

LITERARY NOTICES.

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, Bart. By J. G. LOCKHART. In two volumes, 8vo. pp. 1360. Philadelphia: CAREY, LEA AND BLANCHARD.

It struck us, when we first heard Mr. LOCKHART was about to write the life of SIR WALTER SCOTT, that a very important task had fallen into the hands of an improper person, and that the work, in the end, would have to be done over again. The result has fully justified this expectation; for while the book is unquestionably one of interest — with Mr. Lockhart's means, and Mr. Lockhart's talents, it could not well have been otherwise — it is false in principles, dangerous to the young, and far from being free from the imputation of mystification and insincerity. We believe notwithstanding what has just been said, that the effect of this biography has been to lessen that blind respect for the character of Scott, which sprang up as a natural consequence of his unprecedented literary popularity, rather than as a consequence of investigation and facts, by exposing motives that are never admitted by the upright, and never avowed by the sensitive; but, we believe, at the same time, that this result has been unlooked for by Mr. Lockhart; for we think it sufficiently obvious, that in all those cases in which he has rendered Scott most obnoxious to the censures of the discriminating, he has been totally unconscious himself of the conclusion to which all right-thinking men must arrive. It is true, Mr. Lockhart occasionally appears to have a lively consciousness that Scott could and did sometimes grievously err; but, in the very face of his own testimony, in the summing up of his case, he claims for his father-in-law a character for worth and probity, that is utterly irreconcilable with his own facts. This circumstance constitutes the predominant moral defect of the book; for when such a conclusion is audaciously drawn from such premises, the world sustaining, or quietly submitting to, the justness of the former, we are not to be surprised if we find the young and inexperienced following in footsteps that are made to appear hallowed. We think it time that the voice of truth should be heard, in this matter; that those old and venerable principles which have been transmitted to us from God himself, should be fearlessly applied; and that public attention should be drawn to the really distinctive traits of Scott, in order that public opinion may settle down in decisions that are neither delusive nor dangerous. The limits of a monthly periodical will not allow full justice to be done to the subject, but we may have space enough to set inquiry on foot, and to give some check to the progress of fallacies and falsehoods.

Some who are entirely disposed to acquiesce in the justice of our opinions, may feel a wish to inquire into the *cui bono* of the exposures we are about to make; for the admiration of Scott's talents is so general and profound, that the imagination, in such instances, prefers to cherish a delusion, in preference to giving up one of its own most pleasing pictures. The answer is not difficult to find. In the first place, the failings, not to use a harsher term, of Sir Walter Scott, have been paraded before the world, in a way that really seems to bid defiance to principles; and, in their very

teeth, we are called on to venerate a name that, in a moral sense, owes its extraordinary exaltation to some of the most barefaced violations of the laws of rectitude, that ever distinguished the charlatanism of literature. We think it time that some one should step forward in defence of truth. In the next place, Sir Walter Scott is not entitled to the benefit of the venerable axiom of '*Nil nisi bene de mortuis*,' since he commanded that his personal history should be published, and designated his biographer. A man has a perfect right to order his life to be given to the world, certainly, but after thus openly courting investigation, no one can claim in his behalf, that he is to be protected against just criticism, by the grave. Sir Walter Scott did more; he transmitted materials to his biographer, for this very work, and materials that reflect injuriously, and in many instances unjustly, on third persons; materials, too, that he knew would be published after he himself was removed from earthly responsibility; and least of all can it be said, that they who have been injured by the strictures of Sir Walter Scott, in this reprehensible manner, have not a perfect right to show their want of value. The very fact of designating a biographer, unless in extraordinary instances, infers something very like a fraud upon the public, as it is usually placing one who should possess the impartiality of a judge, in the position of an advocate, and leaves but faint hopes of a frank and fair exhibition of the truth. Nor does this cover all our objections. Mr. Lockhart, as we shall soon, and we think, unanswerably show, was one of the last men that Sir Walter Scott should have selected for this office, by his antecedents, his long connection with a periodical that was conceived, and which has been continued, in fraud; circumstances that no person, *according to his own admissions*, knew better than Sir Walter Scott, and which disqualify him for the task, since a man can no more maintain a connection with a publication like the *Quarterly Review*, which is notoriously devoted to profligate political partisanship, reckless alike of truth and decency, and hope to preserve the moral tone of his mind, than a woman can frequent the society of the licentious, and think to escape pollution. We are not now following the loose example of the periodical we have mentioned, by dealing in unmeaning and frothy epithets, but that which we assert, we shall prove; and as our present object is connected with the sacred cause of truth and human rights, it shall be our aim to do it in the simple manner that best advances both. There is one more reason to be offered, why we think Sir Walter Scott, in this matter, is entitled to the benefit of no other considerations than those of abstract justice, and that is his *Diary*. In this *Diary* he comments freely and loosely on others, and yet he tells us that he has sworn never to erase a line that had once been written in it! We have even a right to infer, from the text and context, that some of these entries were made when his mind was not exactly in a fit condition to comment on others, and we find reason to believe, from the *Diary* itself, that he looked forward to its future publication.

In addition, we shall add another reason for the existence of this article. Happening lately to allude to the deception of giving letters of introduction, with private marks to apprise the correspondent that he was not to heed the words of the communication, we were astounded at finding the practice defended by a remark, that 'Sir Walter Scott did it.' It is indeed time to inquire into the moral value of Sir Walter Scott, when we find his example quoted as justifying such baseness, instead of his name's being involved in obloquy, as a consequence of the offence against the plainest laws of morality and truth! As our limits compel us at once to commence our strictures on the book, or rather on Scott's character, we shall begin with this case of the false letters of introduction, premising that all our quotations and references will be found in CAREY, LEA AND BLANCHARD'S octavo edition of the work before us.

At page 462, volume 1st, in a letter to his brother Thomas, Sir Walter Scott says: 'Dear Tom: I observe what you say as to Mr. * * * ; and as you may be often exposed to similar requests, which it would be difficult to parry, you can sign such letters of introduction as relate to persons you do not delight to honor, short, 'T. Scott,' by which abridgment of your name, I shall understand to limit my civilities.' Here is an unequivocal invitation to give letters that shall express on their face recommendations that are contradicted by a private mark. A similar arrangement is also recommended, unless we are mistaken, to Mr. Morrit, but we do not look it out, since we deem one such fact as clearly illustrative of the scale of moral integrity in a man, as a thousand. No reflection is necessary to characterize such an act. He who is not shocked at the fraud, the instant he is told of it, has reason to distrust himself, for he may rely on it, he is wanting in the very elements of honesty. Reflection only makes the matter worse. If the marks do not contradict the words of the letter, they are clearly unnecessary; if they do contradict the words of the letter, they become a deliberate falsehood, and a falsehood that is so much the worse, as it is connected with treachery, cloaked in the garb of friendship. We admit that this crime, for such it is, against all the laws of honor and truth, may be aggravated, or extenuated, by circumstances, like all crime; but it is inherently foul, and every way unworthy of a man of high literary fame. The practice is said to be by no means unusual; and we do not doubt it. Lying, which forms its essence, is the commonest of human vices; but it will be conceded, that it is an extraordinary mode of vindicating a man's claims to rare virtue, by showing that his failings are of the most ordinary kind. The pretension in behalf of Sir Walter Scott is to *uncommon*, and not *common* qualities. How easy would it have been for Mr. Thomas Scott to have given a letter, generally and simply expressed, which should mean what it said, and which should not impose any great trouble on his brother; but this might have lost both the parties a supporter! No one can have confidence in a mind so constructed as not to revolt at the admission of such a deception, and we shall soon see how thoroughly the propensity to advance his interests by such means, pervaded the character of our subject. If Sir Walter Scott advised false letters of introduction, to save himself from the risk of showing a little bootless civility, who can doubt that he resorted to the same expedient in more important matters? We now propose to show how completely the vein of insincerity ran through his entire moral system.

