

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse
Poe Aristotle James Hastings Voltaire Cooke
Hale Shakespeare Bunner Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Benedict Alcott
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A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century

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ROMANCE

My love dwelt in a Northern land.
A grey tower in a forest green
Was hers, and far on either hand
The long wash of the waves was seen,
And leagues on leagues of yellow sand,
The woven forest boughs between.

And through the silver Northern light
The sunset slowly died away,
And herds of strange deer, lily-white,
Stole forth among the branches grey;
About the coming of the light,
They fled like ghosts before the day.

I know not if the forest green
Still girdles round that castle grey;
I know not if the boughs between
The white deer vanish ere the day;
Above my love the grass is green,
My heart is colder than the clay.

ANDREW LANG.

PREFACE.

The present volume is a sequel to "A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century" (New York; Henry Holt & Co., 1899). References in the footnotes to "Volume I." are to that work. The difficulties of this second part of my undertaking have been of a kind just opposite to those of the first. As it concerns my subject, the eighteenth century was an age of beginnings; and the problem was to discover what latent romanticism existed in the writings of a period whose spirit, upon the whole, was distinctly unromantic. But the temper of the nineteenth century has been, until recent years, prevailingly romantic in the wider meaning of the word. And as to the more restricted sense in which I have chosen to employ it, the mediaevalising literature of the nineteenth century is at least twenty times as great as that of the eighteenth, both in bulk and in value. Accordingly the problem here is one of selection; and of selection not from a list of half-forgotten names, like Warton and Hurd, but from authors whose work is still the daily reading of all educated readers.

As I had anticipated, objection has been made to the narrowness of my definition of *romanticism*. But every writer has a right to make his own definitions; or, at least, to say what his book shall be about. I have not written a history of the "liberal movement in English literature"; nor of the "renaissance of wonder"; nor of the "emancipation of the ego." Why not have called the book, then, "A History of the Mediaeval Revival in England"? Because I have a clear title to the use of *romantic* in one of its commonest acceptations; and, for myself, I prefer the simple dictionary definition, "pertaining to the style of the Christian and popular literature of the Middle Ages," to any of those more pretentious explanations which seek to express the true inwardness of romantic literature by analysing it into its elements, selecting one of these elements as essential, and rejecting all the rest as accidental.

M. Brunetière; for instance, identifies romanticism with lyricism. It is the "emancipation of the ego." This formula is made to fit Victor Hugo, and it will fit Byron. But M. Brunetière would surely not deny that Walter Scott's work is objective and dramatic quite as often as it is lyrical. Yet what Englishman will be satisfied with a definition of *romantic* which excludes Scott? Indeed, M. Brunetière himself is respectful to the traditional meaning of the word. "Numerous definitions," he says, "have been given of Romanticism, and still others are continually being offered; and all, or almost all of them, contain a part of the truth. Mme. de Staël was right when she asserted in her 'Allemagne' that Paganism and Christianity, the North and the South, antiquity and the Middle Ages, having divided between them the history of literature, Romanticism in consequence, in contrast to Classicism, was a combination of chivalry, the Middle Ages, the literatures of the North, and Christianity. It should be noted, in this connection, that some thirty years later Heinrich Heine, in the book in which he will rewrite Mme. de Staël's, will not give such a very different idea of Romanticism." And if, in an analysis of the romantic movement throughout Europe, any single element in it can lay claim to the leading place, that element seems to me to be the return of each country to its national past; in other words, mediaevalism.

A definition loses its usefulness when it is made to connote too much. Professor Herford says that the "organising conception" of his "Age of Wordsworth" is romanticism. But if Cowper and Wordsworth and Shelley are romantic, then almost all the literature of the years 1798-1830 is romantic. I prefer to think of Cowper as a naturalist, of Shelley as an idealist, and of Wordsworth as a transcendental realist, and to reserve the name romanticist for writers like Scott, Coleridge, and Keats; and I think the distinction a serviceable one. Again, I have been censured for omitting Blake from my former volume. The omission was deliberate, not accidental, and the grounds for it were given in the preface. Blake was not discovered until rather late in the nineteenth century. He was not a link in the chain of influence which I was tracing. I am glad to find my justification in a passage of Mr. Saintsbury's "History of Nineteenth Century Literature" (p. 13): "Blake exercised on the literary *history* of his time no influence, and occupied in it no position. . . . The public

had little opportunity of seeing his pictures, and less of reading his books. . . . He was practically an unread man."

