

WILLIAM S. POTTINGHAM'S COLUMBIAN REPOSITORY

HUGH McQUEEN, Editor.

CHAPEL HILL, SATURDAY, JULY 16, 1836.

Vol. I.—No. 4.

TERMS.

The REPOSITORY is published weekly at Three Dollars per annum, if paid in advance, or Three Dollars and a half when six months shall have elapsed from the time of subscription. Advertisements inserted at the customary rates. Letters to the Editor must be post paid.

Literary.

RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

I was introduced to Sir Walter Scott, in 1821. The introduction took place in the house of Mr. D. Sir Walter was then on one of the few visits he paid to the metropolis. Mr. D. had asked a party of literary gentlemen to meet Sir Walter at dinner, several of whom, like myself, had never seen him before, though they were among the most ardent of his admirers. I never was a physiognomist. Had I been so at this time, the more intellectual character of Sir Walter, contrasted with the expression of his countenance, would at once have shaken my faith in the system, if indeed it had not made me formally renounce it. His face had a remarkably dull appearance, something, in fact, which was calculated to make any person who was a stranger to his intellectual character to associate with it the attribute of stupidity. This I know has repeatedly been the case where persons have met with Sir Walter without knowing who or what he was. A few minutes conversation with him, however, was generally found sufficient to rectify the erroneous impression. He had great conversational powers. Perhaps, with the exception of Calverley and two or three others, none of his contemporaries excelled him in this respect. His manner was almost invariably easy—his manner pre-eminently pleasing. On the evening in question, we sat for at least six hours, during which time the conversation scarcely flagged for a single moment. Sir Walter, in this, as in almost every other similar case, had a comparative monopoly of the talk. Not, certainly, that he wished to engross the right of speaking to himself, but because we were all so fascinated with what fell from his lips as to forget what, at other times some of us, perhaps, are too apt to remember—that we have, or imagine we have—"most sweet voices" of our own. The topics introduced into the conversation in the course of the evening were exceedingly varied, and Sir Walter seemed agreeably at home on them all. Scottish poetry—modern literature in general—the difficulties with which genius has often to struggle, and which in many instances prove more than a match for it—the king's visit to Hanover, and his promised visit to Scotland, etc., were subjects which were all introduced and discussed at some length. Sir Walter was, perhaps, one of the greatest admirers of kings that ever lived. Indeed, I doubt not that he went fully into the "right divine" notion. Still his attachment to his country, occasionally got the better of his loyalty. He seemed to think that George the Fourth had sinned against kindly propriety, if not against morals, in giving the preference to his Hanoverian subjects, by visiting his German dominions before he had seen "his kingdom of Scotland." Though Sir Walter Scott did not choose to be very severe, in so far as words went, on his royal patron for what he conceived to be a slight to Scotland, yet it was clear to all present that he felt very sore on the subject. There was something very peculiar and expressive in his tone and manner when he observed, "He might as well have gone to Scotland first; his loving and loyal subjects on our side of the Tweed will be grievously disappointed when they hear of his going to Hanover before coming to them."

Of the many brilliant things to which he gave expression on the evening in question, I unfortunately did not take any note on my return home, and consequently, though recollecting the general tenor of his conversation, am unable to give any thing like his words, and without these his sentiments would lose half their charms. It was two years after this before I met him again. That was in Scotland, where I had occasion to be for a short period at the time. He had exacted from me a solemn promise, on the evening of our first meeting, that if I ever crossed the Tweed I should make it one of the first things I did to visit Abbotsford. I had seen too much of the world not to know that invitations of this kind were often given, when the persons giving them never meant, or wished, they should be accepted; but there was the appearance of so much earnestness and sincerity in Scott's invitation that I at once not only promised I would gladly avail myself of it—which in many instances, are only so many words of course—but at once made up my mind that I would, whenever circumstances should admit of my enjoying

the gratification. I reached the modern Athens in the evening, and started next morning for Abbotsford. On approaching the plantation, in front of the mansion, I observed Sir Walter moving about at a slow pace among the trees. He was very carelessly dressed, and altogether, what is called a "countersigned" appearance. In his right hand he had a small hand-saw, with which he had evidently been lopping off the branches, where they appeared too prominent, from the young trees.

