THE

EDINBURGH REVIEW,

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ART. I. *Marmion; a Tale of Flodden Field.* By Walter Scott, Esq. 4to. pp. 500. Edinburgh and London, 1808.

THERE is a kind of right of primogeniture among books, as well as among men; and it is difficult for an author, who has obtained great fame by a first publication, not to appear to fall off in a second—especially if his original success could be imputed, in any degree, to the novelty of his plan of composition. The public is always indulgent to untried talents; and is even apt to exaggerate a little the value of what it receives without any previous expectation. But, for this advance of kindness, it usually exacts a most usurious return in the end. When the poor author comes back, he is no longer received as a benefactor, but a debtor. In return for the credit it formerly gave him, the world now conceives that it has a just claim on him for excellence, and becomes impertinently scrupulous as to the quality of the coin in which it is to be paid.

The just amount of this claim plainly cannot be for more than the rate of excellence which he had reached in his former production; but, in estimating this rate, various errors are perpetually committed, which increase the difficulties of the task which is thus imposed on him. In the *first* place, the comparative amount of his past and present merits can only be ascertained by the uncertain standard of his reader's feelings; and these must always be less lively with regard to a second performance; which, with every other excellence of the first, must necessarily want the powerful recommendations of novelty and surprise, and, consequently, fall very far short of the effect produced by their strong cooperation. In the *second* place, it may be observed, in general, that wherever our impression of any work is favourable on the whole, its excellence is constantly exaggerated, in those vague and habitual recollections which form the basis of subsequent comparisons.

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comparisons. We readily drop from our memory the dull and bad passages, and carry along with us the remembrance of those only which had afforded us delight. Thus, when we take the merit of any favourite poem as a standard of comparison for some later production of the same author, we never take its true average merit, which is the only fair standard, but the merit of its most striking and memorable passages, which naturally stand forward in our recollection, and pass upon our hasty retrospect as just and characteristic specimens of the whole work; and this high and exaggerated standard we rigorously apply to the first, and perhaps the least interesting parts of the second performance. Finally, it deserves to be noticed, that where a first work, containing considerable blemishes, has been favourably received, the public always expects this indulgence to be repaid by an improvement that ought not to be always expected. If a second performance appear, therefore, with the same faults, they will no longer meet with the same toleration. Murmurs will be heard about indolence, presumption, and abuse of good nature; while the critics, and those who had gently hinted at the necessity of correction, will be more out of humour than the rest at this apparent neglect of their admonitions.

For these, and for other reasons, we are inclined to suspect, that the success of the work now before us will be less brilliant than that of the author's former publication, though we are ourselves of opinion, that its intrinsic merits are nearly, if not altogether, equal; and that, if it had had the fortune to be the elder born, it would have inherited as fair a portion of renown as has fallen to the lot of its predecessor. It is a good deal longer, indeed, and somewhat more ambitious; and it is rather clearer that it has greater faults, than that it has greater beauties; though, for our own parts, we are inclined to believe in both propositions. It has more tedious and flat passages, and more ostentation of historical and antiquarian lore; but it has also greater richness and variety, both of character and incident; and if it has less sweetness and pathos in the softer passages, it has certainly more vehemence and force of colouring in the loftier and busier representations of action and emotion. The place of the prologuizing minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem; and the ballad pieces and mere episodes which it contains, have less finish and poetical beauty; but there is more airiness and spirit in the lighter delineations; and the story, if not more skilfully conducted, is at least better complicated, and extended through a wider field of adventure. The characteristics of both, however, are evidently the same;—a broken narrative—a redundancy of minute

minute description—bursts of unequal and energetic poetry—and a general tone of spirit and animation, unchecked by timidity or affectation, and unchastised by any great delicacy of taste, or elegance of fancy.

But though we think this last romance of Mr Scott's about as good as the former, and allow that it affords great indications of poetical talent, we must remind our readers, that we never entertained much partiality for this sort of composition, and ventured on a former occasion to express our regret, that an author endowed with such talents should consume them in imitations of obsolete extravagance, and in the representation of manners and sentiments in which none of his readers can be supposed to take much interest, except the few who can judge of their exactness. To write a modern romance of chivalry, seems to be much such a fantasy as to build a modern abbey, or an English pagoda. For once, however, it may be excused as a pretty caprice of genius; but a second production of the same sort is entitled to less indulgence, and imposes a sort of duty to drive the author from so idle a task, by a fair exposition of the faults which are in a manner inseparable from its execution. To enable our readers to judge fairly of the present performance, we shall first present them with a brief abstract of the story; and then endeavour to point out what seems to be exceptionable, and what is praiseworthy, in the execution.

Lord Marmion, the fictitious hero of the poem, was an English knight of great rank, fortune and prowess, in the reign of Henry VIII., and had, some years before the opening of the narrative, seduced and carried off from her convent, Constance de Beverley, a professed nun of good family, whom he had afterwards retained about his person in the disguise of a page. At the end of three years, however, he falls in love with the fair face or the broad lands of Clara de Clare, a damsel of great merit, whose affections, however, were previously engaged to Ralph De Wilton, a valiant knight in her neighbourhood. Marmion can think of no better way of disposing of this rival, than to employ Constance to put a parcel of forged letters, importing treasonable practices, into his portfolio, and thereafter to arraign him of those offences before their jealous sovereign. The forged papers give credit to this accusation; and the matter is referred to the judgment of God by a single combat between the two parties. In this contest the treacherous Marmion is victorious; and the true De Wilton, who is supposed to die of his wounds, assumes the dress of a palmer, and wanders from shrine to shrine brooding over his unmerited disgrace, and his natural purposes of revenge. Constance, in the mean while, who had lent herself to this scheme for promoting the marriage of

Marmion, only to make herself mistress of a secret which gave her power over his life, now resolves to gratify her own jealousy and envy by the destruction of the rival who had supplanted her in the heart of her seducer. She therefore engages a wicked monk in a plot to murder the Lady Clare; but before she can carry it into execution she is delivered up by Marmion, now satiated with her beauty, and wearied out with her murmurs, to the spiritual superiors from whom she had fled, and by whom this new crime of projected murder is speedily detected. The Lady Clare, in the mean time, full of sorrow for De Wilton and of horror at his conqueror, had retired into the convent of Whitby, with the intention of taking the veil; and Lord Marmion, bearing down remorse with pride and ambition, was proceeding on an embassy from his Sovereign to the court of James IV. of Scotland, to inquire into the cause of the great levy of troops which that prince was making, and the destination of the vast army which he had assembled in the neighbourhood of his capital.

Such is the situation of matters at the commencement of the poem, which opens with the arrival of Lord Marmion and his train at the castle of Norham upon the Tweed, the last English post upon his road, where he takes up his quarters in a fine summer evening, in the year of our Lord 1513. The whole first canto is taken up with the description of his train, and his reception and entertainment in the castle; every minute particular of which, from the letting down the drawbridge and bringing in the venison pasties for supper, down to the presentation of the stirrup cup at parting in the morning, is recorded with the most anxious and scrupulous exactness. While at table, he asks his host to provide him a guide to the Scotish court; and after some consultation, a holy palmer is introduced for this purpose, who afterwards turns out to be his injured rival De Wilton, although so much disguised by his dress, beard and misery, as not to be recognized by his oppressor. This is the only incident in the first canto that can be said to bear at all upon the business of the poem. It ends with the departure of the embassy on the following morning under the guidance of the mysterious palmer.

In the Second Canto, we entirely drop Lord Marmion and his retinue, in order to attend to the voyage of Clara, and the fate of Constance. This poor lady had been detected in her plot against her rival in the monastery of Holy Isle; and a chapter of the adjoining superiors had been summoned, to pass sentence on her for this crime and for the breach of her monastic vows. The canto begins with a picture of the voyage of the abbess of Whitby, to assist at this tragical convocation. There is then a description of the Abbey at Holy Isle, and an abstract of the legends connected with

with the history of its saints, and with those of the rival foundation of Whitby. Then comes the condemnation of Constance, and her auxiliar monk. The judges assemble in a low, dark vault, paved with tombstones, and lighted with an iron chandelier, where two deep niches already appear in the massive walls, with stones and mortar laid, ready to immure the convicted delinquents. The monk howls and shrieks with unmanly and unheeded agonies of terror; but Constance maintains a lofty and heroic resolution. She discloses the whole perfidy of Marmion, in his accusation of De Wilton, and his baseness to herself: She expresses little penitence for her own conspiracy against the blameless Lady Clare; but after arraigning her judges of bigoted cruelty, and prophesying the speedy downfal of their power, she receives * sentence from the stern blind abbot of Lindisfarn, and is left to expiate her offences in the gloomy sepulchre to which she is committed.

