to admire? And so of Goldsmith: besides the "Vicar of Wakefield" and the "Deserted Village," there is little in his writings that is likely to prove immortal. Johnson wrote but little poetry that is now generally valued. Certainly his dictionary, his greatest work, is not immortal, and is scarcely a standard. Indeed, we have outgrown nearly everything which was prized so highly a century ago, not only in poetry and fiction, but in philosophy, theology, and science. Perhaps that is least permanent which once was regarded as most certain.

If, then, the poetry and novels of Sir Walter Scott are not so much read or admired as they once were, we only say that he is no exception to the rule. I have in mind but two authors in the whole range of English literature that are read and prized as much to-day as they were two hundred years ago. And if this is true, what shall we say of rhetoricians like Macaulay, of critics like Carlyle, of theologians like Jonathan Edwards, of historians like Hume and Guizot, and of many other great men of whom it has been the fashion to say that their works are lasting as the language in which they were written? Some few books will doubtless live, but, alas, how few! Where now are the eight hundred thousand in the Alexandrian library, which Ptolemy collected with so great care,—what, even, their titles? Where are the writings of Varro, said to have been the most learned man of all antiquity?

I make these introductory remarks to show how shallow is the criticism passed upon a novelist or poet like Scott, in that he is not now so popular or so much read as he was in his own day. It is the fate of most great writers,—the Augustines, the Voltaires, the Bayles of the world. It is enough to say that they were lauded and valued in their time, since this is about all we can say of most of the works supposed to be immortal. But when we remember the enthusiasm with which the novels of Scott were at first received, the great sums of money which were paid for them, and the honors he received from them, he may well claim a renown and a popularity such as no other literary man

ever enjoyed. His eyes beheld the glory of a great name; his ears rang with the plaudits of idolaters; he had the consciousness of doing good work, universally acknowledged and gratefully remembered. Scarcely any other novelist ever created so much healthy pleasure combined with so much sound instruction. And, further, he left behind him a reproachless name, having fewer personal defects than any literary man of his time, being everywhere beloved, esteemed, and almost worshipped; whom distant travellers came to see,—sure of kind and gracious treatment; a hero in their eyes to the last, with no drawbacks such as marred the fame of Byron or of Burns. That so great a genius as Scott is fading in the minds of this generation may be not without comfort to those honest and hard-working men in every walk of human life who can say: We too were useful in our day, and had our share of honors and rewards,—all perhaps that we deserved, or even more. What if we are forgotten, as most men are destined to be? To live in the mouths of men is not the greatest thing or the best. "Act well your part, there all the honor lies," for life after all is a drama or a stage. The supremest happiness is not in being praised; it is in the consciousness of doing right and being possessed with the power of goodness.

When, however, a man has been seated on such a lofty pinnacle as was Sir Walter Scott, we wish to know something of his personal traits, and the steps by which he advanced to fame. Was he overrated, as most famous men have been? What is the niche he will probably occupy in the temple of literary fame? What are the characteristics of his productions? What gave him his prodigious and extraordinary popularity? Was he a born genius, like Byron and Burns, or was he merely a most industrious worker, aided by fortunate circumstances and the caprices of fashion? What were the intellectual forces of his day, and how did he come to be counted among them?

All these points it is difficult to answer satisfactorily, but some light may be shed upon them. The bulky volumes of Lockhart's Biography constitute a mine of information about Scott, but are now heavy reading, without much vivacity,—affording a strong contrast to Boswell's Life of Johnson, which concealed nothing that we would like to know. A son-in-law is not likely to be a dispassionate biographer, especially when family pride and interests restrain him. On the other hand, it is not wise for a biographer to be too candid, and belittle his hero by the enumeration of foibles not consistent with the general tenor of the man's life. Lockhart's knowledge of his subject and his literary skill have given us much; and, with Scott's own letters and the critical notice of his contemporaries, both the man and his works may be fairly estimated.

Most biographers aim to make the birth and parentage of their heroes as respectable as possible. Of authors who are "nobly born" there are very few; most English and Scotch literary men are descended from ancestors of the middle class,—lawyers, clergymen, physicians, small landed proprietors, merchants, and so on,—who were able to give their sons an education in the universities. Sir Walter Scott traced his descent to an ancient Scottish chief. His grandfather, Robert Scott, was bred to the sea, but, being ship-wrecked near Dundee, he became a farmer, and was active in the cattle-trade. Scott's father was a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh,—what would be called in England a solicitor,—a thriving, respectable man, having a large and lucrative legal practice, and being highly esteemed for his industry and integrity; a zealous Presbyterian, formal and precise in manner, strict in the observance of the Sabbath, and of all that he considered to be right. His wife, Anne Rutherford, was the daughter of a professor of medicine in the University of Edinburgh,—a lady of rather better education than the average of her time; a mother whom Sir Walter remembered with great tenderness, and to whose ample memory and power of graphic description he owed much of his own skill in reproducing the past. Twelve children were the offspring of this marriage, although only five survived very early youth.

Walter, the ninth child, was born on the 15th of August, 1771, and when quite young, in consequence of a fever, lost for a time the use of his right leg. By the advice of his grandfather, Dr. Rutherford, he was sent into the country for his health. As his lameness continued, he was, at the age of four, removed to Bath, going to London by sea. Bath was then a noted resort, and its waters were supposed to cure everything. Here little Walter remained a year under the care of his aunt,

when he returned to Edinburgh, to his father's house in George Square, which was his residence until his marriage, with occasional visits to the county seat of his maternal grandfather. He completely regained his health, although he was always lame.

From the autobiography which Scott began but did not complete, it would appear that his lameness and solitary habits were favorable to reading; that even as a child he was greatly excited by tales and poems of adventure; and that as a youth he devoured everything he could find pertaining to early Scottish poetry and romance, of which he was passionately fond. He was also peculiarly susceptible to the beauties of Scottish scenery, being thus led to enjoy the country and its sports at a much earlier age than is common with boys,—which love was never lost, but grew with his advancing years. Among his fellows he was a hearty player, a forward fighter in boyish "bickers," and a teller of tales that delighted his comrades. He was sweet-tempered, merry, generous, and well-beloved, yet peremptory and pertinacious in pursuit of his own ideas.

In 1779, Walter was sent to the High School in Edinburgh; but his progress here was by no means remarkable, although he laid a good foundation for the acquisition of the Latin language. He also had a tutor at home, and from him learned the rudiments of French. With a head all on fire for chivalry and Scottish ballads, he admired the old Tory cavaliers and hated the Roundheads and Presbyterians. In three years he had become fairly familiar with Caesar, Livy, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, and Terence. He also distinguished himself by making Latin verses. From the High School he entered the University of Edinburgh, very well grounded in French and Latin. For Greek and mathematics he had an aversion, but made up for this deficiency by considerable acquisitions in English literature. He was delighted with both Ossian and Spenser, and could repeat the "Faërie Queene" by heart. His memory, like that of Macaulay, was remarkable. What delighted him more than Spenser were Hoole's translations of Tasso and Ariosto (later he learned Italian, and read these in the original), and Percy's "Reliques of Ancient Poetry." At college he also read the best novels of the day, especially the works of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett. He made respectable progress in philosophy under the teaching of the celebrated Dugald Stewart and Professor Bruce, and in history under Lord Woodhouselee. On the whole, he was not a remarkable boy, except for his notable memory (which, however, kept only what pleased him), and his very decided bent toward the poetic and chivalric in history, life, and literature.

Walter was trained by his father to the law, and on leaving college he served the ordinary apprenticeship of five years in his father's office and attendance upon the law classes in the University; but the drudgery of the law was irksome to him. When the time came to select his profession, as a Writer to the Signet or an advocate, he preferred the latter; although success here was more uncertain than as a solicitor. Up to the time of his admission to the bar he had read an enormous number of books, in a desultory way, and made many friends, some of whom afterwards became distinguished. His greatest pleasures were in long walks in the country with chosen companions. His love of Nature amounted to a passion, and in his long rambles he acquired not only vigorous health, but the capacity of undergoing great fatigue.

Scott's autobiography closes with his admission to the bar. From his own account his early career had not been particularly promising, although he was neither idle nor immoral. He was fond of convivial pleasures, but ever had uncommon self-control. All his instructors were gentlemanly, and he had access to the best society in Edinburgh, when that city was noted for its number of distinguished men in literature and in the different professions. His most intimate friends were John Irving, Sir Archibald Campbell, the Earl of Dalhousie, and Adam Ferguson, with whom he made excursions to the Highlands, and to ruined castles and abbeys of historic interest,—following with tireless search the new trail of an old Border ballad, or taking a thirty-mile walk to clear up some local legend of battle, foray, or historic event. In all these antiquarian raids the young fellows mingled freely with the people, and tramped the counties round about in most hilarious mood, by no means escaping

the habits of the day in tavern sprees and drinking-bouts,—although Scott's companions testify to his temperate indulgence.

