

PEACOCK, SCOTT, AND ROBIN HOOD

SIR HENRY NEWBOLT

IT is, I think, the common opinion that a creative artist, and especially an artist who works with words, is an extremely self-centred person, perhaps an egoist, certainly a being of marked individuality, who is moved first of all to express feelings different from those of other men. The poets have provided a great deal of evidence to support this judgment, and it will probably be admitted to contain at least half the truth. But to some of us it is the other part, the truth that is not quite so obvious or so easily explored, which offers at this moment the more attractive line of enquiry. If there is to be good poetry, or good creative work in prose, no doubt there must be successful expression—self-expression if you will. The further question remains—what does that “self” include? What the poetic bee gives to the hive is certainly his own honey, the honey which he has himself selected and secreted; but his finished product derives many of its distinctive qualities from the flowery world in which he lives, and—what is more important—his honey-making habits, and even his magic honeybag itself, are the result of untold centuries of co-operation in an industrious community.

The metaphor must not be taken too exactly; in human life, so far, there has been more scope than there is in hive life for originality and new departures. Poet differeth from poet in glory, more than bee from bee. But, whether he cares to admit it or not, every poet does in fact owe much of his material, and of the mental formation which governs his expression, to the thought and feeling of his own nation, past and present. It has even proved possible for a body of literature, expressing a very distinctive view of life, to spring up and last for many generations, without a trace of any individual personality, but strongly marked by the character of a race. For each of our old ballads there was beyond doubt a single author, or a succession of single authors, at work; but they were so completely identified with the community that the remembrance of their very names has perished. Each of them must have had a self, and that he expressed; but in so doing he expressed a greater self, a national self, from which he drew his peculiar power, and for which he spoke so well that he perpetuated what he had received.

There is no more striking example of this than the ballad story of Robin Hood—a legend which was from the beginning handed down without any sign of authorship. We shall look presently into its long history: but first let me remind the reader of its unique charm, and the perfection with which it expressed or accorded with certain marked characteristics of the people among whom it was so long a national possession:

In somer, when the shawes be sheyne
 And leves be large and long,
 Hit is full mery in fayre foreste
 To here the foulys song:

To se the dere draw to the dale
 And leve the hilles hee,
 And shadow hem in the leves grene
 Under the grenewode tree.

To this day, in a combe of the Quantocks or of Exmoor, or in a glade of that forest where the kings of England have been at home for some nine hundred years, you may lie beneath the bracken at noon and see the deer draw to the dale and shadow them under the greenwood tree. And, if you are one who knows the best and discounts the worst of your fellow countrymen, you will hear out of old memory the story of—

Robin that was a proud outlaw
 The while he walked on ground:
 So courteous an outlaw as he was one
 Was never none y-found.

And then his courteous greenwood law:

“Thereof no force,” then said Robin;
 “We shall do well enow;
 But look ye do no husband harm
 That tilleth with his plow.

“No more ye shall no good yeoman
 That walketh by greenwood shaw:
 Nor yet no knight nor no squier
 That will be a good fellow.”

Nor should any company be harmed wherein there was a woman; only “these bishops and these archbishops” and such oppressors as the Sheriff of Nottingham were to be appropriately kept in mind. The tale is a long and excellent one, true in every

note, but truest at the end. When Robin has been pardoned by King Edward and taken away to Court, he pines for his old life in Barnsdale and gets leave to go:

When he came to greene-wood
 In a merry morning,
 There he heard the notes small
 Of birds merry singing.

"It is far gone," said Robin Hood,
 That I was latest here;
 Me list a little for to shoot
 At the dunne deer."

We can judge this idealized forest life, rough and generous, honourable and unscrupulous, English and poetical, by a better test than our own feeling: it is mirrored with all its long descended beauty in the deep woodland pool of Shakespeare's mind. When Oliver, in *As you Like it*, asks "Where will the old Duke live?" Charles, from whom no one could have expected sentiment of his own, replies: "They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England; they say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world."

There is, then, a very old and powerful enchantment in this ballad; and we are now to see how, centuries after it had touched Shakespeare, it fell again upon two men of a very different generation, one living by Thames, and one by Tweed. In 1818 the volume of Robin Hood ballads, collected by Joseph Ritson, had long been familiar to Walter Scott, and he had resolved to make use of the story as part of his material for a new novel. His object was, he says, in the preface to *Ivanhoe*, to

obtain an interest for the traditions and manners of Old England, similar to that which has been excited in behalf of those of our poorer and less celebrated neighbours. The name of Robin Hood, if duly conjured with, should raise a spirit as soon as that of Rob Roy; and the patriots of England deserve no less their renown in our modern circles than the Bruces and Wallaces of Caledonia.

Ivanhoe was begun, accordingly, during the same painful illness of 1818 in which the *Legend of Montrose* was finished; by July, 1819, it was well advanced, and the book was published in December of that year.