In the Third Canto, we return again to Lord Marmion and the Palmer, who gudies him in silence across the Border, and to the village of Gifford, in East Lothian, where the train halts for the night at a country inn. Here the ghastly visage, and keen, steady eye of the Palmer disturbs the soul of Marmion, and awes the whole band into silence. Marmion tries to relieve this, by calling on one of his squires for a song; but is still further annoyed, when he pitches upon a favourite air of Constance, and sings about the vengeance that is reserved for those who are perfidious in love. The host then tells a long story of a rencontre which took place in the neighbourhood, between King Alexander the III. and a spirit in the shape of Edward the I. of England, in which the Scottish monarch discomfited his unearthly antagonist, and forced him to reveal the fortune that awaited him in the war in which he was engaged with the Danes. He concludes with saying, that any knight who will repair at midnight to the same spot, and blow his bugle of defiance, will still be encountered by an aerial representation of his greatest enemy; and, if victorious, may learn from him the destiny of his future life. Marmion is unable to sleep after hearing all these stories; and rising in the night, mounts his charger, and gallops to the appointed ground, where he is encountered by the figure of De Wilton, and

* We were a little surprised at the words of this sentence, 'Sinful sister, part in peace;' which sounds more like a merciful dismissal than a condemnation. On looking into the notes, we find Mr Scott has adopted this *formula* from what we humbly conceive to be a *mistranslation* of the Latin *vade in pacem*, which does not signify, part in peace, but, 'go *into* peace,' or into eternal rest; a pretty intelligible *mittimus* to another world.

and unhorsed in the first shock. His foe, however, spares his life, and disappears; and the astonished champion returns sullenly to his train. The reader will probably guess, what is afterwards related at length, that this unexpected opponent was no other than the real De Wilton himself, who had heard Marmion ride out, and, suspecting his purpose, had put off his palmer's dress, and borrowing the arms and the steed of one of his sleeping attendants, had followed and answered his challenge.

The Fourth Canto pursues the march of Marmion to the Scotish court. In his way, he meets the chief herald, or Lyon King at Arms of Scotland, who had been despatched to attend him, and who conducts him to a castle a few miles from Edinburgh, where he is to reside for a day or two, till the King is at leisure to receive him. Here the Lord Lyon tells a strange story, of a vision which had recently appeared to his Sovereign at Linlithgow, warning him not to persist in his warlike resolutions; which Marmion repays, by recounting his night adventure at Gifford. At last they take the way to Edinburgh: and the Canto ends with a spirited description of the appearance of that city and the adjoining landscape, as it appears on gaining the summit of the hills that rise above it on the south, and of the great army that then lay encamped between the bottom of these hills and the walls.

The Fifth Canto begins with a more exact and detailed description of the different bands and sorts of forces through which Marmion passed in his way to the city. In the evening he is conducted to the court, which, as well as the person of the Scotish monarch, is described with great spirit and vivacity. He is then told, that his Sovereign's aggressions on the Border have been such as to leave little hope of accommodation; but that he is to take up his residence in Lord Angus's castle of Tantallon till the return of the herald who had been sent to complain of these injuries, and to denounce desperate hostility, if they were not instantly repaired. We now learn, too, that the Lady Abbess of Whitby, returning by sea with the Lady Clare, from the condemnation of poor Constance, had been captured by a Scotish privateer, and brought to Edinburgh, to await the disposal of the Sovereign. These unfortunate persons are now put under the charge of Lord Marmion, and directed to remain with him at Tantallon, and to be conducted by him to their respective homes, upon his final return to England. The Abbess, who had received from the dying Constance the written proofs of the perfidy of Marmion and the innocence of De Wilton, is fearful that these documents may fall into the hands of that unprincipled warrior, and, in her distress, applies to the palmer, to whom she narrates the whole story, and puts the papers into his hands, that they may be presented to Cardinal Wolsey or the King, and Clara be delivered from the suit of so unworthy an admirer. The conference of these holy persons, which takes place in a gallery looking down on the street, is suddenly broken off by a strange apparition of figures like heralds and pursuivants, who glide through the air, and, taking their station at the market-cross, summon the Scotish king and most of his nobles, together with Marmion and De Wilton, to appear before the throne of their Sovereign within forty days. The palmer protests and appeals against this citation. The train afterwards proceeds to Tantallon, the Abbess being dropped at a convent in the way; and Marmion growing impatient at the delay of the Scotish herald, and learning that James had advanced into Northumberland at the head of a great army, and that Lord Surrey had marched to oppose him, resolves to join the latter army without further delay, and to stay no longer in the castle of Lord Angus, whose demeanour he observed had recently become very cold and disrepectful.

In the beginning of the last Canto, which is by far the busiest, we learn, that De Wilton, who had obtained the proofs of his innocence from the Abbess, had told his story to Lord Angus, who had agreed to restore him to the rank of knighthood, and, for that purpose, had sought out a suit of old armour, with which he proposed to invest him, and send him forth armed to the English host. Over this armour, as it lay in the castle-yard, to be watched by the knightly candidate, the Lady Clare first stumbles, and then moralizes; when, behold, De Wilton himself stands before her, and, in a few words, recounts his disastrous story, and clears his injured fame. Clara assists in accoutring him as a knight; and forth he rides in the morning on an old steed of the Earl's. Marmion, in the mean time, gets his band set in order, and presents himself to take leave of his host, who refuses to shake hands with him at parting, and some high words pass between them. However, he goes on, accompanied by Clara, in very bad humour; and, by the way, learns the particulars of the extraordinary conversion of the palmer into a knight, and calling to mind the whole particulars of his deportment, becomes satisfied that this mysterious personage is no other than his antient and still dreaded rival. The sight of the two armies, however, soon drives all other thoughts from his mind. He leaves the Lady Clare on an eminence in the rear, and gallops to Lord Surrey, who instantly assigns him a station in the van, where he is received with shouts of joy and exultation. The battle is very finely described. It is represented as seen from the eminence where Clara was left; and the indistinctness of the picture, and the anxiety and uncertainty which results from that indistinctness,

indistinctness, add prodigiously to the interest and grandeur of the representation. His two squires bear back Marmion, mortally wounded, to the spot where Clara is waiting. In his last moments, he learns the fate of Constance, and bursts out into an agony of rage and remorse, which is diverted, however, by the nearer roar of the battle; and he expires in a chivalrous exclamation of encouragement to the English warriors. The poet now hurries to a conclusion; the disastrous issue of Flodden Field is shortly but powerfully represented; and the reader is told, in a few words, of the restoration of De Wilton to his honours, and of his happy marriage with Clara, which closes the story.

Now, upon this narrative, we are led to observe, in the first place, that it forms a very scanty and narrow foundation for a poem of such length as is now before us. There is scarcely matter enough in the main story for a ballad of ordinary dimensions; and the present work is not so properly diversified with episodes and descriptions, as made up and composed of them. No long poem, however, can maintain its interest without a connected narrative. It should be a grand historical picture, in which all the personages are concerned in one great transaction, and not a mere gallery of detached groupes and portraits. When we accompany the poet in his career of adventure, it is not enough that he points out to us, as we go along, the beauties of the landscape, and the costume of the inhabitants. The people must do something after they are described; and they must do it in concert, or in opposition to each other; while the landscape, with its castles and woods and defiles, must serve merely as the scene of their exploits, and the field of their conspiracies and contentions. There is too little connected incident in Marmion, and a great deal too much gratuitous description.

