

KELSO AND LASSWADE.

PATERFEX TELLS OF THE RAUNTS OF SCOTT'S BOYHOOD.

Is Early Youth and How it Was Spent, Among Romantic Surroundings—His School Days and Their Wild Frolics—How He First met His Wife.

"Ewes and lambs on braes ran bleating; Linties chirped on larks tree; Frae the west, the sun, near setting, Flamed on Roslin's tower sae hie. Roslin's towers and braes sae bonnie! Craigs and water, woods and glens! Roslin's banks, unpeeped by ony, Save the Muses' Hawthornden.

"Blessings be with them—and eternal praise," who by the might of Virtue and of Genius endear to us the hills we never behold, and the vales our feet have never trodden! Through them the scenes that nourished us first, and gave food for fancy, are twin in our affections with the Tweed and the Wye. Somehow the world becomes all as one, where brave men tread it, and it is illustrated by song, and sown thickly both with deeds and dreams. They exercise a spell to draw our feet; and as pilgrims, we cross the ocean and climb the mountain, that we may kneel at their shrines; while hearts that have been thrilled by the prowess of the warrior transfused through the fire of the poet feel a new ecstacy in the presence of the shrines of Dunedin or of Alloway, the height of Stirling, or the field of Bannockburn. And what land draws the pilgrim and stranger with a cord stronger than Caledonia binds about us? Truly as it said, and to the verse our heart is responsive,—

"On this earth there is a spot To which my soul admiringly turns, It is the land of Walter Scott, It is the land of Robert Burns! On a glimpse of that proud Land Where Genius all triumphant shines! To stray a pilgrim, and in hand, And worship at her thousand shrines!"

This boy-life at Sandy-knowe (a queer misnomer!) meant more for Scott than all his school-days did for him. Nature and romance were to claim him; and the brain of the imaginative child was here to absorb the materials for his poems and his Waverley stories as eagerly as the sepia does blood and as readily as the sponge does water. The old time was before him in character, as well as scenery, and their singularity and picturesqueness were photographed in memory as on the retina of that most living eye. The old worthies of the place doted on his childhood, as he did in after years on little Marjorie Fleming. We hear of the quaint recluse, "old MacDougal of Makers-town, in his little laird cocked hat, embroidered scarlet waist-coat, light colored coat, and white hair tied military fashion, kneeling on the carpet before the child, and drawing his watch along to induce him to it. We hear of "old Ormiston the herdsman telling him all sorts of stories, who used to bring him out into the moorlands, and blow his whistle, when the nurse was to fetch him home." Narrow was his escape from the mad nurse who, anxious to escape the solitude, confessed how she was tempted to carry the child out among the crags, cut his throat with the scissors, and bury him in the mass. Her maniac fancy was that she was under the devil's own impulse; perhaps the Dr. Todds will think his majesty recanted upon reflection perceiving how instrumental his works would become. What effect such things might well have is suggested to us by some similar child-experience, in an old house, with its own legends, and superstitions gossips to make a weird night by the stories told all day. For in this wild, solitary place were poured into his ears "all sorts of border and other ballads: 'Watt of Harden,' 'Wight Willie of Aikwood,' 'Jamie Telfer,' 'The Fair Dodhead,' 'Hardyknute,' and the like; and the stories of the cruelties practised on the rebels at Carlisle, and in the Highlands, after the battle of Culloden, related to him by a farmer of Yethyn who had witnessed them 'tragic tales which,' said Scott, 'made so great an impression on me.' And then the spot was as a mountain of vision, to one who carried eyes like the poet. There were visible, near and remote, the beauties of that now classic country which his pen has made of interest to all the world. As his biographer points them out,—nearly in front of Sandy-knowe, 'across the Tweed, Lesudden, the comparatively small, but still venerable and stately abode of the lairds of Raeburn; and the hoary Abbey of Dryburgh, surrounded by yew-trees as ancient as itself, seem to lie almost at the feet of the spectator. Opposite him rise the purple peaks of Eildon, the traditional scene of Thomas the Rhymer's interview with the Queen of Faerie; behind are the blasted peel which the seer of Kircubbin himself inhabited, 'The Broom of the Cowdenknowes, the pastoral valley of the Leader, and the bleak wilderness of Lammermoor. To the eastward, the desolate grandeur of Hume castle breaks the horizon, as the eye travels toward the range of the Cheviot. A few miles westward, Melrose, 'like some tall rock with lichens grey,' appears clasped amid the windings of the Tweed; and the distance presents the serrated mountains of the Gals, the Ettrick, and the Yarrow, all famous in song. Such were the objects that had painted the ear-

liest images on the eye of the last and greatest of the Borden minstrels."