I was within twenty yards of him when he first saw me. He recognized me at once. "Oh, Mr. —! How's a' wi' you! I'm truly glad to see you at Abbotsford," was the salutation with which he greeted me. As he gave utterance to these words, he advanced hastily, and, placing his saw under his left arm, extended to me his right hand. "I have just been amusing myself here with these little sticks" (pointing to the young trees), said he, after making the usual enquiries about my own health and about that of several of our intimate acquaintances in the metropolis. I paid him some merited compliments on the beauty of the plantations, with which he seemed highly gratified. In fact he was always much more delighted with the commendation of the taste he displayed in laying out his grounds at Abbotsford than with the universal and unqualified admiration which was expressed of his literary works.

After being shown the grounds around Abbotsford I was conducted to the house where, as a matter of course, I was introduced to Lady and Miss Scott. With the appearance of Lady Scott I was much struck. Though diminutive in stature, her person possessed such symmetry, which added to her "some features" a profusion of ringlets of the most beautiful jet-black I ever saw clustering about her neck, made her what the late James Hogg somewhere calls her, "a bewitching creature." She was remarkably kind and affable in her manners. She seemed particularly anxious, as did indeed Miss Scott also, that I should enjoy myself. She had much of the manners of the French, and it would have been easy to discover from her accent, though I had not before been aware of the circumstance, that she belonged to that nation. After a half hour's conversation with Lady Scott and her daughter, Sir Walter proposed that we should inspect the different apartments of his splendid mansion. The armory, the library, and the study were to me, as I doubt not they were to most other visitors, the principal objects of attraction. The armory it were impossible to describe. The study has been described a hundred times over. The library was a spacious room. The number of books in it has been variously estimated from 20,000 to 30,000 volumes. It is unnecessary to say Sir Walter never purchased all these; the greater part of them were presentation copies, either from personal friends, or from authors naturally anxious their works should meet with his approbation. Of course he had not time to read a tithe of those thus sent him. He was often too waited on by young authors anxious to learn his opinion of their manuscript before committing it to the press. His kindness and condescension on such occasions exceeded all praise. To the serious interruption, oftentimes of his own literary labours, he would waive through the manuscript works of such persons, and give them such advice, in the most friendly spirit, as he thought the circumstances called for. At the very moment he was busy pointing out to me a number of literary works, with several paintings, which were his chief favorites, the servant knocked at the door, and, on being desired to "come in," intimated that a person, of the name of Buchan, from the north of Scotland, was anxious to see him for a few minutes. Sir Walter desired the servant to show the individual into a certain room, and to say that he would be with him presently. Sir Walter then begged my pardon for a few minutes. He returned in about 15 minutes. He mentioned to me that he had been just looking over an immense collection of the traditional unpublished ballads of the north of Scotland, collected, he said, after ten years' hard unremitting labour, by a humble printer, of the name of Buchan, residing in Peterhead. Sir Walter spoke in terms of warm encomium of the enthusiasm of Mr. Buchan in collecting so many of the traditional ballads of the olden time amid so many difficulties, not the least of

* The writer of these Recollections of Sir Walter, met, by the parent accident, with Mr. Buchan since the interview in question. He then saw the collection of Ballads of which Sir Walter spoke so favorably; and really they will constitute an enduring memorial of the admirable taste, as well as singular industry of an individual collecting them under such unfavorable circumstances. The ballads were published in 1828, in two volumes, at one guinea; but, I am sorry to say, the sale never paid the expenses. Sir Walter engaged to write a lengthened notice of the work in the Quarterly Review; but his promise was never fulfilled. Most probably, amid the multiplicity of his other avocations, the subject slipped out of his recollection.

