substantially the same as that in which they would have been clothed by poets contemporary, or nearly succeeding them, if these, for their metrical romances or their ballads of love and war, had possessed equal appliances, in a formed language, and in extended views as to the principles of the poetical art.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel is really a long border- ballad ; and, inspired by the poet’s early recollections and studies, and nourished not only by those copious sources of illustration of which the Border Minstrelsy furnishes abun­dant specimens, but by affectionate familiarity with the landscapes of his story, this work possesses, both in spirit and in details, at once a fervour and a unity superior to any of his others. Very little indeed, either of incident or character, would require to be withdrawn from it, as foreign to its essence. Marmion is pitched in another key, but is still antique, and, though less rich in characteristic details of the olden time, and rather less free from modern admix­tures, is pervaded almost throughout by the chivalrous spirit, while that spirit blazes forth at several points with a splendour which the poet elsewhere never equalled. The poem is a metrical romance of history ; the full develop­ment of a species of composition in which Barbour had but faintly traced the design. The Lady of the Lake cannot be so readily referred to any one class of our old national poems ; in which, indeed, that moving panorama of gor­geous landscapes, amidst which the personages exist, is, as a prominent feature, quite unknown. But this very fea­ture, and the placidly romantic air which breathes through most of the adventures, at once determine its type as a kind of pastoral romance (instanced more frequently in foreign literature than in our own), and diffuse over the work a sin­gular charm, which hides from us much vagueness, both in the characters and in the historical details of manners and ideas. Rokeby, the next in the list, is confessedly the weakest of its author’s larger poems, as it is also that in which he has removed himself farthest from his ordinary models. Defective alike in unity of spirit and in historical fidelity, it would, but for some poetical gems which sparkle through, deserve no higher name than that of a novel in verse. In the Lord of the Isles we behold a return to the poet’s higher sources of inspiration ; for we have here ano­ther metrical chronicle, a second Marmion, every way in­ferior to the first.

It is abundantly evident that the task which Scott has thus performed, of creating anew the scenes and characters of a fierce and chaotic stage of society, allowed him ample room for arousing some of the strongest emotions which poetry can awaken. Sometimes, indeed, he errs by apply­ing himself to the excitement of feelings which, though strictly within his limits, are not broadly enough impressed on the minds of most men to found any lively sympathy. Such are the feelings of superstitious awe and delight in supernatural invention, feelings which are chiefly addressed in his two anonymous poems, and to whose prevalence these works, equal in some points to any thing in verse he ever wrote, mainly owe their want of general interest and popularity. But he far offener throws himself on those principles which are universally sympathized with and ap­preciated, not indeed arousing all of them with equal skill, but compounding, out of the use he makes of all, a representa­tion which is at once sufficiently true and widely attractive. That which was really the master-feeling of the times he deli­neates, the love of warlike adventure, is the path in which he has been by far most successful. In tenderness or pas­sion he does not stand by any means first among the poets of our day ; and even in those exhibitions of chivalrous ge­nerosity and lofty feeling which are so closely consonant to his stories and their actors, he is, although often delightfully felicitous, yet by no means without his equals ; but there is no poet of our times, and very few in any age or coun­

try, who have portrayed with such admirable force and fire the soldier’s thirst for battle, and the headlong fury of the field of slaughter. Throughout all his works there occur bursts of this sort, which would of themselves have placed him high among poets of the class, even though he had never written his noblest passages of warfare, the knightly combat of Fitzjames and Roderick, or the magnificent bat­tle-piece which closes Marmion. His clear and cheerful, yet delicately sketched and poetically elevated descriptions of natural scenery, less strong in their outlines than some poetry of a similar kind, and less vivid in their colouring and chiaroscuro than others, but always pleasing and ori­ginal, and often far more, may probably be said to be, after their warlike temper, the most distinctive feature of his poems.

If the moral tone of Scott’s poetry is not high, it must be at least admitted that it is uniformly inoffensive ; and if most passages excite us less violently than those of some other poets, there is none whose works leave on the mind a more pleasing expression of content and hopefulness. Perhaps, in his views of human society, the only thing which can at all jar on the feelings of any, is that tendency to aristocratic hauteur, which, not indeed shrinking from contact with the lower orders, and willingly recognising and esteeming many of their virtues, yet considers them strictly as the depen­dents of higher men, and is silent on every other relation they can be supposed to hold. This feeling, so palpable both in his poetry and in his romances, is, it must be re­marked, quite in keeping as a feature of the times he de­scribes in the former class of writings ; and even as an ele­ment in modern poetry, there doubtless are, after all, many who will esteem the sentiment a just one.

In skill of execution, as respects both ease of expression and melody of versification, there is in the poems an ex­ceedingly observable progress, not at all corresponding to their respective degrees of real merit. Both in diction and in music there is a very wide distinction between the first few stanzas of the Lay and the most finished passages in Rokeby or the Lord of the Isles. Not less noticeable are the variations in point of poetical ornament, a thing very different from genuine poetical force or beauty. In the Lay, the most poetically conceived of all the works, there are wonderfully few passages of the kind that furnish showy quotations, though those of this class that do occur are of a very high order. Marmion, except in the Introduction, scarcely contains more ; the Lady of the Lake possesses such far more abundantly ; while Rokeby overflows with couplets poetically sententious ; and the Lord of the Isles again returns towards the earlier manner.

There is one point of view in which the poems offer a very interesting subject of consideration, not for their own sake, but in their relation to those more celebrated and cer­tainly higher works which succeeded them. They may be regarded as in some sense preparations, or, in the artist’s phrase, studies, for the novels and romances. The field of speculation which is thus presented may furnish some in­telligent inquirer with extremely apt materials for illustrat­ing the poet’s genius ; but the mine is too wealthy to be here so much as opened. It may be remarked, however, that while the latter poems in their spirit approach far nearer to the prose romance than the earlier ones, thus in some degree indicating the operations which were going on in the author’s mind, yet it is from the earlier that the ro­mances have derived by far the most plentiful hints and materials. In the slightly sketched personages of the poems we may frequently discover elements which were expanded into the finished characters of the prose works, and this not only in the dignified and poetical, but even in the comic, as one instance of which may be cited the Friar John of Norham as the first outline of Robin Hood’s Tuck. In in­cident, the borrowings from the poems are less direct and