The picture of the child, seated at the feet of his grandfather at Sandy-knowe, listening to Miss Jenny as she read the Bible, or whatever good book, is supplemented by that of the boy,—lame still, but grown vigorous with abundant life, and fondness for sport,—rambling with Jamie Ballantyne (the future publisher) along the riverside at Kelso telling stories, singing songs, reciting scraps of poetry and ballads, and making echo ring generally with their laughter, or watching the salmon as they came flashing from the Tweed.

Kelso was, and is, a quaint, retired, old-fashioned country town, on the Tweed, and at its confluence with the Teviot; where it has broad sandy beaches, and is surrounded by a wealth of rural scenery that was the pride and joy of Scott's heart. He could never to his latest day forget the pleasant times of his boyhood in this old town, and along its sweet and sunny waters. Here the river broadens, and runs between steep banks, "magnificently hung with splendid woods;" by day the angler may wade in his tall boots, and cast his line; and at evening, the ruddy flare of the torch marks where the spear-men take the prey,— "like geni armed," as the poet describes them. What rare sport had Scott and his friends, along these banks! And yonder comes that other stream to join its "kindred river," embalmed in the music of his verse:

Sweet Teviot! on thy silver tide The glaucous base fires blaze no more; No longer steel-clad warriors ride Along thy wild and willowed shore; Where'er thou wind'st by dale or hill, All, all is peaceful all's still, As if thy waves, since time was born, Since first they rolled upon the Tweed, Had only heard the shepherd's reed, Nor started at the bugle-horn.

Adjoining the town is a fine park, and walls of an old castle rise from the midst of its trees; while within its limits are the noble ruins of an abbey about which the poet spent many a dreaming hour, amid his recreations. Scott's relatives dwelt here also, and it became a second home—the peculiar home of his heart. Eastward of the Kirkyard was the home of Miss Janet Scott, in a house surrounded by woody acres, stretching downward to the Tweed, with its mounds and winding walks, and in the midst a summer-banquet-house. "It was laid out in the old style with high pleached hornbeam hedges, and had a fine plane tree. In many parts of the garden were fine yews and other trees, and there was also a goodly old orchard. Here, as in a very paradise he used to devour heaps of poetry." While he went to the town grammar school, he had likewise a rare tuition out of Tasso's 'Jerusalem delivered,' Percy's 'Reliques of Ancient Poetry' and the works of Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, Mackenzie and other novelists. "The features of this garden," we are told remained deeply imprinted on his mind, and have been reproduced in different descriptions of his works. Like the garden of Eden itself, this charming old garden has now vanished. Indeed, he himself relates with what chagrin he found, on revisiting the place many years afterwards, the good old plane-tree gone, the hedges pulled up, and the bearing trees felled! Here, also, lived his Uncle Robert at "Rosebank" a little farther out of the town and on the same side of the stream, with its lofty trees embowering his home, and the smooth green lawn running clear down to the bank of Tweed.

We shall not be able to follow up Scott's school days very closely,—for it was not in the schools he obtained the most important part of his education, even though he regretted in later years a want of thoroughness, and of that deep knowledge of literature which might have enabled him to form a compact and more finished style. Yet in him we have so much that we are not disposed very deeply to regret this, in his case. We cannot have all in one; and perhaps if we cannot have butter, we may have cream. But when the Edinburgh high school is in session he is there—that is, after his eight year, in charge of that excellent man and ripe scholar, Luke Frazier, and after him the rector Dr. Adam. But Scott had rather scamper in the yards, than to be chief of the form, and he had rather kick a football, than wrestle with a root, mathematical or classical. "Notwithstanding his infirmity" he was among them all "the swiftest of the racers, the strongest of pugilists, the most persevering in snow-ball bickers, the most daring climber of the little rime steps (a pass of peril leading along the dark brow of the castle rock) and the most dextrous and strategic commander in the mimic battles fought in the cross causeway between the children of the mob and those of the better-to-do citizens." Yet,—if he took to himself the cognomen of "dunce," "blockhead," "incorrigibly idle imp," and the like,—it was known by the discerning that he had intellectual powers, if they were but awakened, and in particular an amazing memory, for all literary antiquarian, legendary, or historical lore. Nor may we here consider his collegiate period,

