

soul. He was twenty-five before he learned to write, and then by careful copying such bits of script as might come his way. He practised the making of the letters on flat stones while herding his flocks, yet he at last acquired an easy and dignified style of penmanship, and his manuscripts contained almost no errors in spelling or faults in syntax. All this brings to one's mind the words which Shakespeare makes Cæsar say:—

“Nor stony towers, nor walls of beaten brass,
Nor airless dungeons, nor strong links of iron
Can be retentive of the strength of spirit.”

So Hogg, despite the many hardships of youth and early manhood, and the chill penury that might have frozen the genial current of his soul, burst through all barriers and became one of Scotland's greatest sons, and one of the few and immortal names that are not born to die.

Hogg was sprung from a long line of shepherd peasants. They lived in a poor district where there was a very meagre supply of the world's goods. The country was romantic and rich in the finest scenery. It was also full of splendid legend and the story of brave deeds. Every foot of the Ettrick and the Yarrow could tell of some noble person who had died for the sake of freedom of country or liberty of conscience. Some of his ancestors are said to have had associations with those of the spirit world, as tradition in those days ran. While he may not have believed all this, it no doubt helped to make him what he was, namely, the poet of the mystic feelings and the supernatural.

In appearance he was of handsome form. Those who knew him describe him in his early manhood as of medium height, finely symmetrical and agile in form, of a clear, ruddy face