

the first canto of "Marmion" he made full amends.

A nature so joyous, a life so happy, so full of physical as well as of mental enjoyment, social success so great, excluded all questionings about the mystery of being, and all sympathy with the desire of change. There is not in Scott's poems a particle of the philosophy which we find in Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, or a shade of the melancholy which we find in the last two. He is as purely pictorial as Homer. The Revolution politically was his aversion; it seemed to him merely vulgar and levelling. He wished "to cleave the politic pates" of its Cobbetts as Homer revelled in the drubbing of Thersites. Intellectually it has left no more trace upon his poems than upon the waters of Loch Katrine.

Our generation has seen a strong current of religious reaction setting towards the Middle Ages. Of this there is nothing in Scott. The things which he loved in mediæval life were the chivalry, the adventure, the feudal force of character, the aristocratic sentiment, the military picturesqueness. For Dante he cared little, while he cared much for Ariosto. Roman Catholicism he contemned as a weak and effeminate superstition. Asceticism was utterly alien to him; in the Guard-room Song in "The Lady of the Lake" he is anti ascetic to the verge of coarseness. A boon companion was in his eyes "worth the whole Bernardine brood." In his writings the churchman appears only as the chaplain of the warrior. His priests and friars are either jolly fellows who patter a hasty mass for lords and knights impatient to be in their saddles, or wizards like Michael Scott. Ecclesiastical ruins, though he loves them as an antiquary, do not seem to move his reverence. At Kirkwall and Iona he thinks much more about the tombs of chieftains than about

the monuments of religion. In Kirkwall Cathedral, the Canterbury of the Orkneys, he says: "The church is as well fitted up as could be expected; much of the old carved oak remains, but with a motley mixture of modern deal pews: all however is neat and clean, and does great honour to the Kirk Session who maintain its decency." Not so would he have spoken of a famous castle of the Middle Ages.

The poet first drew the breath of mental life at Sandy Knowe, the home of his grandfather. There he looked on a district "in which every field has its battle and every rivulet its song;" on the ruined tower of Smailholme, the scene of "The Eve of St. John," Mertoun and Hume Castle, Dryburgh and Melrose, the purple bosks of Eildon, the hill of Faerie, the distant mountain region of the Gala, the Ettrick and the Yarrow. Edinburgh, in which he lived while reading law, he might well call "his own romantic town." In his vacations it was his delight to ramble through the dales of the Border, above all through Teviotdale, living with the dalesmen, drinking whiskey with them—sometimes too much, for there was an element of coarse conviviality as well as of popular joviality in his character—and garnering in his eager mind their Border tales and ballads. The fruits were a collection of "Border Minstrelsy" (1802), with which he published some ballads of his own. Being asked by Lady Dalkeith, wife of the heir of his "chieftain," the Duke of Buccleuch, to write her a ballad on the legend of Gilpin Horner, and finding the subject grow under his pen, he in a happy hour developed the ballad into the metrical romance and produced "The Lay of the Last Minstrel." The Last Minstrel is the poet himself, who revives in a prosaic and degenerate age the heroic memories of the older time.