

one of the first to assert that Burns was very much more than an uneducated peasant with a happy knack of versifying.

In the present day we hear too much of the inspired ploughman bursting into song, as one that could not help himself, and warbling of life and love in a kind of lyrical frenzy. The fact is that Burns was a great intellectual power, and would have been a force in any sphere of life or letters. All who have met him and heard him talk have insisted on the greatness of the man apart from his achievements in poetry. This is what Sir Walter Scott says of him in his reminiscences:

Sir Walter Scott's View of Burns

"I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7 when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the West Country, the two sets that he most frequented. As it was, I saw him one day at the late Venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns' manner was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side, on the other his widow with a child in her arms.

"These lines were written beneath:

'Cold on Canadian hills or Minden's plain,
Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain;
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptised in tears.'

"Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present; he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

"His person was strong and robust, his manners rustic — not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, i.e., none of your modern agriculturists who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the dour gentleman who held his own plough.

"There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally glowed) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least in-