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NATURE DESCRIPTION IN THE WORKS OF

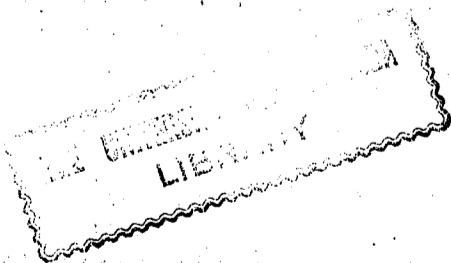
DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN,

THE FIRST SCOTTISH RENASCENCE POET.

BY

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Very good.



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Books consulted:-

Bernhard ten Brink: Geschichte der Englischen
Literatur.

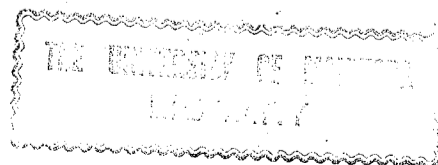
Veitch : The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry.

Moorman: The Interpretation of Nature in English
Literature from Beowulf to Chaucer.

Masson : The Life of William Drummond Of Hawthornden.

Poems of William Drummond of Hawthornden, edited by
the Maitland Club.

From the very earliest times natural description has played an important part in literature, marking the development of the various peoples in their attitude towards Nature. Of this development three chief phases offer themselves for present consideration - one, as foundational, the other two as actual factors of the subject to be discussed. Before going further however it will be well to have a working definition of Nature. By Nature we are to understand - as it has been expressed- "all that belongs to the outer world of sense-perception, which is not man nor the immediate work of man." Now the primal attitude towards what is herein included would seem to have been one of awe, amounting often even to fear. Proof of this we have in the ancient Scandinavian and Teutonic sagas - or to go further back - still - to the Vedic hymns and Sanskrit epics. This awe led man to elevate those forces whose working he perceived but could in no way comprehend, into supernatural powers which as time passed took on the more definite form of Gods; hence our long series of Nature-myths. As yet there was no love - nor even any admiration - for the works of Nature. Man stood quite apart from all these incomprehensible phenomena - found in general that they opposed themselves to his efforts- because he observed them chiefly in their destructive activities. One thinks involuntarily of the great Anglo-Saxon epic, Beowulf, which marks the attitude of the old Teutonic tribes. It is not at all strange then to find that when poets begin to depict Nature for its own sake they confine their efforts chiefly to describing what stood under the immediate control of man. This attitude exists until a comparatively late ^{date} in literary history. The admirable and lovable in the world around consisted in gardens and park land-



scapes, not by any chance in the unhampered, unrestricted scenery of wood and field and mountain. Actual observation of natural circumstances and things was still to seek; conventional description after classical models, the order of the day. But with the coming of the Renaissance and its poets, we arrive at a new stage - that in which the poet identifies himself with Nature, finds a connection often between his moods and her manifestations, and pictures the inanimate world as feeling for him in his woes and joys; in fine realizes himself as related to these hitherto uncomprehended and avoided powers. In English poetry this stage is reached with the publication of Tottel's Miscellany in the year 1557 - more completely with the appearance of Spenser's Shepherds Calendar in 1579. In Scottish poetry, we note it first to any great extent in the writings of William Drummond of Hawthornden.

Before proceeding to examine the poems of Drummond in detail, it is advisable to consider the works of those Scotch poets who had before him succeeded in winning a place in literature. Almost the first to insert a piece of natural description in an historic poem was Thomas of Erceldoune, who lived probably in the latter half of the 13th century: this was an attempt at describing a May morning. In the first half of the 14th century, we have the epics of Archdeacon Barbour, notably the 'Bruce'. Barbour makes an interesting attempt to depict a particular place - Ben Cruachan and the pass of Brander - but gives the impression that he regards the mountain as something repellent, an attitude characteristic of the whole period. Landscape, however, he introduces never for its own sake, always with some ulterior end. Another series of epics which ^{appeared} about this time may be called the 'Gawayne epics.' The authorship of these has been much disputed but is generally attributed to Huchown of the Awle Ryale. In these poems landscape is kept in the background, but when introduced cannot be said to be very conventional. The scenes described are typically Scottish, and ,

