

LANG'S LIFE OF LOCKHART.*

INTERESTING as Abbotsford is to the ordinary American visitor, more interesting still, to our mind, and far more lovely than the neighboring ruins of Melrose Abbey, are the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, three miles to the southeastward across the Tweed, where, in St. Mary's Aisle, in the vault of his ancestors, lie the remains of Sir Walter Scott, and where, hard by, Lockhart, his son-in-law and biographer, lies also buried. The stranger pauses reverently before these companion graves, and forever after the memories of the two men will be associated in his mind. The name and work of Lockhart have been naturally overshadowed by the greater name and the greater work of the literary magician whose daughter he married and whose life he wrote; but he deserves a place of his own in the ranks of British editors and authors, and, if his rank has been at all questioned hitherto, this noble work of Mr. Lang's will go far toward settling it, if it does not do so finally. A cloud, too, of dis-

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like and more or less of suspicion has always rested around Lockhart, which the warm sunshine of sympathy that permeates the two sumptuous volumes before us will largely if not entirely dispel. They render a service of rescue and deliverance, and the conclusions to which they lead are happily stated in these welcome words:

Of no human character can another venture to be the judge, least of all when the character is so strong and so complex as that of Lockhart. He has been spoken of as cold, heartless, incapable of friendship. We have written in vain, and his own letters are vainly displayed, if it be not now recognized that the intensity of his affections rivaled, and partly caused, the intensity of his reserve. . . . Lockhart felt too strongly for words, and his griefs were "too great for tears," as the Greek says. His silence was not so much the result of a stoical philosophy as of that constitutional and ineradicable ply [*sic*] of nature which, when he was a child, left his cheeks dry while others wept, and ended in a malady of voiceless grief. He was born to be so and to be misconstrued. The loyalty of his friendships, and the loyalty of his friends to him, is not of common example. . . . To have won the entire trust and love of Scott, the singular affection of Carlyle, . . . is no ordinary proof of extraordinary qualities of heart and brain. His generosity in giving, even beyond his means, is attested by Mr. Christie. His affection within his family was tender. . . . In society . . . he could both take and give pleasure. . . . That he was strenuously industrious and conscientious, . . . courteous and punctual, has been proved. . . . Reviewing all that I know of him, my own impression is one of respect, admiration, affection, and regret. The close of his days, so admirable for courage, kindness, endurance, sweetness of temper, and considerateness, is like a veiled sunset, beautiful and sad. . . . The presence of his dust at Dryburgh . . . makes the place doubly sacred. His lesser light is blended for all time with the warmth and radiance of the man he loved.

Mr. Lang's two volumes are devoted to the substantiation of this interesting and tender portraiture. Lockhart's faults are not concealed or extenuated, but they are relieved by his virtues, which were many, and the faults may well be forgotten. The worst of them were of temper and of tongue, and he mellowed and softened as he grew old. Happy are they who do.

A word must answer here for the outline of his busy and eventful life. He was born in Lanarkshire in 1794, and died at Abbotsford in 1854. He was educated at Glasgow and Oxford, called to the bar in Edinburgh, became a contributor to *Blackwood's* and a collaborator with Christopher North, married Scott's daughter, took up his residence at Chiefswood, near Abbotsford, wrote several works of fiction, edited *Don Quixote*, translated Spanish ballads, and in 1826 removed to London to succeed to the editorship of the *Quarterly Review*, in which position he remained until 1853, when he retired to Abbotsford in shattered health, and there ended his clouded life in sunshine and in peace. Besides his life of Scott, which is one of the immortals, he wrote lives of Burns and Napoleon, and continued his contributions to *Blackwood's*.

Mr. Lang, it is evident, has had a good

deal of difficulty in prosecuting his task, owing to the inaccessibility of important materials. These consist largely of unpublished correspondence, much of which is as yet reserved from public view. But all the Abbotsford manuscripts have passed through his hands, and that he has incorporated everything that is to be had is readily apparent; and he has had much help from various persons, relative or otherwise, in establishing the truth about his subject. The great value of this work lies in its epistolary authority, which is, of course, not to be questioned or underweighed. Lockhart speaks for himself, and those who knew him speak for him.

A feature of the greatest interest in the work is the series of full-page illustrations, eight in the first volume, seven in the second—eight of the whole number being reproductions in facsimile of water-color sketches by Lockhart himself, who had at least the gift of caricature. These eight are all or purport all to be portraits, and they are clever if not always truthful. There are also portraits by other hands of Lockhart, Professor Wilson, Leigh Hunt, John Wilson Croker, Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd," and Carlyle, the latter a photogravure of the portrait by Millais.

The work is most elegantly made in every respect, of small quarto size, with very wide margins, rough front edges, gilt tops, and corresponding quality of paper, type, and binding. We should be glad to enter more deeply into its points of interest, but at this season of the year, with the crowd of new books on our table awaiting their turn, it is impossible to say more. Perhaps we have said enough to apprise the reader that here is a piece of signal biography, uniting in subject, authorship, and workmanship the traits of a work of true distinction.