The young lawyer was, indeed, unwittingly preparing for his mission to paint Scottish scenery so vividly, and Scottish character so charmingly, that he may almost be said to have created a new country which succeeding generations delight to visit. No man was ever a greater benefactor to Scotland, whose glories and beauties he was the first to reveal, showing how the most thrifty, practical, and parsimonious people may be at the same time the most poetic. Here Burns and he go hand in hand, although as a poet Scott declared that he was not to be named in the same day with the most unfortunate man of genius that his country and his century produced. How singular that in all worldly matters the greater genius should have been a failure, while he, who as a born poet was the lesser light, should have been the greatest popular success of which Scotland can boast! And yet there is something almost as pathetic and tragical in the career of the man who worked himself to death, as in that of the man who drank himself to death. The most supremely fortunate writer of his day came to a mournful end, notwithstanding his unparalleled honors and his magnificent rewards.

At the time Scott was admitted to the bar he was not, of course, aware of his great original creative powers, nor could he have had very sanguine expectations of a brilliant career. The profession he had chosen was not congenial with his habits or his genius, and hence as a lawyer he was not a success. And yet he was not a failure, for he had the respect of some of the finest minds in Edinburgh, and at once gained as an advocate enough to support himself respectably among aristocratic people,—aided no doubt by his father who, as a prosperous Writer to the Signet, threw business into his hands. Amid his practice at the courts he found time to visit some of the most interesting spots in Scotland, and he had money enough to gratify his tastes. He was a thriving rather than a prosperous lawyer; that is to say, he earned his living.

But Scott was too much absorbed in literary studies and in writing ballads, to give to his numerous friends the hope of a distinguished legal career. No man can serve two masters. "His heart" was "in the Highlands a-chasing the deer," or ransacking distant villages for antiquarian lore, or collecting ancient Scottish minstrelsy, or visiting moss-covered and ivy-clad ruins, famous before John Knox swept monasteries and nunneries away as cages of unclean birds; but most of all was he interested in the feuds between the Lowland and Highland chieftains, and in the contest between Roundheads and Cavaliers when Scotland lost her political independence. He did, however, find much in Scotch law to enrich his mind, with entanglements and antiquarian records, as well as the humors and tragedies of the courts; and of this his writings show many traces.

No young lawyer ever had more efficient friends than Walter Scott. And richly he deserved them, for he was generous, companionable, loyal, a brilliant story-teller, a good hunter and sportsman, bright, cheerful, and witty, doubtless one of the most interesting young men in his beautiful city; modest, too, and unpretentious, yet proud, claiming nothing that nothing might be denied him, a favorite in the most select circles. His most striking peculiarity was his good sense, keeping him from all exaggerations, which were always offensive to him. He was a Tory, indeed; but no aristocrat ever had a more genial humanity, taking pleasure in any society where he could learn anything. His appetite was so healthy, from his rural sports and pedestrian feats, that he could dine equally well on a broiled haddock or a saddle of venison, although from the minuteness of his descriptions of Scottish banquets one might infer that he had great appreciation of the pleasures of the table.

It is not easy to tell when Scott began to write poetry, but probably when he was quite young. He wrote for the pleasure of it, without any idea of devoting his life to literature. Writing ballads was the solace of his leisure hours. His acquaintance with Francis, Lord Jeffrey began in 1791, at a club, where he read an essay on ballads which so much interested the future critic that he sought an introduction to its author, and the acquaintance thus begun between these two young men, both of whom unconsciously stood on the threshold of great careers, ripened into friendship. This happened before Scott was called to the bar in 1792. It was two years afterwards that he produced a poem

which took by surprise a literary friend, Miss Cranstoun, and caused her to exclaim, "Upon my word, Walter Scott is going to turn out a poet, something of a cross between Burns and Gray!"

In 1795 Scott was appointed one of the Curators of the Advocates' Library,—a compliment bestowed only on those members of the bar known to have a zeal in literary affairs; but I do not read that he published anything until 1796, when appeared his translation from the German of Bürger's ballads, "The Wild Huntsman" and "Lenore." This called out high commendation from Dugald Stewart, the famous professor of moral philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and from other men of note, but obtained no recognition in England.

It was during one of his rambles with his friend Ferguson to the English Lakes in 1797 that Scott met Miss Charlotte Margaret Carpenter, or Charpentier, a young French lady of notable beauty and lovely character. She had an income of about £200 a year, which, added to his earnings as an advocate, then about £150, encouraged him to offer to her his hand. For a young couple just starting in life £350 was an independence. The engagement met with no opposition from the lady's family; and in December of 1797 Scott was married, and took a modest house in Castle Street, being then twenty-six years of age. The marriage turned out to be a happy one, although *convenance* had something to do with it.

Of course, so healthy and romantic a nature as Scott's had not passed through the susceptible time of youth without a love affair. From so small a circumstance as the lending of his umbrella to a young lady (Margaret, the beautiful daughter of Sir John Belches) he enjoyed five years of affection and of what seems to have been a reasonable hope, which, however, was finally ended by the young lady's marrying Mr. William Forbes, a well-to-do banker, and later one of Scott's best friends. "Three years of dreaming and two years of waking," Scott calls it in one of his diaries, thirty years later; and his own marriage followed within a year after that of his lost love.

With an income sufficient only for the necessities of life, as a married man in society Scott had not much to spare for expensive dinners, although given to hospitality. What money he could save was spent for books and travel. At twenty-six, he had visited what was most interesting in Scotland, either in scenery or historical associations, and some parts of England, especially the Cumberland Lakes. He took a cottage at Lasswade, near Edinburgh, and began there the fascinating pursuit of tree-planting and "place"-making. His vacations when the Courts were not in session were spent in excursions to mountain scenery and those retired villages where he could pick up antiquarian lore, particularly old Border ballads, heroic traditions of the times of chivalry, and of the conflicts of Scottish chieftains. Concerning these no man in Scotland knew so much as he, his knowledge furnishing the foundation alike of his lays and his romances. His enthusiasm for these scenic and historic interests was unquenchable,—a source of perpetual enjoyment, which made him a most acceptable visitor wherever he chose to go, both among antiquaries and literary men, and ladies of rank and fashion.

In March, 1799, Mr. and Mrs. Scott visited London, where they were introduced to many distinguished literary men. On their return to Edinburgh, the office of sheriff depute of Selkirkshire having become vacant, worth £300 a year, Scott received the appointment, which increased his income to about £700. Although his labors were light, the office entailed the necessity of living in that county a few months in each year. It was a pastoral, quiet, peaceful part of the country, belonging to the Duke of Buccleuch, his friend and patron. His published translation in this year of Goethe's "Goetz of Berlichingen" added to his growing reputation, and led him on towards his career.

With a secure and settled income, Scott now meditated a literary life. A hundred years ago such a life was impossible without independent means, if a man would mingle in society and live conventionally, and what was called respectably. Even Burns had to accept a public office, although it was a humble one, and far from lucrative; but it gave him what poetry could not,—his daily bread. Hogg, peasant-poet of the Ettrick forest, was supported in all his earlier years by tending sheep and borrowing money from his friends.

The first genuine literary adventure of Scott was his collection of a "Scottish Minstrelsy," printed for him by James Ballantyne, a former schoolfellow, who had been encouraged by Scott to open a shop in Edinburgh. The preparation of this labor of love occupied the editor a year, assisted by John Leyden, a man of great promise, who died in India in 1811, having made a mark as an Orientalist. About this time began Scott's memorable friendship with George Ellis, the most discriminating and useful of all his literary friends. In the same year he made the acquaintance of Thomas Campbell, the poet, who had already achieved fame by his "Pleasures of Hope."

It was in 1802 that the first and second volumes of the "Minstrelsy" appeared, in an edition of eight hundred copies, Scott's share of the profits amounting to £78 10 s., which did not pay him for the actual expenditure in the collection of his materials. The historical notes with which he elucidated the value of the ancient ballads, and the freshness and vigor of those which he himself wrote for the collection, secured warm commendations from Ellis, Ritson, and other friends, and the whole edition was sold; yet the work did not bring him wide fame. The third and last volume was issued in 1803.