Were we to select any one letter of Scott's, among all those published by Mr. Lockhart, as completely illustrative of the man, we should take that to Mr. Gifford, on the subject of establishing the Quarterly Review. Its length prevents our extracting it entire; but it will be found on page 328, vol. 1., and we earnestly entreat the reader to turn to it himself, and to peruse it with care. This letter is Scott, from the commencement to the end; being full of talents, worldly prudence, management, false principles, insincerity, mystification, and moral fraud. The *professed* object in establishing the Review, was to set up another tribunal of taste, sound principles, and just criticism in literature. This was what the world had a perfect right to expect, and a perfect right to insist on. Any deliberate or premeditated departure from such a plan, was inherently a fraud; a wrong done to the laws of truth and justice, and consequently a violation of the standards of morality. Any advantage obtained to a collateral and unavowed object, was an advantage obtained under false pretences. Now we learn by this letter, the deep-laid scheme of deception that was practised on the public, the wily and unjustifiable manner in which the real ends were to be obtained, in gradually gaining the confidence of the world, by concealing the true object, until in possession of the public ear by a course

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of upright reviewing, the periodical might turn its batteries insidiously on those it was designed to injure. All this we learn from Scott himself, in the most unanswerable manner; though he presents his artifices with so much skill, as to require clear moral perceptions, to see at once the whole deformity of the procedure. It was alleged that the Edinburgh had embarked in politics, abusing its professions also, and that it was necessary to counteract its influence by a similar publication. The fair and honest course would have been, to assail the political opinions of the Edinburgh directly, trusting to reason and facts for success; and so Scott tacitly admits himself, for he censures the fraud of the Edinburgh loudly, and certainly he could not have believed that any fault of Mr. Jeffrey's could justify a fault of Sir Walter Scott's. We repeat the invitation to the reader to turn to the letter itself; to peruse it with care; to reflect on what the governing motive of one concerned in establishing such a work ought to be; to see what that avowed by Scott actually was; and we leave the result to his own judgment. In order, however, to point out how deep-laid was the fraud, we make a few extracts, ourselves: '*It would not certainly be advisable that the work should assume, especially at the outset, a professed political character. On the contrary, the articles on science and miscellaneous literature ought to be of such a quality, as might fairly challenge competition with the best of our contemporaries.*' BUT AS THE REAL REASON OF INSTITUTING THE PUBLICATION, IS THE DISGUSTING AND DELETERIOUS DOCTRINES, WITH WHICH THE MOST POPULAR OF OUR REVIEWS DISGRACES ITS PAGES, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO CONSIDER HOW THIS WARFARE SHALL BE MANAGED.' 'At the same time, as I before hinted, *it will be necessary to maintain the respect of the public by impartial disquisition, and I would not have it said, as may usually be predicated of other reviews, that the sentiments of the critic were less determined by the value of the work, than by the purposes it was written to serve.*' 'I should think, *an open and express declaration of political tenets, or of opposition to works of a contrary tendency, ought, for the same reason, to be avoided.*' Of the deep deception proposed in this letter, it is unnecessary to speak; but what are we to think of Mr. Gifford, as well as of Scott, when, the subject of establishing a Review being in discussion between them, the latter gravely reminds the former, that '*it will be necessary to maintain the respect of the public by impartial disquisition*'—meaning, only, too, as we shall unanswerably show, presently, until the public confidence was obtained? It strikes us very much as if two well-dressed fellows should go out into the world, with an understanding that they would be on their good behaviour, until they got into a set where gold snuff-boxes might reward their light-fingered dexterity. We are not surprised at learning this history of the Quarterly, for we are familiar with its motives, and know its character among the intelligent in England; but we do confess astonishment at the coolness of the impudence with which it is related by the editor of the periodical himself! Sir Walter speaks of the 'disgusting and deleterious doctrines of the Edinburgh,' but we are to understand by this merely the slang of party, and not a high moral aim, as a brief consideration of the facts will show. The Quarterly is Tory; the Edinburgh Whig. The first party taught the doctrine of undue deference to rank, of perpetuating the institutions, which was perpetuating an aristocratical polity, of obedience and homage to the king to cloak the power of the nobles, and of submission to the thousand abuses that belong to such a system. Now, the sincerity with which Scott held such doctrines, may, in a measure, be gathered from his own words. It has often been remarked, that they who are servilely submissive to the great in public, take their revenge by abusing them in private; and we quote the following as proof not only of the existence of this trait in Scott, but of his real sentiments concerning those in whose behalf he was so anxious to counteract 'the disgusting and deleterious doctrines' of the Edinburgh.

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In a letter to Mr. Ellis, a brother reviewer, by the way, page 351, vol. i., he says: 'This (a peace) if his (Napoleon's) devil does not fail him, he will readily patch up, and send a few hundred thousands among our coach-driving noblesse, and perhaps among our princes of the blood.' 'It is not these (the Burdettites,) whom I fear, however, it is the vile and degrading spirit of égoïsme, (selfishness) so prevalent among the higher classes, especially among the highest. God forgive me, if I do them injustice, but I think champagne, duty free, would go a great way to seduce some of them, etc. etc.' Again, in a letter to Mr. Morritt, page 479, vol. i., he says: 'What a miserable thing it is, that our royal family cannot be quiet and decent, at least, if not correct and moral, in their deportment.' What a miserable thing it is, indeed, that a man like Scott should have sold himself, principles and talents, to people such as he has here described! Let us fancy, for a moment, paragraphs like those we have just quoted, in the pages of the Quarterly, in place of the infamous and corrupt slanders that publication has notoriously lavished on all opposed to its party, and imagine the result!

But to return to the history of this review, as it is connected with Scott. Bad as were the motives avowed, and unjustifiable as was the proposed mode of proceeding, it seems there was a wheel within a wheel, and that Scott deceived Gifford, as he wished Gifford to deceive the public. It is altogether a curious and melancholy specimen of profound deception, which Mr. Lockhart naïvely qualifies by the word 'frankness.' In a letter to his brother Thomas, page 332, vol. i., Scott draws aside the veil, and we find the real reason of his agency in establishing the Quarterly, which appears to have been entirely, or, in a great measure, at least, personal. In urging his brother to contribute, he says: 'He (Gifford) made it a stipulation, however, that I should give all the assistance in my power, especially at the commencement, to which I am, for many reasons, nothing loth.' 'Constable, or rather that bear his partner, (who published the Edinburgh,) has behaved to me of late not very civil, and I owe Jeffrey a flap with a fox-tail, on account of his review of Marmion, and thus doth the whirligig of time bring about my revenges.'

