

LITERARY NOTES AND NOTICES.

I have gathered me a posie of other men's flowers, and nothing but the thread that binds them is mine own.—MONTAIGNE.

23—Two divisions of the subject continued in this paragraph may be found in Note No. 12 and Note No. 19, to which the reader is respectfully referred.

Scotch thought is somewhat more forcible and more subjective, or inner, than English thought. The difference between them, however, is not so great but that Scotch thought might harmonize with, and nurture by its sympathy, a genius whose individual tendencies were strictly English in their nature. This, at least, was possible before Scotch genius had fully developed itself, and established its own school of thought and feeling. Before the birth of Burns and Scott and the school of Scotch Philosophers the genius displayed by the Gaels north of the Tweed was not often of a distinctive sort. It contained little that was racy of the Scottish soil and less of what could be traced to an exclusively Scottish intellectual source. At such a period, English genius, already fully developed in its characteristic form, would act powerfully on the literary tastes and tendencies of Scotland, interfering with the free growth of whatever in these was peculiar to themselves. It was, consequently, to have been expected that the first great Scotch contributor to English literature would display a genius not strongly marked with specially Scottish characteristics. Besides this, while the prevalent French taste in England was due in a great degree to the reaction against Puritanism to which religious absurdity English thought was wholly unsuited. In Scotland there was no such reaction. On the contrary, the Scotch nation had stamped the features of its forceful and inner genius on its religion, and in it had so fixed them, that down to the present they have maintained a most retentive grip. While, therefore, in London, wit and elegance were playing on the surface of things, most pleased with watching their own feats and listening to their own music, in Edinburgh a more

profound and slower style of thought prevailed. There James Thompson was drinking in Nature's beauty, and her own sweet voice was sounding through his thoughtful soul, soon to break forth in that poetry of nature which, in love and fervor, was unequalled in England till near a century later. What Thompson owed to his Scottish birth, and blood was his freedom from the repelling influence of that aversion to slow brooding thought which prevailed in Puritan England, but from which Scotland was free. Otherwise Thompson was essentially English, and his genius drew its inspiration from that faithful love of nature which I have described as harmonizing completely with English thought.

Soon after Thompson's time, Scotch genius assumed more distinctly its own proper forms. A number of writers appeared who countenanced and encouraged each other's Scottish tendencies and established an independent development of genius in conformity with Scottish ideals and in harmony with the national character of thought. A band of philosophers also arose, the depth and strength of whose thoughts and reasoning marked out Scotland as a land of thoughtful and forcible minds, while the direction which their investigations took pointed to the inner world of mind and morals as their appropriate sphere. This same slowness of thought favored research, and this innerness of thought gave strength to that tenacity of historic memories from which I have conjectured that it originally sprang. Thus, the compilation of history was congenial to Scottish genius, if my analysis holds true. Robertson, Hume, Smith and Reid, demonstrated at all events, that it is characteristic of Scotch thought that history should flourish along with philosophy.

This tenacity of historic memories may be observed in another form in Walter Scott, whose genius was nurtured by them.