

where attained. The brooding spirit of *Ecclesiastes* here covers, as it were, with the shadow of one of its wings the joys and sorrows, the failures and successes of a private family and their friends, with the other the fates of England and Europe; the fortunes of Marlborough and of Swift on their way from dictatorship, in each case, to dotage and death; the big wars and the notable literary triumphs as well as the hopeless passions or acquiescent losses. It is thus an instance—and the greatest—of that revival of the historical novel which was taking place, and in which the novel of Scott¹—simpler, though not so very simple as is sometimes thought—is being dashed with a far heavier dose of the novel-element as opposed to the romance, yet without abandonment of the romance-quality proper. Of these novel-romance scenes, as they may be called, the famous mock-duel at the end is of course the greatest. But that where the Duke of Hamilton has to acknowledge the Marquis of Esmond, and where Beatrix gives the kiss of Beatrix, is almost as great: and there are many others. It is possible that this very transcendence accounts to some extent for the somewhat lukewarm admiration which it has received. The usual devotee of the novel of analysis dislikes the historic, and has taught himself to consider it childish; the common lover of romance (not the better kind) feels himself hampered by the character-study, as Émile de Girardin's subscribers felt themselves hampered by Gautier's style. All the happier those who can make the best of both dispensations!

Nothing, however, has yet been said of one of the most

¹ The influence of Scott on Thackeray is undoubted and freely confessed. But I cannot fall in with 'certain persons of distinction' in making *Esmond* very specially indebted to *Woodstock*. *Woodstock* is a very great book in itself and amazing when one knows its circumstances: but it is, even for Scott, very specially and exclusively objective. *Esmond* is subjective also in the highest degree.