By a remarkable coincidence, Thomas Love Peacock, the brilliant author of *Nightmare Abbey*, conceived the idea of writing a novel on the same Robin Hood story, almost exactly at the same moment. Ritson's book had but lately come into his hands, but its effect was intoxicating. On August 6th, 1818, he notes in his diary: "Could not read or write for scheming my romance. Rivers, castles, forests, abbeys, monks, maids, kings and banditti dancing before me like a masked ball." And again on August 12th and 13th he was "reading ballads about Robin Hood." On August 30th he wrote to Shelley, "I am also scheming a novel, which I shall write in the winter, and which will keep me during the whole of that season at home." In another letter to the same friend, on November 29th, he describes his novel as "a Comic Romance of the Twelfth Century, which I shall make the vehicle of much oblique satire on the oppressions that are done under the sun. I have suspended the Essay till the completion of the Romance."

These diligent intentions were not realized. The Romance made good progress, but was necessarily laid aside when an unexpected chance of entering the India Office was presented to Peacock. He set to work immediately on a laborious thesis on Indian affairs, received the coveted appointment in January, 1819, and became at once absorbed in his new profession. It was not until 1822, more than two years after the appearance of *Ivanhoe*, that *Maid Marian* was at last completed and published.

It is here that we reach the point of interest which led me to the present enquiry. We have before us two novels, each in its own way a classic, and each bearing the signs of its admitted descent from a common ancestor. But there is more than this: the resemblances between the two stories, in spite of the widely different mood and handling, are so striking as inevitably to raise the question—are these due to chance, or is one of the two novels in some degree imitative of the other? And if there is imitation, since by the dates it could only be imitation of the serious romance by the comic, was *Maid Marian* written as a burlesque of *Ivanhoe*?

The possibility of this suggestion was foreseen by Peacock, and he took care to insert in his book a prefatory note: "This little work, with the exception of the last three chapters, was all written in the autumn of 1818." The precaution was sufficient for its purpose: Peacock was well known as a man of letters, a wit, a scholar and a gentleman, and from 1819 to 1923 his words have been quoted, with the extracts from diary and letters which I have already given, as conclusive evidence that *Maid Marian*

owes its resemblance to *Ivanhoe* in part to a common ancestry, and in part to pure coincidence. Dr. Richard Garnett, who edited Peacock's novels in 1891, speaks of the dates as vindicating his "claim to originality in the choice of his subjects," and adds: "Were they not irrefragably established, it might be difficult to credit him with absolute independence of *Ivanhoe*, though even then what was subtracted from his originality might have to be added to his intrepidity. *Ivanhoe*, however, was not published till December, 1819, when the all but completed *Maid Marian* had lain in Peacock's desk for a twelvemonth. Any parallel between the two would, of course, be extravagant. *Ivanhoe* is an epic, *Maid Marian* an idyll." Mr. Carl van Doren, who wrote Peacock's life in 1911, says "The allusions to Peacock's romance in his diary of 1818 would furnish assurance of his good faith, even if it were doubted. There is, however, a better proof," and he goes on to emphasize the contrast between the two books, much as Dr. Garnett had done twenty years before.

Both these writers seem to me to miss the real point, or points, of interest. Dr. Garnett assumes that proof of "originality in the choice of his subject" is equivalent to proof of his "absolute independence of *Ivanhoe*," and refrains from any further enquiry into the resemblances. Mr. van Doren defends Peacock's good faith, which no one has ever doubted, and then, somewhat oddly, cites as "a better proof" than the author's own statements the contrast between the general character of the two books. Both these commentators assume that, if the books are independent or different in character, their admitted resemblance is of no interest.

For lovers of Peacock, of Scott, and of Robin Hood, this may well seem an impossible position. To one at least the matter appears in this light. Not only is Peacock's good faith unquestionable, but the right of an author and artist to borrow where he pleases is also unquestionable. He stands to be judged, not by what he has used, but by the use he has made of it. If he has borrowed a skein of silk and exposed it for sale as his own, he is condemned; but there is no known penalty, for the crime is a profitless and unlikely one. If he has used the silk to weave into a brocade of his own making, he is estimated by the beauty of his design, without regard to the source of his material. But when all moral and legal irrelevances are brushed aside, there may be, and in this case there certainly are, very interesting reflections to be made on materials and sources. Some of these I shall attempt to follow out. The evidence now known to us was probably not all available to the writers of 1818,

but we happen to know exactly what were the materials mainly relied on by both. First there was Ritson's volume of 1795, containing the ballads with notes and additions; secondly there was in each case some edition of the 17th century collection known as *Robin Hood's Garland*; and thirdly, there were the two plays published in 1601 by Antony Munday (assisted by Henry Chettle)—*The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington*, and *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntington*. Of these plays Scott may possibly have read the whole text, but it seems probable that Peacock knew only so much as is quoted in Ritson's book. In any case, these are the ancestors of *Ivanhoe* and *Maid Marian*, and no one will dispute the general resemblance which is the result of this common descent. The Robin Hood legend and its heroes appear in all the eighteen chapters of Peacock's book; in Scott's they form a secondary thread in the story, but are the making of some fifteen chapters out of forty-four. In both we recognize the famous outlaw and marksman of the *Lytell Geste of Robin Hood*—the best and earliest ballad in Ritson's collection—with his almost equally famous followers, Little John, William Scarlet or Scathelock, Much the Miller's son, and Friar Tuck. In both, as in the ballad, they waylay priors and abbots, defeat oppressors, perform miracles of archery, kill the king's deer, bring all and sundry to their rendezvous in a forest glade; and, after proving the immense superiority of the greenwood life to any more civilized existence, they end by falling on their knees before the real king of England and receiving his forgiveness for their unconventional habits. In both there is a subtle suggestion of the poetical, the disinterested, the genial side of life, and the joys of a free but not undisciplined society in the open air; an inspiration which has been since reinforced by the Red Indian romances of Fenimore Cooper, and now, through the genius of Sir Robert Baden-Powell, is stirring the young blood of all the European races. Every Boy Scout is a Scarlet or a Little John; every Girl Guide a Maid Marian.

