

tricity, carelessness and disorder. One Walt Whitman in five hundred years is surely enough. Furthermore, the public shall demand that, in disobeying laws heretofore approved, genius shall embody and suggest deeper and better ones. Until genius can give an affirmative reply to such inquiries, innovation should be ruthlessly frowned down.

Now, I have long been of opinion that the want of technique from which Irish poetry so grievously suffers may be traced to one prolific source—want of patience in Irish poets. To save this modest dictum—the unassuming utterance of one who holds the whole lengthy line of Irish bards most dear—from being branded as dogmatic, and, if possible, rescue it from a seeming sterility of arrogance, and an deadness of contempt, out of which nothing can proceed, some explanation is necessary. Let me set out with the proviso that I am not alluding to the glorious band of Irish balladists. Ballads—not ballades, which bear to the former about the same relation subsisting between “Symthe” and “Smith” in the long and distinguished line of the Smiths—form a class apart. They are Democrats among poems. They fairly delight in the crudest aspects of human life and nature. Freedom is their dominant note. They prefer audacity of invention to logic and correctness. In them frequently proportion and harmony give place to direct force, if not incoherence. Every country owes much to its balladists, and Ireland is, I venture to think, among the countries that owe most. The Irish intellect is so endowed as to give the lyrical element a peculiar predominance, and Irish lyrists have been numerous. The Irish balladists are the lineal descendants of the patriotic Irish bards of by-gone days. Their work is great, but from the literary standpoint, it is imperfect. To be striking, vivid, passionate, is their main object. It is only just to measure them by the standard that is universally applied to such works as theirs, and under this treatment they show up well; nor should it be forgotten they never so much as affected the desires of the varnished and gilt-edged votaries of pseudo-classical insincerity and hollowness. They never bothered their heads about “decadence” and “art for art’s sake,” being more vitally interested, I have no doubt, in potatoes for potatoes’ sake. They have stimulated patriotism and braced the