

AN INDICATOR ON THE EILDONS.

BY JOHN CLARKE.

THE Eildon Hills are a group of three small heights lying immediately to the south of Melrose, the central and highest peak attaining an elevation of 1385 feet, some 300 feet lower than the summit of Bennachie. To the traveller going south by the Waverley route, they form a prominent object in the foreground from Galashiels onward. The mass of hills to the south of Selkirk precluded the choice of a line direct south, so that the railway has to make a wide sweep to the east between Galashiels and St. Boswells, at the latter of which it gradually regains its south direction, and soon to Hawick and over the Borders. At Melrose it is running practically due east or even slightly to the north of east. The river Tweed, which emerges from the hill country between Galashiels and Selkirk, for the remainder of its course meanders through the plain—the Merse—passing in succession Abbotsford, Galashiels, Melrose, St. Boswells, Dryburgh, Kelso, Coldstream, and so east and north-east till it discharges itself into the North Sea at Berwick. On its north or left bank it receives the Gala and the Leader (from Lauderdale), and on the south the Ettrick (at Selkirk) and the Teviot (at Kelso), into which the Jed from the Jedburgh direction has previously fallen. These are the main topographical features of the ground plan of the district.

The interest of the Eildons is not merely three or four-fold, but manifold. They form the hub of a country

rich in historical, romantic, military, and picturesque features and associations. Trimontium, as the Romans called it, possesses also no little archæological interest, to which the Roman camp at Newstead, a mile or two east of Melrose, and the Roman road leading to it, testify. The two points of more general appeal are that it is the centre of the Scott country, and that it commands a wide view of the Borderland, the scene of foray and fight for so many ages between Scot and Southron, looking down, too, on the culminating scene of tragedy at Flodden, some twenty-five or thirty miles off to the southeast. To one nurtured on the Scott poetry and the Waverleys, the district possesses a wonderful attraction, amounting to positive fascination. A flying visit in the spring of 1873, which incidentally had been made by way of Loch Katrine, the Trossachs, Stirling Castle and Loch Leven, was but an introduction to Dryburgh, Melrose, Abbotsford and St. Mary's Loch. The intervening years had added much to the knowledge of the district and therewith enhanced the glamour of its story and legends, and the charm of its natural beauty. Two facts in particular began to force themselves on one's mind, first that in the Eildons there was a viewpoint which commanded much of the interest of the Scott and Border land, and second, that acquaintance with the traditions and associations of the region required to be preserved, renewed and placed on a more secure basis. This suggested, in September, 1924, the idea of an Indicator of the kind familiar from Arthur's Seat, and more recently illustrated by those erected on Lochnagar and Ben Macdhui. The design was to supply, as it were, a permanent map always unfolded and inviting inspection, free from the vagaries of the wind on storm swept peaks, and embodying as much topographical and other lore as it might be possible to cram into the space. The idea, once mooted, at once "caught on." Scott and Border Clubs, the Burghs of Melrose and Galashiels, backed by the neighbouring towns already mentioned, entered warmly into the project, and private donors came forward with the utmost readiness to answer

the appeal for funds. The Earl of Dalkeith, owner of the Hills, not only gave the site but entered into the project with great zeal. Other representatives of the great Buccleuch house also aided, while the committee in charge were fortunate in securing as chairman the Honourable Lord Sands, at the time president of the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club. Aberdeen friends were not wanting in doing their part, and may claim a substantial share in the success of the movement. The Indicator was unveiled on June 2, in presence of a large and representative company. Provost Curle, Melrose, presided. The address was delivered by the Master of Polwarth, and the monument was unveiled by Lord Henry Scott, who released the Union Jack covering it. A poetical tribute was paid by Mr. George Hope Tait, Galashiels, on behalf of the Abbotsford Scott Fellowship, while votes of thanks were moved to the speakers by Provost Hayward, Galashiels, and to the technical experts and unseen workers by the writer. The Master of Polwarth, it may be mentioned, is the Hon. Walter Hepburn Scott, the lineal descendant of Sir Walter's great fighting ancestor, Wat of Harden, and it is at Harden that the Master resides. Lord Henry Scott is brother to the Duke of Buccleuch, and thence uncle to Lord Dalkeith. The design of the Indicator was drawn by Mr. John Mathieson, late of the Ordnance Survey, who designed the Arthur's Seat Indicator, and whose name is well known in Aberdeen, especially in connection with General Wade's roads. He spared no time or care in observing, recording, and verifying the details. Whereas Scott is credited with having been able to point out forty-three places "famous in war and verse," Mr. Mathieson has raised the number to over ninety, most of them places of note. He has also embodied a ground plan, showing rivers and railways, and has added a horizon corresponding to the sky line on a clear day. The Indicator is cast of the hardest bronze, while not inappropriately, the pedestal which is composed of three pieces is of Rubislaw granite, "more enduring than bronze." The Indicator

is a handsome piece of work, worthy of the site and object, in form and the knowledge it conveys alike creditable.

To describe the wealth of objects, localities, scenes, and associations which cluster round the view is beyond the compass of space or power. The spot was that to which Scott was wont to bring up his visitors, perhaps generally by way of the Rhymer's Glen, as he did in the case of Washington Irving, to show them the beauties of the land and expatiate on the delights of his Delectable Mountains. That was a main reason for the choice of the site. To Flodden, reference has already been made. The route of James IV.'s ill-fated expedition lay across the plain spread out before us at our feet. Away to the east is Norham-on-Tweed, whence Marmion's journey can be traced across the Merse till it enters the hill country to the north-west between the Lammermoors and the Moorfoots. On the west, over Bowden Moor, rode William of Deloraine on his midnight journey to the tomb of Michael Scott at Melrose. Branksome from which he started is away south, a few miles up the Borthwick Waters from Hawick. Harden is not far off, a little to the north of Branksome. Close to Hawick are Minto Crags and beyond the more prominent hill, if less known to fame, Ruberslaw. Abbotsford itself is not in sight, but the woods are, and up on the shoulder of the hill is Cauldshiels. Between us and the loch is the Rhymer's Glen. On the other side of the Tweed, a little above Melrose Bridge, is the Fairy Dean, the scene of the appearance of the White Lady of Avenel. The time would fail to speak of Yarrow and associations of the Ettrick Shepherd and Wordsworth, not to mention Mungo Park, whose cottage lies close to the spot

where Newark's stately tower

Looked out from Yarrow's birchen bower,

in the days of the Last Minstrel.

Then there are the Tweed and all its tributaries, with their thriving manufacturing centres, which supply so much of their clothing to our former enemies as well as

to friends. But perhaps the chief attraction is simply the view itself. The landscape, if lacking in the rugged grandeur of the Cairngorms, presents a wonderful panorama of varied beauty. The setting is mountainous—the long line of the Cheviots, the hills of Dumfries and Peebles, with, possibly, glimpses of the Upper Ward of Lanark, the Moorfoots, the Lammermoors, and so, round to the gap which marks the sea on the east. It is from Melrose, as already indicated, that the Tweed basin opens out into a broad strath or dale, rich in woodland, pasturage and cropping. The variety of grouping and colouring presents an ever changing scene which furnishes a source of endless enjoyment. The same view is never seen on two successive visits. The Eildons, in fact, hold a strategic position, and are an ideal position for an indicator no less on account of their natural position than for the commanding prospect of a region rich in the records of a chequered past. As a climb it is nothing—at least in the eyes of a Cairngormer. To others, however, its ease of access may be one of its many attractions. In any case, the exertion to weak or strong will be rewarded a thousandfold.