In the second place, we object to the whole plan and conception of the fable, as turning mainly upon incidents unsuitable for poetical narrative, and brought out in the denouement in a very obscure, laborious, and imperfect manner. The events of an epic narrative should all be of a broad, clear, and palpable description; and the difficulties and embarrassments of the characters, of a nature to be easily comprehended and entered into by readers of all descriptions. Now, the leading incidents in this poem are of a very narrow and peculiar character, and are woven together into a petty intricacy and entanglement which puzzles the reader instead of interesting him, and fatigues instead of exciting his curiosity. The unaccountable conduct of Constance, in first ruining De Wilton in order to forward Marmion's suit with Clara, and then trying to poison Clara, because Marmion's suit seemed likely to succeed with her—but, above all, the paltry

try device of the forged letters, and the sealed packet given up by Constance at her condemnation, and handed over by the abbess to De Wilton and Lord Angus, are incidents not only unworthy of the dignity of poetry, but really incapable of being made subservient to its legitimate purposes. They are particularly unsuitable, too, to the age and character of the personages to whom they relate; and, instead of forming the instruments of knightly vengeance and redress, remind us of the machinery of a bad German novel, or of the disclosures which might be expected on the trial of a pettifogging attorney. The obscurity and intricacy which they communicate to the whole story, must be very painfully felt by every reader who tries to comprehend it; and is prodigiously increased by the very clumsy and inartificial manner in which the denouement is ultimately brought about by the author. Three several attempts are made by three several persons to beat into the head of the reader the evidence of De Wilton's innocence, and of Marmion's guilt; first, by Constance in her dying speech and confession; secondly, by the abbess in her conference with De Wilton; and, lastly, by this injured innocent himself, on disclosing himself to Clara in the castle of Lord Angus. After all, the precise nature of the plot and the detection is very imperfectly explained, and, we will venture to say, is not fully understood by one half of those who have fairly read through every word of the quarto now before us. We would object, on the same grounds, to the whole scenery of Constance's condemnation. The subterranean chamber, with its low arches, massive walls, and silent monks with smoky torches,—its old chandelier in an iron chain,—the stern abbots and haughty prioresses, with their flowing black dresses, and book of statutes laid on an iron table, are all images borrowed from the novels of Mrs Ratcliffe and her imitators. The public, we believe, has now supped full of this sort of horrors; or, if any effect is still to be produced by their exhibition, it may certainly be produced at too cheap a rate, to be worthy the ambition of a poet of original imagination.

In the third place, we object to the extreme and monstrous improbability of almost all the incidents which go to the composition of this fable. We know very well, that poetry does not describe what is ordinary; but the marvellous, in which it is privileged to indulge, is the marvellous of performance, and not of accident. One extraordinary rencontre or opportune coincidence may be permitted, perhaps, to bring the parties together, and wind up matters for the catastrophe; but a writer who gets through the whole business of his poem, by a series of lucky hits and incalculable chances, certainly manages matters in a very economical

way for his judgment and invention, and will probably be found to have consulted his own ease, rather than the delight of his readers. Now, the whole story of Marmion seems to us to turn upon a tissue of such incredible accidents. In the first place, it was totally beyond all calculation, that Marmion and De Wilton should meet, by pure chance, at Norham, on the only night which either of them could spend in that fortress. In the next place, it is almost totally incredible that the former should not recognize his antient rival and antagonist, merely because he had assumed a palmer's habit, and lost a little flesh and colour in his travels. He appears unhooded, and walks and speaks before him; and, as near as we can guess, it could not be more than a year since they had entered the lists against each other. Constance, at her death, says she had lived but three years with Marmion; and, it was not till he tired of her, that he aspired to Clara, or laid plots against De Wilton. It is equally inconceivable that De Wilton should have taken upon himself the friendly office of a guide to his arch enemy, and discharged it quietly and faithfully, without seeking, or apparently thinking of any opportunity of disclosure or revenge. So far from meditating any thing of the sort, he makes two several efforts to leave him, when it appears that his services are no longer indispensable. If his accidental meeting, and continued association with Marmion, be altogether unnatural, it must appear still more extraordinary, that he should afterwards meet with the Lady Clare, his adored mistress, and the Abbess of Whitby, who had in her pocket the written proofs of his innocence, in consequence of an occurrence equally accidental. These two ladies, the only two persons in the universe whom it was of any consequence to him to meet, are captured in their voyage from Holy Isle, and brought to Edinburgh, by the luckiest accident in the world, the very day that De Wilton and Marmion make their entry into it. Nay, the king, without knowing that they are at all of his acquaintance, happens to appoint them lodgings in the same stair-case, and to make them travel under his escort! We pass the night combat at Gifford, in which Marmion knows his opponent by moonlight, though he never could guess at him in sunshine; and all the inconsistencies of his dilatory wooing of Lady Clare. Those, and all the prodigies and miracles of the story, we can excuse, as within the privilege of poetry; but, the lucky chances we have already specified, are rather too much for our patience. A poet, we think, should never let his heroes contract such great debts to fortune; especially when a little exertion of his own might make them independent of her bounty. De Wilton might have been made to seek and watch his adversary, from some moody feeling of patient revenge; and it

it certainly would not have been difficult to discover motives which might have induced both Clara and the Abbess to follow and relieve him, without dragging them into his presence by the clumsy hands of a cruizer from Dunbar.

In the *fourth* place, we think we have reason to complain of Mr Scott for having made his figuring characters so entirely worthless, as to excite but little of our sympathy, and at the same time keeping his virtuous personages so completely in the back ground, that we are scarcely at all acquainted with them when the work is brought to a conclusion. Marmion is not only a villain, but a mean and sordid villain; and represented as such, without any visible motive, and at the evident expense of characteristic truth and consistency. His elopement with Constance, and his subsequent desertion of her, are knightly vices enough, we suppose; but then he would surely have been more interesting and natural, if he had deserted her for a brighter beauty, and not merely for a richer bride. This was very well for Mr Thomas Inkle, the young merchant of London; but for the valiant, haughty and liberal Lord Marmion of Fontenaye and Lutterward, we do think it was quite unsuitable. Thus, too, it was very chivalrous and orderly perhaps, for him to hate De Wilton, and to seek to supplant him in his lady's love; but, to slip a bundle of forged letters into his bureau, was cowardly as well as malignant. Now, Marmion is not represented as a coward, nor as at all afraid of De Wilton; on the contrary, and it is certainly the most absurd part of the story, he fights him fairly and valiantly after all, and overcomes him by mere force of arms, as he might have done at the beginning, without having recourse to devices so unsuitable to his general character and habits of acting. By the way, we have great doubts whether a *convicted* traitor, like De Wilton, whose guilt was established by written evidence under his own hand, was ever allowed to enter the lists, as a knight, against his accuser. At all events, we are positive, that an accuser, who was as ready and willing to fight as Marmion, could never have condescended to forge in support of his accusation; and that the author has greatly diminished our interest in the story, as well as needlessly violated the truth of character, by loading his hero with the guilt of this most revolting and improbable proceeding. The crimes of Constance are multiplied in like manner to such a degree, as both to destroy our interest in her fate, and to violate all probability. Her elopement was enough to bring on her doom; and we should have felt more for it, if it had appeared a little more unmerited. She is utterly debased, when she becomes the instrument of Marmion's murderous perfidy, and the assassin of her unwilling rival. De

De Wilton, again, is too much depressed throughout the poem. It is rather dangerous for a poet to chuse a hero who has been beaten in fair battle. The readers of romance do not like an unsuccessful warrior; but to be beaten in a judicial combat, and to have his arms reversed and tied on the gallows, is an adventure which can only by expiated by signal prowess and exemplary revenge, achieved against great odds, in full view of the reader. The unfortunate De Wilton, however, carries this stain upon him from one end of the poem to the other. He wanders up and down, a dishonoured fugitive, in the disguise of a palmer, through the five first books; and though he is knighted and mounted again in the last, yet we see nothing of his performances; nor is the author merciful enough to afford him one opportunity of redeeming his credit by an exploit of gallantry or skill. For the poor Lady Clare, she is a personage of still greater insipidity and insignificance. The author seems to have formed her upon the principle of Mr Pope's maxim, that women have no characters at all. We find her every where, where she has no business to be; neither saying nor doing any thing of the least consequence, but whimpering and sobbing over the Matrimony in her prayer book, like a great miss from a boarding school; and all this is the more inexcusable, as she is altogether a supernumerary person in the play, who should atone for her intrusion by some brilliancy or novelty of deportment. Matters would have gone on just as well, although she had been left behind at Whitby till after the battle of Flodden; and she is daggled about in the train, first of the Abbess and then of Lord Marmion, for no purpose, that we can see, but to afford the author an opportunity for two or three pages of indifferent description.

Finally, we must object, both on critical and on national grounds, to the discrepancy between the title and the substance of the poem, and the neglect of Scottish feelings and Scottish character that is manifested throughout. Marmion is no more a tale of Flodden Field, than of Bosworth Field, or any other field in history. The story is quite independent of the national feuds of the sister kingdoms; and the battle of Flodden has no other connexion with it, than from being the conflict in which the hero loses his life. Flodden, however, is mentioned; and the preparations for Flodden, and the consequences of it, are repeatedly alluded to in the course of the composition. Yet we nowhere find any adequate expressions of those melancholy and patriotic sentiments which are still all over Scotland the accompaniment of those allusions and recollections. No picture is drawn of the national feelings before or after that fatal encounter; and the day that broke for ever the pride and the splendour of his country,

is only commemorated by a Scottish poet as the period when an English warrior was beaten to the ground. There is scarcely one trait of true Scottish nationality or patriotism introduced into the whole poem; and Mr Scott's only expression of admiration or love for the beautiful country to which he belongs, is put, if we rightly remember, into the mouth of one of his Southern favourites. Independently of this, we think that too little pains is taken to distinguish the Scottish character and manners from the English, or to give expression to the general feeling of rivalry and mutual jealousy which at that time existed between the two countries.