although evidently of but secondary importance, are of a higher type than anything so far written. We may take as of special importance the poet's description of winter- here , as elsewhere in later poems, regarded from the standpoint of what Professor Veitch characterizes as shivering repugnance. Toward the end of the 15th century, we find another writer of epics- Henry the Minstrel, or, as he is commonly called, Blind Harry. The chief interest which attaches to him is that of his having been the first to attempt a systematic description of the seasons - description which strikes one as being a mere catalogue of events or sights with nothing behind it aside from mere animal enjoyment of the comfortable phases of the year, the whole being laden with multitudinous classical allusions. His landscapes too are distinctively Scottish, but have little life,- they may perhaps be but memories from the time before he had lost his sight. A distinguished poet of this same period brings with him to Scotland a Southron influence, namely that of his master Chaucer. This poet was James the First. He, like Chaucer, preferred the scenery of garden and park, and , although he holds close to his model, he shows an originality and a fine observation which redeem him from the charge of utter conventionality. This appears chiefly in his enumeration of birds and flowers and in the expression of some half understood affinity between Nature and humanity. An instance of this occurs in stanza CXVII of the 'King-is Quair', which, more Petrarchian than Chaucerian, runs thus:

And eke, in takin of this pitouse tale,
 Quhen so my teris dropen on the ground,
 In thaire nature the lytill birdis smale
 Stytith thaire song, and murnyth for that sound,
 And all the lightis in the hevin round
 Of my grevance have suich compaciencie,
 That from the ground they hiden thaire presence.

With King James begins also the love-poetry of Scotland which reaches its height with Ramsay and Burns- poetry in which the

passion is inextricably associated with the Scotch scenery, the trysting-place under the hawthorn, by the burnside or the broomy knowes. Robert Henryson, 1425- 1498?- gives us like Blind Harry a description of the seasons and is the first Scottish poet who seems actually to realize- at least who attempts to give again- the richness and beauty of the familiar landscape of his own country, without deeming it necessary to adorn them by conventional devices. He rises indeed to a genuine aesthetic emotion higher far than the mere agreeableness of sensation. W William Dunbar (1450 - 1520) in many instances, -such as the poems, *Rorate coeli desuper*, or *Timor mortis conturbat me*, - affords us something deeper than the ordinary objective treatment of Nature. Dunbar shows a true insight into Nature and a sense of natural beauty. His landscape painting, however, though brilliant, is frequently conventional and general. One passage is well worth quoting:-

The day did up daw, and dew donkit the flouris;
 The morow myld wes et meik, and the mavis did sing,
 And all remuffit the myst, and the meid smellit;
 Silver schouris doune schuke, as the schene cristall,
 And berdis schoutit in schaw, with thair schill notis;
 The goldin glitterand gleme, so gladiit ther hertis,
 Thai maid a glorius gle amang the grene bewis.
 The soft souch of the swyr, and sounne of the stremys,
 The sueit savour of the sward, and singing of foulis,
 Myght confort ony creatur of the kyn of Adam;

A And kindill agane his curage thocht it wer cald sloknyt.
 Ap poet with wider range of vision and keener observation is Gawin Douglas (1474?-1522?). In the prologues to the books of his *Aeneid* translation, we find finished descriptions of the seasons, particularly realistic in the case of winter, -which would seem to have presented more interesting features than absolutely attractive ones to the Scottish writers. Evidently

Douglas's power to recognize the charms of Nature was perfect; what he lacked was ~~the~~ adequate power of expression. His poems have served as inspiration for many in the ^{14th} century. From this period onward till the time of Drummond of Hawthornden little addition was made to what had already been contributed by the various writers named. Sir David Lyndsay (1490 - 1551) cared little for Nature but of course found it necessary to describe occasionally. In such cases he shows ~~an~~ no originality but a higher degree of finish to his work than had up to this time been met with. Alexander Montgomerie's works (1535 - 1610) abound in classical imagery, which works restrainingly, but he has burst the fetters of conventionality so far as to go beyond park and garden and find pleasure in uncontrolled Nature. Alexander Scott seldom ventures to throw aside the traditions of the Chaucerians but shows advance toward that point of view where Nature is regarded with purely unselfish feelings of pleasure, the triumph of the aesthetic. The last of these poets to be mentioned is Alexander Hume (1560 - 1609) who certainly reaches the highest point so far attained as regards realism, extent of range and genuine appreciation of the picturesque. His chief poem, *The Day Estivall*, seems more properly to belong to the 18th than to the 16th century. No attempt, however, is made to do other than depict Nature from the Objective standpoint. The poets of the 15th and 16th centuries had fallen under the influence of the revival of learning, - but the true spirit of the Renaissance was still far from them.

