

William Heughan—An Ambassador of Empire

(By the Editor.)

In the daily press of Vancouver city the musical critics have told of the outstanding ability of William Heughan, the singer, and of his correspondingly capable colleagues, Gladys Sayer (Mrs. Heughan), and Hyman Lenzer. But an article might well be written at this time of Mr. Heughan's first visit to Vancouver on the impression left by Heughan the man.

In Vancouver the final concert especially gave evidence that within the short space of ten days his worth had been heralded abroad, and before "Auld Lang Syne" was sung that night a member of the audience interrupted Mr. Heughan to request that all present be allowed to sing to him a verse of "Will Ye No' Come Back Again!" Then the spontaneous and hearty utterance given by the audience to that stirring Jacobite song demonstrated that many were disposed (like the writer of these lines) to exclaim: "Of course he'll come back again: He is a credit not only to Scotland, but to the British Empire: Long may his strength be maintained, and may his influence increase with the years!"

Here's a man of whom all alike who met him are ready to say—as one of Vancouver's judges did verbatim to the writer: "He's such a fine fellow, too; so unassuming and friendly," etc. It is no wonder if he sets the heather on fire. Some lowland or midland Scots (now Canadians) may have feared that the highland bonnet shown in the newspaper advertisement and other pictures, and the kilted dress he wears on the platform, would be handicaps in publicity by suggesting a limited repertoire. But by his regular wearing of the garb of the Gael, William Heughan has, for all time, associated with the tartan a personality with a power of interpretation in song and a superbness of dramatic suggestion in story and action which should go far to demonstrate that Scotsmen can be cosmopolitan not merely in their pioneering work, and in their ideals in relation to humanitarian principles and practices, but can, to say the least, rival any other Nationals in intellectual treatment of musical and dramatic numbers. For we say without hesitation, though we know little of this William Heughan's "clan" or the district it inhabits in the dear Homeland, that if the author of "A Minstrel in France" (Harry Lauder) was, for that book and the war-work behind

it, worthy of Knighthood—and this notemaker remembers he for one suggested that in a review of the "Minstrel" published in this magazine long before that honour was conferred on "Harry"—then, we believe, William Heughan might not unreasonably be offered a seat in the House of Lords! Indeed, occasion offering at a luncheon given in the Hotel Grosvenor by Vancouver Scottish Society at which Mr. Heughan was the guest of honour, the writer of these lines expressed that opinion; whereupon the soul-stirring singer at once naively rejoined that "He would not be able to sing then!" Which in turn drew forth the reply, "Well, you might reform them—if they still need it." But, since the war, may be even the House of Lords does not so badly need reforming—let us hope!

But this **British Columbia Magazine** would be neglectful of its duty to the Empire of which Canada forms part if it did not join in commending this Captivating Captain of Song to all whom it may concern in this province and elsewhere—wherever a copy of this magazine is seen, and quite a few copies do go overseas. With such a man to expound the story and sing the songs of Burns around the world, the Burns Federation, London, under whose auspices we learn Mr. Heughan and his company are travelling, will not only help to bring about a better and wider understanding of Burns—the true Burns, of analytic insight, big heart, and brilliant genius—but with arresting and thrilling appeals in song in English, Irish, Scots, Gaelic, French—not to mention Italian and Russian—will tend to bind the different nations of the British Commonwealth as with hoops of steel.

It happened that Mr. Heughan and party were in Vancouver the same week as (among other notable attractions) the pictures of the tour of the Prince of Wales were shown. Though by those who have not heard Heughan—and to estimate his work fairly one should hear at least one complete programme—we may be accused of putting it strongly, we believe it is no disrespect to His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, to say that it would be well in future to see that, if possible, the dates of the two do not clash. For each, in different ways, is an ambassador of Empire. The Prince (Heaven bless him!) we may be apt to take as such as a matter of course; but such a

man as William Heughan, with his unaffected smile, his stalwart form, and winning ways, is no less a representative of the British Commonwealth, and is himself a "wealth" which we are happy to think of as shared in "common" by the different portions of the Empire. Notable, indeed, is his power of stirring the emotions, the memory and the imagination, not only by clearly-suggested impersonations, but by recalling, through sympathetic expression, such pathetic heroisms of history as the clansmen's loyalty to the death, "five deep," on the dark day of Culloden, or the not less memorable words of Bruce and attitude of his army at Bannockburn as Burns' song, rightly rendered, reveals them; the quaint naturalness, so happily amusing, of the rustic in "Zummerzetzhire"; the jovial, beloved "Father O'Flynn"; and—literally dozens of others, including such talent-testing pieces from Faust as Mephistophles in "The Calf of Gold"; "The Song of the Flea" (Russian); the several characters in "Widdicombe Fair," etc., etc.

All the more because of the larger success which crowned the last concert, it was particularly gratifying to note at the outset that William Heughan's capacity to "come up smiling" was not dependent on the size of the audience. At the earlier concerts, owing to other attractions and because knowledge of him and his ability had not yet permeated the Vancouver community, the attendance was comparatively small. Then indeed he seemed to the writer the more worthy of his British race, and showed a measure of real heroism in the way in which he none the less put heart and soul into his singing. Naturally it was afterwards more than pleasing to find the attendance at the earlier concerts offset by the crowd at the last one, and the warmth of the reception given this leader and his associates culminate, as already mentioned, in the request by an unknown admirer that the audience be allowed to sing "Will Ye No' Come Back Again."

Of course, if he is "spared" (as all sensible Scotsmen say), he will come back; and it is gratifying indeed to think that he will be welcomed, not merely in any clannish way, however warm and worthy that may be, but as a Briton from the Homeland Isles of whom, and of whose service, citizens in every part alike of the British Empire may well