

which the population were principally agriculturists, an occupation more productive of honesty and independence of character than any other. (Hear, hear.) But there was another circumstance in their favor. There was no country in the world in which greater attention was paid to education than was being paid to it in Canada at the present moment. There was no person in Upper Canada who was not within reach of the means of a better education than Burns, the poet, enjoyed. But, however excellent might be their schools and colleges, it was not by the teacher's instruction that they could become poets such as Robert Burns. (Hear, hear.) Genius like his was the gift of Heaven. (Applause.)

2. REV. JOHN McCaul, LL.D.  
(President of University College, Toronto.)

BURNS AND HIS POETRY.

Dr. McCaul was received with loud applause. He said:—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is with no ordinary pleasure that I rise to take part in the proceedings of this evening, intended as they are to do honor to one who has been so justly styled "Scotia's immortal bard." It is peculiarly gratifying to find, on such an occasion as the present, all national distinctions thrown aside, and the natives of each part of the United Kingdom coming forward gladly to testify their admiration of the genius of the great Poet. There is a beautiful custom that prevails in parts of the continent, whereby the relatives and friends of some dear one, parted from them by death, fix on some anniversary—that of birth, of marriage, or of death—the three great epochs of human existence, in order to approach that tomb which wraps the remains of him or her they loved in life, and to present, as a tribute of affection, simple flowers in testimony of their undying attachment. (Applause.) It is in some such ceremony as this we are engaged this evening. The monument of Burns is not here; that monument is near that Alloway kirk that gave origin to what I conceive to be the finest of all his poems, "Tam o' Shanter;" but we can fancy a cenotaph on this platform, erected to his memory, even though it hold not his remains, and to that the Scotsman comes forward and presents, as a tribute of affection and regard, the Thistle, the proud emblem of that land which the bard loved so well. The Englishman comes forward and presents the Rose, all fragrant with perfume and blushing with beauty, and the native of my own dear Isle comes forward—(loud applause)—and presents

"The green, immortal Shamrock,  
Chosen leaf  
Of bard and chief,  
Old Erin's native Shamrock!"

(Great applause.) And our brethren, the natives of this fair and fertile land of our adoption, come forward, and present the bright Maple leaf, the autumnal glory of our woods. This, Sir, is as it ought to be. Burns is not the poet of one people, although Scotland is stamped unequivocally on everything he wrote; Burns is the poet of all countries. (Applause.) But on such an occasion as the present, it might reasonably be expected that any one who would rise and address the audience would bring forward and expatiate on what he believed to be the especial merits of Burns. I confess that, in attempting such a task as this, I labor under very great difficulty. I have not the good fortune to be familiar with the dialect in which he wrote, and I well know the great disadvantage of not knowing that. I well remember that when I first read Burns' poems, I appreciated, as any one must, those beauties which are on the surface; but, when I heard a Scottish lady read them with all the unction of her native dialect, there were passages which had seemed to me tame that acquired force and vigor; there were passages in which, to my eyes, there was little fire, but then flame burst forth; "the thoughts breathed, the words burned." (Applause.) Under such circumstances, I feel that the best I can do will be to leave such subjects to be dealt with by a gentleman whom I am glad to see amongst us on this occasion, Mr. McLachlan, who is, I believe, to address you this evening, a Canadian author of lyrics, one who has unquestionably caught no small portion of the spirit of Burns himself. Perhaps, however, as a matter of curiosity, for it can be but little more, some persons whom I address may be desirous of knowing what are the peculiar merits for which an Irishman admires Burns. First of all, I admire him for his truth to nature; for his strict adherence to nature. There is nothing affected, nothing distorted in him; but his verses actually daguerreotype the scenes and persons around him. How marked a characteristic that is, few can know, unless they have studied the pastorals of the days before him, with the solitary exception of those of Allan Ramsay, his immediate predecessor. In my estimation this is a most attractive feature of his Muse:

"More dear to me, congenial to my heart,  
Each natural charm, than all the gloss of art."