† In a small work which the Ettrick Shepherd has published since these "Recollections" were in manuscript, Mr. Hogg has given a version of this anecdote, but it omits several of the most amusing circumstances.

which arose from his limited pecuniary means. He desired Mr. B. to call again on a day he mentioned, when he would see of what further assistance he could be to the laborious compiler of the Ballads of his native district in the way of forwarding his views of publication.

Having inspected the interior of Abbotsford, with its costly furniture and valuable curiosities, we proceeded to the outside to view the exterior of the building. It is altogether a unique superstructure. No description can give the reader any distinct conception of it. Of the pleasure grounds, which next claimed our attention, I do not well know how to speak. Any thing of the kind more admirably laid out, I have never seen. What consummate taste did Sir Walter here display! I saw them under particularly favorable circumstances, it being then the month of June.

The dinner hour insensibly stole upon us. Mr. James Ballantine and another gentleman from Edinburgh, of some literary distinction, were engaged to dine at Abbotsford that day. Mr. Ballantine kept his appointment; the other gentleman, owing to indisposition, did not. I never spent a happier evening in my life. Sir Walter, as I afterwards learnt from Mr. Ballantine, outdid himself in the brilliancy of his conversation. What a store of rich anecdotes did he that evening prove himself to be possessed of! And with what infinite ease and zest were they, one after another, poured from his lips! One—I shall never forget. When Duke Charles of Buccleugh was alive, he on one occasion, invited a number of his personal friends and most respectable tenants to what is called a general feast. The company being unusually numerous, two tables were necessary for their accommodation. The Duke himself presided at one table, and Sir Walter at the other. A splendid entertainment, in the shape of a dinner, was set before the guests, and done up in justice to. Wines of every variety followed in abundance, the quality of which were sufficiently tested by all present. Toast followed toast, and song succeeded song with an interruption. The company, in a word, had exceeded the happy medium of Burns' "Tam O'Shanter."

"Who was not four, but just had plenty." They were four or were at least bordering on it. Morning came, but instead of parting, the Duke volunteered a song which he was to give standing in a peculiar position. He insisted, before presenting the company with the vocal feat, that they should all stand in precisely the same position as himself and duly join in the chorus. His will of course was a law. His Grace then setting one foot on the table and the other in the chair—which singular position was instantly assumed by all present—commenced singing the well-known song of "Hey Johnny Cope, are ye wakin' yet?" The Duke got through his song, and kept his station till the end of it. Not so all his guests. Sundry of their persons were reeling on the floor before his Grace had reached the end of the first verse, and consequently were unable to join even for once in the chorus—unless indeed the wild sounds they rowled out as their bodies came in contact with the floor deserved that name. The bursts of laughter from most of those who retained their equilibrium a little longer than their less steady associates in the mirth and gorges of the evening, as the weights were sprawling horizontally, were quite astounding, and completely drowned both his Grace's voice and the voices of the few who were still able to join in the chorus. Nay, in several instances, the very violence of the laughter of the first class, soon brought them to a level with the second; so that before the Duke got to the end of the song, he had only Sir Walter and one or two others to join him in the chorus. Most of those who had been lying horizontally, having by this time recovered their perpendicular position, Sir Alexander Ferguson, who was one of the guests, insisted they should all show their sense of the good example his Grace had shown them, by an immediate imitation of it under another leader. In this last capacity Sir Alexander volunteered his services. He mounted, putting one foot on the table and the other on the chair. The company put themselves in the same position. Sir Alexander commenced his song, but had not finished the third line when all at once one of the tables was upset, and down went men, glasses, wine &c., all in "glorious confusion." The scuffle on the floor, which now ensued, would have defied the pencil of Hogarth himself. Sir Walter declared that never in his life did he laugh so immoderately.

It is nothing to read this anecdote as here related; but to have heard Sir Walter tell the story was, as the reader will readily believe, a somewhat different matter. Mr. James Ballantine, though perhaps more in Sir Walter's company than any other man, mentioned to me the next day that he never saw the illustrious baronet enter with so much spirit or with so much effect into the narration of any story whatever.

[To be continued.]

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON.

