

preme master. To make him this, two things combined. First, there was the great background of national melody and antique verse, coming down to him from remote ages, and sounding through his heart from childhood. He was cradled in a very atmosphere of melody, else he never could have sung so well. No one knew better than he did, or would have owned more feelingly, how much he owed to the old forgotten song-writers of his country, dead for ages before he lived, and lying in their unknown graves all Scotland over. From his boyhood he had studied eagerly the old tunes, and the old words where there were such, that had come down to him from the past, treasured every scrap of antique air and verse, conned and crooned them over till he had them by heart. This was the one form of literature that he had entirely mastered. And from the first he had laid it down as a rule, that the one way to catch the inspiration, and rise to the true fervour of song, was, as he phrased it, "to *sowth* the tune over and over," till the words came spontaneously. The words of his own songs were inspired by pre-existing tunes, not composed first, and set to music afterwards. But all this love and study of the ancient songs and outward melody would have gone for nothing, but for the second element, that is the inward melody born in the poet's deepest heart, which received into itself the whole body of national song; and then when it had passed through his soul, sent it forth ennobled and glorified by his own genius.

That which fitted him to do this was the peculiar intensity of his nature, the fervid heart, the trembling sensibility, the headlong passion, all thrilling through an intellect strong and keen beyond that of other men. How mysterious to reflect that the same qualities on their emotional side made him the great songster of the world, and on