We have said that Scott, by his advice to maintain 'impartial disquisition' in the Review, did not even mean to urge a principle, which most honest men would have taken for an insult, but merely a temporary expedient, by which to obtain the public confidence; and we shall now prove it, by his own acts and his own words. In order to do so, we refer to page 370, vol. i., where, in a letter to Mr. Ellis, he says: 'I have run up an attempt on the 'Curse of Kehama,' for the Quarterly; a strange thing it is — the Curse I mean — and the critique is not, as the blackguards say, worth a damn; but what I could, I did, which was to throw as much weight as possible upon the beautiful passages, of which there are many, and to slur over the absurdities, of which there are not a few.' 'This said Kehama affords cruel openings for the quizzers, and I suppose will get it roundly in the Edinburgh Review. I would (should) have made a very different hand at it indeed, had the order of the day been pour déchirer.'

All this was worthy of a Grub-street hack. In the first place, we see the utter want of principle, which palms off on the public dishonest reviewing, and then follows the miserable salvo for his own talents, by declaring what he would have done himself, had not the unjustifiable course he had actually taken, been part of the system. We hope all the devout believers in the Quarterly Review, of whom still a few trucking temperaments remain in this country, will ponder well on these matters; and it may help to liberate their faculties if they are told, that nothing is better understood in England, than the fact, that the publication in question was early discovered to be nothing but a party print, got up in the form of a review.

But a word remains to be said. This review of the 'Curse' was written *after the public confidence had been obtained*, by 'impartial disquisition,' thus carrying out the fraud *in extenso*!

But the whole history of the Quarterly Review is eloquence itself on the subject of Scott's motives, advice, and character, so far as he was connected with its establishment. In the first place, we have his letter to Gifford, a production every way unworthy of a man of probity, and still more so of a literary man; then his revelations to Thomas Scott, betraying a fraud on his brother in the original fraud, and his own precious confessions of the spirit in which he himself played the reviewer in this very periodical, so openly made, moreover, to a brother of the craft, as to leave no doubt that the practice was common. To complete the matter, the whole is laid before the world by the editor of the very review in question, with a *sang froid* that is altogether in keeping with the rest of the transaction! It is known that soldiers get to be so indifferent to fire, by exposure, as to disregard batteries, and it is fair to presume that a man can become so dead to the ordinary moral sensibilities, by too long familiarity with the practices of a publication like the Quarterly, as to fancy he is merely doing a clever thing, while all just men believe him a knave. There is another curious affair connected with Scott's letter to Ellis. It is without date, although, in general, Mr. Lockhart is so particular as to give dates, even when he gives mere extracts from the letters of his father-in-law. This letter is complete, from 'Dear Ellis,' down to 'Ever Yours,' *but it has no date*. It is certainly possible that Scott may have forgotten to date this particular letter, though there is one circumstance which induces us to suspect that the date has been suppressed, not *pour déchirer*, but, *pour cause*. We think the date has been suppressed, lest it should be seen that Scott had actually written the review on Southey, *previously to the date of the letter on an adjoining page*, in which he tells Southey that he had not seen his poem, but that Ballantyne, who was printing it, had excited his impatience by the accounts he gave of its beauties. Were the letter to Southey actually written subsequently to the letter to Ellis, the exposure would probably have been too strong, even for Mr. Lockhart's nerves. We are aware our suspicions would be unkind, or even unjustifiable, without more positive evidence, in the case of a man of established probity and sincerity of character; but neither Mr. Lockhart nor Sir Walter Scott can now come before the world with any pretensions to be superior to suspicions of this nature. Not to travel out of the record — and we could easily do it, if we chose, more especially in connection with a review of the life of McIntosh, not long since, in the Quarterly, but we hold it to be unnecessary — without travelling out of the record, then, what moral insensibility is betrayed by the man who coolly exposes to the world, Scott's false reviewing, and then audaciously claims for the latter a character of extreme goodness and virtue, that should place him above the suspicion of suppressing a date, at need? As for Scott, himself, had he actually written to Southey after he wrote the review, would it, in a moral sense, have been a worse act than the one he confessedly performed? But luckily, we have other evidence to show how far Sir Walter Scott could carry professions, when it suited his aim. Among many that offer, we select the following.

At page 273, vol. 1., in a letter to Mr. Ellis, Sir Walter Scott says: 'Poor Lord Melville! how does he look? We have had a miserable account of his health in London. *He was the architect of my little fortune*, from circumstances of personal regard merely; *for any of my trifling literary acquisitions were out of his way.*' Begging the reader to recollect, for another purpose, the last words italicised, we put the first in contrast to the following, which appears on the same page, in a letter to the late Duke of Buccleuch: 'I cannot help flattering myself — for perhaps it is flattering myself — *that the noble architect of the Border Minstrel's little fortune*, has been

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sometimes anxious for the security of that lowly edifice, during the tempest which has overturned so many palaces and towers.' The first of these letters was dated February 11th, and the other February 20th, 1806. Now did there exist but one of these letters, the person to whom that one referred would have had a perfect right to claim the honor of having been the architect of Scott's little fortune, but there having been two, the whole matter is left in its original darkness!

As it may be profitable to the American reader to expose the true character of the Quarterly Review still more, we shall pursue the investigation a little farther, in connection with that branch of the subject. At page 26th, vol. ii., Mr. Lockhart alludes to the well-known fact, that Sir Walter Scott reviewed himself in this periodical. The history of this transaction is now distinctly given, at least as distinctly given as Mr. Lockhart usually gives any thing, for there is scarcely a fact prejudicial to his subject, in the two volumes, that is fairly and fully laid before the reader; or, if the facts be given, the conclusions are either smothered entirely, or perverted from their true natures. It seems that in 1816, Scott volunteered to Mr. Murray to write a review of the 'Tales of my Landlord.' In the letter making this offer, he distinctly denies that he was the author of the Tales, offers to prove it by the very act of reviewing them, and merely asks for the assistance of Mr. Erskine. The review was furnished, it having been extended, at Murray's request, to a review of the whole series of the novels. Mr. Lockhart admits that Scott had been much censured for this act, but he thinks unjustly, as he does not believe that Scott wrote the passages *which contain the critical estimate of the Waverley novels*, which he ascribes to Erskine; and even if he did write them, that the estimate placed on the works was below rather than above their value. This apology will be found in a note at the page already mentioned.

A review, on its face, professes to be, as far as it goes, an impartial judgment, made up by an impartial judge. If authors were known to review their own works, few would take the trouble to read their strictures, and those who did, would regard the comments with very different eyes from what is usually done. When one reads a review, secretly written by the author himself, he becomes the subject of a deception, and this objection lies at the very threshold of Mr. Lockhart's apology; though one professionally engaged in all the chicanery that attends this branch of literature, may well have become indifferent to those points of feeling which influence men less indurated. The review of the novels was highly laudatory, though Mr. Lockhart thinks not sufficiently so. At all events, it did the novels great good, whereas, had it been known that it was written by the novelist, in person, it would probably have done the novels great harm, and thus a benefit was obtained by means of a false pretence. No man of true modesty, of much sensibility, of habitual fairness in his transactions, or of a strong love of truth, would have ever done what his biographer admits Scott did, even putting the biographer's version on the entire affair. But how do we know that Erskine had any connection at all with the article? Scott professed a wish that he might have the assistance of Mr. Erskine, but in the same letter, he deliberately and gratuitously denied that he was the author of the novels! One so fond of mystification, may have mystified on the subject of Mr. Erskine, as well as on the subject of the authorship. The review was entirely in the hand-writing of Scott, and Mr. Lockhart thinks the former took the pains to copy Erskine's eulogies on himself with a view to help along the mystification. Why should Scott do this? He had announced Erskine's expected assistance, and why wish to conceal it when obtained? Taking all together, in conjunction with Scott's known habits of deception, as we have shown them in this article to have existed, we are much more disposed to believe that the name of Erskine was introduced in the letter as a mere cloak, than to believe he wrote this part of the review, and that Scott took the trouble to copy

what he had written; for if it was desirable to *conceal* Erskine's agency, why was his name mentioned at all? Beside, Scott was censured for this review, and particularly for this part of it, and did he not take the precaution to preserve Erskine's manuscript? Did Mr. Erskine himself say nothing to exculpate his friend, or is the world to be put off with a loose conjecture of a man who evidently thinks self-reviewing a very venial affair?