The work is full of Scott's best characteristics,—wide historical knowledge, wonderful industry, humor, pathos, and a sympathetic understanding of life—that of the peasant as well as the knight—such as seizes the imagination. Lockhart quotes a passage of Scott's own self-criticism: "I am sensible that if there be anything good about my poetry, or prose either, it is *a hurried frankness of composition*, which pleases soldiers, sailors, and young people of bold and active dispositions." His ability to "toil terribly" in accumulating choice material, and then, fusing it in his own spirit, to throw it forth among men with this "hurried frankness" that stirs the blood, was the secret of his power.

Scott did not become famous, however, until his first original poem appeared,—*"The Lay of the Last Minstrel,"* printed by Ballantyne in 1805, and published by Longman of London, and Constable of Edinburgh. It was a great success; nearly fifty thousand copies were sold in Great Britain alone by 1830. For the first edition of seven hundred and fifty copies quarto, Scott received £169 6 s., and then sold the copyright for £500.

In the meantime, a rich uncle died without children, and Scott's share of the property enabled him, in 1804, to rent from his cousin, Major-General Sir James Russell, the pretty property called Ashestiel,—a cottage and farm on the banks of the Tweed, altogether a beautiful place, where he lived when discharging his duties of sheriff of Selkirkshire. He has celebrated the charms of Ashestiel in the canto introduction to *"Marmion."* His income at this time amounted to about £1000 a year, which gave him a position among the squires of the neighborhood, complete independence, and leisure to cultivate his taste. His fortune was now made: with poetic fame besides, and powerful friends, he was a man every way to be envied.

"The Lay of the Last Minstrel" placed Scott among the three great poets of Scotland, for originality and beauty of rhyme. It is not marked by pathos or by philosophical reflections. It is a purely descriptive poem of great vivacity and vividness, easy to read, and true to nature. It is a tale of chivalry, and is to poetry what Froissart's *"Chronicles"* are to history. Nothing exactly like it had before appeared in English literature. It appealed to all people of romantic tastes, and was reproachless from a moral point of view. It was a book for a lady's bower, full of chivalric sentiments and stirring incidents, and of unflagging interest from beginning to end,—partly warlike and partly monastic, describing the adventures of knights and monks. It deals with wizards, harpers, dwarfs, priests, warriors, and noble dames. It sings of love and wassailings, of gentle ladies' tears, of castles and festal halls, of pennons and lances,—

"Of ancient deeds, so long forgot,
Of feuds whose memory was not,
Of forests now laid waste and bare,
Of towers which harbor now the hare."

In "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" there is at least one immortal stanza which would redeem the poem even if otherwise mediocre. How few poets can claim as much as this! Very few poems live except for some splendid passages which cannot be forgotten, and which give fame. I know of nothing, even in Burns, finer than the following lines:—

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?
If such there breathe, go, mark him well!
For him no minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,—
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentr'd all in self,
Living shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

The favor with which "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was received, greater than that of any narrative poem of equal length which had appeared for two generations, even since Dryden's day, naturally brought great commendation from Jeffrey, the keenest critic of the age, in the famous magazine of which he was the editor. The Edinburgh Review had been started only in 1802 by three young men of genius,—Jeffrey, Brougham, and Sydney Smith,—and had already attained great popularity, but not such marvellous influence as it wielded ten years afterwards, when nine thousand copies were published every three months, and at such a price as gave to its contributors a splendid remuneration, and to its editors absolute critical independence. The only objection to this powerful periodical was the severity of its criticisms, which often also were unjust. It seemed to be the intent of the reviewers to demolish everything that was not of extraordinary merit. Fierce attacks are not criticism. The articles in the Edinburgh Review were of a different sort from the polished and candid literary dissections which made Ste.-Beuve so justly celebrated. In the beginning of the century, however, these savage attacks were all the fashion and to be expected; yet they stung authors almost to madness, as in the case of the review of Byron's early poetry. Literary courtesy did not exist. Justice gave place generally to ridicule or sarcasm. The Edinburgh Review was a terror to all pretenders, and often to men of real merit. But it was published when most judges were cruel and severe, even in the halls of justice.

The friendship between Scott and Jeffrey had been very close for ten years before the inception of the Edinburgh Review; and although Scott was (perhaps growing out of his love for antiquarian researches and admiration of the things that had been) an inveterate conservative and Tory, while the new Review was slashingly liberal and progressive, he was drawn in by friendship and literary interest to be a frequent contributor during its first three or four years. The politics of the Edinburgh Review, however, and the establishment in 1808 of the conservative Quarterly Review, caused a gradual cessation of this literary connection, without marring the friendly relations between the two men.

About this time began Scott's friendship with Wordsworth, for whom he had great respect. Indeed, his modesty led him to prefer everybody's good poetry to his own. He felt himself inferior not

only to Burns, but also to Wordsworth and Campbell and Coleridge and Byron,—as in many respects he undoubtedly was; but it requires in an author discernment and humility of a rare kind, to make him capable of such a discrimination.

More important to him than any literary friendship was his partnership with James Ballantyne, the printer, whom he had known from his youth. This in the end proved unfortunate, and nearly ruined him; for Ballantyne, though an accomplished man and a fine printer, as well as enterprising and sensible, was not a safe business man, being over-sanguine. For a time, however, this partnership, which was kept secret, was an advantage to both parties, although Scott embarked in the enterprise his whole available capital, about £5000. In connection with the publishing business, soon added to the printing, with James Ballantyne's brother John as figure-head of the concern,—a talented but dissipated and reckless "good fellow," with no more head for business than either James Ballantyne or Scott,—the association bound Scott hand and foot for twenty years, and prompted him to adventurous undertakings. But it must be said that the Ballantynes always deferred to him, having for him a sentiment little short of veneration. One of the first results of this partnership was an eighteen-volume edition of Dryden's poems, with a Life, which must have been to Scott little more than drudgery. He was well paid for his work, although it added but little to his fame, except for intelligent literary industry.

Before the Dryden, however, in the same year, 1808, appeared the poem of "Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field," which was received by the public with great avidity, and unbounded delight. Jeffrey wrote a chilling review, for which Scott with difficulty forgave him, since with all his humility and amiability he could not bear unfriendly or severe criticism.

In a letter to Joanna Baillie, Scott makes some very sensible remarks as to the incapability of such a man as Jeffrey appreciating a work of the imagination, distinguished as he was:—

"I really have often told him that I think he wants the taste for poetry which is essentially necessary to enjoy, and of course to criticize with justice. He is learned with the most learned in its canons and laws, skilled in its modulations, and an excellent judge of the justice of the sentiments which it conveys; but he wants that enthusiastic feeling which, like sunshine upon a landscape, lights up every beauty, and palliates if it cannot hide every defect. To offer a poem of imagination to a man whose whole life and study have been to acquire a stoical indifference towards enthusiasm of every kind, would be the last, as it would surely be the silliest, action of my life."

As stated above, it was about this time that Scott broke off his connection with the Edinburgh Review. Perhaps that was what Jeffrey wished, since the Review became thenceforth more intensely partisan, and Scott's Toryism was not what was wanted.

It is fair to add that in 1810 Jeffrey sent Scott advance proofs of his critique on "The Lady of the Lake," with a frank and friendly letter in which he says:—

"I am now sensible that there were needless asperities in my review of 'Marmion,' and from the hurry in which I have been forced to write, I dare say there may be some here also.... I am sincerely proud both of your genius and of your glory, and I value your friendship more highly than most either of my literary or political opinions."

Southey, Ellis, and Wordsworth, Erskine, Heber, and other friends wrote congratulatory letters about "Marmion," with slight allusions to minor blemishes. Lockhart thought that it was on the whole the greatest of Scott's poems, in strength and boldness. Most critics regarded the long introduction to each canto as a defect, since it broke the continuity of the narrative; but it may at least be said that these preludes give an interesting insight into the author's moods and views. The opinions of literary men of course differ as to the relative excellence of the different poems. "Marmion" certainly had great merit, and added to the fame of the author. There is here more variety of metre than in his other poems, and also some passages of such beauty as to make the poem immortal,—like the death of Marmion, and those familiar lines in reference to Clara's constancy:—

"O woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light, quivering aspen made,—
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou."

The sale of "Marmion" ultimately reached fifty thousand copies in Great Britain. The poem was originally published in a luxurious quarto at thirty-one and a-half shillings. Besides one thousand guineas in advance, half the profits went to Scott, and must have reached several thousand pounds,—a great sale, when we remember that it was confined to libraries and people of wealth. In America, the poem was sold for two or three shillings,—less than one-tenth of what it cost the English reader. A successful poem or novel in England is more remunerative to the author, from the high price at which it is published, than in the United States, where prices are lower and royalties rarely exceed ten per cent. It must be borne in mind, however, that in England editions are ordinarily very small, sometimes consisting of not more than two hundred and fifty copies. The first edition of "Marmion" was only of two thousand copies. The largest edition published was in 1811, of five thousand copies octavo; but even this did not circulate largely among the people. The popularity of Scott in England was confined chiefly to the upper classes, at least until the copyright of his books had expired. The booksellers were not slow in availing themselves of Scott's popularity. They employed him to edit an edition of Swift for £1500, and tried to induce him to edit a general edition of English poets. That scheme was abandoned in consequence of a disagreement between Scott and Murray, the London publisher, as to the selection of poets.