Corresponding to this general likeness there are some differences which are equally natural. Scott could not have refrained from songs in such a book as *Ivanhoe*; five of his characters sing between them half a dozen times—Richard and Wamba twice exemplify the troubadour tradition, Ulrica shrieks a death-song from the Sagas, Rebecca and Rowena have each a hymn for their own occasions. But Peacock goes far beyond this: in a book of less than one-third the length, his gay little company give us three times as many songs—eleven set pieces and eight catches—or snatches.

Except for a few in which the heroine joins, and one which she sings alone, these are all in the part of Brother Michael, the same tall friar who began his legendary life as Friar Tuck, but afterwards acquired some of the peculiar characteristics of Frère Jean des Entommeures, from the Rabelais country. The spirit with which he and Matilda render their parts has a remarkable effect; it not only differentiates this from all other novels, but transforms it into a "musical comedy," and reminds us of nothing so much as *The Beggar's Opera* in the past, and *H. M. S. Pinafore* in the period which was yet to come.

Another difference is this: Maid Marian, or Matilda FitzWater, round whom the whole action of Peacock's book is made to revolve, finds no place at all in *Ivanhoe*. Scott did not need her—she would indeed have been an embarrassment to an author already provided with two competing heroines—and he may have had another reason, an antiquary's reason, for omitting her. She is not of the same ancient descent as Robin Hood and Little John. They belong to the 13th century, and were already popular in the 14th, while she appears for the first time only at the end of the 15th. Even then, when Barclay introduces her name in his *Fourth Eclogue*, he seems almost to dissociate her from Robin Hood, as belonging to a separate story; he makes Codrus say to Menalcas:

Yet would I gladly heare some mery fit
Of Maide Marian, or els of Robin Hood.

This was in 1500; in 1601 we find that Munday has done much to improve her position. She is now a noble lady, Matilda FitzWater, daughter of the Baron of Arlingford, betrothed to a noble spendthrift, Robert, Earl of Huntington, whose marriage is unavoidably postponed by the unfeeling conduct of his creditors. Upon his "downfall" he takes to the greenwood (in this play the forest of Sherwood, not Barnsdale), with his faithful followers and the fair Matilda. He lays down a code of forest laws for his men, the first and second of which are that, while it is their chance to live in Sherwood a poor outlaw's life, none of them shall presume to call their master

By name of Earl, Lord, Baron, Knight or Squire,
But simply by the name of Robin Hood,

and similarly Matilda is to be called only by the name of Maid Marian, which in fact the playwright has already given her in-

advertently on several occasions in the two preceding Acts. After having been thus clearly explained by Antony Munday, she was received everywhere; from 1663 onwards *Robin Hood's Garland* always gives her a place, though not a very distinguished one; in the edition of 1723 she is a mere broadside heroine—a “queen of the shepherds” with a pseudo-classical name, and a genius for marriage at first sight:

“For 'tis a fine life, and 'tis void of all strife,”

“So, 'tis, sir,” Clorinda reply'd.

“But O!” said bold Robin, “how sweet it would be
If Clorinda would be my sweet bride.”

She blush'd at the notion, yet after a pause

Said, “Yes, Sir, and with all my heart.”

“Then let us send for a priest,” said Robin Hood,

“And be married before we do part.”

Of course this young lady's past was as well known to Peacock as to Scott; but Peacock wanted only a burlesque Baron's daughter, who could sing and bully her father. For a place in *Ivanhoe* no third lady could be accepted whose record would not illustrate the manners of the Norman aristocracy as well as their titles. No; and when we find that at the date required by these two stories there was not in England a peerage of FitzWater, or even such a surname, we must admit that Maid Marian is a very shadowy figure, an old Morris-dancer's part perhaps, taken over by Matilda; and as for Matilda, she is simply Munday's child, a parvenu with a faked Norman pedigree, who has been taught to sing and act—charmingly—by Mr. Peacock.