But this instance of self-reviewing, on the part of Scott, does not stand alone. Hogg, in his *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, mentions another, that is exceedingly curious. It will be found pp. 161 to 166, inclusive, of Harper's edition of that book, where Mr. Hogg, in substance, tells the following story. A review had appeared, in which, to use his own words, Scott was put 'at the head' and he (Hogg) 'at the tail' of living English poets. Irritated at this comparison, Hogg wrote a severe article in reply, in which Scott thought there were allusions to his prejudice. A quarrel ensued, and Hogg justified himself, by saying that he had written his own attack, under the impression that Scott was the writer of the injurious comparison, but that he believed it no longer, as *Ballantyne had told him that Southey, who actually furnished the article, was the real critic*. By the latter statement, Scott was pacified. Hogg, however, goes on to add, that *Southey had subsequently assured him that he did not write the article*, though it had been furnished to the magazine through his hands, and that *he himself believed that Scott was actually its author!* Mr. Hogg adds, that Scott never took the simple course of *denying* that he had written the article, and that he now suspects that he, in fact, *did* write it. The whole story is worthy of perusal, as it generally betrays the gross system of fraud that is practised on the world by some of its greatest names, and has all the air of truth about it. Mr. Lockhart accuses Hogg of ingratitude to Scott, but he does not refute this story. Mr. Southey is living, and his part of the affair might easily have been confirmed or denied; but Mr. Lockhart evidently considers the practices of regular reviewers as very innocent things. Scott tells us himself, page 484, vol. i., in a letter to Lady Davy, in speaking of his family affairs, and after his son-in-law was engaged with the *Quarterly*: 'Lockhart is, I think, *in his own line*. A less equivocal opinion, after all Sir Walter Scott confessedly *knew of the origin, intentions, and character of the Quarterly*, could hardly have been expressed.

Keeping all these facts in view, and very many more might be added to them on the conjoint testimony of Sir Walter Scott and Mr. Lockhart, it must require the credulity of a believer in Animal Magnetism, or in Mormonism, to think the former a man of high moral sensibilities, upright mind, simple practices, or ingenuous habits. The love of mystification must have been strong indeed, to overcome all the scruples that will readily suggest themselves to less artificial temperaments; and we might think better of Sir Walter Scott's mystifications, even, if we could find a single instance in which they had not been practised to his especial benefit.

Common report has long made the principle failing of Scott's character, a profound and besetting deference for hereditary rank and power. Poetical minds are apt to entertain this feeling, which so readily assumes the aspect of a sentiment, and which, in fact, is intimately associated with so much that is beautiful and interesting in the recollections of the past. We defer, in a degree, to historical names ourselves, believe the influence of long-established respectability to be useful, and heartily wish this country was well sprinkled with a territorial gentry, that depended solely on their moral claims for ascendancy, as the promoters of taste, local attachments, and social order. So far from quarrelling with Scott for such a weakness, if weakness it be, we should be disposed to defend his predilection, when not carried beyond the bounds of discretion. We know, from personal observation,

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however, that with Sir Walter Scott, 'a saint in crape was twice a saint in lawn,' and that he had a strong propensity to see more good qualities in a duke, than in an earl; but until we read this book, we had no just notion of the real motive that lay at the root of all this subserviency. After the testimony that is profusely scattered through these volumes, after analyzing character, and tracing motives to their sources, we find it impossible not to believe, that a cold and calculating worldly expediency, and disposition to advance his own fortunes, in short, a regular old-fashioned *Scotticism*, was the cause of all.

Let us exemplify what we say, by some proofs. While Scott was in his noviciate as a great man, he was noticed by the Princess of Wales. Now this unfortunate woman, in a political sense, was a tool of the Whigs, and party could have had no influence with the poet. At that time, the lady was a paragon, and her husband an ogre. At a later day, the Prince Regent smiled on him, when the wife was deserted for the husband. Of the character of that husband, it is scarcely necessary to speak, since it was marked by nearly all that was false, and redeemed by nothing. He was a king, and that was all that could be said of him. As such, however, he had influence enough to make baronets, officers in the army, clerks in the public offices, and to grant pensions on the privy purse. This was sufficient for Scott, whose love for this monarch — of whom, by the way, he had spoken with sufficient freedom previously — like that of Saul for Jonathan, was 'passing the love of women.' We give a letter that has lately appeared in the *Memoirs of Sir William Knighton*, as a specimen of Scott's management with this prince:

"MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM,

I have a circumstance to mention which concerns myself only, and therefore would be most unworthy of being mentioned to his Majesty, were it not that as his Majesty has distinguished me by elevating my rank in society, I conceive his goodness will be gratified by knowing that the approaching marriage of my eldest son to a very amiable young lady, with a considerable fortune, promises to enable those who may follow me, to support suitably the mark of honor which his Majesty has conferred on me.

The lady's independent fortune is so far very valuable to me, that it permits my son to marry before my death, and gives me permission, if it please God, to look a generation farther into futurity: but these would be of little consequence, were I not satisfied, as I have every reason to be, with the good sense and amiable qualities of my future daughter, and my son pleased with her person and accomplishments.

"I can only add to these uninteresting details, that my son's bride is named Miss Jobson of Lock, which she soon exchanges for the more chivalrous name (if I may be allowed to say so) which his Majesty lately distinguished with a baronetcy. I hope those who may succeed to that honor may always remember by whom it was conferred, and be ready to serve their sovereign by word, and pen, and sword, when wanted.

"Pray suppress this letter, if the communication be assuming too much upon his Majesty's encouraging goodness. I am sure the intelligence will be gratifying to you personally even if it is not proper to carry it elsewhere.

I have the honor to be,

Dear Sir William,

Your most faithful,

and obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

Edinburgh, 21st Jan., 1825.

"Perhaps I ought to add, that my son, who is warmly attached to his profession, is to continue in the army, and the young lady, though brought up in the character of an only child, has taken up the old ditty,

'Mount and go,—mount and make ready,—
Mount and go, and be a soldier's lady.'

So they set off to join the fifteenth hussars in Ireland, so soon as circumstances will permit."

