

might be required to set off a theme otherwise neither deficient in poetry nor romance. In dealing with his subject the poet claims credit for having taken no liberties with history. "I have not deviated," he says in his preface, "from what I consider to be the historical truth;" thereby, as it seems to us shackling the free wings of his muse to extremely little purpose; since his conscientious adherence to historic truth, only brings out more prominently the neglect of that higher truth of nature, involved in the one all-pervading conception of the dungeoned ruffian thus communing with his remorseful conscience in six coherent cantos of smoothly flowing verse. Such professions of adherence to literal history are altogether misplaced; for nobody out of the nursery wants to study history in rhymes. But our dissatisfaction with the claim finds other grounds, when we discover that the history adhered to is the old vulgar popular conception, which pictures Mary of Scotland an angel, Knox a morose fanatic, and Elizabeth of England a wrinkled and jealous shrew! The following picture of Darnley may pass without dispute:

"She wedded Darnley—and a fool
 In every sense was he,
 With scarce the wit to be a knave
 If born in low degree.
 But folly, when it walks abroad
 In royal guise and strain,
 Will never lack for knavery
 To loiter in its train.

Folly walks *in royal strain* here, we presume, for the sake of the rhyme. But what shall we say of the portraiture of Elizabeth?—the sole sinner, according to the historic bard, even in the unpatriotic defections of Scotland's nobles:

But at the gate the Temptress stood,
 Not beautiful nor young;
 Nor luring, as a syren might,
 By magic of her tongue;
 High and imperious, stately, proud,
 Yet artful to beguile,
 A woman, without woman's heart,
 Or woman's sunny smile;
 By nature tyrannous and vain,
 By king-craft false and mean—
 She hated Mary from her soul,
 As woman and as queen!

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What mattered it that flattering knaves
 Proclaimed her Beauty's Queen,