I think the quarrels of authors eighty or one hundred years ago with their publishers were more frequent than they are in these times. We read of a long alienation between Scott and Constable, the publisher, who enjoyed a sort of monopoly of the poet's contributions to literature. Constable soon after found a great rival in Murray, who was at this time an obscure London bookseller in Fleet Street. Both these great publishers were remarkable for sagacity, and were bold in their ventures. The foundation of Constable's wealth was laid when he was publishing the *Edinburgh Review*. In 1809, Murray started the *Quarterly Review*, its great political rival, with the aid of Scott, who wrote many of its most valuable articles; and William Gilford, satirist and critic, became its first editor. Growing out of the quarrel between Scott and Constable was the establishment of John Ballantyne & Co. as publishers and booksellers in Edinburgh.

Shortly after the establishment of the *Quarterly Review* as a Tory journal, Scott began his third great poem, "The Lady of the Lake," which was published in 1810, in all the majesty of a quarto, at the price of two guineas a copy. He received for it two thousand guineas. The first edition of two thousand copies disappeared at once, and was followed the same year by four octavo editions. In a few months the sale reached twenty thousand copies. The poem received great commendation both from the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh Review*.

Mr. Ellis, in his article in the *Quarterly*, thus wrote:

"There is nothing in Scott of the severe majesty of Milton, or of the terse composition of Pope, or the elaborate elegance of Campbell, or the flowing and redundant diction of Southey; but there is a medley of bright images, and a diction tinged successively with the careless richness of Shakespeare, the antique simplicity of the old romances, the homeliness of vulgar ballads, and the sentimental glitter of the most modern poetry,—passing from the borders of the ludicrous to the sublime, alternately minute and energetic, sometimes artificial, and frequently negligent, but always full of spirit and vivacity, abounding in images that are striking at first sight to minds of every contexture, and never expressing a sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader any exertion to comprehend."

This seems to me to be a fair criticism, although the lucidity of Scott's poetry is not that which is most admired by modern critics. Fashion in these times delights in what is obscure and difficult to be understood, as if depth and profundity must necessarily be unintelligible to ordinary readers. In Scott's time, however, the fashion was different, and the popularity of his poems became almost universal. However, there are the same fire, vivacity, and brilliant coloring in all three of these masterpieces, as they were regarded two generations ago, reminding one of the witchery of Ariosto; yet there is no great variety in these poems such as we find in Byron, no great force of passion or depth of sentiment, but a sort of harmonious rhythm,—more highly prized in the earlier part of the century than in the latter, since Wordsworth and Tennyson have made us familiar with what is deeper and richer, as well as more artistic, in language and versification. But no one has denied Scott's originality and high merits, in contrast with the pompous tameness and conventionality of the poetry which arose when Johnson was the oracle of literary circles, and which still held the stage in Scott's day.

Even Scott's admirers, however, like Canning and Ellis, did not hesitate to say that they would like something different from anything he had already written. But this was not to be; and perhaps the reason why he soon after gave up writing poetry was the conviction that his genius as a poet did not lie in variety and richness, either of style or matter. His great fame was earned by his novels.

One thing greatly surprises me: Scott regarded Joanna Baillie as the greatest poetical genius of that day, and he derived more pleasure from reading Johnson's "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes" than from any other poetical composition. Indeed, there is nothing more remarkable in literary history than Scott's admiration of poetry inferior to his own, and his extraordinary modesty in the estimate of his own productions. Most poets are known for their morbid vanity, their self-consciousness, their feeling of superiority, and their depreciation of superior excellence; but Scott had eminently a healthy mind, as he had a healthy body, and shrank from exaggeration as he did from vulgarity in all its forms. It is probable that his own estimate of his poetry was nearer the truth than that of his admirers, who were naturally inclined to be partial.

There has been so much poetry written since "The Lady of the Lake" was published,—not only by celebrated poets like Wordsworth, Southey, Moore, Byron, Campbell, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Browning, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Bryant, but also by many minor authors,—that the standard is now much higher than it was in the early part of the century. Much of that which then was regarded as very fine is now smiled at by the critics, and neglected by cultivated readers generally; and Scott has not escaped unfavorable criticism.

It has been my object to present the subject of this Lecture historically rather than critically,—to show the extraordinary popularity of Scott as a poet among his contemporaries, rather than to estimate his merit at the present time. I confess that most of "Marmion," as also of the "Lady of the Lake," is tame to me, and deficient in high poetic genius. Doubtless we are all influenced by the standards of our own time, and the advances making in literature as well as in science and art. Yet this change in the opinions of critics does not apply to Byron's "Childe Harold," which is as much, if not as widely, admired now as when it was first published. We think as highly too of "The Deserted Village," the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and the "Cotter's Saturday Night," as our fathers did. And men now think much more highly of the merits of Shakspeare than they have at any period since he lived; so that after all there is an element in true poetry which does not lose by time. In another hundred years, the verdicts of critics as to the greater part of the poems of Tennyson, Wordsworth, Browning, and Longfellow, may be very different from what they now are, while some of their lyrics may be, as they are now, pronounced immortal.

Poetry is both an inspiration and an art. The greater part of that which is now produced is made, not born. Those daintily musical and elaborate measures which are now the fashion, because they claim novelty, or reproduce the quaintness of an art so old as to be practically new, perhaps will soon again be forgotten or derided. What is simple, natural, appealing to the heart rather than to the head,

may last when more pretentious poetry shall have passed away. Neither criticism nor contemporary popularity can decide such questions.

Scott himself seemed to take a true view. In a letter to Miss Seward, he said:—

"The immortality of poetry is not so firm a point in my creed as the immortality of the soul."

'I've lived too long,
And seen the death of much immortal song.'

"Nay, those that have really attained their literary immortality have gained it under very hard conditions. To some it has not attached till after death. To others it has been the means of lauding personal vices and follies which had otherwise been unremembered in their epitaphs; and all enjoy the same immortality under a condition similar to that of Nouredin in an Eastern tale. Nouredin, you remember, was to enjoy the gift of immortality, but with this qualification,—that he was subjected to long naps of forty, fifty, or a hundred years at a time. Even so Homer and Virgil slumbered through whole centuries. Shakspeare himself enjoyed undisturbed sleep from the age of Charles I., until Garrick waked him. Dryden's fame has nodded; that of Pope begins to be drowsy; Chaucer is as sound as a top, and Spenser is snoring in the midst of his commentators. Milton, indeed, is quite awake; but, observe, he was at his very outset refreshed with a nap of half-a-century; and in the midst of all this we sons of degeneracy talk of immortality! Let me please my own generation, and let those who come after us judge of their facts and my performances as they please; the anticipation of their neglect or censure will affect me very little."

In 1812 the poet-lawyer was rewarded with the salary of a place whose duties he had for some years performed without pay,—that of Clerk of Sessions, worth £800 per annum. Thus having now about £1500 as an income, independently of his earnings by the pen, Scott gave up his practice as an advocate, and devoted himself entirely to literature. At the same time he bought a farm of somewhat more than a hundred acres on the banks of the beautiful Tweed, about five miles from Ashestiel, and leaving to its owners the pretty place in which he had for six years enjoyed life and work, he removed to the cottage at Abbotsford,—for thus he named his new purchase, in memory of the abbots of Melrose, who formerly owned all the region, and the ruins of whose lovely abbey stood not far away. Of the £4000 for this purchase half was borrowed from his brother, and the other half on the pledge of the profits of a poem that was projected but not written,—*"Rokeby."*

Scott ought to have been content with Ashestiel; or, since every man wishes to own his home, he should have been satisfied with the comfortable cottage which he built at Abbotsford, and the modest improvements that his love for trees and shrubs enabled him to make. But his aspirations led him into serious difficulties. With all his sagacity and good sense, Scott never seemed to know when he was well off. It was a fatal mistake both for his fame and happiness to attempt to compete with those who are called great in England and Scotland,—that is, peers and vast landed proprietors. He was not alone in this error, for it has generally been the ambition of fortunate authors to acquire social as well as literary distinction,—thus paying tribute to riches, and virtually abdicating their own true position, which is higher than any that rank or wealth can give. It has too frequently been the misfortune of literary genius to bow down to vulgar idols; and the worldly sentiments which this idolatry involves are seen in almost every fashionable novel which has appeared for a hundred years. In no country is this melancholy social slavery more usual than in England, with all its political freedom, although there are noble exceptions. The only great flaw in Scott's character was this homage to rank and wealth.