A more whining and pitiful letter than this, was never written by a gentleman, or a man of talents. It is almost abject, and the medium through which it was sent, was as objectionable, as its motive was obvious. This Sir William Knighton was the confidant of George IV., and was employed in his private agencies. We re-

member that, in 1828, a report prevailed, in the high circles of London, that he was in Germany, negotiating an establishment for an illegitimate child of the king, by a married woman. In short, he has the reputation, and we doubt not justly, of doing all such offices for his master, and great injustice has been done that master, if the money used was always honestly obtained. Kings are seldom safe factors, and George IV. did not escape severe imputations of this nature. The motive of Scott's letter is to be found in the postscript. His son was about to be married, and promotion was desirable, on the occasion. This promotion was actually obtained, and Sir Walter went on to use his 'word and pen,' if not 'his sword,' in behalf of those whom he thought it was a pity 'could not be decent, if not correct and moral.' So profound did Scott's deference for his sovereign become, that, in more than one instance, he actually affirms, in these volumes, that he was king *de jure*, in defiance of the claims of the descendants of Charles I., and *through females*, (let this be remembered,) of whom some twenty or thirty stood before him, according to those laws, by which the right *de jure* could alone be transmitted. Scott was a genealogist, and must have known this fact, and even Mr. Lockhart looks upon his declaration, as a singular proof of a delusion *growing out of his loyalty*! Let us apply a very simple test to this sentiment.

According to the laws of the British empire, females take the crown; according to the laws of clanship, a male is the head of a clan, the system being patriarchal. Now Scott shows his loyalty to George IV., who was king *de facto*, and not king *de jure*; and his homage to the Duke of Buccleuch as his chieftain, who was precisely in the same predicament, although the principles under which the incumbents held, were exactly different in the two cases. In other words, Scott was true to the instinct of his own interests, by showing loyalty to a sovereign, whose right is derived from a revolution, and arbitrary political enactments, to the prejudice of female rights; and homage to a chief who derived all the right he had, through females, though females cannot carry chieftainship! To be more explicit: George IV. was king of England *de facto*, while the Duchess of Modena, (we believe the right is in her,) is Queen of England *de jure*, and the Duke of Buccleuch was head of the clan Scott *de facto*, while Mr. Lockhart himself tells us that Lord Napier is the head *de jure*.^{*} Scott, in both instances, sticks closely to the fact, leaving sentiment and right to take care of themselves; the Duke of Buccleuch holding through females, who cannot carry chieftainship, if we understand the laws of the clans, on the one hand, and George IV., in the teeth of the old law, holding to the prejudice of females, who, according to the law of England, could inherit the crown. Thus we see, that Scott is always true to actual power, and just as far as possible from displaying that high-toned feeling in favor of hereditary right, that Mr. Lockhart claims for him.

The reader may better understand our distinction, when he is told, that in the male line, the Dukes of Buccleuch are descended from a bastard son of Charles II., by Mrs. Crofts, the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth, and that they got their titles and estates through an heiress of the house of Buccleuch. What renders this sentiment of Mr. Lockhart still more questionable, is the use to which Scott puts his homage. From the king he obtains various important favors, by means of letters like that written to Sir William Knighton, and the duke he styles the 'architect of his little fortunes.' Sentiment would avoid, instead of seeking, such favors.

We desired the reader to note the admission of Scott, that Lord Melville had not favored him *on account of his literary claims*, but for what he chooses to term *per-*

^{*} Mr. Lockhart may not use these words, but he says, that he thinks Lord Napier, who had also changed his name for a fortune, is the male head of the house of Scott.

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sonal regard. Abstract personal regard was one of the last things for which Henry Dundas would become the 'architect' of any man's 'little fortune.' He was Pitt's manager for Scotland, and he has the reputation of having employed more corruption in discharging that trust, than any man of modern times. Now we deem Scott's admission as confirmatory of an accusation of the Scottish Whigs, who charge him with having been, in secret, one of the most ruthless political writers of their country; and this, always, let it be remembered, in behalf of those whom he thinks might be bought with the gold of Napoleon! Although the evidence in this case is not as unanswerable as in most of those which Mr. Lockhart furnishes against Scott's disinterestedness and principles, it is, in our eyes, one of the clearest admissions in the book, as to the real history of his career. To be favored by Henry Dundas, for the motives that usually influenced his favor, is to us sufficient; although it is probable that the Quarterly will throw itself into one of its melo-dramatic attitudes, and remind us that we 'are writing of the Rt. Hon. Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville!'

We have dwelt on these things, because we know that much error exists in this country, concerning the value of men and opinions in the other hemisphere, and more particularly in England; because we are satisfied that advantage is taken of an ascendancy obtained by the foulest agencies, not only to influence the public mind in America, to the advantage of antagonist interests, but to our own direct detriment; and because we regret to see a disposition to view principles, abroad and at home, through their connection with the conduct of great men, instead of viewing great men through their connection with acts and principles.

Mr. Lockhart's book — though apart from its mystifications, and its obtuseness in matters of moral concern, it is sufficiently manly as a whole — is not entirely without a certain sort of puerility, that is only too common with the sentimental school of biographers, but from which he ought to have been free. Of this class of portraying, is the anecdote he relates, how Lady Scott got up new chintz curtains, how Sir Walter did not discover the improvement, and how he complimented his wife's taste, when the fact was pointed out to him! If this story is told by way of showing what an amiable person Scott was, it is absurd, as probably there is not the man living, to whom some such incidents have not occurred. It is in singular contradiction to this attempt at extraordinary amiability, moreover, that Mr. Lockhart tells us, no one dared to let Scott into the secret of the falling off in the sales of his novels, and this, too, at a moment when it was of the last importance to his interests that he should be apprized of the facts.

Mr. Lockhart also assumes, that it was a thing altogether without precedent, the 'gallant manner,' as he terms it, in which Scott set about writing a new book, before he was aware of the reception of the last. Perhaps there is nothing more common in the course of an author's life, than this very 'gallantry,' and Mr. Lockhart ought to have known it. It is no unusual circumstance for authors to have several works in progress at the same moment; some just about to be published, some just published, and others just commenced. We mention these trifles, as they tend to mislead the uninstructed, and as blemishes in a work that might well depend on its more material matter had that matter been fairly offered to the world.

We pass over the affair of Miss Seward, and several others, that discover similar traits in Scott, in order to find room for things of greater gravity. His alienation from his brother, bespeaks any thing but that extreme goodness of heart, on which his biographer dwells with so much stress, nor does it say much for the nature or depth of his religious impressions. It would seem that this brother, whose name was Daniel, had been guilty of some crimes, moral or legal, we know not which, and was sent to the West Indies, where employment was found for him, under a friend. This

person, with whom Scott occasionally corresponded on the subject, was left in profound ignorance of the precise degree of affinity, even, that existed between his correspondent and the individual in his employment. On some occasion, Daniel Scott showed a want of courage, when Scott dropped him entirely, carrying his resentment to the grave, for he even refused to attend his funeral. Mr. Lockhart, as usual, seems to think that some very heroic quality lay at the bottom of this conduct. As we are left in the dark as to the brother's original misconduct, we can say nothing of the course Scott took in the outset; quite likely it was right; but the pretension that a man was so brave himself, that cowardice was odious to him, is in the last degree absurd. The truly brave have the most consideration for the infirmities of others; and the most thoroughly lion-hearted man we ever knew, rebuked his officers because they did not allow the seamen to 'duck,' when they first went into fire. It is scarcely possible to read this account, without seeing that Scott was more hurt by the disgrace reflected on himself by the bad conduct of his brother, than by any abstract reverence for virtue. The best part of the affair is, that Sir Walter Scott deeply repented, afterward, of the course he had taken. Still the transaction must take its place in the catalogue of his deeds, else might a tardy repentance make a pure biography of a very corrupt life.

