

in concord with nature. Soon follow the poets of the early years of the present century—a galaxy only equalled by those of the beginning of the seventeenth.

This great period of poetry was caused by many combined forces acting on the social world at the close of the last century, some of which were the following:—

1st. The natural weariness following the excess of artistic productions. People became tired of the artificial form and forced sentiment of these foreign imitations and turned to the early native poetry.

2d. The awakened interest in this old poetry in its various forms tended greatly towards the formation of a more healthy and vigorous poetical taste. The first outburst of a poetical age is likely to be lyrical; in this respect the present period resembles the Elizabethan in its love of the metrical romances of chivalry and the simple narrative ballads. This fancy for early poetry is well marked by the literary forgeries to which it gave occasion, viz.:—Macpherson's "Poems of Ossian" (1760), Chatterton's "Rowley Poems, etc.," Ireland's forgeries of Shakespeare, and by the publication and imitation of many old poets, especially Shakespeare and Spenser. But, perhaps, the most significant, and certainly the most influential work of that nature was Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Ballad poetry has at all ages had a firm hold on the imagination of the people; at times, indeed, a song has been sufficient to rouse a nation to mighty deeds,—witness the Welsh bards, the Swiss *Ranz des Vaches*, Wharton's *Lillibulero*, and the *Marseillaise*. But in this period it had a great influence on poetic taste, it gave the first impulse to the genius of Scott, who was passionately fond of it, and collected his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in imitation of the *Reliques*; indeed, it may be traced in most poets of the period. Wordsworth says:—"I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the *Reliques*; I know that it is so with my friends; for myself, I am happy to make a public avowal of my own." Another book that marks this antiquarian spirit is