And now, having said all that need be here said of the natural likenesses and unlikenesses of the two books, I must draw attention to the passages in which resemblance may be held to imply a closer connection than that which comes by common origin or by accident. Let me repeat that this is a literary and not a legal or moral enquiry; it is, moreover, one in which everyone can read and judge for himself. What is here contributed is not an argument, but a record of personal experience. I first read *Maid Marian* in 1891, with a fair knowledge of the Robin Hood ballads in my mind, but no thought of any other source. Seven chapters went quickly by, with a mingled effect of familiarity and novelty. If the story or the treatment reminded me of anything, it was of the *Ingoldsby Legends*. Then in Chapter VIII we were to witness the execution by the Sheriff of Nottingham's men of Robin's cousin, William Gamwell.

"But when they reached the place of execution, Little John appeared, accompanied by a ghostly friar." The friar was, of course, Robin in disguise. He duly approached young Gamwell at the foot of the ladder, under the suspicious Sheriff's very nose, and began to play his double part. He "opened his book, groaned, turned up the white of his eyes, tossed up his arms in the air, and said '*Dominus vobiscum.*'" A moment or two of silence, and he threw off his holy robes, appeared as a forester clothed in green, with a sword in his right hand and a horn in his left, blew his horn, rallied his hundred bowmen, completed the rescue and shot the Sheriff himself through the arm. All was as it should be—in fact, as it had always been.

But my other and more accurate self, the man in the basement, whom nothing can escape, suggested that I had overlooked something. For a moment I thought, "Surely in the old story it was not '*Dominus vobiscum*'; it was '*Pax vobiscum.*'" "Yes," came the answer, "but it was not in the old story at all—it is from *Ivanhoe.*"

He was right, as he usually is. In Sir Walter's XXVth chapter Wamba the fool volunteers to carry a message to his master Cedric, imprisoned in Front de Boeuf's castle. He goes off in the disguise of a friar, saying "*Pax vobiscum,*" and in Chapter XXVI, when he has gained admittance to Cedric and exchanged his dress with him, he gives him also these two words to enable him to act the same part in turn. "The spell lies in two words," replied Wamba. "*Pax vobiscum* will answer all queries. If you go or come, eat or drink, bless or ban, *Pax vobiscum* carries you through it all. It is as useful to a friar as a broomstick to a witch, or a wand to a conjurer. . . I think, if they bring me out to be hanged to-morrow, as is much to be doubted they may, I will try its weight upon the finisher of the sentence."

"If such prove the case," said his master, "my religious orders are soon taken—'*Pax vobiscum*'"—and he escapes forthwith.

It was not until afterwards that I verified this reference; at the moment I was content to go on with the story, for I had not yet read Dr. Garnett's preface or heard of Peacock's diary, and his note claiming priority for his own book. It did not occur to me that there was anything more strange or illegal in borrowing an incident from Scott than from the author of the *Lytell Geste*. But my attention was now aroused, and I was not surprised to come, only ten pages later, upon another vivid reminder of *Ivanhoe*. This was the siege of the Castle of Arlingford—an incident also not to be found in Peacock's acknowledged sources.

The castle is defended by Lord FitzWater with his daughter Matilda, the little round friar, and some retainers: the attackers, Prince John and his men, have constructed an immense machine on wheels for the assault, which is to take place next morning. But the garrison make a sortie, and with the support of Robin Hood's band from the forest side the machine is fired and destroyed. The description of the fight is the only serious battle piece in Peacock's novels, and quite worthy of Scott himself.

The Baron and his daughter are successfully brought off by their men and the foresters, and make good their escape towards Sherwood. Prince John intends to console himself for losing the lady by sacking the castle, but has the mortification to see it burst into flames in several places at once.

Scott gives considerably more space to his siege: but then he has a double and even treble drama to work out within its walls. The fate of Athelstane must be in the balance; Ulrica must be avenged on Front de Boeuf; and Rebecca must picture the battle to her beloved and helpless Ivanhoe, which she does most vigorously.

After a partial success there is a lull in the attack, during which Ulrica sets fire to the magazine of fuel in the castle, and after taunting the wounded tyrant, Front de Boeuf, locks him in his room. Then, when the whole building is in flames, the Templar Bois-Guilbert makes his escape through the besiegers, followed by the remnant of his men.

So far the resemblance between these two passages is enough to interest a reader who knows both books, but only if his attention has been drawn to the parallel. It becomes, however, much more striking towards the end. When the castle of Torquilstone is burning, Scott's Anglo-Norman epic reaches its dramatic climax in this striking scene:

Those of the castle who had not gotten to horse still continued to fight desperately with the besiegers, after the departure of the Templar, but rather in despair of quarter than that they entertained any hope of escape. The fire was spreading rapidly through all parts of the castle, when Ulrica, who had first kindled it, appeared on a turret, in the guise of one of the ancient furies, yelling forth a war song, such as was of yore raised on the field of battle by the scalds of the yet heathen Saxons. Her long dishevelled gray hair flew back from her uncovered head; the inebriating delight of gratified vengeance contended in her eyes with the fire of insanity; and she brandished the distaff which she held in her hand, as if she had been one of the Fatal Sisters who spin and abridge the thread of human life. Tradition has pre-

served some wild strophes of the barbarous hymn which she chanted wildly amid that scene of fire and slaughter.

