

A SONG OF LABOUR.

WHEN labour has its own
Then haughty pride shall fall,
The king upon his throne
The lordling in his hall
Shall fade and wither all
Like weeds the scythe has mown,
For none shall heed their call
When labour has its own.

When land is free as air,
Then labour shall be free,
And hollow-featured care
Shall cease from sea to sea,
Then every life shall be
Earth modelled, round and fair,
The primal curse shall flee
When land is free as air.

When toilers prize a vote
Above the power of gold,
And use it to denote
The minds of freemen bold,
Then wealth shall loose its hold
On labour's strangled throat,
On earth's life-giving mould
When toilers prize a vote.

WILLIAM MCGILL.

THE JOURNAL OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

SIR WALTER SCOTT was fifty-four when he began to keep his Journal. Though a very prolific writer he was not a precocious one: he was thirty-four when "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" was published, and forty-three at the time of the publication of "Waverley." In the course of eleven years after "Waverley" had made an unparalleled sensation in the reading world, he had produced "Guy Mannering" and the "Antiquary," three series of "Tales of My Landlord" and "Rob Roy," "Ivanhoe" and "The Monastery," "The Abbot" and "Kenilworth," "The Pirate" and "The Fortunes of Nigel," "Peveril of the Peak" and "Quentin Durward," "St. Ronan's Well," "Redgauntlet," and "The Tales of the Crusaders." In addition to this long list of romances, many poems and essays were written during these eleven years, and it is difficult to decide whether the quantity produced or the quality of the work is the more remarkable.

The year 1825 was one of those disastrous years during which the spirit of speculation became rampant, and men who had been cautious embarked their savings in hazardous enterprises and lost them. A member of the firm of Hurst and Robinson, a large publishing house, and the agents in London for Archibald Constable and Company, had speculated in hops to the extent of £100,000; and when the money market grew feverish, and this firm required help, none was forthcoming, the result being that the firm failed for about £300,000; the firm of Archibald and Company, being closely connected with it, failed also, the liabilities being £256,000; while the printing house of James Ballantyne and Company failed for £130,000, it being as closely connected with Messrs. Constable as the latter was with Messrs. Hurst and Robinson. Sir Walter Scott was a partner with Ballantyne, and he was personally responsible for the debts. Hurst and Robinson and Constable and Company followed the usual mercantile course, and the estate was divided among their creditors, the dividend in the case of the former being 1s. 3d., and of the latter 2s. 9d., in the pound. Sir Walter Scott undertook to discharge the liabilities of the firm to which he belonged, of which, as he wrote in his Journal, £30,000 had been incurred without his being "a party to their contraction." What gives a painful interest to his Journal is the circumstances of the catastrophe, and the struggle through the remainder of his life to become what he called "a free man." On the 16th of January, 1826, he learned his position; a few days afterwards he assigned his whole estate to trustees for the benefit of his creditors, and on the 26th there is an entry in his Journal: "Can we do nothing for creditors with the goblin drama called 'Doom of Devorgoil'?"

A more serious matter preyed upon his mind at the time when all its energies were in a state of tension. Lady Scott's health then gave him great concern. The evil fortune which had befallen him was a still more crushing blow to her. She did not comfort him when he much needed consolation. Writing before the crash had actually occurred, but when he believed it could not be averted, he says: "Another person did not afford me all the sympathy I expected, perhaps because I seemed to need little support, yet that is not her nature, which is generous and kind." When his forebodings were realized, he says:—

"A painful scene after dinner, and another after supper, endeavouring to convince these poor dear creatures (Lady Scott and Anne his younger daughter) that they must not look for miracles, but consider the misfortune as certain, and only to be lessened by patience and labour."

On the 11th of May, 1826, his professional duties obliged him to go to Edinburgh, leaving his wife at Abbotsford. Before going he wrote: "To what scene I may suddenly be recalled, it wrings my heart to think." He received a message on the 15th that his wife was

dead. His feelings at the time, on his return and at the funeral, are pathetically set forth in his Journal, and most of the passages have been quoted by Lockhart, the following being an exception. At Abbotsford on the 29th of May, he wrote:—

"To-day I leave, for Edinburgh, this house of sorrow. In the midst of such distress I have the great pleasure to see Anne regaining her health, and showing both patience and steadiness of mind. God continue this for my own sake as well as hers. Much of my future comfort must depend upon her."