But I admire him also for his tenderness and sensibility. Take

those graceful compositions with which we are all familiar—"To a Daisy," and "To a Field Mouse." What every-day occurrences with the ploughman were the prostration of the daisy and the overthrow of the mouse's home; but how few are there who have ever been led, on beholding such ordinary results, to such a train of appropriate, tender, and sombre thought as Burns has so feelingly expressed! But I admire him for his high appreciation of that feeling, which when the gates of Eden were closed on our primitive parents, and they went forth wanderers through the world, was in mercy left to them to cheer and comfort them, and their posterity, too—in all their troubles and sorrows—that affection which, like the rainbow, shines brightest amidst the darkest gloom. I refer not to such verses as we all wish that the poet had never written, and which unquestionably he would himself have cancelled, if his life had been longer spared. His own matured judgment and chastened taste, would have suggested the removal of such blemishes; and we must bear in mind, in judging of him, both the times in which he lived, and the early age, but thirty-seven, in which he was called away by death; but I do refer to such passages as that which has been quoted by critics as being the very essence of a thousand love stories:

"Had we never loved so kindly,  
Had we never loved so blindly,  
Never met, or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

(Applause.) I do refer to that most exquisite specimen of thrilling simplicity, "John Anderson, my Jo"—

"John Anderson, my Jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither,  
And mony a canty day, John,  
We've had wi' ane anither.  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
But hand in hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson, my Jo."

(The Rev. gentleman threw great pathos into the last two lines, and drew forth from the audience a round of applause.) Nothing can be finer than that; nothing can be truer to nature! It is pure poetic gold; it has the ring of the true metal, and, to borrow an expressive Yankee phrase, "and no mistake." (Cheers.) I do not envy the man whose hair has been whitened by time, since he first knew the happiness and the consolation of having a leal partner of his joys and of his griefs, that does not feel his heart throb with emotion responsive to those verses, which so simply but so truly express the crowning glory of domestic bliss. But I admire Burns, too, for his pathos. Take for instance his poem to "Mary in Heaven," filled with touching remembrances of that lost one, "dear to him as light and life." I admire him for his originality, his power of changing rapidly from the terrific to the ludicrous, such as is exemplified in his poem of "Tam O'Shanter." I admire him also for his thorough independence of character, for his thorough conviction of the dignity of man, independently of the adventitious advantages of rank or wealth. (Applause.) Need I mention that song, so familiar to us all, in which we find the quotations which are now proverbial amongst us—

"The rank is but the guinea-stamp,  
The man's the gowd for a' that."

"The King may make a belted Knight,  
A Marquis, Duke, and a' that,  
But an honest man's aboon his might,  
Gude faith he maunna fa' that."

In the "Cotter's Saturday Night," the same sentiment occurs:

"Princes and Lords are but the breath of Kings."

The very same idea presented itself to Goldsmith:

"Princes and Lords may flourish or may fade,  
A breath can make them, as a breath has made,  
But the bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

But, Sir, I fear I have already trespassed too far on the audience, and I shall therefore close with one most marked characteristic of Burns—a characteristic that is apparent in every one of his verses, I mean his thorough nationality;—he is an unequivocal, undoubted, straightforward Scotsman. I believe, Sir, there is a class of philosophers, the growth of these later years, who look on this love of country, such as Burns had, as a reprehensible weakness, a censurable infirmity. They look on it as a proof of intellectual imbecility. If these, Sir, be their tenets, and the abnegation of love of country the object of such grand terms as "wide extended cosmopolitan views," all I can say is, that I neither am nor wish to be a disciple of their school, and if they found an institution for the propagation of their doctrines, most unquestionably I will not matriculate in it. I have no desire to exchange the warm throbbings of natural feeling for the artificial pulsations of a cold and lifeless philosophy. My feeling towards my native land is similar to that expressed in the words of a familiar song—