Then comes the final picture:

The towering flames . . . rose to the evening skies one huge and burning beacon, seen far and wide through the adjacent country. Tower after tower crashed down, with blazing roof and rafter . . . the victors, assembling in large bands, gazed with wonder, not unmixed with fear, upon the flames, in which their own ranks and arms glanced dusky red. The maniac figure of the Saxon Ulrica was for a long time visible on the lofty stand she had chosen, tossing her arms abroad with wild exultation . . . at length, with a terrific crash, the whole turret gave way, and she perished in the flames which had consumed her tyrant. An awful pause of horror silenced each murmur of the armed spectators, who for the space of several minutes stirred not a finger, save to sign the cross.

For a reader who had been familiar with Scott since childhood, and had had this memorable picture safely pasted into his mental picture-book for twenty years, the reflection which Peacock had foreseen was inevitable. I was instantly reminded of all the main characteristics of the scene when I read what appeared to me to be Peacock's deliberate parody of it. The setting is exactly the same; a castle burning in the midst of a forest landscape into which the defenders have already escaped, and in front of it a body of the besiegers looking on at the catastrophe. Then:

A piteous cry was heard from within, and, while the prince was proclaiming a reward to any one who would enter into the burning pile and elucidate the mystery of the doleful voice, forth waddled the little fat friar in an agony of fear, out of the fire into the frying-pan: for he was instantly taken into custody and carried before Prince John, wringing his hands and tearing his hair. "Are you the friar," said Prince John in a terrible voice, "that laid me prostrate in battle, mowed down my men like grass, rescued my captive, and covered the retreat of my enemies? And not content with this, have you now set fire to the castle in which I intended to take up my royal quarters?"

The little friar quaked like a jelly: he fell on his knees and attempted to speak, but . . . his utterance totally failed him, and he remained gasping, with his mouth open, his lips quivering, his hands clasped together, and the whites of his eyes turned up towards the prince with an expression most ruefully imploring.

"Are you that friar?" repeated the prince.

Several of the bystanders declared that he was not that friar. . .

"Take him away, Harpiton," said the prince, "fill him with sack and turn him out."

"Never mind the sack," said the little friar, "turn me out at once."

"A sad chance," said Harpiton, "to be turned out without sack."

But what Harpiton thought a sad chance the little friar thought a merry one, and went bounding like a fat buck towards the abbey of Rubygill.

This, I thought, after reading Peacock's chapter, is the perfection of burlesque; a material resemblance is established, and with it a complete spiritual difference is made to clash, with that sudden disappointment of expectation which is a well-known element in humour, and especially in boisterous humour. And how well the contrast is worked out; even after the wild figure of the ancient avenging fury has been suddenly replaced by the ludicrous apparition of the little fat friar, the parody is prolonged; instead of Scott's silent and awestruck crowd, and the abiding memory of a maniac's heroic pride, Peacock gives us a humorous group, a witty bit of dialogue, and the panic flight of the sanest and most comfort-loving type of man.

There are two other passages in *Maid Marian* which I marked as worth considering along with those I have given. It will be remembered that in the early chapters of *Ivanhoe*, Prior Aymer and Bois-Guilbert are guided to Cedric's home by Wilfred of Ivanhoe disguised as a "Palmer just returned from the Holy Land." In the banquet scene in Chapter V the conversation chances to turn on the Crusade, and the Pilgrim—in spite of his assumed humility of rank—inter venes with authentic information about King Richard and his Knights, and the haughty Templar accepts a veiled defiance from "this nameless vagrant." After supper the Pilgrim is sent for (Chapter VI) by the Lady Rowena, that she may ask for tidings of her lover, the Knight of Ivanhoe.

Similarly in Peacock's XIVth chapter it is told how "the baron, Robin and Marian disguised themselves as pilgrims returned from Palestine, and travelling from the sea-coast of Hampshire to their home in Northumberland. They... were already on the borders of Yorkshire, when, one evening, they passed within view of a castle, where they saw a lady standing on a turret and surveying the whole extent of the valley through which they were passing. A servant came running from the castle, and delivered to them a message from his lady, who was sick with expectation of news from her lord in the Holy Land, and entreated them to come to her, that she might question them concerning him. This was an

awkward occurrence; but there was no pretence for refusal, and they followed the servant into the castle. The baron, who had been in Palestine in his youth, related his own adventures to the lady as having happened to the lord in question,' and the lady "was delighted to find that her lord was alive and in health, in high favour with the king and performing prodigies of valour in the name of his lady, whose miniature he always wore in his bosom. The baron guessed at this circumstance from the customs of that age, and happened to be in the right." Finally, when the lady asks him embarrassing questions concerning her lord's personal appearance, "Robin came to his aid, observing a picture suspended opposite to him on the wall, which he made a bold conjecture to be that of the lord in question; and making a calculation of the influences of time and war, which he weighed with a comparison of the lady's eye, he gave a description of her lord sufficiently like the picture in its groundwork to be a true resemblance, and sufficiently differing from it to be more an original than a copy."

This last sentence I have always taken to be a marvellously apt description by a burlesque author of his own method; and certainly if he had intended to borrow from Scott and burlesque him at the same time, he could hardly have hoped to do it better.