If there be any truth in what we have now said, it is evident that the merit of this poem cannot consist in the story. And yet it has very great merit, and various kinds of merit,—both in the picturesque representation of visible objects, in the delineation of manners and characters, and in the description of great and striking events. After having detained the reader so long with our own dull remarks, it will be refreshing to him to peruse a few specimens of Mr Scott's more enlivening strains. The opening stanzas of the whole poem contain a good picture.

'Day set on Norham's castled steep,
And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,
And Cheviot's mountains lone:
The battled towers, the Donjon Keep,
The loop-hole grates where captives weep,
The flanking walls that round it sweep,
In yellow lustre shone.
The warriors on the turrets high,
Moving athwart the evening sky,
Seemed forms of giant height:
Their armour, as it caught the rays,
Flashed back again the western blaze,
In lines of dazzling light.

St George's banner, broad and gay,
Now faded, as the fading ray
Less bright, and less, was flung;
The evening gale had scarce the power
To wave it on the Donjon tower,
So heavily it hung.
The scouts had parted on their search,
The castle gates were barr'd;
Above the gloomy portal arch,
Timing his footsteps to a march,
The warder kept his guard,
Low humming, as he paced along,
Some ancient Border gathering song.' p. 23, 24.

The

The first presentment of the mysterious Palmer is also laudable.

' The ſummoned Palmer came in place;
His ſable cowl o'erhung his face;
In his black mantle was he clad,
With Peter's keys, in cloth of red,
On his broad ſhoulders wrought;
The ſcallop ſhell his cap did deck;
The crucifix around his neck
Was from Loretto brought;
His ſandals were with travel tore,
Staff, budget, bottle, ſcrip, he wore;
The faded palm-branch in his hand,
Showed pilgrim from the Holy Land.

Whenas the Palmer came in hall,
Nor lord, nor knight, was there more tall,
Or had a ſtatelier ſtep withal,
Or looked more high and keen;
For no ſaluting did he wait,
But ſtrode acroſs the hall of ſtate,
And fronted Marmion where he ſate,
As he his peer had been.
But his gaunt frame was worn with toil;
His cheek was ſunk, alas the while!
And when he ſtruggled at a smile,
His eye looked haggard wild.' p. 49—51.

The voyage of the Lady Abbess and her nuns presents a picture in a very different style of colouring, but of at least equal merit.

' 'Twas ſweet to ſee theſe holy maids,
Like birds eſcaped to green-wood ſhades,
Their firſt flight from the cage,
How timid, and how curious too,
For all to them was ſtrange and new,
And all the common ſights they view,
Their wonderment engage.
One eyed the ſhrouds and ſwelling ſail,
With many a benedicite;
One at the rippling ſurge grew pale,
And would for terror pray;
Then ſhrieked, becauſe the ſea-dog, nigh,
His round black head, and ſparkling eye,
Reared o'er the foaming ſpray;
And one would ſtill adjuſt her veil,
Diſordered by the ſummer gale,
Perchance leſt ſome more worldly eye
Her dedicated charms might ſpy;
Perchance, becauſe ſuch action graced
Her fair-turned arm and ſlender waiſt.
Light was each ſimple boſom there,' &c. p. 78, 79.

' And

' And now the veſſel ſkirts the ſtrand
Of mountainous Northumberland;
Towns, towers, and halls ſucceſſive riſe,
And catch the nuns' delighted eyes.
Monk-Wearmouth ſoon behind them lay,
And Tynemouth's priory and bay;
They marked, amid her trees, the hall
Of lofty Seaton-Delaval;
They ſaw the Blythe and Wanſbeck floods,
Ruſh to the ſea through ſounding woods;
They paſt the tower of Widderington,
Mother of many a valiant ſon;
At Coquet-iſle their beads they tell,
To the good Saint who owned the cell;
Then did the Alne attention claim,
And Warkworth, proud of Percy's name;
And next, they croſſed themſelves, to hear
The whitening breakers ſound ſo near,
Where, boiling through the rocks, they roar
On Dunſtanborough's caverned ſhore;
Thy tower, proud Bamborough, marked they there,
King Ida's caſtle, huge and ſquare,
From its tall rock look grimly down,
And on the ſwelling ocean frown;
Then from the coaſt they bore away,
And reached the Holy Iſland's bay.' p. 84—86.

The picture of Constance before her judges, though more laboured, is not, to our taste, so pleasing; though it has beauty of a kind fully as popular.

' When thus her face was given to view,
(Although ſo pallid was her hue,
It did a ghaſtly contraſt bear,
To thoſe bright ringlets gliſtering fair,)
Her look compoſed, and ſteady eye,
Beſpoke a matchleſs conſtancy;
And there ſhe ſtood ſo calm and pale,
That, but her breathing did not fail,
And motion ſlight of eye and head,
And of her boſom, warranted,
That neither ſenſe nor pulſe ſhe lacks,
You might have thought a form of wax,
Wrought to the very life, was there;
So ſtill ſhe was, ſo pale, ſo fair.' p. 100.

' Twice ſhe eſſayed, and twice, in vain,
Her accents might no utterance gain;
Nought but imperfect murmurs ſlip

From

From her convulfed and quivering lip:
'Twixt each attempt all was fo ftill,
You feemed to hear a diftant rill—
'Twas ocean's fwells and falls;
For though this vault of fin and fear
Was to the founding furge fo near,
A tempeft there you fcarce could hear,
So maffive were the walls.
At length, an effort fent apart
The blood that curdled to her heart,
And light came to her eye,
And colour dawned upon her cheek,
A hectic and a fluttered ftreak,
Like that left on the Cheviot peak,
By autumn's ftormy fky;
And when her filence broke at length,
Still as fhe fpoke fhe gathered ftrength,
And arm'd herfelf to bear.
It was a fearful fight to fee
Such high refolve and conftancy,
In form fo foft and fair.' p. 104, 105.

The sound of the knell that was rung for the parting soul of this victim of seduction, is described with great force and solemnity.

'Slow o'er the midnight wave it fwung,
Northumbrian rocks in anfwer rung;
To Warkworth cell the echoes rolled,
His beads the wakeful hermit told;
The Bamborough peafant raifed his head,
But flept ere half a prayer he faid;
So far was heard the mighty knell,
The ftag fprung up on Cheviot Fell,
Spread his broad noftril to the wind,
Lifted before, afide, behind;
Then couched him down befide the hind,
And quaked among the mountain fern,
To hear that found fo dull and ftern.' p. 112, 113.

The following introduction to the squire's song is sweet and tender.

'A deep and mellow voice he had,
The air he chofe was wild and fad;
Such have I heard, in Scottifh land,
Rife from the bufy harveft band,
When falls before the mountaineer,
On lowland plains, the ripened ear.
Now one fhrill voice the notes prolong,
Now a wild chorus fwells the fong:

Oft

Oft have I liftened, and ftood ftill,
As it came foftened up the hill,
And deemed it the lament of men
Who languifhed for their native glen;
And thought, how fad would be fuch found,
On Sufquehana's fwampy ground,
Kentucky's wood-encumbered brake,
Or wild Ontario's boundlefs lake,
Where heart-fick exiles, in the ftrain,
Recalled fair Scotland's hills again!' p. 140, 141.

The view of the camp and city from the top of Blackford Hill, is very striking; but we cannot make room for the whole of it.

'Marmion might hear the mingled hum
Of myriads up the mountain come;
The horfes' tramp, and tingling clank,
Where chiefs reviewed their vaffal rank
And charger's fhrilling neigh;
And fee the fhifting line's advance,
While frequent flafhed, from fhield and lance,
The fun's reflected ray.

'Thin curling in the morning air,
The wreaths of failing fmoke declare,
To embers now the brands decayed,
Where the night-watch their fires had made.
They faw, flow rolling on the plain,
Full many a baggage-cart and wain,
And dire artillery's clumfy car,
By fluggifh oxen tugged to war.' p. 215.

'Still on the fpot Lord Marmion ftayed,
For fairer fcene he ne'er furveyed.
When fated with the martial fhow
That peopled all the plain below,
The wandering eye could o'er it go,
And mark the diftant city glow
With gloomy fplendour red;
For on the fmoke-wreaths, huge and flow,
That round her fable turrets flow,
The morning beams were fhed,
And tinged them with a luftre proud
Like that which ftreaks a thunder-cloud.
Such dufky grandeur clothed the height,
Where the huge caftle holds its ftate,
And all the fteep flope down,
Whofe ridgy back heaves to the fky,
Piled deep and maffy, clofe and high,
Mine own romantic town!