What then is this true spirit of the Renaissance, and how did it manifest itself? As already mentioned its herald in England was Tottel's *Miscellany* (1557) which, however, by no means broke with old traditions. The first product of the new era was Spenser's *Shepherds Calendar* which appeared in 1579. Many causes had been at work to contribute to this new growth - the first perhaps being the conquest of Constantinople by the

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Turks in 1453 and the consequent migration westward of the exponents of Greek learning. Shortly afterward came the discovery of America and the awakening of men's minds to the unknown mysterious New World, the rousing of curiosity in things and countries beyond their ken, the resulting desire to travel and the breaking down of barriers of insularity, - barriers which through the peril of the Spanish Armada were soon to be immensely strengthened in another way by the awakening of national consciousness. All these factors helped to remould the mind, to shake it out of the dream of exhausted possibilities into which it had fallen. Men were startled out of their apathetic repose and discovered a world hitherto unknown. So Englishmen came into closer relation with the continent and with continental literature. French and Italian letters began to exercise their influence, at first unmarked, then to take a firm hold on the poet's imagination. At first natural description remained objective as before, but the new tendencies showed themselves in allegory and symbolism, - in France used chiefly with satirical ends in view, in England applied to moral purposes. Then with closer study of the continental models was born the desire to imitate them, - above all the great master Petrarch, - and a consequent outburst of lyricism. Now the lyric necessitates self-revelation. The great change had begun. Poetry was no longer impersonal and naive but subjective and intense, - at first somewhat awkwardly and shamefacedly but soon with complete self-consciousness. Soon the poet began to seek about him for means of expressing his swelling emotions. What more natural than that he should turn to Nature for sympathy, - sometimes to find her all he could desire often to seem harshly repulsed. This was the age of chivalry, - Nature must aid him to find fresh and fitting descriptions of the charms of his mistress. More and more in all his moods he turned to Nature and sought to identify himself with her; hence the desire to be alone with her, to shun cities and crowds; the

the outcome of this feeling took form in the pastoral. The poet of the period was endowed with a passionate love of beauty which found expression in the most sensuous descriptions of natural and human loveliness; he had a vehement longing for the strong expression of his individuality, and gave it utterance in the sonnet sequences of which we have so many; he further delighted in a bold inquisitive intellect, in the fearless search for truth,— the ardent desire for life and the comprehension of life. But to all these positive tendencies there was inevitably a reaction and this we recognize in the deep melancholy which permeates the works of this golden age. All these unmistakable qualities, the tokens of the Renaissance spirit, we find now for the first time in the history of Scottish literature united in the works of William Drummond of Hawthornden. With him, then, we may say, a new era was beginning— that of a spiritual rebirth in Scotland's poetry.

William Drummond was born in 1585 at Hawthornden near Roslin, about seven miles from Edinburgh, his father being gentleman-usher to the young King James, with whose court the Drummonds were also connected through the mother's brother who was private secretary to the queen. Drummond was educated at the university of Edinburgh, and took his M. A. degree there in 1605. Immediately afterward he went abroad to study law, but paused on his way to visit London and the court. From 1605 till 1608 he seems to have been on the continent, alternating between Bourges and Paris. He returned to Scotland in 1609 when he would doubtless have commenced his career as an advocate if the death of his father had not left him laird of Hawthornden, freed from the necessity of spending his early life in what we can but suppose a somewhat distasteful employment. For the next three years he remained on his estate and gave himself up to quiet study. At the end of this period of rest, he appeared before the world as poet with the elegy, 'Teares on the Death of Moeliades',—Moeli-