On the other hand, rank and wealth also paid homage to him as a man of genius; both Scotland and England received him into the most select circles, not only of their literary and political, but of their fashionable, life.

In 1811 Scott published *"The Lord of the Isles,"* and in 1813, *"Rokeby,"* neither of which was remarkable for either literary or commercial success, although both were well received. In 1814 he

edited a nineteen-volume edition of Dean Swift's works, with a Life, and in the same year began—almost by accident—the real work of his own career, in "Waverley."

If public opinion is far different to-day from what it was in Scott's time in reference to his poetry, we observe the same change in regard to the source of his widest fame, his novels,—but not to so marked a degree, for it was in fiction that Scott's great gifts had their full fruition. Many a fine intellect still delights in his novels, though cultivated readers and critics differ as to their comparative merits. No two persons will unite in their opinions as to the three of those productions which they like most or least. It is so with all famous novels. Then, too, what man of seventy will agree with a man of thirty as to the comparative merits of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, George Eliot, Eugene Sue, Victor Hugo, Balzac, George Sand? How few read "Uncle Tom's Cabin," compared with the multitudes who read that most powerful and popular book forty years ago? How changing, if not transient, is the fame of the novelist as well as of the poet! With reference to him even the same generation changes its tastes. What filled us with delight as young men or women of twenty, is at fifty spurned with contempt or thrown aside with indifference. No books ever filled my mind and soul with the delight I had when, at twelve years of age, I read "The Children of the Abbey" and "Thaddeus of Warsaw," What man of eighty can forget the enthusiasm with which he read "Old Mortality" or "Ivanhoe" when he was in college?

Perhaps one test of a great book is the pleasure derived from reading it over and over again,—as we read "Don Quixote," or the dramas of Shakspeare, of whose infinite variety we never tire. Measured by this test, the novels of Sir Walter Scott are among the foremost works of fiction which have appeared in our world. They will not all retain their popularity from generation to generation, like "Don Quixote" or "The Pilgrim's Progress" or "The Vicar of Wakefield;" but these are single productions of their authors, while not a few of Scott's many novels are certainly still read by cultivated people,—if not with the same interest they excited when first published, yet with profit and admiration. They have some excellencies which are immortal,—elevation of sentiment, chivalrous regard for women, fascination of narrative (after one has waded through the learned historical introductory chapters), the absence of exaggeration, the vast variety of characters introduced and vividly maintained, and above all the freshness and originality of description, both of Nature and of man. Among the severest and most bigoted of New England Puritans, none could find anything corrupting or demoralizing in his romances; whereas Byron and Bulwer were never mentioned without a shudder, and even Shakspeare was locked up in book-cases as unfit for young people to read, and not particularly creditable for anybody to own. The unfavorable comments which the most orthodox ever made upon Scott were as to the repulsiveness of the old Covenanters, as he described them, and his sneers at Puritan perfections. Scott, however, had contempt, not for the Puritans, but for many of their peculiarities,—especially for their cant when it degenerated into hypocrisy.

One thing is certain, that no works of fiction have had such universal popularity both in England and America for so long a period as the Waverley Novels. Scott reigned as the undisputed monarch of the realm of fiction and romance for twenty-five years. He gave undiminished entertainment to an entire generation—and not that merely, but instruction—in his historical novels, although his views were not always correct,—as whose ever are? He who could charm millions of readers, learned and unlearned, for a quarter of a century must have possessed remarkable genius. Indeed, he was not only the central figure in English literature for a generation, but he was regarded as peculiarly original. Another style of novels may obtain more passing favor with modern readers, but Scott was justly famous; his works are to-day in every library, and form a delightful part of the education of every youth and maiden who cares to read at all; and he will as a novelist probably live after some who are now prime favorites will be utterly forgotten or ignored.

About 1830 Bulwer was in his early successes; about 1840 Dickens was the rage of his day; about 1850 Thackeray had taken his high grade; and it was about 1860 that George Eliot's power appeared. These still retain their own peculiar lines of popularity,—Bulwer with the romantic few,

Thackeray with the appreciative intelligent, George Eliot with a still wider clientage, and Dickens with everybody, on account of his appeal to the universal sentiments of comedy and pathos. Scott's influence, somewhat checked during the growth of these reputations and the succession of fertile and accomplished writers on both sides of the Atlantic,—including the introspective analysts of the past fifteen years,—has within a decade been rising again, and has lately burst forth in a new group of historical romancers who seem to have "harked back" from the subjective fad of our day to Scott's healthy, adventurous objectivity. Not only so, but new editions of the *Waverley Novels* are coming one by one from the shrewd publishers who keep track of the popular taste, one of the most attractive being issued in Edinburgh at half-a-crown a volume.

The first of Scott's remarkable series of novels, "*Waverley*," published in 1814 when the author was forty-three years of age and at the height of his fame as a poet, took the fashionable and literary world by storm. The novel had been partly written for several years, but was laid aside, as his edition of Swift and his essays for the supplement of the "*Encyclopaedia Britannica*," and other prose writings, employed all the time he had to spare.

This hack-work was done by Scott without enthusiasm, to earn money for his investment in real estate, and is not of transcendent merit. Obscurer men than he had performed such literary drudgery with more ability, but no writer was ever more industrious. The amount of work which he accomplished at this period was prodigious, especially when we remember that his duties as sheriff and clerk of Sessions occupied eight months of the year. He was more familiar with the literary history of Queen Anne's reign than any subsequent historian, if we except Macaulay, whose brilliant career had not yet begun. He took, of course, a different view of Swift from the writers of the *Edinburgh Review*, and was probably too favorable in his description of the personal character of the Dean of St. Patrick's, who is now generally regarded as "inordinately ambitious, arrogant, and selfish; of a morose, vindictive, and haughty temper, utterly destitute of generosity and magnanimity, as well as of tenderness, fidelity, and compassion." Lord Jeffrey, in his *Review*, attacked Swift's moral character with such consummate ability as to check materially the popularity of his writings, which are universally admitted to be full of genius. His superb intellect and his morality present a sad contrast,—as in the cases of Bacon, Burns, and Byron,—which Scott, on account of the force of his Tory prejudices, did not sufficiently point out.

But as to the novel, when it suddenly appeared, it is not surprising that "*Waverley*" should at once have attained an unexampled popularity when we consider the mediocrity of all works of fiction at that time, if we except the Irish tales of Maria Edgeworth. Scott received from Constable £1000 for this romance, then deemed a very liberal remuneration for what cost him but a few months' work. The second and third volumes were written in one month. He wrote with remarkable rapidity when his mind was full of the subject; and his previous studies as an antiquary and as a collector of Scottish poetry and legends fitted him for his work, which was in no sense a task, but a most lively pleasure.

It is not known why Scott published this strikingly original work anonymously; perhaps it was because of his unusual modesty, and the fear that he might lose the popularity he had already enjoyed as a poet. But it immediately placed him on a higher literary elevation, since it was generally suspected that he was the author. He could not altogether disguise himself from the keen eyes of Jeffrey and other critics.

The book was received as a revelation. The first volume is not particularly interesting, but the story continually increases in interest to its close. It is not a dissection of the human heart; it is not even much of a love-story, but a most vivid narrative, without startling situations or adventures. Its great charm is its quiet humor,—not strained into witty expressions which provoke laughter, but a sort of amiable delineation of the character of a born gentleman, with his weaknesses and prejudices, all leaning to virtue's side. It is a description of manners peculiar to the Scottish gentry in the middle of the eighteenth century, especially among the Jacobite families then passing away.

Of course the popularity of this novel, at that time, was chiefly confined to the upper classes. In the first place the people could not afford to pay the price of the book; and, secondly, it was outside their sympathies and knowledge. Indeed, I doubt if any commonplace person, without culture or extended knowledge, can enjoy so refined a work, with so many learned allusions, and such exquisite humor, which appeals to a knowledge of the world in its higher aspects. It is one of the last books that an ignorant young lady brought up on the trash of ordinary fiction would relish or comprehend. Whoever turns uninterested from "Waverley" is probably unable to see its excellencies or enjoy its peculiar charms. It is not a book for a modern school-boy or school-girl, but for a man or woman in the highest maturity of mind, with a poetic or imaginative nature, and with a leaning perhaps to aristocratic sentiments. It is a rebuke to vulgarity and ignorance, which the minute and exaggerated descriptions of low life in the pages of Dickens certainly are not.