The three parallels which struck me, and which I have tried to exhibit here, derive a great part of their cogency from the fact that their notable likeness cannot be traced to any common ancestry of the two books. The materials known and acknowledged to have been used by Peacock do not account for them; either they were invented and form a series of very remarkable coincidences, or they were in some way acquired from Scott. But there is a fourth parallel, which is not on quite the same footing, and yet must count for much in any theory worth considering. In the epic ballad, *The Lytell Geste*, whose eight fyttes and 456 stanzas contain the only ancient and first-rate account of Robin and his men that has come down to us, there is one decisive indication of a date. The King of England is Edward. In Munday's plays the reigning king is at first Henry, and afterwards his son, Richard. Richard appears also in the 17th century doggerel of the *Robin Hood's Garland*, and lastly in the novels of both Scott and Peacock. There is little or no doubt that the period originally assigned both by ballad writers and chroniclers to Robin's adventures was the reign of Edward the First. I shall quote three of the witnesses. Bower, writing in 1441—7 of the popularity of the Robin Hood ballads, says that Robin had been a follower of Simon, Earl of

Montfort. Montfort, as everyone knows, was killed at the battle of Evesham in 1265, and was held by the people of England to have died for their liberties. The remnant of his followers in the midlands would be, naturally, popular heroes, though broken and outlawed men. Again, Wynton's *Chronicle*, some twenty years earlier in date (c. 1420), has this passage under the year 1283 (12 Ed. I):

Lytell John and Robin Hude
Waythmen* were commendyd gude:
In Yngilwode and Barnysdale
Thai oisyd† all this tyme thare travale.

Thirdly, in Child's monumental work on the ballads there is this note: "J. Hunter (*Critical and Historical Tracts IV*) shews that Barnsdale was peculiarly unsafe for travellers in Edward I's time. Three ecclesiastics, conveyed from Scotland to Winchester, had a guard, sometimes of eight archers, sometimes of twelve, or, further south, of none at all; but when they passed from Pontefract to Tickhill, the number was increased to twenty, *propter Barnsdale*"—"because of Barnsdale."

The early evidence then all supports the Edwardian date of Robin Hood's historical existence: and it must be added that the *Lytell Geste* itself is a witness second to none, for it is explicit, coherent, and older by a century than all the plays and other ballads which touch this point. It is also nowhere in conflict with historical facts, as are all the sources of the Richard I legend. Indeed, these last are witnesses who could not be relied on by any serious writer as historically competent; they give Richard a Queen named Katharine, invent Norman families of FitzOoth and Fitz-Water, and create earldoms of Leicester and Essex in a reign when there were none. If they are to be followed, both the *Lytell Geste* and English history must make way for them; for they offer us in Richard a king of England who was never in Barnsdale, nor long enough in England between his accession and his death to keep Robin Hood at his Court for "twelve months and three."

Why, then, did Scott and Peacock reject the older and more probable story in favour of a legend of later date which was closely interwoven with obvious genealogical and historical absurdities? Scott's reason we know, for he has given it himself in the Introduction to *Ivanhoe*, dated from Abbotsford, 1830, in the following words: "The period of the narrative adopted was the reign of Richard I, not only as abounding with characters whose very names

*Hunters. †Used.

were sure to attract general attention, but as affording a striking contrast betwixt the Saxons, by whom the soil was cultivated, and the Normans, who still reigned in it as conquerors, reluctant to mix with the vanquished, or acknowledge themselves of the same stock. The idea of this contrast was taken from the ingenious and unfortunate Logan's tragedy of *Runnemedé*." (1748-88)

On a later page he adds that the meeting between the king and Friar Tuck was taken "from the stores of old romance," and as his oldest source he quotes a ballad story of King Edward (whom he conjectures to be Edward IV), and a Hermit in Sherwood Forest. As for Robin Hood, we have already seen what he says in the Dedicatory Epistle to the original edition: "The name of Robin Hood, if duly conjured with, should raise a spirit as soon as that of Rob Roy."

No author could be franker or fuller than Scott is here; he disregards all the 16th century stuff about King Richard and Queen Katharine, FitzOoth and the Earl of Leicester; he misunderstands and disregards the older story of King Edward: what he "adopts" as motive is a national contrast suggested by quite a different writer of his own time, and for his own purpose he lays his scene in a reign that suits him. No such explanation was given, or could be given by Peacock; we must look elsewhere for his reasons for adopting the Richardian theory instead of the Edwardian. I think it is plain that he did so because it offered him an excellent villain in the person of Prince John, whom he found pursuing Matilda in Munday's plays. The king is then, of necessity, King Richard, and any historical evidence to the contrary may be thrown overboard. So far he is probably quite independent of *Ivanhoe* on this point.