But I hope that this second volume may make more clear the unity of my design and the limits of my subject. It is scarcely necessary to add that no absolute estimate is attempted of the writers whose works are described in this history. They are looked at exclusively from a single point of view. H. A. B.

APRIL, 1901.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

- I. WALTER SCOTT
- II. COLERIDGE, BOWLES, AND THE POPE CONTROVERSY
- III. KEATS, LEIGH HUNT, AND THE DANTE REVIVAL
- IV. THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL IN GERMANY
- V. THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN FRANCE
- VI. DIFFUSED ROMANTICISM IN THE LITERATURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
- VII. THE PRE-RAPHAELITES
- VIII. TENDENCIES AND RESULTS

A HISTORY OF ENGLISH ROMANTICISM.

CHAPTER I.

Walter Scott.[1]

It was reserved for Walter Scott, "the Ariosto of the North," "the historiographer royal of feudalism," to accomplish the task which his eighteenth-century forerunners had essayed in vain. He possessed the true enchanter's wand, the historic imagination. With this in his hand, he raised the dead past to life, made it once more conceivable, made it even actual. Before Scott no genius of the highest order had lent itself wholly or mainly to retrospection. He is the middle point and the culmination of English romanticism. His name is, all in all, the most important on our list. "Towards him all the lines of the romantic revival converge." [2] The popular ballad, the Gothic romance, the Ossianic poetry, the new German literature, the Scandinavian discoveries, these and other scattered rays of influence reach a focus in Scott. It is true that his delineation of feudal society is not final. There were sides of mediaeval life which he did not know, or understand, or sympathize with, and some of these have been painted in by later artists. That his pictures have a coloring of modern sentiment is no arraignment of him but of the *genre*. All romanticists are resurrectionists; their art is an elaborate make-believe. It is enough for their purpose if the world which they recreate has the look of reality, the *verisimile* if not the *verum*. That Scott's genius was *in extenso* rather than *in intenso*, that his work is largely improvisation, that he was not a miniature, but a distemper painter, splashing large canvasses with a coarse brush and gaudy pigments, all these are commonplaces of criticism. Scott's handling was broad, vigorous, easy, careless, healthy, free. He was never subtle, morbid, or fantastic, and had no niceties or secrets. He was, as Coleridge said of Schiller, "master, not of the intense drama of passion, but the diffused drama of history." Therefore, because his qualities were popular and his appeal was made to the people, the

general reader, he won a hearing for his cause, which Coleridge or Keats or Tieck, with his closer workmanship, could never have won. He first and he alone *popularised* romance. No literature dealing with the feudal past has ever had the currency and the universal success of Scott's. At no time has mediaevalism held so large a place in comparison with other literary interests as during the years of his greatest vogue, say from 1805 to 1830.

The first point to be noticed about Scott is the thoroughness of his equipment. While never a scholar in the academic sense, he was, along certain chosen lines, a really learned man. He was thirty-four when he published "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" (1805), the first of his series of metrical romances and the first of his poems to gain popular favour. But for twenty years he had been storing his mind with the history, legends, and ballad poetry of the Scottish border, and was already a finished antiquarian. The bent and limitations of his genius were early determined, and it remained to the end wonderfully constant to its object. At the age of twelve he had begun a collection of manuscript ballads. His education in romance dated from the cradle. His lullabies were Jacobite songs; his grandmother told him tales of moss-troopers, and his Aunt Janet read him ballads from Ramsay's "Tea-table Miscellany," upon which his quick and tenacious memory fastened eagerly. The ballad of "Hardiknute," in this collection, he knew by heart before he could read. "It was the first poem I ever learnt—the last I shall ever forget." Dr. Blacklock introduced the young schoolboy to the poems of Ossian and of Spenser, and he committed to memory "whole duans of the one and cantos of the other." "Spenser," he says, "I could have read forever. Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense, and God only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such society." A little later Percy's "Reliques" fell into his hands, with results that have already been described.[3]