Mr. Lockhart has not very distinctly told the story of Scott's efforts to pay his debts, which has probably done more than any thing else to give the great man a high personal character with the world, though he has given us nearly all the facts that are necessary to make up an opinion for ourselves. As much deception has been practised in this matter, we will consider it regularly, though briefly.

Sir Walter Scott early became a sleeping partner in the establishment of the Ballantynes, who were printers, publishers, and, we believe, stationers. In the course of time, this house became involved with that of Constable, and the failure of the latter brought down Ballantyne and Scott. What was the precise connection between the two firms, that rendered the latter liable for so large an amount of debt, is not known. Sir Walter Scott has been censured, blindly, for having entered into such a connection at all, and has been as blindly commended for the manner in which he devoted himself to the extinguishment of debts that, personally, he never contracted. The world may, and probably it does, decide right, in the end, in all those cases in which it can arrive at the truth; but truth is the most difficult thing for man to reach, and it would not much exceed the fact, if we were to add, that he never finds it, without some alloy, when there are any interested in concealing it.

The occupation of a printer and publisher is, *per se*, an honest occupation; and it is far more creditable to Scott to have embarked in such an enterprise, than to have employed his money in nine-tenths of the speculations, in which the noble and quasi honorable daily do engage. There was nothing improper in the pursuit; and Walter Scott might much more creditably make a hundred pounds by employing workmen on a press, than in writing false reviews for the Quarterly. We dismiss this part of the subject, then, as unworthy of serious comment, and turn to its more important features.

When Scott's eldest son married, the father settled on him the estate of Abbotsford as a make-weight against the lands of Lock. Now, Scott was bound to ascertain how far Abbotsford was his, in law and in honor, before he took any step of this magnitude. If he owed money, or was indirectly liable for debts of any sort, the creditor had a right to insist he should not put his property out of his hands, but that it should be kept in a situation to meet his liabilities. In this particular, then, Scott erred, though there is no reason to suppose that he erred wilfully, since all his collateral conduct, and all the divulged facts, go to show, that his sin was a sin of omission, instead of being one of commission. In short, he was ignorant of his true situ-

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ation overrated his prospective receipts, and probably had not the smallest intention of wronging any one, when he made the settlement. If the nature of the connection with Constable had been clearly put, as it ought to have been put, it is probable we might have had it in our power to say, that the settlement, under the circumstances, was absolutely proper. But Mr. Lockhart, while he tells us so much, tells nothing very explicitly that involves the real character of Scott. He writes like a man who is fond of ambiguity, in all such cases. He makes, however, one sensible and fair remark, by stating that Scott, had he contemplated fraud, might have called in all the old securities, and issued new ones, after the marriage, with a view to defeat the lien. Had the debts which existed at the moment of the failure, existed at the time of the settlement, we do not see how the latter could destroy this lien. When the failures, and Scott's liabilities, became public, the creditors claimed a right to hold the estate of Abbotsford responsible for their demands; but Mr. Lockhart tells us, that they soon became sensible that the property, for the moment at least, was beyond their reach. It is therefore possible there had actually been a substitution of new debts for the old ones, in the interval, in the regular course of business, and without Scott's agency; but the settlement itself became no protection against the claims of the creditors, in the event that the son had no issue by the particular lady he had already married. At the time of the failure, the parties had been married a year, or more, and there being no appearance of issue, a case was created that rendered it doubtful whether there ever would be children by that marriage. The twelve years that have succeeded, have confirmed the doubt which then arose, the present Sir Walter Scott being still childless.

We have now what may be termed the legal facts of the case, and a few words will put us in possession of those that are less technical. At the period when the Ballantynes failed, three out of four of Sir Walter Scott's children were, in a measure, provided for. Lady Scott soon after died, and there remained only Sir Walter, his daughter Anne, and himself, to support. To do this, Sir Walter had an official income of near eight thousand dollars a year. How much, or how little, or whether any portion of his two salaries was appropriated to the payment of his debts, does not appear. We know, however, from personal observation, that Sir Walter Scott maintained the appearance and manner of living of a gentleman, after his failure. Abbotsford was his residence, and when in London and Paris, he kept his own carriage, never using hackney-coaches, etc. All this we presume he did out of his salaries. These salaries, then, put Sir Walter Scott in a very different situation from that of most bankrupts. In his circumstances, with Abbotsford so peculiarly placed, so far from its being an extraordinary act that he should attempt to pay his debts, it would have been extraordinary had he not attempted it.

Although the creditors of Ballantyne and Co. might not have an *immediate* claim on Abbotsford, there was always a probability that they would have an *eventual* claim on that estate; a fact that, of itself, puts a very different complexion on the whole affair; since Sir Walter Scott, devoting himself to hopeless toil, from a sentiment of probity, and Sir Walter Scott, virtually working to pay off a mortgage for the benefit of his posterity, present very different pictures to the world.

There is still another point of view, in which truth requires that we should regard this matter. The debts were enormous, and considered in reference to the pen as a means of payment, they strike the imagination with unusual force; but nothing can be plainer than the fact, that Scott, with his great talents, and unprecedented popularity, could discharge an enormous debt more readily with his pen, than many a man, engaged in pursuits in connection with which we are more accustomed to deem thousands of no great importance. It is plain, his devotion ought to be altogether measured by his means; and the man who could command some forty or fifty thousand dollars for a work like the *Life of Napoleon*, was aided by fortuitous circum-

stances of great account. These circumstances detract from his devotion, precisely as they do credit to his talents.

But we are not at a loss to know how Scott regarded his means, since he has spoken frankly of the prospects under which he devoted himself to the task of paying his debts, in a letter to Mr. Morrit, page 483, vol. II., where he says: 'I have obtained an arrangement of payment, convenient for every body concerned, and easy for myself.' We have touched on this point, as great injustice is done to others, laboring under similar difficulties, by the senseless hurrahs of the world. Notwithstanding the manner in which the public has been dazzled by the grand scale on which Scott conducted his literary operations, it is probable that a hundred cases have occurred, in our own times, in which writers have shown greater devotion to their duties, suffering and toiling in unobtrusive silence. All the merit, of an exclusive nature, that can be claimed for Scott, in this transaction, is that of possessing the rare qualities to command such vast sums by his pen; but this touches his talents, rather than his principles.

We shall barely allude to the Diary. As a literary composition, it has rare beauties and egregious faults. In the way of morals, it is more exceptionable. This, too, is another instance, in which the world suffers itself to be mystified by appearances. Most persons read a diary as they would ponder over the parting sentiments of a dying man, whereas all its records are as much made under the influence of the passions, errors, and impulses, of this state of being, as any other species of composition. When, as in Scott's case, there is a perfect conviction that what is written will certainly be published, it almost amounts to fraud, since the air of confidential communications with one's self, is a sheer deception. We confess we were shocked with the avowal that Scott makes, where he tells us, and under such circumstances, too, that he has sworn never to erase a syllable that he had written in this diary! If his declaration was sincere, it discovers a want of feeling, since every man ought to stand ready to correct his errors, and the diary is not sufficiently exempt from unjust comments on others, to be beyond this reproach; and if not sincere, it was a fraudulent parade of an unmeaning frankness before the reader. This diary, too, was conceived in puerility, and in imitation, even to the affectation of the 'Gurnal,' the whole being manifestly taken from Byron's manly and quaint, though not faultless, record of the same nature. None but a strictly conscientious man, to say nothing of other qualities, should ever leave a diary for publication.

