

What then are the characteristics of Burns' poems which claim our attention and make us feel that here is a great spirit, one to whom we might well listen and grow in wisdom? We cannot do better than agree with Carlyle that sincerity—his indisputable air of truth—at the very beginning impresses us that this man has a message and understands it. He paints no false, unreal life. He speaks of no sorrows and joys which might take place: but to him the whole is real. It is that of which he knows he speaks, and from a full heart which has measured it all he gives forth his treasures. Speaking from the heart he reaches the heart, and it is because of this trueness that Burns is a home-name wherever his poems have found their way. That sincerity is one of the greatest elements in religion, I think we can all agree. Religion's first demand is to be real, true, to describe "things as we see them, for the God of things as they are." To be convinced of our circumstances, our own inner nature and our God is one of the great secrets for interpreting the problems of life to our fellow beings. Burns does not seem to know what affectation is. He is an honest man and an honest writer. He borrows no lustre but clothes himself in his own garments. There is no shadowy glory covering up faults and failings. Nothing is put in a false light, no dim distant halo surrounds the head of any hero or spreads hazy outlines over any landscape.

The sympathy of Burns and his naturalness find him subjects where ever his far seeing vision sweeps. It is not his to go back to mythical ages to find a theme for his fancy. He bends over a daisy and it speaks as an angel. He sees the upturned nest of "the wee beastie" and tears fall. He lifts a tethered sheep from the ditch and it becomes a teacher of men. He watches the uncertain way of the creeping insect and a philosopher speaks. He sits in the ingle nook of his father's home and reverence and homeliness join hands. With rollicking companions he drinks his glass and cracks his joke and fun and frolic stand arrayed in fair garments. He becomes conscious of man's hypocrisy and his words sting like falling lashes. He crosses the path of the misguided prodigal