It is gratifying to add that his hope was fulfilled, his daughter watching over him with care and tenderness in his declining years.

Nothing gave Sir Walter greater concern after losing his wife than the delicate health of his grandson. On the 24th of May, 1827, he wrote: "A good thought came into my head: to write stories for little Johnnie Lockhart from the history of Scotland, like those taken from the history of England." Such was the origin of the "Tales of a Grandfather," which had the warmest reception from the public of any work by him since "Ivanhoe." As Lockhart put it, Sir Walter "had solved for the first time the problem of narrating history, so as at once to excite and gratify the curiosity of youth, and please and instruct the wisest of mature minds." When revising these "Tales" for the press in January, 1828, he wrote:—

"I have made great additions to volume first and several of these 'Tales'; and I care not who knows it, I think well of them. Nay, I will hash history with anybody, be he who he will. I do not know but it would be wise to let romantic composition rest, and turn my mind to the history of England, France and Ireland, to be *de capo rotund*, as well as that of Scotland. Men would look at me as an author for Mr. Newbury's shop in Paul's Churchyard. I should care little for that. *Virginibus puerisque*. I would as soon compose histories for boys and girls, which may be useful, as fiction for children of a larger growth, which can at best be only idle folk's entertainment. But write what I will, or to whom I will, I am doggedly determined to write myself out of the present scrape by any labour that is fair and honest."

Sir Walter was unfaltering in his determination to work for his creditors. When offered from £1,500 to £2,000 a year to conduct a journal, he declined, writing at the time: "A large income is not my object; I must clear my debts."

When absorbed with the work in hand, and especially when he was toiling in order that his creditors might be paid, Sir Walter gave little heed to politics, and this is shown by an entry on the 18th of May, 1827:—

"Tom Campbell called, warm from his Glasgow rectorship; he is looking very well. He seemed surprised that I did not know anything about the contentions of Tories, Whigs, and Radicals in the great commercial city. I have other eggs on the spit."

One of the passages which Mr. Douglas has extracted from James Ballantyne's unpublished memoranda contains a fuller account than Lockhart supplied of the extraordinary conditions under which some of Sir Walter's best novels were produced. In his Journal he made an entry to the effect that:—

"Bishop, the composer, was very ill when he wrote 'The Chough and Crow,' and other music for 'Guy Mannering.' Singular! but I do think illness, if not too painful, unseals the mental eye, and renders the talents more acute, in the study of the fine arts at least."

There were few noteworthy men of his day whom Sir Walter did not meet. Edward Irving was one whom he saw more than once. The impression made upon him by the eccentric divine was unfavourable, and he recorded how on one occasion he went out of his way to escape encountering him. This was after dining at a party where Irving was present, and Sir Walter had entered in his Journal:—

"I could hardly keep my eyes off him while we were at the table. He put me in mind of the devil disguised as an angel of light, so ill did that horrible obliquity of vision harmonize with the dark tranquil features of his face, resembling that of our Saviour in Italian pictures, with the hair carefully arranged in the same manner. There was much real or affected simplicity in the manner in which he spoke. He rather *made play*, and spoke much across the table to the Solicitor, and seemed to be good-humoured. But he spoke with that kind of unctious which is nearly (allied) to cajolery. He boasted much of the tens of thousands that attended his ministry at the town of Annan, his native place, till he well-nigh provoked me to say he was a distinguished exception to the rule that a prophet was not esteemed in his own country. But time and place were not fitting."

Sir Walter disliked being treated as a lion, yet he was sometimes compelled to undergo the ordeal. He probably submitted with a better grace than the entries in his Journal imply, as politeness to others and consideration for them were distinguishing traits in his character. However, he indulges in many uncomplimentary references to the social hunters of lions, and he depicts several, among whom the following unnamed lady is one:—

"Miss ———— dined with us, a professed lion-huntress, who travels the country to rouse the peaceful beasts out of their lair, and insists on being hand and glove with all the leonine race. She is very plain, besides frightfully red-haired, and out-Lydia-ing even my poor friend Lydia White. An awful visitation! I think I see her with javelin raised, and buskined foot, a second Diana, roam-

ing the hills of Westmoreland in quest of the lakers. Would to God she were there or anywhere but here! Affection is a painful thing to witness, and this poor woman has the bad taste to think direct flattery is the way to make her advances to friendship and intimacy."

