

"Look at This Picture and Upon That."

A great many of the magazine writers of to-day are devoting considerable time and space to the consideration of the true position of Scottish literature to-day, and a comparison between the writers of the end of this century as compared with those at the beginning of this or the end of last century. The general consensus of opinion tends toward the conclusion that the writers of to-day compare but feebly with the great fixed literary stars or even the brilliant literary meteors of a hundred years ago.

Without offering an opinion upon the merits of the discussion, it is only fair to the writers of the present day to say that their critics are too near to the times of which they write to judge them fairly, and that they are also liable to some extent to that familiarity that breeds contempt, or in other words, distance lends enchantment to the view.

As a matter of fact the older and the younger writers will hardly bear a fair comparison and they will bear less than a fair comparison if we accept the dictum of Dr. Vandyke, of New York, who has publicly declared that Scotland has no lasting literature properly considered as such, and that to-day she has no literary writers of more than very ordinary merit. The reverend gentleman's conclusions may be dismissed with the remark they do not find a responsive echo among the literary men of either Europe or America.

It is true there are not to-day, in the firmament of Scottish literature, such writers as Burns, Scott, Hume, Adam Smith, or such literary productions as the "Blackwood's" and "McMillan's." In the closing years of last century and the opening years of this, Scotland gave to the world a galaxy of writers who, while differing in degree and in character, yet so impressed themselves upon the

literature of the age as to render their effacement impossible. It is as absurd to make a comparison between the works of Scott and those of Burns as it is to compare the literature of the end of last century with that of the closing years of the nineteenth. Scott and Burns were masters of literature and yet appealed to humanity from entirely different points of view. Scott, the Wizard of the North, fired the imagination, captivated the fancy, painted the scenery and added a halo of glory to the troublous times of the Scottish Nation. Burns, on the other hand, sang the sweet songs of the common people, ennobled the mouse and the daisy in one breath, and in another fired the patriotic heart by the soul stirring chords of "Scots Wha Hae," touched the well of memory by "Auld Lang Syne" and painted the source of Scotland's strength, her God-fearing peasantry, by one swift touch of his magic pen, while he stirred humanity to its very depths by the song of the Humanitarian, which breathed the brotherhood of man in his immortal verses, "A man's a man for a' that."

Along entirely different lines Hume contributed his share to the sum of Scottish literature. Adam Smith and his Wealth of Nations gave the economist a text-book which becomes invaluable as the years roll on. What Jeffrey has done and Brougham and Christopher North, Hugh Miller, and countless others, need not be dwelt upon in detail; the mere mention of these names to the student of literature recalls work that has found a niche in the permanent records of good literature, wherever the English tongue is spoken.

The other picture is the writer of to-day. Robert Louis Stevenson, Andrew Lang, Dr. Macdonald, Annie Swan, and those great masters of the Kail-Yard school, Barrie, Crockett, and Ian MacLaren at once suggest themselves. It has become fashionable with a number of so-called critics