"What a charm of innocence and quietude was in the retired home-life,—how attractive the picture! "Old Mrs. Scott sitting with her spinning wheel at one side of the fire, in a clean, clean pair; the grandfather a good deal faded, in his elbow chair opposite; and the little boy lying on the carpet at the old man's feet, listening to the Bible," etc. This is not an inferior school for one who was to give us some affecting pictures of domestic and social life.—P. F.

nor his pursuits of the law, wherein, like others of his kind he was apt to 'pen starze when he should engross'; but will hasten on to love, to poetry, and to scenery again.

It was during his apprenticeship to his father (in the second year, Scott says,) that by the bursting of a blood-vessel he was confined and restricted to a vegetable diet, and a regimen of books and dreams. He burst like the Ancient Mariner, into the "silent sea" into the wide wide sea of novels, poems; and it is said, after having been blind and blistered, drove the circulating 'librarians to their wits end,' or played unlimb'd chess for several months. Thus while he reclined, and "not suffered to speak above his breath," he was "preparing himself for the future exigencies of his literary life as effectually . . . as when rambling through the mountains of Perthshire with Inverhaye, or 'making himself' with shot-reed among the traditional wilds of Liddersdale." As Ferguson struck his head-stars, so Scott on pillow or counterpane arranged his shell or seed armies, and pebble brigades, as he read of battles that got him in order to write Flodden, and many another well-contested field. Mirrors were combined to refresh his eyes with the world outdoors, and the troops marching. So he made capital of his illness; and when he awoke to return to the office it was to bid "a long farewell to disease and medicine."

A tincture of wildness and excess in his blood, which broke out in wild frolics and escapades in his boyhood, was chastened in later years by the "meats of a pure and passionate attachment." His first attachment had been unreciprocated, and brought him sorrow; but his second was more successful, and so long as its object remained, filled all after his life with content. The poet had attained his perfect manhood but not his perfect fame, when at Spa of Gilsdale, a pretty watering place in Cumberland, he first saw Charlotte Margaret Charpentier, and fell in love with her. This fair scion of a French family had been brought thither by her friend's to break up one attachment, not agreeable to Lord Downshire her guardian, and here she straightway fell into another not to be escaped from. "The meeting," we learn, "was like one of those in his own novels. He was riding with his friend Adam Ferguson—the joyous, genial friend of his whole life—one day in that neighbourhood, when they met a young lady taking an airing on horseback, whom neither of them had before seen. They were so much struck with her appearance, as to keep her in view till they were sure that she was a visitor at The Wells. The same evening they met her at a ball, and so much were they charmed with her that he soon made her a proposal, and she became his wife. All who knew her in her youth speak of her as a very charming person, though I confess that her portrait at 'Abbotsford' does not give me much idea of her personal charms." "but," says Mr. Lockhart who had the best opportunity of knowing, "without the features of a regular beauty, she was rich in personal attractions; a form that was fashioned as light as a fairy's; a complexion of the clearest and the brightest olive; eyes large deep-set and dazzling, of the finest Italian brown; and a profusion of silken tresses, black as the raven's wing; her address hovering between the reserve of a pretty Englishwoman who has not mingled largely in general society, and a certain archness and gaiety that suited well with the accompaniment of a French accent. A lover's vision, as all who remember her in the bloom of her days have assured me, could hardly have been imagined."

With his charming bride Scott settled among his loved hills in a bit of the choicest scenery the neighborhood of Edinburgh affords. Some seven miles is the Lasswade cottage, a very bower of retirement where some of his happiest years were spent, and some of his best work done. His friends gathered here, and "blithe little wife" proved a most excellent hostess. Howitt, who visited it described it as "a lovely neighborhood. It is thrown up with lofty ridges all finely wooded. The country there is rich, and the noble woods, the fine views down in the fertile valleys, and the Elk coming sounding along its channel from Rosslyn and Hawthornden make it very charming. It is in the immediate neighborhood not only of Rosslyn with its beautiful chapel, and the classic cliffs and woods of Hawthornden, but of Dalkeith; and Lord Melville's park is at Lasswade itself. The cottage of Scott is still called Lasswade cottage. Every one still knows the house as the one where he lived, (this is over forty years ago.) A miller near said, 'He minded him well. He was an advocate then, and his wife a little dark French woman?' The house Howitt found occupied by two Miss Mutters who kept a lady's school, and was "run down," but it still occupied "a very sweet secluded place." It stands about fifty yards from the roadside, as you approach the village from a hamlet called Loanhead; and as you descend the hill, you see it some

