

gneiss hills. All the mica-schists, however, decompose into soils, which, though light and thin, are more favourable to the production of the grasses and the common dicotyledonous shrubs and trees of the Highlands, than any of the gneisses or granites, and greatly more so than the porphyries or quartz rocks; and so the micaceous regions are not only more picturesque in outline than any of the others, but also richer in foliage and softer in colour. A tangled profusion of vegetation forms quite as marked a feature in the living and breathing description of the *Lady of the Lake*, as the mural picturesqueness of the crags and precipices which the vegetation half-conceals; and this, be it remembered, is not an ordinary characteristic of the Scottish Highlands, though true to nature in the mica-schist region selected by Scott as the scene of his story. After employing, in describing the rocks near Loch Katrine, well-nigh half the vocabulary of the architect,—spires, pyramids, and pinnacles,—towers, turrets, domes, and battlements,—cupolas, minarets, pagodas, and mosques,—he goes on to say,—

‘ Nor were these earth-born castles bare,
 Nor lacked they many a banner fair;
 For from their shivered brows displayed,
 Far o’er the unfathomable glade,
 All twinkling with the dewdrop’s sheen,
 The brier-rose fell in streamers green,
 And creeping shrubs of thousand dyes
 Waved in the west wood’s summer sighs.
 Boon nature scattered free and wild
 Each plant or flower, the mountain’s child.
 Here eglantine embalmed the air,
 Hawthorn and hazel mingled there,
 The primrose pale and violet flower
 Found in each cliff a narrow bower;
 Foxglove and nightshade, side by side,
 Emblems of punishment and pride,
 Grouped their dark hues with every stain
 The weather-beaten crags retain,