There are many facts illustrative of Scott's true character, that remain to be examined, but for lack of room, we shall allude to only one more. It appears, by the Diary, that Lady Scott had been gradually wasting away for two years. Scott tells us that he had foreseen the result for that length of time. On the eleventh of May, he leaves Abbotsford for Edinburgh, with a perfect consciousness of the danger of his wife; his daughter Anne promising to send him constant information of her mother's state of health. The record in the Diary, on taking leave, is bad; being words, as substitutes for feelings and duty. He complains, it is true, of the necessity of leaving his wife, at such a moment; but we nowhere learn what that necessity was. Important, all-important, as this reason is, in making up an estimate of the heart and real character of his subject, Mr. Lockhart does not add a word of explanation to what is said in the Diary. Scott complains a little, in measured language, of the hardship of being compelled to quit the bedside of his wife, but the record is so forced as to wear the appearance of an apology. He goes to Edinburgh, where he remains until the 15th, when he gets the news of Lady Scott's death. The Diary tells us that she had been *much worse* for the last two days. As soon as he heard of the death of his wife, Scott returns to Abbotsford, where he finds his daughter in

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hysterics. Now how is this apparent desertion of the death-bed of a wife to be explained? Is all we have heard of his domestic qualities, and of his goodness of heart, a deception, or has this extraordinary abandonment of one of the first of his duties been left unexplained, by inadvertency? We have met with various answers, when we have asked for an explanation. Some think duty in court called Scott away. No court would be so exacting, and a right-feeling man would not have obeyed its mandate, if it had. Others believe his sensibilities drove him to Edinburgh. We have no faith in those natural feelings that do not produce natural results; and, moreover, the Diary itself contradicts this, as its author alludes to some other necessity for quitting his wife, though it is a necessity that ceased as soon as *she was dead*. Perhaps Miss Scott deceived him with false intelligence. This is unnatural, and opposed to her pledge. Perhaps she remained silent. Would a man of kind and domestic feelings, conscious of the danger, remain in ignorance, within a few hours' journey of a dying wife? If intelligence did not come to him, would he not go after the intelligence?

Again! The Diary professes to record Scott's feelings on his return. Would not the prevailing emotion of an affectionate husband, under such circumstances, be anguish, and having been kept from the side of his wife, to watch over her wants, to catch her last gleam of intelligence and love, to hear her last sigh? Sir Walter Scott speaks of 'pinched features,' and 'symmetrical limbs,' but there is no regret, of the sort we have named, in the Diary. If he did not feel this regret, this anguish, what are we to think of the man? If he did feel it, what are we to think of the Diary? We beg the reader to turn to this portion of the work, and to examine it for himself.

We have said nothing of Scott as a writer. The subject has been too often discussed, to require any thing but an elaborate criticism, from attempting which we are precluded by the character and limits of a monthly magazine. On the whole, we do not think Mr. Lockhart overrates Scott's powers, though we might differ from him in the details. Perhaps no two men would entirely coincide in their estimates of the works of so powerful and voluminous an author. There are, notwithstanding, one or two points connected with this branch of the subject, on which we differ *toto cælo* from Mr. Lockhart. He claims for Scott a high character as a moral writer. In a negative sense, Sir Walter Scott is sufficiently correct; but affirmatively, it strikes us his claims, in this respect, are of very little moment. We scarcely know a writer who so often limited his object to a pleasing exhibition of manners and customs, without any ulterior moral aim, as Scott. Even his besetting weakness, deference for power, pervades his works, rather as a reflection of his habits of mind, than as a matter of design. His sole object was to direct the imagination of the reader, or perhaps it were still truer to say, that he gave vent to the workings of his own fertile imagination, and dashed on paper the passing images of his teeming brain, without other thought of any moral consequences, than a proper care not to offend. His incidental reflections were seldom profound or original, though, like all he did, they were agreeable, and introduced with tact.

The pretension of Mr. Lockhart, that to Sir Walter Scott is the world indebted for the healthful class of novels that have succeeded, and indeed eradicated, the sickly sentimentalism of the old school, is so extravagant as almost to amount to audacity. We see in it the cool assertion of the hireling reviewer, rather than the well-weighed remark of the historian and biographer. To say nothing of twenty others, Miss Edgeworth alone had supplanted the sentimentalists, before Scott was known, even as a poet. This whole school, which includes Mrs. Opie, Mrs. More, Miss Austin, and Mrs. Brunton, not to say Madame D'Arblay, was quite as free from sentimentalism as Scott, and, because less heroic, perhaps more true to every-day nature. Still he was vastly their superior, for he raised the novel, as near as might be, to the

dignity of the epic. Neither was Scott the head of his own particular heroic school, except in talents. The Scottish Chiefs alone, to say nothing of others, was a work of his own country, class, and peculiar subject, differing from a Waverly merely in power. We have known persons, however, so much bewitched with this transcendent power, as to fancy that Scott wrote the first novel the world ever saw; and to this day, very many persons suppose he was the introducer of the custom of placing mottoes at the heads of chapters. All this proves the great influence of his pen, no doubt, but it also proves the delusions to which it gave birth.

The greatest peculiarity of Scott, as a writer, was *tact* in throwing a high degree of grace around all he did. He has been surpassed in invention, in power, and in vividness of description; in nice delineations of character even, though rarely; but he has never been equalled in this faculty. In many cases in which he has failed in his conceptions, he has redeemed himself by the graceful manner in which he has presented his fallacies. He had a just estimate of men, more especially in their vices and weaknesses; and thus we find, that while most of his loftier characters are the heroes of tradition, his representatives of vice are inventions, that betray an intimate knowledge of the corrupt workings of the human heart. The faculty we have mentioned, not only pervaded the writings of Scott, but it strikes us that it pervaded the entire character of the man. It was, in truth, the art of seemliness, of *vraisemblance* in delineation, of appearances in practice; and its effect, in the latter case, was to render that pleasing to the senses, which was in truth obnoxious to the censures of the right-minded and just. Even the very letters that we have quoted in this article, possess this charm of manner, and some of them will require more than one reading, to enable the ordinary observer to detect all their innate want of principle.

To the peculiarity named, however, Scott added high powers of the imagination, though they were subordinate rather than inventive, requiring to be quickened by associations, and depending as much on memory, as on any other faculty of the mind. Thrown purely on his own naked resources, unaided by legend and traditions, and reading, and the poetical habits of a poetical country, Scott would have had many superiors; and thus it is that we find him more disposed to embellish than to create. The fitness of his particular excellence for his particular style of writing, has induced many to give him credit for more general powers than he possessed; but Scott was probably conscious that his *forte* lay in this indirect copying. Whatever he could see, or read of, he could portray with an ability that baffled competition; and although he necessarily often misconceived his originals, he threw so much seeming reality around his pictures, that even those who ought to have known better, were frequently puzzled to distinguish between the true and the false. This faculty of creating a *vraisemblance*, is next to that of a high invention, in a novelist; and as it was sustained in Scott by the additional, or perhaps it were better to say the subsidiary, powers of the humorous, the dramatic, the pathetic, and the eloquent, the united qualities put him at once at the head of his class.