Scott's nickname among his own set was Duns Scotus. His dress at this time was neglected. Ordinary breeches was his common attire; and when reproached with their meanness his reply was, "They be good enough for drinking in; come and let us have some oysters in the Covenant Close." These convivialities, however were after relinquished.

fifty yards from the roadside. "There are two roads leading from the highway up to the house; one being the carriage drive up to the front, and the other to the back, past some laborers' cottages. It is a somewhat singular looking house, having one end tall, and thatched in a remarkably steep manner, and then a long, low range, running away from it. The whole is thatched, white-washed, and covered with Ayrshire roses, evergreen plants, and masses of ivy. When you get round to the front, for it turns its back on the road, you find the lofty part projecting much beyond the low range, and having a circular front. A gravel walk or drive goes quite round to this side, and is divided from a paddock by laurels. There are three paddocks. One opposite to the tall end, and extending down to the road, one in front, and one behind, in which stands near the house, in a still smaller enclosure, a remarkably large yew-tree. The paddocks are all surrounded by tall full-grown trees, and they shut in the place to perfect retirement. At the end of the low range lies a capital large kitchen garden, with plenty of fruit trees; and this extends to the back lane, proceeding toward the valley of the Esk. The neighborhood is full of the houses of people of wealth and taste. Here for many years lived Henry Mackenzie. . . Here Scott was busy with his German translations of 'Lenore,' 'Gotz Von Berlichingen,' and his 'Border Minstrelsy.' Here Mat Lewis, and Heber, the collector of rare books visited him; as well as the crabbed Ritson, whom the rough and impatient Leyden put to flight. Then came Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, from a tour in the Highlands; and Scott set off on a ramble down to Melrose and Teviotdale. Here he had partly written the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' and edited and published 'Sir Tristram.' These facts are enough to give a lasting interest to the cottage of Lasswade."

From his cottage Scott could slip easily into Edinburgh, for business or social pleasure, and back again to books, and desk, and "wee wulke." Thence he made his romantic excursions into Liddesdale, to Ettrick forest, and all that now famous border region. With exquisite delight he fell in with the country-folk and their yet unchanged customs; looked on wilder and more beautiful scenes, and conversed with new-found poets, and spirits kindred with his own, among the peasantry,—such as Jamie Hogg, and Willie Laidlaw Leyden, he had met in Edinburgh, a rude and powerful border minstrel, with a giant's powers, but "uncouth as a colt from the moors." Scott had found Scotland out, that he might introduce her and open her mountain-gates to the world. What the Eldorado's and Islands of Wonder were to the voyagers of Phillip and Elizabeth, these unfrequented wilds became to him who looked on them with new-creating eyes. He came and rejoiced in his combined mission of poet, romancer and historian of his native land. We hear in those crying lines,— "O Caledonia, stern and wild! There is nothing in biography, one has well said, that strikes me so full of the enjoyment of life, as these 'raids,' as Scott called them, into Liddesdale, and other border wildernesses. PASTOR FELIX.

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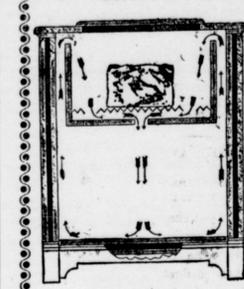


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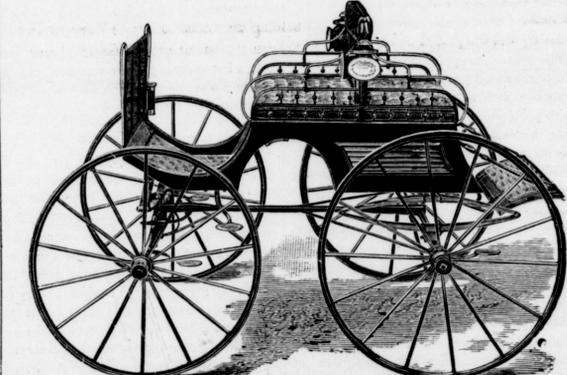
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