

INTRODUCTION.

SCOTT'S LIFE AND WORK.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, Aug. 15th, 1771. In early life he was somewhat delicate, and contracted a slight but permanent lameness. For the sake of health he was sent to live with his paternal grandfather, who held the farm of Sandy Knowe, in the very midst of scenes memorable in Border story. Here the child awakened into consciousness, and here, before he could read, the first literary impression was imprinted on his mind through learning by heart the ballad of *Hardicanute*. After passing through the Edinburgh High School, his health again failed, and he was sent to recruit at Kelso, the most beautiful village in Scotland (as he himself tells us) surrounded by "objects not only grand in themselves, but venerable from their association." "The romantic feelings," he continues, "which I have described as predominating in my mind, naturally rested upon and associated themselves with these grand features of the landscape around me; and the historical incidents, or traditional legends connected with many of them, gave to my admiration a sort of intense impression of reverence, which at times made my heart feel too big for its bosom. From this time the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins, or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion." At this date his appetite for reading was great, and his favourite books show his natural taste and served to develop it. Among these were the romantic poems of Spenser and Tasso; but first in his affections was Percy's collection of old ballads, "nor do I believe," he says, "that I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm."

He now entered classes in the university, and when about fifteen years old became an apprentice to his father, who was a Writer to the Signet, a profession which corresponds nearly to that of solicitor. But it was not on legal pursuits that his interests were centred. He and a friend would spend whole holidays wandering in the most solitary spots about Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, composing romances in which the martial and miraculous always predominated. When opportunity permitted he delighted to make longer pedestrian excursions, for "the pleasure of seeing romantic scenery, or what afforded me at least equal pleasure, the places which had been distinguished by remarkable historic events." Some business led him to