But anyone who cares to overlook the author of *Maid Marian* at his work will see that he used King Richard, when he had got him, in a fashion much more like that of Scott than that of Munday or the ballad writers. In Munday the king comes to the greenwood only in the final scene, and he comes not in disguise nor in search of Robin Hood, but with all the pomp and armed train of royalty in pursuit of the usurping traitor, John. In the *Lytell Geste* he comes disguised as an abbot, with five knights in the weed of monks, to take Robin Hood if he may, being "wonder wroth" with him for shooting all his best deer. In Peacock's tale, as in Scott's, he comes as an unknown knight, is engaged in single fight by one of the outlaws, and finally—after revealing himself to Robin Hood and his whole company—furnishes the *denouement* of the

story. And here for the last time I must draw attention to a passage which is either an echo or a noticeable parallel.

Scott's picture of the disguised king is as follows: "In the meantime, the Black Champion and his guide were pacing at their leisure through the recesses of the forest. . . . You are then to imagine this Knight, such as we have already described him, strong of person, tall, broad-shouldered, and large of bone."

Peacock's runs thus: "Many moons had waxed and waned, when on the afternoon of a lovely summer day a lusty broad-boned knight was riding through the forest of Sherwood."

This is, it may be said, only a matter of a word or two, but the words seem strangely like a response to Scott's bidding—"You are then to imagine this knight."

Taken all together, I think the resemblances I have picked out from the last eleven (not the last three) chapters of *Maid Marian* would seem to any interested reader, as they did to me, sufficiently remarkable to call for an explanation. As we have seen, the theory of a common origin in the ballads and plays will not cover these parallel passages, and any idea of conscious borrowing or burlesque by Peacock is negatived by his own statement. We are left to decide among three possible explanations. The first of these would solve everything by pure coincidence; but the coincidence here would be a singularly complex one—so complex as to be, I think, incredible. Besides, it would be for most of us unacceptable; mere coincidence is a disappointment to the enquiring mind. Two more theories remain, and both can be supported by evidence from the records of literature. The cases of unconscious reminiscence are many;—probably most of the examples of what is called the "influence" of great poets on their successors come under this head. Milton did not deliberately copy Fletcher and Spenser: he took out of his storehouse what he had long since heaped up and forgotten there. Disraeli in a famous speech used a peroration which he found in his own notebook, and remembered only afterwards that he had years before translated it from a French speech which he admired. Similarly, though on a less resounding occasion, a poet still among us, when translating a *Lai* of Marie de France, found himself writing easily in this fashion:

For while he numbered three swift nights
 Within that palace of delights,
 Three hundred years had passed on earth
 And in the country of his birth
 Dead was his king, his own folk dead,
 Yea, all his lineage lapped in lead.

It was not till some time afterwards that, in reading over a poem of Richard Barnfield's which he had first enjoyed twenty-five years before, he came with astonishment on the lines:

King Pandion he is dead,
All thy friends are lapped in lead.

They tell us now, and I believe it, that the unconscious self never forgets, and at times helps us in very unexpected ways. To me it seems quite possible that Peacock not only finished, but revised, his *Maid Marian* a year or two after reading *Ivanhoe*, and in so doing was quite unaware of owing Scott any acknowledgment whatever for the loan of plot, incident, or phrase. But I must admit that objections of some weight may be urged against this supposition; it would seem to be almost excluded by Peacock's introductory note. When he wrote that, he had evidently become conscious of the resemblances between his book and Scott's, and yet was still unawakened to a sense of indebtedness. Those who feel this difficulty have only one resource left; they must accept some theory of second sight or thought-transference. Is it possible for a great imaginative mind to have a direct intuition of things past, or to be affected by the mind of another writer engaged at the same time, or earlier, upon the same subject or material or line of thought; and this though no communication be possible between them through the ordinary channels of sense? Such a theory would not be without support from modern poets and philosophers; and without claiming to prove anything, I can add two instances which are verifiable beyond doubt, and may well be taken into consideration with the facts in Peacock's case. First, then, take the following well-known poem, written by Mary Coleridge in 1895, and published shortly after her death in 1907:

Egypt's might is tumbled down
Down a-down the deeps of thought;
Greece is fallen and Troy Town,
Glorious Rome hath lost her crown,
Venice' pride is nought.

But the dreams their children dreamed,
Fleeting, unsubstantial, vain,
Shadowy as the shadows seemed,
Airy nothing, as they deemed,
These remain.

When these lines were written there was already in existence, though unpublished and unknown, a poem on a kindred theme and with

thoughts, words and cadences which make up just such a resemblance as those which we are now considering.

Between 1824 and 1836 John Clare wrote some stanzas on "Song's Eternity," which were published for the first time by Mr. Blunden in 1913, six years after Mary Coleridge's death. The following are the last three stanzas:

Mighty songs that miss decay
 What are they?
 Crowds and cities pass away
 Like a day.
 Books are out and books are read
 What are they?
 Years will lay them with the dead—
 Sigh, sigh;
 Trifles unto nothing wed,
 They die.

Dreamers, mark the honey bee,
 Mark the tree
 Where the blue-cap "tootle-tee"
 Sings a glee
 Sung to Adam and to Eve—
 Here they be.
 When floods covered every bough,
 Noah's ark
 Heard that ballad singing now;
 Hark, hark.

"Tootle, tootle, tootle, tee"—
 Can it be
 Pride and fame must shadows be?
 Come and see—
 Every season own her own;
 Bird and bee
 Sing Creation's music on;
 Nature's glee
 Is in every mood and tone
 Eternity.