But

But northward far, with purer blaze,
On Ochil mountains fell the rays,
And as each heathy top they kiſſed,
It gleamed a purple amethyſt.
Yonder the ſhores of Fife you ſaw;
Here Preſton-Bay, and Berwick-Law;
And broad between them rolled,
The gallant Frith the eye might note,
Whoſe iſlands on its boſom float,
Like emeralds chaſed in gold.
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!" p. 218–220.

The picture of the court, and the person of the prince, is very spirited and lively.

'The dazzling lamps, from gallery gay,
Caſt on the court a dancing ray;
Here to the harp did minſtrels ſing;
There ladies touched a ſofter ſtring;
With long-eared cap and motley veſt,
The licenſed fool retailed his jeſt;
His magic tricks the juggler plied;
At dice and draughts the gallants vied;
While ſome, in cloſe receſs apart,
Courted the ladies of their heart,
Nor courted them in vain;
For often, in the parting hour,
Victorious love aſſerts his power
O'er coldneſs and diſdain;
And flinty is her heart, can view
To battle march a lover true,—
Can hear, perchance, his laſt adieu,
Nor own her ſhare of pain.

Through this mixed crowd of glee and game,
The King to greet Lord Marmion came,
While, reverend, all made room.
An eaſy taſk it was, I trow,
King James's manly form to know,
Although, his courteſy to ſhow,
He doffed, to Marmion bending low,
His broidered cap and plume.
For royal were his garb and mien,

His

His cloak, of crimſon velvet piled,
Trimmed with the fur of martin wild;
His veſt, of changeful ſatin ſheen,
The dazzled eye beguiled;
His gorgeous collar hung adown,
Bearing the badge of Scotland's crown;
The thiſtle brave, of old renown;
His truſty blade, Toledo right,
Deſcended from a baldric bright;
White were his buſkins, on the heel
His ſpurs inlaid of gold and ſteel;
His bonnet, all of crimſon fair,
Was buttoned with a ruby rare:
And Marmion deemed he ne'er had ſeen
A prince of ſuch a noble mien.

The Monarch's form was middle ſize;
For feat of ſtrength, or exerciſe,
Shaped in proportion fair;
And hazel was his eagle eye,
And auburn of the darkeſt dye,
His ſhort curled beard and hair.
Light was his footſtep in the dance,
And firm his ſtirrup in the liſts;
And, oh! he had that merry glance,
That ſeldom lady's heart reſiſts.
Lightly from fair to fair he flew,
And loved to plead, lament, and ſue;—
Suit lightly won, and ſhort-lived pain!
For monarchs ſeldom ſigh in vain.' p. 251—254.

The description of Lady Heron, the favourite of this amorous monarch, and the very lively and characteristic ballad she sings, afford so pleasing a proof of Mr Scott's talents for lighter composition, that we insert the whole of it, at the risk of extending this article to a length which our severer readers may think insufferable.

'Fair was her rounded arm, as o'er
The ſtrings her fingers flew;
And as ſhe touched, and tuned them all,
Ever her boſom's riſe and fall
Was plainer given to view;
For, all for heat, was laid aſide
Her wimple, and her hood untied:
And firſt ſhe pitched her voice to ſing,
Then glanced her dark eye on the King,
And then around the ſilent ring;
And laughed, and bluſhed, and oft did ſay
Her pretty oath, by Yea, and Nay,
She could not, would not, durſt not play!

At

At length, upon the harp, with glee,
Mingled with arch fimplicity,
A foft, yet lively, air fhe rung,
While thus the wily lady fung.

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the weft,
Through all the wide Border his fteed was the beft;
And, fave his good broad-fword, he weapons had none,
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and fo dauntlefs in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He ftaid not for brake, and he ftopped not for ftone;
He fwam the Efke river where ford there was none;
But, ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had confented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love, and a daftard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby Hall,
Among bridefmen, and kinfmen, and brothers, and all:
Then fpoke the bride's father, his hand on his fword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom faid never a word,)
" O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?"

" I long wooed your daughter, my fuit you denied;—
Love fwells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
And now am I come, with this loft love of mine,
To lead but one meafure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar."

The bride kiffed the goblet; the knight took it up,
He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
She looked down to blufh, and fhe looked up to figh,
With a fmile on her lips, and a tear in her eye.
He took her foft hand, ere her mother could bar—
" Now tread we a meafure!" faid young Lochinvar.

So ftately his form, and fo lovely her face,
That never a hall fuch a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom ftood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride-maidens whifpered, " 'Twere better by far
To have matched our fair coufin with young Lochinvar."

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall-door, and the charger ftood near;
So light to the croup the fair lady he fwung!
So light to the faddle before her he fprung!—
" She is won! we are gone, over bank, bufh, and fcaur;
They'll have fleet fteeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar.

Thre

There was mounting 'mong Græmes of the Netherby clan;
Forfters, Fenwicks, and Mufgraves, they rode and they ran:
There was racing, and chafing, on Cannobie Lee,
But the loft bride of Netherby ne'er did they fee.
So daring in love, and fo dauntlefs in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

The monarch o'er the fyren hung,
And beat the meafure as fhe fung;
And, preffing clofer, and more near,
He whifpered praifes in her ear.
In loud applaufe the courtiers vied;
And ladies winked, and fpoke afide.

The witching dame to Marmion threw
A glance, where feemed to reign
The pride that claims applaufes due,
And of her royal conqueft, too,
A real or a feigned difdain.' p. 257—261.

The description of the battle, and of the death of Marmion, in the Sixth Canto, are, in our opinion, by far the finest passages in the poem. But before closing our extracts with a part of that admirable description, we must treat our readers with the following fine sketch of an ancient Scotish baron, Douglas Earl of Angus, in his old age.

' His giant-form, like ruined tower,
Though fallen its mufcles' brawny vaunt,
Huge-boned, and tall, and grim, and gaunt,
Seemed o'er the gaudy fcene to lower:
His locks and beard in filver grew;
His eye-brows kept their fable hue.' p. 263, 264.

' O'er his huge form, and vifage pale,
He wore a cap and fhirt of mail,
And lean'd his large and wrinkled hand
Upon the huge and fweeping brand,
Which wont, of yore, in battle-fray,
His foeman's limbs to fhred away,
As wood-knife lops the fapling fpray.
He feemed as, from the tombs around
Rifing at judgment-day,
Some giant Douglas may be found
In all his old array;
So pale his face, fo huge his limb,
So old his arms, his look fo grim.' p. 333.

We shall begin our extracts from the Flodden scenes, with the following moving picture of the passage of the English host through the deep vale of the Till, and of the fatal inactivity of the Scotish army.

' High

' High fight it is, and haughty, while
They dive into the deep defile;
Beneath the caverned cliff they fall,
Beneath the caftle's airy wall.
By rock, by oak, by hawthorn tree,
Troop after troop is difappearing;
Troop after troop their banners rearing,
Upon the eaftern bank you fee.
Still pouring down the rocky den,
Where flows the fullen Till,
And rifing from the dim-wood glen,
Standards on ftandards, men on men,
In flow fucceffion ftill,
And bending o'er the Gothic arch,
And preffing on, in ceafelefs march
To gain th' oppofing hill.

' And why ftands Scotland idly now,
Dark Flodden! on thy airy brow,
Since England gains the pafs the while,
And ftruggles through the deep defile?
What checks the fiery foul of James?
Why fits that champion of the dames
Inactive on his fteed,
And fees, between him and his land,
Between him and Tweed's fouthern ftrand,
His hoft Lord Surrey lead?
What vails the vain knight-errant's brand?—
O, Douglas, for thy leading wand!
Fierce Randolph, for thy fpeed!
O for one hour of Wallace wight,
Or well-fkilled Bruce, to rule the fight,
And cry—"Saint Andrew and our right!"
Another fight had feen that morn,
From Fate's dark book a leaf been torn,
And Flodden had been Bannock bourne!—' p. 345—7.

The battle itself, as we have already intimated, is described as it appeared to the two squires of Lord Marmion, who were left on an eminence in the rear, as the guard of Lady Clare: And certainly, of all the poetical battles which have been fought, from the days of Homer to those of Mr Southey, there is none, in our opinion, at all comparable, for interest and animation,—for breadth of drawing, and magnificence of effect,—with this of Mr Scott's. The Scotish army set fire to its camp on the brow of the hill, and rushed down to the attack, under cover of the smoke of the conflagration.