In February, 1815, "Guy Mannering" was published, the second in the series of the Waverley Novels, and was received by the intelligent reading classes with even more *éclat* than "Waverley," to which it is superior in many respects. It plunges at once *in medias res*, without the long and labored introductory chapters of its predecessor. It is interesting from first to last, and is an elaborate and well-told tale, written *con amore*, when Scott was in the maturity of his powers. It is full of incident and is delightful in humor. Its chief excellence is in the loftiness of its sentiments,—being one of the healthiest and wholesomest novels ever written, appealing to the heart as well as to the intellect, to be read over and over again, like "The Vicar of Wakefield," without weariness. It may be too aristocratic in its tone to please everybody, but it portrays the sentiments of its age in reference to squires and Scottish lairds, who were more distinguished for uprightness and manly duties than for brains and culture.

The fascination with which Scott always depicts the virtues of hospitality and trust in humanity makes a strong impression on the imagination. His heroes and heroines are not remarkable for genius, but shine in the higher glories of domestic affection and fidelity to trusts. Two characters in particular are original creations,—"Dominie Sampson" and "Meg Merrilies," whom no reader can forget,—the one, ludicrous for his simplicity; and the other a gypsy woman, weird and strange, more like a witch than a sibyl, but intensely human, and capable of the strongest attachment for those she loved.

"The easy and transparent flow of the style of this novel; its beautiful simplicity; the wild magnificence of its sketches of scenery; the rapid and ever brightening interest of the narrative; the unaffected kindness of feeling; the manly purity of thought, everywhere mingled with a gentle humor and homely sagacity,—but, above all, the rich variety and skilful contrast of character and manners, at once fresh in fiction, and stamped with the unforgeable seal of truth and nature, spoke to every heart and mind; and the few murmurs of pedantic criticism were lost in the voice of general delight which never fails to welcome the invention that introduces to the sympathy of the imagination a new group of immortal realities."

Scott received about £2000 for this favorite romance,—one entirely new in the realm of fiction,—which enabled him to pay off his most pressing debts, and indulge his taste for travel. He visited the Field of Waterloo, and became a social lion in both Paris and London. The Prince of Wales sent him a magnificent snuff-box set with diamonds, and entertained him with admiring cordiality at Carlton House,—for his authorship of "Waverley" was more than surmised, while his fame as a poet was second only to that of Byron. Then (in the spring of 1815) took place the first meeting of these two great bards, and their successive interviews were graced with mutual compliments. Scott did not think that Byron's reading was extensive either in poetry or history, in which opinion the industrious Scottish bard was mistaken; but he did justice to Byron's transcendent genius, and with more charity than severity mourned over his departure from virtue. After a series of brilliant banquets at the houses of the great, both of rank and of fame, Scott returned to his native land to renew his varied and exhausting labors, having furnished his publishers with a volume of letters on the subjects which most interested him during his short tour. Everything he touched now brought him gold.

"Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk," as he called this volume concerning his tour, was well received, but not with the enthusiasm which marked the publication of "Guy Mannering;" indeed, it had no special claim to distinction. "The Antiquary" followed in May of the next year, and though it lacked the romance of "Waverley" and the adventure of "Guy Mannering," it had even a larger sale. Scott himself regarded it as superior to both; but an author is not always the best judge of his own productions, and we do not accept his criticism. It probably cost him more labor; but it is an exhibition of his erudition rather than a revelation of himself or of Nature. It is certainly very learned; but learning does not make a book popular, nor is a work of fiction the place for a display of learning. If "The Antiquary" were published in these times, it would be pronounced pedantic. Readers are apt to skip names and learned allusions and scraps of Latin. As a story I think it inferior to "Guy Mannering," although it has great merits,—a kind of simple, unsought charm,—and is a transcript of actual Scottish life. It had a great success; Scott says in a letter to his friend Terry: "It is at press again, six thousand having been sold in six days." Before the novel was finished, the author had already projected his "Tales of My Landlord."

Scott was now at the flood-tide of his creative power, and his industry was as remarkable as his genius. There was but little doubt in the public mind as to the paternity of the Waverley Novels, and whatever Scott wrote was sure to have a large sale; so that every publisher of note was eager to have a hand in bringing his productions before the public. In 1816 appeared the "Edinburgh Annual Register," containing Scott's sketch of the year 1814, which, though very good, showed that the author was less happy in history than in fiction.

The first series of "Tales of My Landlord" was published by Murray, and not by Constable, who had brought out Scott's other works, and the book was received with unbounded enthusiasm. Many critics place "Old Mortality" in the highest niche of merit and fame. Frere of the Quarterly Review, Hallam, Boswell, Lamb, Lord Holland, all agreed that it surpassed his other novels. Bishop Heber said, "There are only two men in the world,—Walter Scott and Lord Byron." Lockhart regarded "Old Mortality" as the "Marmion" of Scott's novels; but the painting of the Covenanters gave offence to the more rigid of the Presbyterians. For myself, I have doubt as to the correctness of their criticisms. "Old Mortality," in contrast with the previous novels of Scott, has a place similar to the later productions of George Eliot as compared with her earlier ones. It is not so vivid a sketch of Scotch life as is given in "Guy Mannering." Like "The Antiquary," it is bookish rather than natural. From a literary point of view, it is more artistic than "Guy Mannering," and more learned. "The canvas is a broader one." Its characters are portrayed with great skill and power, but they lack the freshness which comes from actual contact with the people described, and with whom Scott was familiar as a youth in the course of his wanderings. It is more historical than realistic. In short, "Old Mortality" is another creation of its author's brain rather than a painting of real life. But it is justly famous, for it was the precursor of those brilliant historical romances from which so much is learned of great men already known to students. It was a new departure in literature.

Before Scott arose, historical novels were comparatively unknown. He made romance instructive, rather than merely amusing, and added the charm of life to the dry annals of the past. Cervantes does not portray a single great character known in Spanish history in his "Don Quixote," but he paints life as he has seen it. So does Goldsmith. So does George Eliot in "Silas Marner." She presents life, indeed, in "Romola,"—not, however, as she had personally observed it, but as drawn from books, recreating the atmosphere of a long gone time by the power of imagination.

The earlier works of Scott are drawn from memory and personal feeling, rather than from the knowledge he had gained by study. Of "Old Mortality" he writes to Lady Louisa Stuart: "I am complete master of the whole history of these strange times, both of persecutors and persecuted; so I trust I have come decently off."

The divisional grouping of these earlier novels by Scott himself is interesting. In the "Advertisement" to "The Antiquary" he says: "The present work completes a series of fictitious

narratives, intended to illustrate the manners of Scotland at three different periods. *WAVERLEY* embraced the age of our fathers ["'Tis Sixty Years Since"], *GUY MANNERING* that of our own youth, and *THE ANTIQUARY* refers to the last ten years of the eighteenth century." The dedication of "Tales of My Landlord" describes them as "tales illustrative of ancient Scottish manners, and of the traditions of their [his countrymen's] respective districts." They were—*First Series*: "The Black Dwarf" and "Old Mortality;" *Second Series*: "The Heart of Mid-Lothian;" *Third Series*: "The Bride of Lammermoor" and "A Legend of Montrose;" *Fourth Series*: "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous." These all (except the fourth series, in 1832) appeared in the six years from 1814 to 1820, and besides these, "Rob Roy," "Ivanhoe," and "The Monastery."

With the publication of "Old Mortality" in 1816, then, Scott introduced the first of his historical novels, which had great fascination for students. Who ever painted the old Cameronian with more felicity? Who ever described the peculiarities of the Scottish Calvinists during the reign of the last of the Stuarts with more truthfulness,—their severity, their strict and Judaical observance of the Sabbath, their hostility to popular amusements, their rigid and legal morality, their love of theological dogmas, their inflexible prejudices, their lofty aspirations? Where shall we find in literature a sterner fanatical Puritan than John Balfour of Burley, or a fiercer royalist than Graham of Claverhouse? As a love-story this novel is not remarkable. It is not in the description of passionate love that Scott anywhere excels. His heroines, with two or three exceptions, would be called rather tame by the modern reader, although they win respect for their domestic virtues and sterling elements of character. His favorite heroes are either Englishmen of good family, or Scotchmen educated in England,—gallant, cultivated, and reproachless, but without any striking originality or intellectual force.

"Rob Roy" was published in the latter part of 1817, and was received by the public with the same unabated enthusiasm which marked the appearance of "Guy Mannering" and the other romances. An edition of ten thousand was disposed of in two weeks, and the subsequent sale amounted to forty thousand more. The scene of this story is laid in the Highlands of Scotland, with an English hero and a Scottish heroine; and in this fascinating work the political history of the times (forty years earlier than the period of "Waverley") is portrayed with great impartiality. It is a description of the first Jacobite rising against George I. in the year 1715. In this novel one of the greatest of Scott's creations appears in the heroine, Diana Vernon,—rather wild and masculine, but interesting from her courage and virtue. The character of Baillie Jarvie is equally original and more amusing.

