

Such are some of the breathings of our author upon the general things which are at the foundation of a religion. We will now try to form some conception of the application of these to the practical results of his creed.

In the first place he has a great pity for every life which struggles against its environment. The perishing flower calls forth his tears, the storm beaten cattle and cluttering birds make his heart ache and become the subjects of his prayer. When we consider the hardships of the poet and the misery which filled his own life, we find in these sentiments the voice of mercy itself. He lives in sympathy. He explores every realm of being, and no life is indifferent to him. He pities the very Devil and would like to see him released from his sufferings.

“ But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben
O wad ye tak’ a thought an’ men’ !
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken.
Still hae a stake ;
I’m wae to think upo’ yon den, . . .
Even for your sake.”

This pity manifests itself not only in his poems, expressive of love and mercy, but also in those of indignation and humour. Everywhere you may see the bubbling of the spring which gushes from his heart carrying joy and gladness, like the clear water of mountain stream upon its every ripple. To him “ God is love,” and surely in this respect he is a man after “ God’s own heart.” He who loves as truly and as universally as did Burns cannot be a bad man.

Second, his hatred of insincerity and narrowness stand out as landmarks in judging his character. The state of the Church at that day was far from perfection. The power of discipline, if used at all, was a sad miscarriage of justice. Men of impure lives and open vices sat as rulers in the house of God, carried the elements of the Sacrament, and frowned on those of holier methods and purer motives. Upon these Burns had no mercy. “ The Holy Fair ” and “ Holy Willie’s