' Volumed and vaft, and rolling far,
The cloud enveloped Scotland's war,

As

As down the hill they broke;
Nor martial fhout, nor minftrel tone,
Announced their march; their tread alone,
At times one warning trumpet blown,
At times a ftifled hum,
Told England, from his mountain-throne
King James did rufhing come.—
Scarce could they hear, or fee their foes,
Until at weapon-point they clofe.—
They clofe, in clouds of fmoke and duft,
With fword-fway, and with lance's thruft;
And fuch a yell was there,
Of fudden and portentous birth,
As if men fought upon the earth,
And fiends in upper air.
Long looked the anxious fquires; their eye
Could in the darknefs nought defcry.

At length the frefhening weftern blaft
Afide the fhroud of battle caft;
And, firft, the ridge of mingled fpears
Above the brightening cloud appears;
And in the fmoke the pennons flew,
As in the ftorm the white fea-mew.
Then marked they, dafhing broad and far,
The broken billows of the war,
And plumed crefts of chieftains brave,
Floating like foam upon the wave;
But nought diftinct they fee:
Wide raged the battle on the plain;
Spears fhook, and falchions flafhed amain;
Fell England's arrow-flight like rain;
Crefts rofe, and ftooped, and rofe again,
Wild and diforderly.
Amid the fcene of tumult, high
They faw Lord Marmion's falcon fly:
And ftainlefs Tunftall's banner white,
And Edmund Howard's lion bright,
Still bear them bravely in the fight;
Although againft them come,
Of gallant Gordons many a one,
And many a ftubborn Highlandman,
And many a rugged Border clan,
With Huntley, and with Home.

Far on the left, unfeen the while,
Stanley broke Lennox and Argyle;
Though there the weftern mountaineer
Rufhed with bare bofom on the fpear,

And

And flung the feeble targe afide,
And with both hands the broad-fword plied ;
'Twas vain.—But Fortune, on the right,
With fickle fmile, cheered Scotland's fight.
Then fell that fpotlefs banner white,
The Howard's lion fell ;
Yet ftill Lord Marmion's falcon flew
With wavering flight, while fiercer grew
Around the battle yell.
The Border flogan rent the fky :
A Home ! a Gordon ! was the cry ;
Loud were the clanging blows ;
Advanced,—forced back,—now low, now high,
The pennon funk and rofe ;
As bends the bark's maft in the gale,
When rent are rigging, fhrouds, and fail,
It wavered mid the foes.' P. 354—357.

The two squires now successively desert their fair charge to fly to the relief of their Lord ; and Clara is left alone on the hill a prey to terror and anxiety.

' With that, ftraight up the hill there rode
Two horfemen drenched with gore,
And in their arms, a helplefs load,
A wounded knight they bore.
His hand ftill ftrained the broken brand ;
His arms were fmeared with blood, and fand,
Dragged from among the horfes' feet,
With dinted fhield, and helmet beat,
The falcon-creft and plumage gone,
Can that be haughty Marmion ? . . . .
Young Blount his armour did unlace,
And, gazing on his ghaftly face,
Said—" By Saint George, he's gone !
That fpear-wound has our mafter fped ;
And fee the deep cut on his head !
Good-night to Marmion." —
" Unnurtured Blount ! thy brawling ceafe :
He opes his eyes," faid Euftace ; " peace ! "—

' When, doffed his cafque, he felt free air,
Around gan Marmion wildly ftare :—
" Where's Harry Blount ? Fitz-Euftace where ?
Linger ye here, ye hearts of hare !
Redeem my pennon,—charge again !
Cry—' Marmion to the refcue ! '—Vain !
Laft of my race, on battle-plain
That fhout fhall ne'er be heard again !—
Yet my laft thought is England's :—fly,

To Dacre bear my fignet-ring ;
Tell him his fquadrons up to bring.—
Fitz-Euftace, to Lord Surrey hie ;
Tunftall lies dead upon the field ;
His life-blood ftains the fpotlefs fhield :
Edmund is down ;—my life is reft ;—
The Admiral alone is left.
Let Stanley charge with fpur of fire,—
With Chefter charge, and Lancafhire,
Full upon Scotland's central hoft,
Or victory and England's loft.—
Muft I bid twice ?—hence, varlets ! fly !
Leave Marmion here alone—to die." —
They parted, and alone he lay ;
Clare drew her from the fight away,
Till pain wrung forth a lowly moan,
And half he murmured,—" Is there none,
Of all my halls have nurft,
Page, fquire, or groom, one cup to bring
Of bleffed water from the fpring,
To flake my dying thirft ! "—
O, woman ! in our hours of eafe,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to pleafe,
And variable as the fhade
By the light quivering afpen made ;
When pain and anguifh wring the brow,
A miniftering angel thou !—
Scarce were the piteous accents faid,
When, with the Baron's cafque, the maid
To the nigh ftreamlet ran :
Forgot were hatred, wrongs, and fears ;
The plaintive voice alone fhe hears,
Sees but the dying man.
She ftooped her by the runnel's fide,
But in abhorrence backward drew,
For, oozing from the mountain's fide,
Where raged the war, a dark red tide
Was curdling in the ftreamlet blue.
Where fhall fhe turn !—behold her mark
A little fountain-cell,
Where water, clear as diamond-fpark,
In a ftone bafon fell.
Above, fome half-worn letters fay,
" *Drink. weary. pilgrim. drink. and. pray.*
For. the. kind. foul. of. Sybil. Grey.
Who. built. this. crofs. and. well."
She filled the helm, and back fhe hied,' &c. P. 359—363.

' " Is it the hand of Clare, " he faid,
" Or injured Conftance, bathes my head ? "
Then, as remembrance rofe,—
" Speak not to me of fhrift or prayer !
I muft redrefs her woes.
Short fpace, few words, are mine to fpare ;
Forgive and liften, gentle Clare ! "—
" Alas ! " fhe faid, " the while,—
O think of your immortal weal !
In vain for Conftance is your zeal ;
She died at Holy Ifle. "—
Lord Marmion ftarted from the ground,
As light as if he felt no wound ;
Though in the action burft the tide,
In torrents, from his wounded fide.
" Then it was truth ! "—he faid—" I knew
That the dark prefage muft be true.—
I would the Fiend, to whom belongs
The vengeance due to all her wrongs,
Would fpare me but a day !
For waiting fire, and dying groan,
And priefts flain on the altar ftone,
Might bribe him for delay.
It may not be !—this dizzy trance—
Curfe on yon bafe marauder's lance,
And doubly curfed my failing brand !
A finful heart makes feeble hand. "— p. 364, 365.

Clara and a charitable priest now try in vain to soothe his last remorseful agonies: he hears a lady's voice singing reproachful stanzas in his ear, and is deaf to the consolations or hopes of religion. All at once

' The war, that for a fpace did fail,
Now trebly thundering fwelled the gale,
And—Stanley ! was the cry ;—
A light on Marmion's vifage fpread,
And fired his glazing eye :
With dying hand, above his head
He fhook the fragment of his blade,
And fhouted " Victory !—
" Charge, Chefter, charge ! On, Stanley, on ! ". . . .
Were the laft words of Marmion. ' p. 366.

The lady is now hurried away by the priest; and the close of the day is thus described, with undiminished vigour and spirit.

' But as they left the dark'ning heath,
More defperate grew the ftrife of death.
The Englifh fhafts in vollies hailed,
In headlong charge their horfe affailed ;
Front, flank, and rear, the fquadrons fweep,
To break the Scottifh circle deep,
That fought around their king.
But yet, though thick the fhafts as fnow,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though bill-men deal the ghaftly blow,
Unbroken was the ring ;
The ftubborn fpear-men ftill made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each ftepping where his comrade ftood,
The inftant that he fell.
No thought was there of daftard flight ;—
Linked in the ferried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, fquire like knight,
As fearlefsly and well,
Till utter darknefs clofed her wing
O'er their thin hoft and wounded king.
Then fkilful Surrey's fage commands
Led back from ftrife his fhatter'd bands ;
And from the charge they drew,
As mountain-waves, from wafted lands,
Sweep back to ocean blue.
Then did their lofs his foemen know ;
Their king, their lords, their mightieft low,
They melted from the field ; as fnow,
When ftreams are fwoln, and fouth winds blow,
Diffolves in filent dew.
Tweed's echoes heard the ceafelefs plafh,
While many a broken band,
Difordered, through her currents dafh,
To gain the Scottifh land ;
To town and tower, to down and dale,
To tell red Flodden's difmal tale,
And raife the univerfal wail. ' p. 368—370.

