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NOTICES AND ANECDOTES

ILLUSTRATIVE OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT'S NOVELS.

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NOTICES

AND

ANECDOTES

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

THE INCIDENTS, CHARACTERS, AND SCENERY

DESCRIBED IN THE

NOVELS AND ROMANCES

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

WITH

A COMPLETE GLOSSARY FOR ALL HIS WORKS.



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1833.

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PREFACE.

No other part of the civilised world furnishes objects more calculated to invite poetic, romantic, or picturesque description, than the

“ Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood !”

and although these have met with some share of attention, local and general manners and customs have been too neglected, or too commingled with the caricature of romance itself, to convey a just impression or knowledge of their past and present state. The changes in the manners of Scotland that have taken place, from time to time, since the era of William the Conqueror, have been so little noticed, that what knowledge we had of them until the appearance of the Waverley Novels, we owe more to essay writers than to any of the Scottish historians; and it must be allowed, that the tendency so lately manifested to pourtray the peculiarities in Scottish manners, has gone a great way in filling up the chasm in the literature of the country.

The methods of instruction in Scotland have been on the increase since the rebellion, in the year 1745; and the advances in literature keep pace, at least, with their corresponding attainments in the arts and sciences. Metaphysical speculation begins, perceptibly, to yield to the more seductive fascinations of national romance. At one period, however, and that, too, in what has been called the golden age of British literature, the early part of the last century, our novels contained only the most depraved pictures of human life, and our romances were generally too wild or too amatory, to be read without im-

minent danger. To this style of writing succeeded another, whose distinguishing characteristic was monotonous simplicity; lives and adventures of love-sick ladies, or, what were still more tiresome and uninteresting, historical tales and rural stories. Such, however, was the taste of the age; and if, perchance, an historical novel or romance did appear, it was as soon eclipsed under the influence of some more amatory and feminine effusion.

The success of a few Gothic stories, as they were denominated, brought forward a whole host of others, written upon the same plan; and the metropolis was inundated with Lionels and de Montagues, and cross knights, and seneschals, and pilgrims and warders, and a thousand other ancient fragments, all huddled together without order or arrangement.

This age of novel-writing fretted its hour and vanished, and we reached a new era in composition, for which, indeed, it would be difficult to find an appropriate term; the *cacoethes scribendi* raged like an epidemic, infecting all who inhaled its contagious influence. Some good works occasionally appeared, but those were like wandering stars which ran their erratic course in the sky, with those around, which could either follow the new tract, or quit the old one. The greatest darkness is before the dawning; in the midst of the literary gloom burst forth *Waverley*, and the astonishment awakened by that powerful production was kept in constant exercise by its no less celebrated successors. The latter of these were evidently founded on a broad historical basis, and while reading their pages, it seems as if the times they recorded had returned again, and we became actual spectators of the scenes they displayed. But, notwithstanding the admiration which these works excited, it was thought by many rather a daring, if not an improper, act, thus to bring forward the real actors of history, and to place them in the same scenes with fictitious personages; alleging against this system, that it would confuse such as were unacquainted with the true circumstances, by causing them to blend romance with history. This danger is now too old to excite alarm, any more than the apprehension that the works of *Æsop* or *Gay* should cause the rising generation to believe that the inanimate subjects, without the aid of *prosopopœia*, can talk and reason, and hold "colloqui sublime," like an M.P. or a blue stocking. There is indeed not only no real danger attending these historical novels and romances, but, if properly conducted, they produce actual good,—for such has been the