The general effect of "Rob Roy," as well as of "Waverley" and "Old Mortality," was to make the Scottish Highlanders and Jacobites interesting to English readers of opposite views and feelings, without arousing hostility to the reigning royal family. The Highlanders a hundred years ago were viewed by the English with sentiments nearly similar to those with which the Puritan settlers of New England looked upon the Indians,—at any rate, as freebooters, robbers, and murderers, who were dangerous to civilization; and the severities of the English government toward these lawless clans, both as outlaws and as foes of the Hanoverian succession, were generally condoned by public opinion. Scott succeeded in producing a better feeling among both the conquerors and the conquered. He modified general sentiment by his impartial and liberal views, and allayed prejudices. The Highlanders thenceforth were regarded as a body of men with many interesting traits, and capable of becoming good subjects of the Crown; while their own hatred and contempt of the Lowland Saxon were softened by the many generous and romantic incidents of these tales. Two hitherto hostile races were drawn into neighborly sympathy. Travellers visited the beautiful Highland retreats, and returned with enthusiastic impressions of the country. To no other man does Scotland owe so great a debt of gratitude as to Walter Scott, not only for his poetry and novels, but for showing the admirable traits of a barren country and a fierce population, and contributing to bring them within the realm of civilization. A century or two ago the Highlands of Scotland were peopled by a race in a state of perpetual conflict with civilization, averse to labor, gaining (except such of them as were enrolled in the English Army) a precarious support by plunder, black-mailing, smuggling, and other illegal pursuits. Now

they compose a body of hard-working, intelligent, and law-abiding laborers, cultivating farms, raising cattle and sheep, and pursuing the various branches of industry which lead to independence, if not to wealth. The traveller among the Highlanders feels as secure and is made as comfortable as in any part of the island; while revelations of their shrewd intelligence and unsuspected wit, in the stories of Barrie and Crockett, show what a century of Calvinistic theology—as the chief mental stimulant—has done in developing blossoms from that thistle-like stock.

Scott had now all the fame and worldly prosperity which any literary man could attain to,—for his authorship of the novels, although unacknowledged, was more and more generally believed, and after 1821 not denied. He lived above the atmosphere of envy, honored by all classes of people, surrounded with admiring friends and visitors. He had an income of at least £10,000 a year. Wherever he journeyed he was treated with the greatest distinction. In London he was cordially received as a distinguished guest in any circle he chose. The highest nobles paid homage to him. The King made him a baronet,—the first purely literary man in England to receive that honor. He now became ambitious to increase his lands; and the hundred acres of farm at Abbotsford were enlarged by new purchases, picturesquely planted with trees and shrubberies, while "the cottage grew to a mansion, and the mansion to a castle," with its twelve hundred surrounding acres, cultivated and made beautiful.

Scott's correspondence with famous people was immense, besides his other labors as farmer, lawyer, and author. Few persons of rank or fame visited Edinburgh without paying their respects to its most eminent citizen. His country house was invaded by tourists. He was on terms of intimacy with some of the proudest nobles of Scotland. His various works were the daily food not only of his countrymen, but of all educated Europe. "Station, power, wealth, beauty, and genius strove with each other in every demonstration of respect and worship."

And yet in the midst of this homage and increasing prosperity, one of the most fortunate of human beings, Scott's head was not turned. His habitual modesty preserved his moral health amid all sorts of temptation. He never lost his intellectual balance. He assumed no airs of superiority. His manners were simple and unpretending to the last. He praised all literary productions except his own. His life in Edinburgh was plain, though hospitable and free; and he seemed to care for few luxuries aside from books, of which life made a large collection. The furniture of his houses in Edinburgh and at Abbotsford was neither showy nor luxurious. He was extraordinarily fond of dogs and all domestic animals, who—sympathetic creatures as they are—unerringly sought him out and lavished affection upon him.

When Scott lived in Castle Street he was not regarded by Edinburgh society as particularly brilliant in conversation, since he never aspired to lead by learned disquisitions. He told stories well, with great humor and pleasantry, to amuse rather than to instruct. His talk was almost homely. The most noticeable thing about it was common-sense. Lord Cockburn said of him that "his sense was more wonderful than his genius." He did not blaze like Macaulay or Mackintosh at the dinner-table, nor absorb conversation like Coleridge and Sydney Smith. "He disliked," says Lockhart, "mere disquisitions in Edinburgh and prepared impromptus in London." A *doctrinaire* in society was to him an abomination. Hence, until his fame was established by the admiration of the world, Edinburgh professors did not see his greatness. To them he seemed commonplace, but not to such men as Hallam or Moore or Rogers or Croker or Canning.

Notwithstanding Scott gave great dinners occasionally, they appear to have been a bore to him, and he very rarely went out to evening entertainments, although at public dinners his wit and sense made him a favorite chairman. He retired early at night and rose early in the morning, and his severest labors were before breakfast,—his principal meal. He always dined at home on Sunday, with a few intimate friends, and his dinner was substantial and plain. He drank very little wine, and preferred a glass of whiskey-toddy to champagne or port. He could not distinguish between madeira and sherry. He was neither an epicure nor a gourmand.

After Scott had become world-famous, his happiest hours were spent in enlarging and adorning his land at Abbotsford, and in erecting and embellishing his baronial castle. In this his gains were more than absorbed. He loved that castle more than any of his intellectual creations, and it was not completed until nearly all his novels were written. Without personal extravagance, he was lavish in the sums he spent on Abbotsford. Here he delighted to entertain his distinguished visitors, of whom no one was more welcome than Washington Irving, whom he liked for his modesty and quiet humor and unpretending manners. Lockhart writes: "It would hardly, I believe, be too much to affirm that Sir Walter Scott entertained under his roof, in the course of the seven or eight brilliant seasons when his prosperity was at its height, as many persons of distinction in rank, in politics, in art, in literature, and in science, as the most princely nobleman of his age ever did in the like space of time."

One more unconscious, apparently, of his great powers has been rarely seen among literary men, especially in England and France,—affording a striking contrast in this respect to Dryden, Pope, Voltaire, Byron, Bulwer, Macaulay, Carlyle, Hugo, Dumas, and even Tennyson. Great lawyers and great statesmen are rarely so egotistical and conceited as poets, novelists, artists, and preachers. Scott made no pretensions which were offensive, or which could be controverted. His greatest aspiration seems to have been to be a respectable landed proprietor, and to found a family. An English country gentleman was his beau-ideal of happiness and contentment. Perhaps this was a weakness; but it was certainly a harmless and amiable one, and not so offensive as intellectual pride. Scott indeed, while without vanity, had pride; but it was of a lofty kind, disdaining meanness and cowardice as worse even than transgressions which have their origin in unregulated passions.

From the numerous expletives which abound in Scott's letters, such as are not now considered in good taste among gentlemen, I infer that like most gentlemen of his social standing in those times he was in the habit of using, when highly excited or irritated, what is called profane language. After he had once given vent to his feelings, however, he was amiable and forgiving enough for a Christian sage, who never harbored malice or revenge. He had great respect for the military profession,—probably because it was the great prop and defence of government and established institutions, for he was the most conservative of aristocrats. And yet his aristocratic turn of mind never conflicted with his humane disposition,—never made him a snob. He abhorred all vulgarity. He admired genius and virtue in whatever garb they appeared. He was as kind to his servants, and to poor and unfortunate people, as he was to his equals in society, being eminently big-hearted. It was only fools, who made great pretensions, that he despised and treated with contempt.

No doubt Scott was bored by the numerous visitors, whether invited or uninvited, who came from all parts of Great Britain, from America, and even from continental Europe, to do homage to his genius, or to gratify their curiosity. Sometimes as many as thirty guests sat down to his banqueting-table at once. He entertained in baronial style, but without ostentation or prodigality, and on old-fashioned dishes. He did not like French cooking, and his simple taste in the matters of beverage we have already noted. The people to whom he was most attentive were the representatives of ancient families, whether rich or poor.

Scott was very kind to literary men in misfortune, and his chosen friends were authors of eminence,—like Miss Edgeworth, Joanna Baillie, Thomas Moore, Crabbe, Southey, Wordsworth, Sir Humphry Davy, Dr. Wollaston the chemist, Henry Mackenzie, etc. He was very intimate with the Duke of Buccleuch, Lord Montagu, and other noblemen. He was visited by dukes and princes, as well as by ladies of rank and fame. George IV. sent him valuable presents, and showed him every mark of high consideration. Cambridge and Oxford tendered to him honorary degrees. Wherever he travelled, he was received with honor and distinction and flatteries. But he did not like flatteries; and this was one reason why he did not openly acknowledge his authorship of his novels, until all doubt was removed by the masterly papers of John Leycester Adolphus in 1821.