The personal character of Scott, as is only too often the case, strikes us as having been a union of good and bad qualities. We do not know that there is proof to establish any thing unusual, either for or against him, in this respect; for if his virtues were those that are generally found in men of his social condition, his failings were sufficiently common. The effort which has been made to set him up as a model character, is abundantly absurd; and to make it in the face of this book, is presuming too much on the ignorance and compliance of mankind; for while the biography has been followed by the usual unmeaning adulation of the periodicals, a quiet sentiment has been working adversely among the observing and the discreet, ever since Mr. Lockhart's book appeared. There are no apparent reasons to doubt Scott's courage, his liberality, his philanthropy, in the ordinary meaning of the term, his probity in

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every day transactions, or his neighborly propensities; while there is no proof, but phrases, to show that he possessed either quality, in an unusual degree. We presume, had he not been the great writer he was, he would have passed among the mass of his fellow creatures, as remarkable in neither respect, on these several points. It is so much a matter of course for a man to love those nearest to him of kin, that we should never have dreamed of calling in question his ordinary goodness of heart, or his possession of the domestic affections, but for his own account of the manner in which he was absent from the death-bed of his wife. On the other hand, it is not easy to suppose, after the proof that has been here furnished, and much more that might be adduced, had we room, that Scott was a man of nice moral sensibilities; of lively perceptions of right and wrong, except as right and wrong are subjected to the comments of the world; of even common sincerity; of a proper degree of frankness; of true simplicity of character; of a just manliness in matters touching his own interests; or of due independence of thought, or conduct. To claim these qualities for him, after Mr. Lockhart's *evidence* to the contrary, (we put his *opinions* out of the question,) is to deny the inevitable consequences of admitted causes. The high moral qualities which this gentleman claims for his father-in-law, directly in the teeth of his own testimony, leave no alternative between the suspicion of a profound mystification, and a belief that the biographer's notions of what high moral qualities are, are neither very settled nor very accurate. Scott was a man of a century, as respects talents; one of the mass, as regards motives and principles. He had a keen relish for the humorous, and, placed beyond the necessity, imaginary or real, of artifice, he would most probably have been a hearty, convivial, and winning companion. The disposition to conviviality, indeed, was strong within him, and probably, under the influence of Scottish habits, it contributed to the breaking up of his constitution. Following early the bias he had taken toward advancement, however, nature was soon supplanted by factitious expedients, and it was only on occasions, or when among his youthful associates, that he showed himself in the true colors of his originally hearty character. Circumstances soon made him an actor, (he tells us even the precise time, where he alludes to his introduction into the society of his superiors,) and possessing a native aptitude to seemliness, he succeeded in making his acting pass for nature, with those who had not the opportunities for comparison, or who were deficient in observation. His ambition led him to aspire to a place among the cold, artificial aristocracy of England; and, jealous of his own original position, he never acquired their ease, while he did assume a large portion of their marble-like mannerism. Still, the impulses of the natural man would sometimes break down these restraints, and glimpses of his conscious superiority were had through the veil of convention. But, on the whole, he was an actor in general society, to a degree even exceeding the arbitrary laws of the world. Without this acquired desire to assimilate himself to a caste, Scott might have been of simple manners; but with this disposition, his simplicity of deportment was elaborately feigned, though, like all he chose to embellish, so well feigned as to induce most observers to believe it true. We question if it would be easy to find another man who, in mixed society, so rarely expressed his true sentiments, or betrayed his real emotions. It is unnecessary to say, that there could be no simplicity of character in all this.

Had Sir Walter Scott not been so great a man in the estimation of the world, he would have been a much more estimable man, in a moral point of view; and had he been a more estimable man, in a moral point of view, it is not probable he would have been so great a man in the estimation of the world; since his acting, in a measure, was necessary to secure an approbation that is certain to depend on conflicting principles. As he was ambitious of, so was he careful to preserve, his personal popularity, of which we have a striking proof, in the studied kindnesses that for years

were laid before this country, in deeds and words, as compared with his real acts and sentiments toward America and Americans, which are now revealed in his letters. That which he did so surpassingly well in his tales, by throwing around all he delineated a grace of manner that almost supplanted truth, he did equally well in life, by successfully substituting appearances for reality. In short, he paid the penalty of popularity, by being compelled to feign that which he did not feel, say that which he did not think, and do that which he did not desire. He visited the infirmities of a brother with relentless severity, and shut his eyes to the vices of a profligate king; and yet he did both so gracefully, as to cause Mr. Lockhart to think, that, in the one case he was influenced by a stern regard for the higher virtues, and in the other by a sentiment so venerable and lofty, as to clothe it in the garb of poetry! Although, in his acts, he was true to the instinct of his interests, he had the address so to conceal the motive, that it became exposed only when brought to the tests of reason and principles. He was not avaricious, in the vulgar acceptation; his object being advancement on a large scale, rather than pence; though the pretension of the extent of his secret charities involves a contradiction, since that which was strictly private could not have been known, and that which is negligently or coquettishly revealed, must take its place among the less orthodox virtues. Every man of probity must regret, that one gifted as Scott, could so completely mistake the expedient for the right, the seeming for the real, the false for the true. Still we must admit this was the fact, or deny the existence of principles that are immutable.

Until we read this book, we have already said, we believed that a profound deference for rank, a weakness that resulted from education and the factitious state of society in which he had been educated, lay at the root of Scott's principal infirmity, and that when he erred, it was a failing rather than a vice. But after reading this book, we deem it impossible not to see, that his needle was true to the pole of interest, and that no other delusion than one of the most vulgar character had any influence on him, however excellently the motive might, at the passing moment, be concealed. He may have had the pride of talents; it is difficult to believe otherwise; but he could not have had pride of character. The self-reviewer — the habitual mystifier in matters touching his own interests — the flatterer of dissolute princes and vapid nobles — the humble follower of wealth and power, could not have possessed that lofty sentiment, which dignifies, though it may not justify, pride. In a word, untrammelled by any of those nice sensibilities that mark great characters, in a moral sense, Scott well understood the important difference, in the eyes of mankind, between 'being' and 'seeming;' and supported by the faculty of representation that sustained his literary fame, a species of dramatic morality, it is quite probable that, beside deceiving Mr. Lockhart — a matter of no great difficulty, we should think, from the blundering manner in which this gentleman reveals his moral *non sequiters* — he deceived even himself. Admitting this to have been true, he would not have been the first, by many, who was the dupe of his own artifices. All Scott's sentiment, on which his biographer has dilated with so much unction, pointed to self. If he venerated the head of his clan, he got his endorsements on his notes; if he were so loyal as to obscure his knowledge of history, he contrived to get baronetcies, commissions in the army, and places in the public offices, out of the mistake. A shrewd judge of human nature, in its lower aspects, he resorted to his governing agency of seemliness to the last, and endeavored to maintain his assumed character with posterity, by designating a biographer qualified by profession, practice, devotion to a bad cause, and we apprehend by nature, to 'make the worse appear the better reason.'

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