Was born on the 7th September 1709, in the city of Litchfield, where his father was a bookseller. Having received the elements of a classical education principally at the grammar school of his native place, he was sent at the age of 19 to Pembroke College, Oxford, by a gentleman who engaged to maintain him here as a companion to his son. After some time, however, this person withdrew his aid; and Johnson, having made an intellectual attempt to subsist on his own resources, found himself obliged to discontinue his residence before obtaining a degree. He had already, however, during the period he spent at the university, obtained a high reputation for scholarship and abilities. For many succeeding years the life of this distinguished luminary of English literature was one of those hard struggles with poverty which learning and genius have so often been called on to sustain. About the year 1740 he held a small office in a school; his latter died, leaving scarcely twenty pounds behind him. Thus situated, Johnson was constrained to accept the office of usher at the grammar-school of Market Bosworth. But the treatment to which he was subjected soon forced him to give up this appointment. He now attempted in succession various projects of a literary nature, in order to escape the extreme indigence. In 1735 he married a Mrs. Porter, the widow of a mercer, who brought him a fortune of about 800*l.*; and with this money he opened a boarding-school at Edial. But the scheme met with no success. He then determined to set out for London, and here accordingly he arrived in March 1737, accompanied by a young friend, who has been one of his pupils, David Garrick, who afterwards became the greatest actor the modern world had seen. The first employment which he obtained was from the proprietors of the Gentleman's Magazine. But the emoluments derived from this source were very insufficient to afford him a respectable subsistence; and he was often without a shilling to procure him bread during the day, or a lodging whereon to lay his head at night. These difficulties hung to him for a long while; but they did not prevent him from gradually working his way to literary distinction. His reports of parliamentary debates, inserted in the Gentleman's Magazine, which were of an almost entirely original composition, of his own, attracted a general notice; but it was not till long afterwards that their authorship was generally known. The year after his arrival in the metropolis, he published his poem, entitled "London," in imitation of the third Satire of Juvenal. This production had the honor of being commended in very warm terms by Pope, in 1741 appeared his eloquent and striking life of his friend Savage. Three years after he was engaged by an association of book-sellers to prepare an edition of the English Language. This celebrated work occupied the greater part of his time for seven years, and at last appeared in 1755, after the money 1500*g.* which it had been agreed he should receive for his labour, was all spent. It brought him, however, a large share of public applause, and at once placed his name among the first of the living cultivators of English literature. Meanwhile, even before the appearance of his Dictionary, he had by various occasional productions been steadily advancing himself in reputation, although not in wealth. In 1749 he gave to the world his imitation of Juvenal's tenth Satire, under the title of "The Vanity of Human Wishes." The same year his tragedy of Irene, which he had brought with him when he first came to town, was produced at Drury Lane by his friend Garrick. In March, 1750, he commenced the publication of "The Rambler," which he continued for two years at the rate of two papers every week, the whole, with the exception of only five numbers, being the production of his own pen. These, and other works, however, failed in relieving him from the pressure of great pecuniary difficulties, as is proved by the fact, that in 1756 he was arrested for a debt of five pounds, and only obtained his liberty by borrowing the money from a friend. In 1758 he began a new periodical publication, to which he gave the name of "The Idler," and which, like the "Rambler," he carried on for about two years. In 1759 his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached, died at an advanced age; and having gone down to Litchfield to superintend her funeral, he there wrote his beautiful romance of Rasselas in a single week, while his parent lay unburied, in order to obtain the means of defraying the expenses of her interment. This may well be characterized as the finest anecdote that is to be told of Dr. Johnson; for the whole range of biography scarcely records any thing more noble or affecting. At last, in 1762, the Crown was advised to bestow upon him a pension of 300*l.* per annum; an act of bounty which placed him for the rest of his life in ease and affluence. After this he distinguished himself as much by the brilliancy and power of his conversation in the literary circles and general society which he frequented, as by his labors with his pen; but still he was far from relinquishing authorship. In 1765 ap-