ades was the promising young heir to the throne, Prince Henry. In the same year he travelled a little in Scotland, and during this tour began his friendship with Sir William Alexander, the only other Scottish poet of note in those days. This friendship which lasted till the death of Alexander- then Earl Stirling -in 1640, was certainly not without its happy consequences for his work. A less fortunate circumstance has, however, furnished us with some of his most admired poems; this was his engagement to a Miss Cunningham of Barnes, whom he loved passionately and whom he lost through death in 1615, on the eve of their marriage. In the next year he published a volume entitled Poems: Amourous, Funerall, Divine, Pastorall: in Sonnets, Songs, Sextains, Madrigalls. These poems were the fruit of his love and loss. In the following year he produced an extremely laudatory poem in honor of King James, just then visiting Scotland for the first time since his ascension of the English throne. This effusion was called "Forth Feasting" and one cannot refrain from admiring its art, even if one has not sufficient faith in human nature to agree with Prof. Masson in thinking that Drummond need not have been "even smilingly dishonest" as he wrote it. In the winter of 1618 - 19 Drummond had the honor of entertaining Ben Jonson for six weeks at Hawthornden, keeping some slight record of their conversations- a treasure indeed for literary posterity. In 1620 he seems to have been seriously ill, if one may judge from a couple of sonnets written then, as well as from letters to his friend Sir William Alexander. In 1623 appeared a fresh volume entitled, "Flowres of Sion," to which was appended a remarkable and admirable prose essay-"The Cypresse Grove." The contents had been in part published before under the title, "Urania, or Spiritual Songs." As the title indicates they were more or less of a religious nature - the product of a naturally philosophic mind rendered more than ordinarily thoughtful, not to say melancholy, by grief at the loss of his betrothed. During the following seven years his movements are uncertain

although the burden of evidence goes to show that he was on the continent. To our great surprise, we find that in 1627 he was granted a patent for some wonderful machines of war. Nothing more, however, is heard of these deadly things from that time on. In 1631 he was certainly again in Hawthornden, and the next year married - "unexpectedly" as we are told, - a certain Elizabeth Logan, said to have borne a remarkable likeness in appearance to the deceased Miss Cunningham. From this time until his death in 1649 he devoted himself more to politics than to literature - although we have a pastoral elegy, written on the occasion of the death of one, Sir Antonye Alexander, to which may be added a number of political satires. The entire latter part of his life, he devoted to the service of his king. It has been asserted, though on doubtful authority, that his death in 1649 was brought about by grief for his martyred master.

Now in this uneventful life what was there which could have been of importance in the production of the first Scottish Renaissance poet? First, he was born and educated in one of the most beautiful and romantic districts of Scotland - in a highly picturesque glen of the Esk valley. Second, he spent two or three years on the continent just at an age when he was most susceptible to impression, and what more likely to impress a live intellect than the Renaissance movement? Third, he returned to three years of quiet study in beautiful Hawthornden. As Prof. Masson says "To avoid writing poetry was the real difficulty." Fourth, he fell passionately in love, his love was returned, - but his mistress was reft from him by death. Without this last occurrence, sad as it was, all the favorable environment and preparation might have gone for naught. We can see what intellectual influences were at work upon him if we look at the list of books in his extraordinarily well-stocked library. Of the number, 11 were Hebrew; 35, Greek; and 164, Latin. The modern languages were represented by 61 in Italian, 8 in Spanish, 120

in French and 50 in English. Of these last fifty, we know that he possessed three plays of Shakespeare; *Romeo and Juliet*, *Love's Labor Lost*, and *the Midsummer Night's Dream*,— also *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece* and *the Passionate Pilgrim*. The works of Spenser and of Sir Philip Sidney also occupied a place. The last-named of the three great Elizabethans exercised certainly the greatest influence upon his literary activities. He tells us that between 1610 and 1612 he read numerous works, amongst which were many from Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto, as well as from lesser lights such as Guarini, Sanazzaro, and Marino. The first three doubtless influenced him greatly but it was on the works of the three last that he modelled many of his own poems. In fact his verse was almost all cast in Italian Moulds and permeated by Italian Sentiments. The unhappy ending to his love-story led him to write sonnets as did Petrarch but his sonnet-form was that used by Shakespeare and Sidney. Not only in subject-matter but in method generally he was original, for as he himself tells us: he was "the first in the Isle that did e celebrate a mistress dead, and Englished the Madrigall." His "Englishing" of favorite Italian authors forms by no means a small part of his writings,— but even where he translates directly, he manages to give the work an individual flavor. Environment and preparation were complete. To these he brought a live intellect and an individuality which was worthy of the expression it sought.

Before entering on any closer examination of those elements in the natural description which show the impress of the Renaissance, it would be well to gain some definite idea of the general content of the poems. First in order comes then the elegy, "Teares on the Death of Moeliades." Here, Nature, represented as animate, is called upon to mourn the loss of the young prince, and the sorrow of the Scottish rivers, with their wailing nymphs, is shown us first,— then we are commanded to note the grief of meadows and forests,— and the climax of Nature's