The powerful poetry of these passages can receive no illustration from any praises or observations of ours. It is superior, in our apprehension, to all that this author has hitherto produced; and, with a few faults of diction, equal to any thing that has *ever* been written upon similar subjects. Though we have extended our extracts to a very unusual length, in order to do justice to these fine conceptions, we have been obliged to leave out a great deal, which serves in the original to give beauty and effect to what we have actually cited. From the moment the author gets in sight of Flodden Field, indeed, to the end of the poem, there is no tame writing, and no intervention of ordinary passages. He does not once flag or grow tedious; and neither stops to describe dresses and ceremonies, nor to commemorate the

the harsh names of feudal barons from the Border. There is a flight of five or six hundred lines, in short, in which he never stoops his wing, nor wavers in his course; but carries the reader forward with a more rapid, sustained, and lofty movement, than any Epic bard that we can at present remember.

From the contemplation of such distinguished excellence, it is painful to be obliged to turn to the defects and deformities which occur in the same composition. But this, though a less pleasing, is a still more indispensable part of our duty; and one, from the resolute discharge of which, much more beneficial consequences may be expected. In the work which contains the fine passages we have just quoted, and many of nearly equal beauty, there is such a proportion of tedious, hasty, and injudicious composition, as makes it questionable with us, whether it is entitled to go down to posterity as a work of classical merit, or whether the author will retain, with another generation, that high reputation which his genius certainly might make coeval with the language. These are the authors, after all, whose faults it is of most consequence to point out; and criticism performs her best and boldest office,—not when she tramples down the weed, or tears up the bramble,—but when she strips the strangling ivy from the oak, or cuts out the canker from the rose. The faults of the fable we have already noticed at sufficient length. Those of the execution we shall now endeavour to enumerate with greater brevity.

And, in the *first* place, we must beg leave to protest, in the name of a very numerous class of readers, against the insufferable number, and length, and minuteness of those descriptions of antient dresses and manners, and buildings; and ceremonies, and local superstitions; with which the whole poem is overrun,—which render so many notes necessary, and are, after all, but imperfectly understood by those to whom chivalrous antiquity has not hitherto been an object of peculiar attention. We object to these, and to all such details, because they are, for the most part, without dignity or interest in themselves; because, in a modern author, they are evidently unnatural; and because they must always be strange, and, in a good degree, obscure and unintelligible to ordinary readers.

When a great personage is to be introduced, it is right, perhaps, to give the reader some notion of his external appearance; and when a memorable event is to be narrated, it is natural to help the imagination by some picturesque representation of the scenes with which it is connected. Yet, even upon such occasions, it can seldom be adviseable to present the reader with a full inventory of the hero's dress, from his shoebuckle to the plume in his cap, or to enumerate all the drawbridges, portcul-

lisses, and diamond cut stones in the castle. Mr Scott, however, not only draws out almost all his pictures in these full dimensions, but frequently introduces those pieces of Flemish or Chinese painting to represent persons who are of no consequence, or places and events which are of no importance to the story. It would be endless to go through the poem for examples of this excess of minute description; we shall merely glance at the First Canto as a specimen. We pass the long description of Lord Marmion himself, with his mail of Milan steel; the blue ribbons on his horse's mane; and his blue velvet housings. We pass also the two gallant squires who ride behind him. But our patience is really exhausted, when we are forced to attend to the black stockings and blue jerkins of the inferior persons in the train, and to the whole process of turning out the guard with advanced arms on entering the castle.

'Four men-at-arms came *at their backs*,
With halberd, bill, and battle-axe;
They bore Lord Marmion's lance ſo ſtrong,
And led his ſumpter mules along,
And ambling palfrey, *when at need*
Him lifted eaſe his battle-ſteed.
The laſt, and truſtieſt of the four,
On high his forky pennon bore;
Like ſwallow's tail, in ſhape and hue,
Flutter'd the ſtreamer gloſſy blue,
Where, blazoned ſable, as before,
The towering falcon ſeemed to ſoar.
Laſt, twenty yeomen, two and two,
In hoſen black, and jerkins blue,
With falcons broider'd on each breaſt,
Attended on their lord's beheſt.

'Tis meet that I ſhould tell you now,
How fairly armed, and ordered how,
The ſoldiers of the guard,
With muſquet, pike, and morion,
To welcome noble Marmion,
Stood in the Caſtle-yard;
Minſtrels and trumpeters were there,
The gunner held his *linſtock yare*,
For welcome-ſhot prepared—

The guards their morrice pikes advanced,
The trumpets flouriſhed brave,
The cannon from the ramparts glanced,
And thundering welcome gave.

Two purſuivants, whom tabards deck,
With ſilver ſcutcheon round their neck,

Stood on the fteps of ftone,
By which you reach the Donjon gate,
And there, with herald pomp and ftate,
They hailed Lord Marmion.
And he, their courtefy to requite,
Gave them a chain of twelve marks weight,
All as he lighted down.' p. 29—32.

Sir Hugh the Heron then orders supper—
'Now broach ye a pipe of Malvoifie,
Bring pafties of the doe.'

—And after the repast is concluded, they have some mulled wine, and drink good night very ceremoniously.

'Lord Marmion drank a fair good reft,
The Captain pledged his noble gueft,
The cup went round among the reft.'

In the morning, again, we are informed that they had prayers, and that knight and squire

————' broke their faft
On rich fubftantial repaft.'
'Then came the ftirrup-cup in courfe,' &c. &c.

And thus a whole Canto is filled up with the account of a visit and a supper, which lead to no consequences whatever, and are not attended with any circumstances which must not have occurred at every visit and supper among persons of the same rank at that period. Now, we are really at a loss to know, why the mere circumstance of a moderate antiquity should be supposed so far to ennoble those details, as to entitle them to a place in poetry, which certainly never could be claimed for a description of more modern adventures. Nobody, we believe, would be bold enough to introduce into a serious poem a description of the hussar boots and gold epaulets of a commander in chief, and much less to particularize the liveries and canes of his servants, or the order and array of a grand dinner, given even to the cabinet ministers. Yet these things are, in their own nature, fully as picturesque, and as interesting, as the ribbons at the mane of Lord Marmion's horse, or his supper and breakfast at the castle of Norham. We are glad, indeed, to find these little details in *old* books, whether in prose or verse, because they are there authentic and valuable documents of the usages and modes of life of our ancestors; and we are thankful when we light upon this sort of information in an antient romance, which commonly contains matter much more tedious. Even there, however, we smile at the simplicity which could mistake such naked enumerations for poetical description; and reckon them as nearly on a level, in point of taste, with the theological disputations that are sometimes introduced in the same meritorious compositions. In a *modern* romance, however,

however, these details being no longer authentic, are of no value in point of information; and as the author has no claim to indulgence on the ground of simplicity, the smile which his predecessors excited is in some danger of being turned into a yawn. If he wishes sincerely to follow their example, he should describe the manners of his own time, and not of theirs. They painted from observation, and not from study; and the familiarity and *naiveté* of their delineations, transcribed with a slovenly and hasty hand from what they saw daily before them, is as remote as possible from the elaborate pictures extracted by a modern imitator from black-letter books, and coloured, not from the life, but from learned theories, or at best from mouldy monkish illuminations, and mutilated fragments of painted glass.

But the times of chivalry, it may be said, were more picturesque than the present times. They are better adapted to poetry; and every thing that is associated with them has a certain hold on the imagination, and partakes of the interest of the period. We do not mean utterly to deny this; nor can we stop, at present, to assign exact limits to our assent: but this we will venture to observe, in general, that if it be true that the interest which we take in the contemplation of the chivalrous era, arises from the dangers and virtues by which it was distinguished,—from the constant hazards in which its warriors passed their days, and the mild and generous valour with which they met those hazards,—joined to the singular contrast which it presented between the ceremonious polish and gallantry of the nobles, and the brutish ignorance of the body of the people:—if these are, as we conceive they are, the sources of the charm which still operates in behalf of the days of knightly adventure, then it should follow, that nothing should interest us, by association with that age, but what serves naturally to bring before us those hazards and that valour, and gallantry, and aristocratical superiority. Any description, or any imitation of the exploits in which those qualities were signalized, will do this most effectually. Battles,—tournaments,—penances,—deliverance of damsels,—instalments of knights, &c.—and, intermixed with these, we must admit some description of arms, armorial bearings, castles, battlements, and chapels: but the least and lowest of the whole certainly is the description of servants' liveries, and of the peaceful operations of eating, drinking, and ordinary salutation. These have no sensible connexion with the qualities or peculiarities which have conferred certain poetical privileges on the manners of chivalry. They do not enter either necessarily or naturally into our conception of what is interesting in those manners; and, though protected, by their strangeness, from the ridicule which would infal-
libly

libly attach to their modern equivalents, are substantially as unpoetic, and as little entitled to indulgence from impartial criticism.