As soon as he got access to the circulating library in Edinburgh, he began to devour its works of fiction, characteristically rejecting love stories and domestic tales, but laying hold upon "all that was adventurous and romantic," and in particular upon "everything which touched on knight-errantry." For two or three years he used to spend his holidays with his schoolmate, John Irving, on Arthur's

Seat or Salisbury Crags, where they read together books like "The Castle of Otranto" and the poems of Spenser and Ariosto; or composed and narrated to each other "interminable tales of battles and enchantments" and "legends in which the martial and the miraculous always predominated." The education of Edward Waverley, as described in the third chapter of Scott's first novel, was confessedly the novelist's own education. In the "large Gothic room" which was the library of Waverley Honour, the young book-worm pored over "old historical chronicles" and the writings of Pulci, Froissart, Brantome, and De la Noue; and became "well acquainted with Spenser, Drayton, and other poets who have exercised themselves on romantic fiction—of all themes the most fascinating to a youthful imagination."

Yet even thus early, a certain solidity was apparent in Scott's studies. "To the romances and poetry which I chiefly delighted in," he writes, "I had always added the study of history, especially as connected with military events." He interested himself, for example, in the art of fortification; and when confined to his bed by a childish illness, found amusement in modelling fortresses and "arranging shells and seeds and pebbles so as to represent encountering armies. . . . I fought my way thus through Vertot's 'Knights of Malta'—a book which, as it hovered between history and romance, was exceedingly dear to me."

Every genius is self-educated, and we find Scott from the first making instinctive selections and rejections among the various kinds of knowledge offered him. At school he would learn no Greek, and wrote a theme in which he maintained, to the wrath of his teacher, that Ariosto was a better poet than Homer. In later life he declared that he had forgotten even the letters of the Greek alphabet. Latin would have fared as badly, had not his interest in Matthew Paris and other monkish chroniclers "kept up a kind of familiarity with the language even in its rudest state." "To my Gothic ear, the 'Stabat Mater,' the 'Dies Irae,'[4] and some of the other hymns of the Catholic Church are more solemn and affecting than the fine classical poetry of Buchanan." In our examination of Scott's early translations from the German,[5] it has been noticed how exclusively he was attracted by the romantic department of that literature, passing over, for instance, Goethe's maturer work, to fix upon

his juvenile drama "Götz von Berlichingen." Similarly he learned Italian just to read in the original the romantic poets Tasso, Ariosto, Boiardo, and Pulci. When he first went to London in 1799, "his great anxiety," reports Lockhart, "was to examine the antiquities of the Tower and Westminster Abbey, and to make some researches among the MSS. of the British Museum." From Oxford, which he visited in 1803, he brought away only "a grand but indistinct picture of towers and chapels and oriels and vaulted halls", having met there a reception which, as he modestly acknowledges, "was more than such a truant to the classic page as myself was entitled to expect at the source of classic learning." Finally, in his last illness, when sent to Rome to recover from the effects of a paralytic stroke, his ruling passion was strong in death. He examined with eagerness the remains of the mediaeval city, but appeared quite indifferent to that older Rome which speaks to the classical student. It will be remembered that just the contrary of this was true of Addison, when he was in Italy a century before.[6] Scott was at no pains to deny or to justify the one-sidedness of his culture. But when Erskine remonstrated with him for rambling on

"through brake and maze
With harpers rude, of barbarous days,"

and urged him to compose a regular epic on classical lines, he good-naturedly but resolutely put aside the advice.

