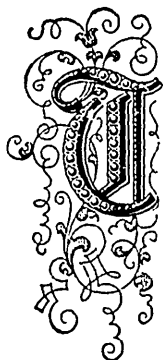


MOORE'S IRISH MELODIES.



OWARDS the end of the last century an oppressive government was striving to crush everything national out of Ireland, and in the general run her sweet and touching music was threatened with being swept away. To the zeal and thoughtfulness of

Mr. Bunting are we indebted, in a great measure, for its preservation. This gentleman made a large collection of her beautiful melodies, and in 1797 Moore's attention was called to them. At intervals he wrote words for some of them, and in 1807 he entered into an engagement with the publisher, Power, to adapt words to all of these airs, and any others that he himself might collect. Sir John Stephenson was to provide for them suitable accompaniments. This was the origin of the Irish melodies as we now have them. They appeared in ten numbers, the last of which was published in 1834. The task assigned to Moore was by no means an easy one, not even to a man so highly gifted, and so well fitted to undertake it, as he. He was obliged to be thoroughly acquainted with all the phases of that almost incomprehensible Irish character, which is nowhere displayed more accurately and interestingly than in the old folk-lore of legend and song that has grown out of the nation's heart, as it were.

Again, the irregular structure of many of them rendered it necessary to adapt the words rather to the ear than the eye, and employ in many cases what he calls a "lawless metre." The want of appropriate English words was another, and no small obstacle. Notwithstanding all these difficulties, the poet succeeded in his task, and has twined a garland round the harp of his country which no government can dis sever, nor time wear away.

On these melodies his fanic will chiefly rest. His Lalla Rookh, though the finest eastern poem in our language, breathing forth the intoxicating odors of Cashmere,

and glittering with all the gorgeousness of Persian fable, mingles at the end a certain disappointment with our admiration, because its beauty consists in the parts, not in the whole. His satires were, no doubt, well written and bore the stamp of his genius, but being employed upon ephemeral subjects, their interest died with the incidents to which they relate. But the melodies with their expressive words, high morals, and sweet music, will send his name down through the ages as long as music will endure.

In these melodies he has so well portrayed the manners and sentiments of his countrymen, that were the Irish nation blotted out of existence, and were their history to disappear with them, Moore's melodies remaining as the only monument of the past, they would furnish the future generations with a sufficient basis for a reconstruction of the character of the vanished race, so well has the poet imbibed and given expression to the spirit embodied in his country's music. Imbued himself with those traits of character peculiar to his countrymen, and gifted with a genius unrivalled in its exuberance of poetical feeling and expression, he has pictured forth in the sweetest song all those peculiarities of mind and heart whereby the Irish are distinguished from every other nationality. The muse leads him through his dear land, so lovely, so sorrowful, smiling through her tears, and points out to him, on all sides, her transcendent beauties. Now, as the sun's first beams are shed upon her clear and rippling streams, or in their blue depths the evening clouds are shadowed, or as the blue mountains raising their majestic heads to the skies, or their craggy cliffs, baring their breasts to the fury of ocean, serves as food for his inspiration. Then this Pierian guide lays bare to him the Irish heart, that strange and complex organ, and bids him sing, all an Irishman's sentiments, his love of freedom, his hatred of oppression, his partiality for the sparkling wine, and his devotion to his motherland and her lovely daughters, and at once they flow from the poet's soul as