

realities to him; and he accepted knighthood from his king's hand in exactly the same spirit which determined his attitude of humility towards his "chief," the Duke of Buccleugh, and which impelled him to exhaust his genius in the effort to build up a great family estate.

There were already signs that the enormous burden of work under which he seemed to move so lightly, was telling on him. *The Bride of Lammermoor*, *The Legend of Montrose*, and *Ivanhoe*, had all of them been dictated between screams of pain, wrung from his lips by a chronic cramp of the stomach. By the time he reached *Redgauntlet* and *St. Ronan's Well*, there began to be heard faint murmurings of discontent from his public, hints that he was writing too fast, and that the noble wine he had poured them for so long was growing at last a trifle watery. To add to these causes of uneasiness, the commercial ventures in which he was interested drifted again into a precarious state. He had himself fallen into the bad habit of forestalling the gains from his novels by heavy drafts on his publishers, and the example thus set was followed faithfully by John Ballantyne. Scott's good humor and his partner's bad judgment saddled the concern with a lot of unsalable books. In 1818 the affairs of the book-selling business had to be closed up, Constable taking over the unsalable stock and assuming the outstanding liabilities in return for copyright privileges covering some of Scott's

novels. This so burdened the veteran publisher that when, in 1825, a large London firm failed, it carried him down also—and with him James Ballantyne, with whom he had entered into close relations. Scott's secret connection with Ballantyne had continued; accordingly he woke up one fine day to find himself worse than beggared, being personally liable for one hundred and thirty thousand pounds.

IV

The years intervening between this calamity and Scott's death form one of the saddest and at the same time most heroic chapters in the history of literature. The fragile health of Lady Scott succumbed almost immediately to the crushing blow, and she died in a few months. Scott surrendered Abbotsford to his creditors and took up humble lodgings in Edinburgh. Here, with a pride and stoical courage as quiet as it was splendid, he settled down to fill with the earnings of his pen the vast gulf of debt for which he was morally scarcely responsible at all. In three years he wrote *Woodstock*, three *Chronicles of the Canongate*, the *Fair Maid of Perth*, *Anne of Geierstein*, the first series of the *Tales of a Grandfather*, and a *Life of Napoleon*, equal to thirteen volumes of novel size, besides editing and annotating a complete edition of his own works. All these together netted his creditors £40,000. Touched by the efforts he was

making to settle their claims, they now presented him with Abbotsford, and thither he returned to spend the few years remaining to him. In 1830 he suffered a first stroke of paralysis; refusing to give up, however, he made one more desperate rally to recapture his old power of story-telling. *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous* were the pathetic result; they are not to be taken into account in any estimate of his powers, for they are manifestly the work of a paralytic patient. The gloomy picture is darkened by an incident which illustrates strikingly one phase of Scott's character.

The great Reform Bill was being discussed throughout Scotland, menacing what were really abuses, but what Scott, with his intense conservatism, believed to be sacred and inviolable institutions. The dying man roused himself to make a stand against the abominable bill. In a speech which he made at Jedburgh, he was hissed and hooted by the crowd, and he left the town with the dastardly cry of "Burk Sir Walter!" ringing in his ears.

Nature now intervened to ease the intolerable strain. Scott's anxiety concerning his debt gradually gave way to an hallucination that it had all been paid. His friends took advantage of the quietude which followed to induce him to make the journey to Italy, in the fear that the severe winter of Scotland would prove fatal. A ship of His Majesty's fleet was put at his disposal, and he set

sail for Malta. The youthful adventurousness of the man flared up again oddly for a moment, when he insisted on being set ashore upon a volcanic island in the Mediterranean which had appeared but a few days before and which sank beneath the surface shortly after. The climate of Malta at first appeared to benefit him; but when he heard, one day, of the death of Goethe at Weimar, he seemed seized with a sudden apprehension of his own end, and insisted upon hurrying back through Europe, in order that he might look once more on Abbotsford. On the ride from Edinburgh he remained for the first two stages entirely unconscious. But as the carriage entered the valley of the Gala he opened his eyes and murmured the name of objects as they passed, "Gala water, surely,—Buckholm,—Torwoodlee." When the towers of Abbotsford came in view, he was so filled with delight that he could scarcely be restrained from leaping out. At the gates he greeted faithful Laidlaw in a voice strong and hearty as of old: "Why, man, how often I have thought of you!" and smiled and wept over the dogs who came rushing as in bygone times to lick his hand. He died a few days later, on the afternoon of a glorious autumn day, with all the windows open, so that he might catch to the last the whisper of the Tweed over its pebbles.

"And so," says Carlyle, "the curtain falls; and the strong Walter Scott is with us no more. A

possession from him does remain; widely scattered; yet attainable; not inconsiderable. It can be said of him, when he departed, he took a Man's life along with him. No sounder piece of British manhood was put together in that eighteenth century of Time. Alas, his fine Scotch face, with its shaggy honesty, sagacity and goodness, when we saw it latterly on the Edinburgh streets, was all worn with care, the joy all fled from it;—ploughed deep with labour and sorrow. We shall never forget it; we shall never see it again. Adieu, Sir Walter, pride of all Scotchmen, take our proud and sad farewell."

II. SCOTT'S PLACE IN THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

In order rightly to appreciate the poetry of Scott it is necessary to understand something of that remarkable "Romantic Movement" which took place toward the end of the eighteenth century, and within a space of twenty-five years completely changed the face of English literature. Both the causes and the effects of this movement were much more than merely literary; the "romantic revival" penetrated every crevice and ramification of life in those parts of Europe which it affected; its social, political, and religious results were all deeply significant. But we must here confine ourselves to such aspects of the revival as showed themselves in English poetry.

Eighteenth century poetry had been distinguished by its polish, its formal correctness, or—to use a term in much favor with critics of that day—its "elegance." The various and wayward metrical effects of the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets, had been discarded for a few well-recognized verse forms, which themselves in turn had become still further limited by the application to them of precise rules of structure. Hand in hand with this restricting process in metre, had gone a similar