The foregoing entry was made on the 1st of July, 1828; that made on the following day is significant as showing the trials which Sir Walter had to bear and the spirit in which he bore them. He had often to repeat what he then said:—

"I believe I was cross yesterday. I am at any rate very ill to-day with a rheumatic headache, and a still more vile hypochondriacal affection which fills my head with pain, my heart with sadness, and my eyes with tears. I do not wonder at the awful feelings which visited men less educated and less firm than I may call myself. It is a most hang-dog sort of feeling, but it may be chased away by study or by exercise. The last I have always found most successful, but the first is the most convenient. I wrought, therefore, and endured all this afternoon. . . . I am now in such a state that I would hardly be surprised at the worst news which could be brought to me. And all this without any rational cause why to-day should be sadder than yesterday. . . . My aches at the heart terminated in a cruel aching of the head—rheumatic I suppose. But Sir Adam and Clerk came to dinner, and laughed and talked the sense of pain and oppression away. We cannot at times work ourselves into a gay humour, any more than we can tickle ourselves into a fit of laughter; foreign agency is necessary. My huntress of lions again dined with us. I have subscribed to her album, and done what was civil."

When Sir Walter visited Paris in the autumn of 1826, he recorded in his Journal on the 7th of November, that, on the return journey, he passed the night at Airaines, where he had "bad lodgings, wet wood, uncomfortable supper, damp beds, and an extravagant charge. I was never colder in my life than when I waked with the sheets clinging round me like a shroud." This was the origin of much of the illness which embittered his closing years. He suffered great pain from rheumatic attacks, and what was equally unbearable was the circumstance that his sound leg was affected, and he feared that he would be unable to walk again. Even when the attack had passed off he was in great discomfort, and he wrote: "The feeling of increasing weakness in my lame leg is a great affliction. I walk now with pain and difficulty at all times, and it sinks to my soul to think how soon I may be altogether a disabled cripple." Attacks of apoplexy endangered his life, and though he survived, yet his speech was affected and his mind impaired. He was conscious of failing health, and wrote in January, 1831, that it was confirmed he had suffered from an apoplectic seizure, that he spoke and read with embarrassment, and even his handwriting seemed to stammer. He added, "I am not solicitous about this, only if I were worthy I would pray God for a sudden death, and no interregnum between I cease to exercise reason and I cease to exist." Before this the references to his handwriting are many, and he even contemplated taking lessons for its improvement. He made the following entry in June, 1828.

"Had a note from Ballantyne complaining of my manuscript, and requesting me to read it over. I would give £1,000 if I could, but it would take me longer to read than to write. I cannot trace my *pièds de mouches* but with great labour and trouble; so e'en take your own share of the burden, my old friend, and, since I cannot read, be thankful I can write."

In his earlier days Sir Walter wrote a clear, business-like hand. The facsimile of a page of the manuscript of "Ivanhoe" was inserted in Lockhart's Life; it is painfully interesting to compare it with the facsimile of the concluding words in the Journal, being the last which Sir Walter penned. No untrained reader of manuscript can decipher them.

Before he consented to leave Scotland and try whether a visit to the sunny south might not lengthen his days, he was reduced to a state of extreme debility. He still persisted in writing, and he was engaged upon "Count Robert of Paris" when he noted, on the 16th of March, 1831, his daily round:—

"Rise at a quarter before seven; at a quarter after nine breakfast, with eggs—or in the singular number, at least; before breakfast private letters, etc.; after breakfast Mr. Laidlaw (who acted as amanuensis) comes at ten, and we write together till one. I am greatly helped by this excellent man, who takes pains to write a good hand, and supplies the want of my own fingers as far as another person can. We work seriously at the task of the day till one o'clock, when I sometimes walk—not often, however, having failed in strength, and suffering great pain even from a very short walk. Oftener I take the pony for an hour or two, and ride about the doors. The exercise is humbling enough, for I require to be lifted on horseback by two servants, and one goes with me to take care I do not fall off and break my bones, a catastrophe very like to happen. My proud promenade *à pied or à cheval*, as it happens, concludes at three o'clock. An hour intervenes for making up my Journal and such light work. At four comes dinner—a plate of broth or soup, much condemned by the doctors, a bit of plain meat, no liquors stronger than small beer, and so I sit quiet to six o'clock, when Mr. Laidlaw returns, and remains with me till nine, or three quarters past, as it happens. Then I have a bowl of porridge and milk, which I eat with the appetite of a child. I forgot to say that after dinner I am allowed half