"Nay, Erskine, nay—On the wild hill
Let the wild heath-bell[7] flourish still
Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,
Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale!" [8]

Scott's letters to Erskine, Ellis, Leyden, Ritson, Miss Seward, and other literary correspondents are filled with discussions of antiquarian questions and the results of his favourite reading in old books and manuscripts. He communicates his conclusions on the subject of "Arthur and Merlin" or on the authorship of the old metrical romance of "Sir Tristram." [9] He has been copying manuscripts in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh. In 1791 he read papers before the Speculative Society on "The Origin of the Feudal System," "The Au-

thenticity of Ossian's Poems," "The Origin of the Scandinavian Mythology." Lockhart describes two note-books in Scott's hand-writing, with the date 1792, containing memoranda of ancient court records about Walter Scott and his wife, Dame Janet Beaton, the "Ladye" of Branksome in the "Lay"; extracts from "Guerin de Montglave"; copies of "Vegtam's Kvitha" and the "Death-Song of Regner Lodbrog," with Gray's English versions; Cnut's verses on passing Ely Cathedral; the ancient English "Cuckoo Song," and other rubbish of the kind.[10] When in 1803 he began to contribute articles to the *Edinburgh Review*, his chosen topics were such as "Amadis of Gaul," Ellis' "Specimens of Ancient English Poetry," Godwin's "Chaucer," Sibal's "Chronicle of Scottish Poetry," Evans' "Old Ballads," Todd's "Spenser," "The Life and Works of Chatterton," Southey's translation of "The Cid," etc.

Scott's preparation for the work which he had to do was more than adequate. His reading along chosen lines was probably more extensive and minute than any man's of his generation. The introductions and notes to his poems and novels are even overburdened with learning. But this, though important, was but the lesser part of his advantage. "The old-maidenly genius of antiquarianism" could produce a Strutt[11] or even perhaps a Warton; but it needed the touch of the creative imagination to turn the dead material of knowledge into works of art that have delighted millions of readers for a hundred years in all civilised lands and tongues.

The key to Scott's romanticism is his intense local feeling.[12] That attachment to place which, in most men, is a sort of animal instinct, was with him a passion. To set the imagination at work some emotional stimulus is required. The angry pride of Byron, Shelley's revolt against authority, Keats' almost painfully acute sensitiveness to beauty, supplied the nervous irritation which was wanting in Scott's slower, stronger, and heavier temperament. The needed impetus came to him from his love of country. Byron and Shelley were torn up by the roots and flung abroad, but Scott had struck his roots deep into native soil. His absorption in the past and reverence for everything that was old, his conservative prejudices and aristocratic ambitions, all had their source in this feeling. Scott's Toryism was of a different spring from Wordsworth's and Coleridge's. It was not a reaction from disappointed radicalism; nor was it the result of rea-

soned conviction. It was inborn and was nursed into a sentimental Jacobitism by ancestral traditions and by an early prepossession in favour of the Stuarts—a Scottish dynasty—reinforced by encounters with men in the Highlands who had been out in the '45. It did not interfere with a practical loyalty to the reigning house and with what seems like a somewhat exaggerated deference to George IV. Personally the most modest of men, he was proud to trace his descent from "auld Wat of Harden" [13] and to claim kinship with the bold Buccleuch. He used to make annual pilgrimages to Harden Tower, "the *incunabula* of his race"; and "in the earlier part of his life," says Lockhart, "he had nearly availed himself of his kinsman's permission to fit up the dilapidated *peel* for his summer residence."

