

truth. It is by the study of the varied character of this expression, the form in which it is moulded and the style that characterizes it all, that we gain a limited knowledge of the personality of a poet.

When we approach the study of the personality of Scott, as revealed in his poems, we at once perceive that his field is wide. He saw the strength of the combined treatment of the human element with the natural world, and, indeed, has an occasional vague and suggestive reference to the unseen. Truly, here is extensive treatment, but possibly the extensiveness has been at the cost of fineness and delicacy of touch in the all important detail.

It can be justly claimed that Scott's treatment of the human element is of adequate fulness to meet his requirements; but here it is wherein lies the fact at once significant and interpretative of the author's personality. Along with the *adequacy* of treatment must go the worth or greatness of the object treated, when determining an author's power. The lightly drawn characters of comedy are the fit representatives of the foibles of humanity, but a deep and determining force in human existence must have a range and fulness of power such as we find in tragedy. This fact, then, is apparent with regard to Scott, that he has treated adequately what he chose, but his choice is comparatively low down the scale. Character with him is revealed more through *description* than through the concrete and more artistic method. His characters lack the *potential*,—that positiveness of existing character—because they are not the life-blood of experience alike bitter and sweet. Scott could not have written, "The rest is silence," because such a conclusion would have been inconsistent where characters do not attain even the limited philosophic introspection of Shakespeare's historical characters, not to mention those of the tragedy.

Scott's creations do not act out of any complexity of motives, being in this respect a perfect commentary on their creator. The pensive mood of a *Hamlet* found no place in Scott's Utopia—if, indeed, he had one at all—but that his love and delight in man was centred chiefly in the accomplishment of the heroic we can see from the sympathetic portrayal of a *William of Deloraine*. Hence it is that his works are not replete with aphorisms indicative of an intimate knowledge of human experience, ethical, at least, if not æsthetic. Scott caught the dominant principles of life and expressed some of them well, as, indeed, we can see from such splendid utterance as,—

"True love's the gift which God has given
To man alone beneath the heaven:
It is not fantasy's hot fire,
Whose wishes, soon as granted, fly;
It liveth not in fierce desire,
With dead desire it doth not die;
It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind."

But even this is not sustained, and we find such weak and clumsy lines as—

"When kindness had his wants supplied,
And the old man was gratified."

Measured by some standards, we are prone to disparage Scott's treatment of human nature as being limited and superficial, but it is not to be disparaged. When we think but momentarily of the possibilities of pessimism we see how clearly stands out the strong, robust, genuinely patriotic and entirely natural mind that moulded the elements of unmeasured possibilities into a harmonious and pleasing whole. His strongest and best work in his poems is actu-

ated by strong, vigorous and wholesome feeling, and when he cries:

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!"

we know that it comes from the heart and that Scott is free from hypocrisy, despite his pride. It is because of the wholesomeness of his own being that he has at times touched the fountain-head of truth, and though no large element of greatness is requisite to reach such a plane, yet we must rejoice that a force has been added on the side of good and truth through one, who, though untroubled by philosophic doubt, or the mystery of existence, was, nevertheless, content to see, admire, and live for, the generation of truth through manly heroic activity. Scott's treatment of the human element is not great nor complete, but it is in general principle good, sound and wholesome, and thoroughly indicative of the man himself.

Perhaps it is in his attitude toward Nature that Scott best and most fully reveals himself, and exterior evidences alone suffice to show his preponderating delight in the natural world as compared with men.

Scott rejoiced in his creations rather as they embodied the principles which he specially recognized, but with Nature his love was unbounded. It was the very essence of his being to love all the beauty and picturesqueness of Nature, not alone the mountain crag and roaring stream but the wild birds and little flowers. Without a touch of self-consciousness he can write the line:

"But the sea-caves rung, and the wild winds sung,"

showing that he had a finely appreciative ear and a power of expression inconstant, perhaps, yet productive of the fineness and perfection of finish so delightful to the ear of Tennyson. He who writes of what appears to be a star and says it

"Shakes its loose tresses on the night,"

and, again, of the morning,—

"The wild birds told their warbling tale,
And waken'd every flower that blows;
And peeped forth the violet pale,
And spread her breast the mountain rose,"

calling the violet *pale*, surely has claims for being called a nature poet.

When we say that Scott was content to revel in all the beauty that he found, and that that was all it meant to him, we have set his limit in his dealing with the natural world. It was with Nature that he flung open his heart to impressions, and we can see that its range was wide, but with it all he never was stirred to cry with Keats,—

"Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art"—

He did detect a sympathy existent between Nature and her poet, but that is all. His progress was not in the spiritual. Nature was a great and beautiful garden; a place delightful to wander in and listen to the morning song of the little bird, the murmuring water and the sighing of the trees, but for him it never came to mean the embodiment of existence under its proper laws,—the need of which Keats felt so keenly. Scott read his sermons not in stones, but rather from the "scrolls that teach thee to live and die." For him there was not the solace and joy that comes from seeing that the bird's flight and the great mountain crag alike belong to beauty; that, inasmuch as they are the product of the activity of an Absolute Mind, some element of which is in his own being, they are the means by which he and his Maker are brought together.