

than of character, at least in its higher grades. Something of insight and experience which Homer had he wanted. All the heroes of his novels are insipid except the Master of Ravenswood, who interests not by his character but by his circumstances; all the heroines except Di Vernon, who interests by her circumstances and her horsemanship. So it is with the heroes and heroines of the poems. Margaret, in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," comes on with a charming movement, but she remains merely the fairest maid of Teviotdale. The best characters are heroic scoundrels, such as Marmion the stately forger, and Bertram Rivingham the buccaneer with a vein of good in his evil nature. "The worst of all my undertakings," says Scott himself, "is that my rogue always in despite of me turns out my hero." The author of "Paradise Lost" met with the same misfortune. Marmion is an almost impossible mixture of majesty and felony; but he is better than a seraph of a gentleman. There is not a happier passage in the poems than that in which, as a gentle judgment on his career of criminal ambition, the peasant takes his place in the baronial tomb. It is marred by the moralizing at the end. Scott did not know when enough had been said.

"To write a modern romance of chivalry," said Jeffrey in his review of "Marmion," "seems to be much such a phantasy as to build a modern abbey or an English pagoda." Restorations are forced and therefore they are weak, even when the mind of the restorer is so steeped in the lore of the past as was that of Scott. His best works, after all, are his novels of contemporary or nearly contemporary life. A revival, whether in fiction or in painting, is a masquerade. Scott knew the Middle Ages better perhaps than any other man of his time; but he did not know them as they are known now; and an antiquary would

pick many holes in his costume. His baronial mansion at Abbotsford was bastard Gothic, and so are many details of his poems. The pageantry not seldom makes us think of the circus, while in the sentiment there is too often a strain of the historical melodrama. The Convent Scene in Marmion is injured by the melodramatic passage in the speech of Constance about the impending dissolution of the monasteries.

All that a reviver could do by love of his period Scott did. He shews his passionate desire of realizing feudal life, and at the same time his circumstantial vividness of fancy, by a minuteness of detail like that which we find in Homer, who perhaps was also a Last Minstrel. He resembles Homer too in his love of local names, which to him were full of associations.

Scott has said of himself—"To me the wandering over the field of Banockburn was the source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling Castle. I do not by any means infer that I was dead to the feeling of picturesque scenery; on the contrary, few delighted more in its general effect. But I was unable with the eye of a painter to dissect the various parts of the scene, to comprehend how the one bore on the other, to estimate the effect which various features of the view had in producing its leading and general effect." It is true that he had not a painter's eye any more than he had a musician's ear; and we may be sure that the landscape charmed him most when it was the scene of some famous deed or the setting of some legendary tower. Yet he had a passionate love of the beauties of nature and communicated it to his readers. He turned the Highlands from a wilderness, at the thought of which culture shuddered, into a place of universal pilgrimage. He was conscien-