Byron wrote: "I twine my hope of being remembered in my line with my land's language." But Scott wished to associate his name with the land itself. Abbotsford was more to him than Newstead could ever have been to Byron; although Byron was a peer and inherited his domain, while Scott was a commoner and created his. Too much has been said in condemnation of Scott's weakness in this respect; that his highest ambition was to become a *laird* and found a family; that he was more gratified when the King made him a baronet than when the public bought his books, that the expenses of Abbotsford and the hospitalities which he extended to all comers wasted his time and finally brought about his bankruptcy. Leslie Stephen and others have even made merry over Scott's Gothic,[14] comparing his plaster-of-Paris 'scutcheons and ceilings in imitation of carved oak with the pinchbeck architecture of Strawberry Hill, and intimating that the feudalism in his romances was only a shade more genuine than the feudalism of "The Castle of Otranto." Scott was imprudent; Abbotsford was his weakness, but it was no ignoble weakness. If the ideal of the life which he proposed to himself there was scarcely a heroic one, neither was it vulgar or selfish. The artist or the philosopher should perhaps be superior to the ambition of owning land and having "a stake in the country," but the ambition is a very human one and has its good side. In Scott the desire was more social than personal. It was not that title and territory were feathers in his cap, but that they bound him more closely to the dear soil of Scotland and to the national, historic past.

The only deep passion in Scott's poetry is patriotism, the passion of place. In his metrical romances the rush of the narrative and the vivid, picturesque beauty of the descriptions are indeed exciting to the imagination; but it is only when the chord of national feeling is touched that the verse grows lyrical, that the heart is reached, and that tears come into the reader's eyes, as they must have done into the poet's. A dozen such passages occur at once to the memory; the last stand of the Scottish nobles around their king at Flodden; the view of Edinburgh—"mine own romantic town"—from Blackford Hill;

"Fitz-Eustace' heart felt closely pent:
As if to give his rapture vent,
The spur he to his charger lent,
And raised his bridle-hand,
And, making demi-volte in air,
Cried, 'Where's the coward that would not dare
To fight for such a land?'"

and the still more familiar opening of the sixth canto in the "Lay"—"Breathes there the man," etc.:

"O Caledonia! stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand?"

In such a mood geography becomes poetry and names are music.[15] Scott said to Washington Irving that if he did not see the heather at least once a year, he thought he would die.

Lockhart tells how the sound that he loved best of all sounds was in his dying ears—the flow of the Tweed over its pebbles.

Significant, therefore, is Scott's treatment of landscape, and the difference in this regard between himself and his great contemporaries. His friend, Mr. Morritt of Rokeby, testifies; "He was but half

satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect it with some local legend." Scott had to the full the romantic love of mountain and lake, yet "to me," he confesses, "the wandering over the field of Bannockburn was the source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling Castle. I do not by any means infer that I was dead to the feeling of picturesque scenery. . . . But show me an old castle or a field of battle and I was at home at once." And again: "The love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins or remains of our fathers' piety[16] or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion." It was not in this sense that high mountains were a "passion" to Byron, nor yet to Wordsworth. In a letter to Miss Seward, Scott wrote of popular poetry: "Much of its peculiar charm is indeed, I believe, to be attributed solely to its *locality*. . . . In some verses of that eccentric but admirable poet Coleridge[17] he talks of

"An old rude tale that suited well
The ruins wild and hoary.'

"I think there are few who have not been in some degree touched with this local sympathy. Tell a peasant an ordinary tale of robbery and murder, and perhaps you may fail to interest him; but, to excite his terrors, you assure him it happened on the very heath he usually crosses, or to a man whose family he has known, and you rarely meet such a mere image of humanity as remains entirely unmoved. I suspect it is pretty much the same with myself."

Scott liked to feel solid ground of history, or at least of legend, under his feet. He connected his wildest tales, like "Glenfinlas" and "The Eve of St. John," with definite names and places. This Antaeus of romance lost strength, as soon as he was lifted above the earth. With Coleridge it was just the contrary. The moment his moonlit, vapory enchantments touched ground, the contact "precipitated the whole solution." In 1813 Scott had printed "The Bridal of Triermain" anonymously, with a preface designed to mislead the public; having contrived, by way of a joke, to fasten the authorship of the piece upon Erskine. This poem is as pure fantasy as Tennyson's "Day Dream," and tells the story of a knight who, in obedience to a vision and the instructions of an ancient sage "sprung from Druid sires,"