peared a new edition of Shakspeare, in the superintendance of which he had been long engaged, and the splendid preface to which is one of the most celebrated of his productions. In 1773 he published the well-known account of his "Journey to the Western Isles of Scotland," which he had just accomplished in company with his friend Boswell. In 1776 he received the degree of LL.D. from the University of Oxford; and in 1781 he brought to a close the last, and perhaps, upon the whole, the greatest of his works, his "Lives of the Poets," in four volumes octavo. He survived this publication only a few years, and having died on the 13th of December, 1784, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, he was interred with great solemnity in Westminster Abbey, in a grave near to that of his friend Garrick. Notwithstanding considerable heat of temper and arrogance of manner, as well as some weak prejudices and singularities by which he was marked, it is impossible to deny that the moral character of Dr. Johnson abounded in noble points, or to regard it upon the whole with other feelings than those of admiration and reverence. A scrupulous respect for virtue, evinced both by the language and scope of all his writings and by the unvarying tenor of his conduct, a lofty scorn of injustice and baseness, a spirit of independence and self-reliance which no trials and sufferings could tame down either to despair or servility, a warm sympathy with human sorrow wheresoever found or however caused, the intrepidity to do a good action in the face even of the world's laugh, and charity in relieving the unfortunate to the utmost verge of his means, and even to his own painful inconvenience,—all these dispositions, based on religious principle, and adorned and crowded by the most fervid piety, are sufficient to cast to cast into the shade far deeper traits of frailty than any with which his nature can fairly be said to have been marked. The question of the intellectual rank properly belonging to Dr. Johnson has given rise to more difference of opinion, he was certainly neither a very original nor a very subtle thinker; and his eminence, indeed, will probably be maintained even by his warmest admirers on the ground rather of his powers of expression than of thought. His poetry rarely ascends beyond the height of rhetoric in rhyme; and his metaphysical and philosophical speculations are throughout extremely common-place and unimaged. But in what may be called the art of criticism, the detection of conventional beauties and defects, and the delineation of the merely literary character of a writer's productions, he is a great master. His style is undoubtedly a Lad in the main; for, to say nothing of its being more Latin than English, and so studiously regulated on the principle of mere sonorousness that it almost entirely wants picturesqueness and the other higher qualities which contribute to effective expression, it is suited at the best to only one kind of writing, the grave-didactic. Still, with all its faults, even this style has great qualities. Its dignity is often very imposing, and its inventor is certainly entitled to the praise of having set the example of a grammatical accuracy and general finish of composition not to be found in the works of our best authors before his time, but which have since been copied by all.

BOOKS IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

We may quote the statement of Henry, in his "History of Great Britain," that, in the middle ages, "None but great kings, princes, and prelates, universities and monasteries, could have libraries; and the libraries of the great kings were not equal to those of many private gentlemen or country clergymen in the present age. The Royal Library of France, which had been collected by Charles V., VI., and VII., and kept with great care in one of the towers of the Louvre, consisted of about 900 volumes, and was purchased by the Duke of Bedford, A. D. 1425, for 1200*l.* From a catalogue of that library still extant, it appears to have been chiefly composed of legends, histories, romances, and books on astrology, geomancy, and chiromancy, which were the favourite studies of those times. The Kings of England were not so well provided with books. Henry V., who had a taste for reading, borrowed several books, which were claimed by their owners after his death. The Countess of Westmoreland presented a petition to the Privy Council, A. D. 1424, representing that the late king had borrowed a book from her, containing the "Chronicles of Jerusalem," and the "Expédition of Godfrey of Boulogne;" and praying that an order might be given, under the privy seal, for the restoration of the said book. The order was granted with great formality. About the same time, John, the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, presented a similar petition to the Privy Council, setting forth, that the king had borrowed from his priory a volume containing the works of St. Gregory; that he had never returned it; but that, in his testament, he had directed it to be restored; notwithstanding which, the prior of Shine, who had the book, refused to give it up. The Coun-

cil, after mature deliberation, commanded a precept, under the privy seal, to be sent to the Prior of Shine, requiring him to deliver up the book, or to appear before the Council to give the reasons of his refusal. These facts sufficiently prove that it must have been very difficult, or rather impossible, for the generality of scholars to procure a competent number of books." The extreme costliness of the article rendered it no less difficult to borrow books than to buy them. To illustrate this, the same writer, in another part of his work, quotes from Copines the fact, that Louis XI. was obliged to deposit a considerable quantity of plate, and to get one of his nobility to join with him in a bond under a high penalty to return it, before he could procure the loan of one volume, which may now be purchased for a few shillings.