So close is the affinity here that it is easy to imagine the two poets collaborating in a poem made up of these two—selecting but not altering either phrases or lines:

Egypt's might is tumbled down,
 Greece is fallen and Troy Town;
 Crowds and cities pass away
 Like a day.

But the dreams their children dreamed,
Shadowy as the shadows seemed,
Mighty songs that miss decay,
What are they?

Dreamers, mark the honey bee,
Can it be
Pride and fame must shadows be?
Come and see.

Books are out and books are read,
Years will lay them with the dead,
Trifles unto nothing wed,
Fleeting, unsubstantial, vain—
These remain.

Here the thought may be regarded as transferred from one mind to another, distant in both time and space; or the earlier poem may be supposed to have been perceived as an existing fact by the intuitive power of a later writer; in either case the process is one which goes on below, above, or beyond the reasoning consciousness of the individual. It is unfortunate that so little trouble is taken to investigate scientifically the stories and beliefs connected with what is called "second sight," for they are often interesting in themselves, and sometimes appear as presenting the only possible solution of indisputable facts—such facts, for example, as those which I shall now relate. Mary Coleridge's novel, *The King with Two Faces*, appeared in the autumn of 1897, and within a few months became widely famous. The scene is laid in Sweden, and the story is concerned with the adventures of Adolf Ribbing, the young Swedish nobleman who in 1792 took part in the assassination of the king, Gustavus III, at a ball. It seemed therefore natural enough that Count von L., then Swedish Minister in London, should express a desire to meet the authoress. The interview took place on February 3rd, 1898, at Lord Knutsford's house in Eaton Square; and there were present, besides Lady Knutsford and the two principals, Miss Coleridge's sister and two of her intimate friends. The Count began by complimenting the authoress upon her book, and especially upon the vivid pictures of the scenery of Dalecarlia in the earlier chapters, where, he said, she had surpassed all previous attempts at rendering the character of the country. He was astonished to hear, in reply to a question, that Miss Coleridge had never in her life visited any part of Sweden, and he seemed to have some further question in mind. After an interval the rest of us removed to a little distance, and he then

asked if Miss Coleridge would tell him by whom she had been informed of an important fact in her story. The assassination of the king, the escape of Adolf Ribbing, and his capture after a price had been put upon his head—these were matters of history. But that he had been betrayed for a reward by his own intimate friend, a young nobleman of his own age—this was a skeleton which had hitherto been carefully kept hidden in the darkest cupboard of the informer's family. Who was it that had now given up the secret after a hundred years? The Count was entitled to ask, for he was himself a great-nephew of the man in question.

The answer was more astonishing than before. Miss Coleridge had received no information on this point from historians or from private sources. Improbable as the incident was, inconsistent with the character of Adolf's friend, and unnecessary to the story, she had written it so because so it came into her mind, inexplicably but convincingly; she saw it so. The Count was too good a diplomatist to argue further; he bowed, and accepted the lady's statement as a claim to second sight.

I need not comment on these two instances; my purpose in this paper is not to develop an argument, but to make two suggestions. One is that the charge of plagiarism or imitation should be less often made, and the word "derivative" as the antithesis to "original" given up altogether. There are in literature examples of conscious imitation, sedulous aping, great and wily borrowing. But they are not common, and though dangerous, they are in no way fraudulent, nor do they even point inevitably to a lack of original creative power. The spiritual activity of the artist works by intuition and re-presentation. His material may be supplied by external events, by inward experience of his own, or by the transmitted experience of others; in any case there must be material; the artist does not make it; he transmutes it, and originality cannot depend upon the source of it. On the contrary, it depends upon the freshness of the result, the characteristic form, colour and atmosphere of the new world created. A poet may "borrow"—as Shakespeare constantly did—subject, metrical form, and even verbal phrases, and yet be far more original than his originals. Every artist knows this, and takes his material wherever he finds it. In most cases he does not "borrow" at all; he picks up the sticks he finds, whether of his own tree or another's, and stacks them in his basement against the day of need, then draws forth what is wanted to feed his own fire, unconsciously. No one is robbed or wronged by this; in the realm of Art you can feel another's work, but you cannot steal it.

The other suggestion which I make is concerned with those parallels or resemblances which cannot be explained by any contact in the material world between two authors. In such cases as that of Peacock and Scott, let us not only refrain from accusation, but look for some better explanation than coincidence. The truth is that coincidence is only a word to cover our ignorance of causes. The trout in a river pool may think it a strange coincidence if two—stranger still if a dozen—of their number disappear successively into the upper air with convulsive struggles. The fisherman concealed on the bank above knows better—knows all—for he is the cause. He has powers beyond the reach of their enquiry. We are not fish, and there is no reason why we should cease our enquiry till we have found out what it is that happens to us in artistic creation, and the cause beyond ourselves. If that cause should prove to be the universal of ourselves, the infinite sum and source of all our powers, we shall have found not only the explanation of some of our literary resemblances, but the secret of Time and Eternity, and of the two-fold nature of the world.