Scott's correspondence must have been enormous, for his postage bills amounted to £150 per annum, besides the aid he received from franks, which with his natural economy he made no scruple

in liberally using. Perhaps his most confidential letters were, like Byron's, written to his publishers and printers, though many such were addressed to his son-in-law Lockhart, and to his dearest friend William Erskine. But he had also some admirable women friends, with whom he corresponded freely. Some of the choicest of his recently-published Letters are to Lady Abercorn, who was an intimate and helpful friend; to Miss Anna Seward, a literary confidant of many years; to Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of the Earl of Bute, and granddaughter of Mary Wortley Montagu, one of the few who knew from the first of his "Waverley" authorship; and to Mrs. John Hughes, an early and most affectionate friend, whose grandson, Thomas Hughes, has made famous the commonplace name of "Tom Brown" in our own day.

Scott's letters show the man,—frank, cordial, manly, tender, generous, finding humor in difficulties, pleasure in toil, satisfaction in success, a proud courage in adversity, and the purest happiness in the affection of his friends.

How Scott found time for so much work is a mystery,—writing nearly three novels a year, besides other literary labors, attending to his duties in the Courts, overlooking the building of Abbotsford and the cultivation of his twelve hundred acres, and entertaining more guests than Voltaire did at Ferney. He was too much absorbed by his legal duties and his literary labors to be much of a traveller; yet he was a frequent visitor to London, saw something of Paris, journeyed through Ireland, was familiar with the Lake region in England, and penetrated to every interesting place in Scotland. He did not like London, and took little pleasure in the ovations he received from people of rank and fashion. As a literary lion at the tables of "the great," he disappointed many of his admirers, since he made no effort to shine. It was only in his modest den in Castle Street, or in rambles in the country or at Abbotsford, that he felt himself at home, and appeared to the most advantage.

It would be pleasant to leave this genuinely great man in the full flush of health, creative power, inward delight and outward prosperity; but that were to leave unwritten the finest and noblest part of his life. It is to the misfortunes which came upon him that we owe both a large part of his splendid achievements in literature and our knowledge of the most admirable characteristics of the man.

My running record of his novels last mentioned "The Monastery," issued in 1820, in the same year with perhaps the prime favorite of all his works, "Ivanhoe," the romantic tale of England in the crusading age of Richard the Lion-Hearted. In 1821 he put forth the fascinating Elizabethan tale of "Kenilworth." In 1822 came "The Pirate" (the tale of sea and shore that inspired James Fenimore Cooper to write "The Pilot" and his other sea-stories) and "The Fortunes of Nigel;" in 1823, "Peveril of the Peak" and "Quentin Durward," both among his best; in 1824, "St. Ronan's Well" and "Redgauntlet;" and in 1825, two more Tales of the Crusaders,—"The Betrothed" and "The Talisman," the latter probably sharing with "Ivanhoe" the greatest popularity.

In the winter of 1825-1826, a widespread area of commercial distress resulted in the downfall of many firms; and among others to succumb were Hurst & Robinson, publishers, whose failure precipitated that of Constable & Co., Scott's publishers, and of the Ballantynes his printers, with whom he was a secret partner, who were largely indebted to the Constables and so to the creditors of that house. The crash came January 16, 1826, and Scott found himself in debt to the amount of about £147,000,—or nearly \$735,000.

Such a vast misfortune, overwhelming a man at the age of fifty-five, might well crush out all life and hope and send him into helpless bankruptcy, with the poor consolation that, though legally responsible, he was not morally bound to pay other people's debts. But Scott's own sanguine carelessness had been partly to blame for the Ballantyne failure; and he faced the billow as it suddenly appeared, bowed to it in grief but not in shame, and, while not pretending to any stoicism, instantly resolved to devote the remainder of his life to the repayment of the creditors.

The solid substance of manliness, honor, and cheerful courage in his character; the genuine piety with which he accepted the "dispensation," and wrote "Blessed be the name of the Lord;" the unexampled steadiness with which he comforted his wife and daughters while girding himself to the

daily work of intellectual production amidst his many distresses; the sweetness of heart with which he acknowledged the sympathy and declined the offers of help that poured in upon him from every side (one poor music teacher offering his little savings of £600, and an anonymous admirer urging upon him a loan of £30,000),—all this is the beauty that lighted up the black cloud of Scott's adversity. His efforts were finally successful, although at the cost of his bodily existence. Lockhart says: "He paid the penalty of health and life, but he saved his honor and his self-respect.

"The glory dies not, and the grief is past."

"Woodstock," then about half-done, was completed in sixty-nine days, and issued in March, 1826, bringing in about \$41,000 to his creditors. His "Life of Napoleon," published in June, 1827, produced \$90,000. In 1827, also, Scott issued "Chronicles of the Canongate," First Series (several minor stories), and the First Series of "Tales of a Grandfather;" in 1828, "The Fair Maid of Perth" (Second Series of the "Chronicles"), and more "Tales of a Grandfather;" in 1829, "Anne of Geierstein," more "Tales of a Grandfather," the first volume of a "History of Scotland," and a collective edition of the Waverley Novels in forty-eight volumes, with new Introductions, Notes, and careful corrections and improvements of the text throughout,—in itself an immense labor; in 1830, more "Tales of a Grandfather," a three volume "History of France," and Volume II. of the "History of Scotland;" in 1831, and finally, a Fourth Series of "Tales of My Landlord," including "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous."

This completes the list of Scott's greater productions; but it should be remembered that during all the years of his creative work he was incessantly doing critical and historical writing,—producing numerous reviews, essays, ballads; introductions to divers works; biographical sketches for Ballantyne's "Novelist's Library,"—the works of fifteen celebrated English writers of fiction, Fielding, Smollett, etc.; letters and pamphlets; dramas; even a few religious discourses; and his very extensive and interesting private correspondence. He was such a marvel of productive brain-power as has seldom, if ever, been known to humanity.

The illness and death of Scott's beloved wife, but four short months after his commercial disaster, was a profound grief to him; and under the exhausting pressure of incessant work during the five years following, his bodily power began to fail,—so that in October, 1831, after a paralytic shock, he stopped all literary labor and went to Italy for recuperation. The following June he returned to London, weaker in both mind and body; was taken to Abbotsford in July; and on the 21st September, 1832, with his children about him, the kindly, manly, brave, and tender spirit passed away.

At the time of his death Sir Walter had reduced his great indebtedness to \$270,000. A life insurance of \$110,000, \$10,000 in the hands of his trustees, and \$150,000 advanced by Robert Cadell, an Edinburgh bookseller, on the copyrights of Scott's works, cleared away the last remnant of the debt; and within twenty years Cadell had reimbursed himself, and made a handsome profit for his own account and that of the family of Sir Walter.

The moneyed details of Scott's literary life have been made a part of this brief sketch, both because his phenomenal fecundity and popularity offer a convenient measure of his power, and because the fiscal misfortune of his later life revealed a simple grandeur of character even more admirable than his mental force. "Scott ruined!" exclaimed the Earl of Dudley when he heard of the trouble. "The author of Waverley ruined! Good God! let every man to whom he has given months of delight give him a sixpence, and he will rise to-morrow morning richer than Rothschild!" But the sturdy Scotchman accepted no dole; he set himself to work out his own salvation. William Howitt, in his "Homes and Haunts of Eminent British Poets," estimated that Scott's works had produced as profits to the author or his trustees at least £500,000,—nearly \$2,500,000: this in 1847, over fifty years ago, and only forty-five years from Scott's first original publication. Add the results of the past fifty years, and, remembering that this gives but the profits, conceive the immense sums that have

been freely paid by the intelligent British public for their enjoyment of this great author's writings. Then, besides all this, recall the myriad volumes of Scott sold in America, which paid no profit to the author or his heirs. There is no parallel.

Voltaire's renown and monetary rewards, as the master-writer of the eighteenth century, offer the only case in modern times that approaches Scott's success; yet Voltaire's vast wealth was largely the result of successful speculation. As a purely popular author, whose wholesome fancy, great heart, and tireless industry, has delighted millions of his fellow-men, Scott stands alone; while, as a man, he holds the affection and respect of the world. Even though it be that the fashion of his workmanship passeth away, wonder not, lament not. With Mithridates he could say, "I have lived." What great man can say more?

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.