In a Close Roll, dated 29th of March, 1298, King John writes to the Abbot of Reading to acknowledge that he had received, by the hands of the sacrist of Reading, six volumes of books, containing the whole of the Old Testament.—The receipt is also acknowledged of "Master Hugh de S. Victor's Treatise on the Sacrament;" the "Sentences of Peter the Lombard;" the "Epistles of St. Augustine, on the City of God and on the Third Part of the Psalter;" "Valerian de Moribus;" "Origen's Treatise on the Old Testament;" and "Candidus Arianus to Marius." The following month, the king wrote to the same abbot to acknowledge the receipt of his copy of Pany, which the abbot had in his custody.

In 1249 King Henry III. orders Edward, the son of Otho of Westminster, to cause to be purchased certain church-service books, and to give them to the constable of Windsor Castle, that he might deliver them by his own hand to the officiating chaplain in the new chapel at Windsor, to be used by them; and they were then to be held responsible to the constable for "this library," consisting of eight books. Another Close Roll of the same king, dated 1250, commands Brother R. de Sanard, Master of the Knights of the Temple in England, to allow Henry of the Wardrobe, the bearer, to have for the queen's use a certain great book which was in their house at London, written in the French dialect, containing "The Exploits of Antiochia, and of the Kings, and others." This work was probably a French translation of a Latin heroic Poem, entitled "The War of Antioch, or the Third Crusade of Richard I.," written by Joseph of Exeter, otherwise called Josephus, and was perhaps wanted by the queen to elucidate the paintings in the "Antioch Chamber." It is observable that all the books mentioned in these Rolls are either in the Latin or French language. Indeed no English literature at that time existed, if we except some metrical chronicles and romances, chiefly translations, of a very marvellous character, a few of which have, of late years, been printed from MSS. still extant.

* One of the class of writers known as the "Schoolmen." This work attained him the title of "the Master of the Sentences." Both he and Hugh de St. Victor lived in the preceding century. The rest are old Latin authors.

Remarkable Trout.—Old Isaac Walton's pastime having succeeded to most other field sports, it may not be unreasonable now to give the following instance of the size to which trout may attain, and which may be interesting at once to the naturalist and sportsman.—Lake trout are known to reach an enormous size, and those in our Welsh rivers to grow above a pound weight; but I had listened rather incredulously, to an account of one of fourteen pounds, caught some time ago in the Thames, until I lately became acquainted with this fact. A well-known artist and worthy brother of the angle, who has a lovely villa at Clarendon, near Bath, several years ago placed two small trout (one of each sex) in a separate part of a stream running through his grounds: after attaining to three pound weight, the female grew about two pounds and a quarter yearly. At the end of nine years, she had reached the great weight of fourteen pounds and three quarters, then giving hopes of exceeding twenty pounds at least; but alas! "all that's bright must fade!" the midnight attempts of some biped shark to poach this jewel of fine water injured her so much that she was killed (as Paddy would say) to save her life. Both male and female at this period were above thirty-six inches in length; but although faring equally sumptuously upon gudgeons, the poor gentleman only arrived at seven pounds weight. These trout were very tame, coming to be fed morning and evening; were frequently taken out to be weighed; would seize a rat thrown into the water; and the female well deserved O'Connell's description of Cobbett—she was certainly altogether "a splendid animal." The above fact, well known at Bath, is perhaps, after all, more curious than useful, as I catch doubt any trout being as good after two pound weight as before, however much it is true that the genuine and disinterested sportsman may like grander conquest.—*Old London Sporting Magazine.*