We would extend this censure to a larger proportion of the work before us than we now choose to mention—certainly to all the stupid monkish legends about St Hilda and St Cuthbert—to the ludicrous description of Lord Gifford's habiliments of divination—and to all the various scraps and fragments of antiquarian history and baronial biography, which are scattered profusely through the whole narrative. These we conceive to be put in purely for the sake of displaying the erudition of the author; and poetry, which has no other recommendation, but that the substance of it has been gleaned from rare or obscure books, has, in our estimation, the least of all possible recommendations. Mr Scott's great talents, and the novelty of the style in which his romances are written, have made even these defects acceptable to a considerable part of his readers. His genius, seconded by the omnipotence of fashion, has brought chivalry again into temporary favour; but he ought to know, that this is a taste too evidently unnatural to be long prevalent in the modern world. Fine ladies and gentlemen now talk, indeed, of donjons, keeps, tabards, scutcheons, tressures, caps of maintenance, portcullisses, wimples, and we know not what besides; just as they did, in the days of Dr Darwin's popularity, of gnomes, sylphs, oxygen, gossamer, polygynia, and polyandria. That fashion, however, passed rapidly away; and if it be now evident to all the world, that Dr Darwin obstructed the extension of his fame, and hastened the extinction of his brilliant reputation, by the pedantry and ostentatious learning of his poems, Mr Scott should take care that a different sort of pedantry does not produce the same effects. The world will never be long pleased with what it does not readily understand; and the poetry which is destined for immortality, should treat only of feelings and events which can be conceived and entered into by readers of all descriptions.

What we have now mentioned, is the cardinal fault of the work before us; but it has other faults, of too great magnitude to be passed altogether without notice. There is a debasing lowness and vulgarity in some passages, which we think must be offensive to every reader of delicacy, and which are not, for the most part, redeemed by any vigour or picturesque effect. The venison pasties, we think, are of this description; and this commemoration of Sir Hugh Heron's troopers, who

> 'Have drunk the monks of St Bothan's ale,
> And driven the beeves of Lauderdale;
> Harried the wives of Greenlaw's goods,
> And given them light to fet their hoods.' p. 41.

The long account of Friar John, though not without merit, offends in the same sort; nor can we easily conceive, how any one could venture, in a serious poem, to speak of

> ——— ———' the wind that blows,
> And *warms itfelf againft his nofe.*'

The speeches of squire Blount, too, are a great deal too unpolished for a noble youth aspiring to knighthood. On two occasions, to specify no more, he addresses his brother squire in these cacophonous lines—

> '*St Anton' fire thee!* wilt thou ftand
> All day with bonnet in thy hand?'

And,

> '*Stint in thy prate,*' quoth Blount, '*thou'dst best,*
> And liften to our Lord's beheft.'

Neither can we be brought to admire the simple dignity of Sir Hugh the Heron, who thus encourageth his nephew,

> ——————' *By my fay,*
> Well haft thou fpoke—fay forth thy fay.'

There are other passages in which the flatness and tediousness of the narrative is relieved by no sort of beauty, nor elegance of diction, and which form an extraordinary contrast with the more animated and finished portions of the poem. We shall not afflict our readers with more than one specimen of this falling off. We select it from the Abbess's explanation to De Wilton.

> 'De Wilton and Lord Marmion wooed
> Clara de Clare, of Glofter's blood;
> (Idle it were of Whitby's dame,
> To fay of that fame blood I came;)
> And once, when jealous rage was high,
> Lord Marmion faid defpiteoufly,
> Wilton was traitor in his heart,
> And had made league with Martin Swart,
> When he came here on Simnel's part;
> And only cowardice did reftrain
> His rebel aid on Stokefield's plain,—
> And down he threw his glove:—the thing
> Was tried, as wont, before the king;
> Where frankly did De Wilton own,
> That Swart in Guelders he had known;
> And that between them then there went
> Some fcroll of courteous compliment,
> For this he to his caftle fent;
> But when his meffenger returned,
> Judge how De Wilton's fury burned!
> For in his packet there were laid
> Letters that claimed difloyal aid,
> And proved King Henry's caufe betrayed.' p. 273—274.

In some other places, Mr Scott's love of variety has betrayed him

him into strange imitations. This is evidently formed on the school of Sternhold and Hopkins.

> 'Of all the palaces so fair,
> Built for the royal dwelling,
> In Scotland, far beyond compare,
> Linlithgow is excelling.'

The following is a sort of mongrel between the same school, and the later one of Mr Wordsworth.

> 'And Bishop Gawain, as he rose,
> Said—Wilton, grieve not for thy woes,
> Disgrace and trouble;
> For He, who honour best bestows,
> May give thee double.'

There are many other blemishes, both of taste and of diction, which we had marked for reprehension, but now think it unnecessary to specify; and which, with some of those we have mentioned, we are willing to ascribe to the haste in which much of the poem seems evidently to have been composed. Mr Scott knows too well what is due to the public, to make any boast of the rapidity with which his works are written; but the dates and the extent of his successive publications show sufficiently how short a time could be devoted to each; and explain, though they do not apologize for, the many imperfections with which they have been suffered to appear. He who writes for immortality should not be sparing of time; and if it be true, that in every thing which has a principle of life, the period of gestation and growth bears some proportion to that of the whole future existence, the author now before us should tremble when he looks back on the miracles of his own facility.

We have dwelt longer on the beauties and defects of this poem, than we are afraid will be agreeable either to the partial or the indifferent; not only because we look upon it as a misapplication, in some degree, of very extraordinary talents, but because we cannot help considering it as the foundation of a new school, which may hereafter occasion no little annoyance both to us and to the public. Mr Scott has hitherto filled the whole stage himself; and the very splendour of his success has probably operated, as yet, rather to deter, than to encourage, the herd of rivals and imitators: but if, by the help of the good parts of his poem, he succeeds in suborning the verdict of the public in favour of the bad parts also, and establishes an indiscriminate taste for chivalrous legends and romances in irregular rhime, he may depend upon having as many copyists as Mrs Radcliffe or Schiller, and upon becoming the founder of a new schism in the catholic poetical church, for which, in spite of all our exertions, there will probably be no cure, but in the extravagance of the last and lowest of its followers. It is for this reason that we conceive it

it to be our duty to make one strong effort to bring back the great apostle of the heresy to the wholesome creed of his instructors, and to stop the insurrection before it becomes desperate and senseless, by persuading the leader to return to his duty and allegiance. We admire Mr Scott's genius as much as any of those who may be misled by its perversion; and, like the curate and the barber in Don Quixote, lament the day when a gentleman of such endowments was corrupted by the wicked tales of knight-errantry and enchantment.

We have left ourselves no room to say any thing of the epistolary effusions which are prefixed to each of the cantos. They certainly are not among the happiest productions of Mr Scott's muse. They want interest in the subjects, and finish in the execution. There is too much of them about the personal and private feelings and affairs of the author; and too much of the remainder about the most trite common places of politics and poetry. There is a good deal of spirit, however, and a good deal of nature intermingled. There is a fine description of St Mary's loch, in that prefixed to the second canto; and a very pleasing representation of the author's early tastes and prejudices, in that prefixed to the third. The last, which is about Christmas, is the worst; though the first, containing a threnody on Nelson, Pitt and Fox, exhibits a more remarkable failure. We are unwilling to quarrel with a poet on the score of politics; but the manner in which he has chosen to praise the last of these great men, is more likely, we conceive, to give offence to his admirers, than the most direct censure. The only deed for which he is praised, is for having broken off the negotiation for peace; and for this act of firmness, it is added, Heaven rewarded him with a share in the honoured grave of Pitt! It is then said, that his errors should be forgotten, and that he *died* a Briton—a pretty plain insinuation, that, in the author's opinion, he did not live one; and just such an encomium as he himself pronounces over the grave of his villain hero Marmion. There was no need, surely, to pay compliments to ministers or princesses, either in the introduction or in the body of a romance of the 16th century. Yet we have a laboured lamentation over the Duke of Brunswick, in one of the epistles; and, in the heart of the poem, a triumphant allusion to the siege of Copenhagen—the last exploit, certainly, of British valour, on which we should have expected a chivalrous poet to found his patriotic gratulations. We have no business, however, on this occasion, with the political creed of the author; and we notice these allusions to objects of temporary interest, chiefly as instances of bad taste, and additional proofs that the author does not always recollect, that a poet should address himself to more than one generation.

ART.