

You see yon birkie ca'd a lord,  
 Wha struts, and stares and a' that ;  
 Though hundreds worship at his word,  
 He's but a cuil for a' that.

.....  
 A king may mak a belted knight,  
 A marquis, duke and a' that ;  
 But an honest man's aboon his micht,  
 Gude faith, he maunna fa' that !

Burns, we fear, allowed himself to be carried away by revolutionary principles from over the Channel, but to us is left only his *Ode to Liberty* a fragment of the original in which such expressions were contained. His eyes fill with tears as he thinks of the degeneracy of nations, especially his own, from which freedom has fled, and bewails the fall of many an arm "That braved usurpation's boldest daring."

The first aim of Burns was to teach the people of the lower classes, one of whom he always considered himself, that happiness is not to be more abundantly found in the higher than in the lower circles of society. That man is happy who feels in his heart that he has done his duty to God, his neighbor and himself, a feeling oftener experienced in the lowly and humbler walks of life than in the higher and less truly honorable. A second aim seems to have been to leave to posterity, a faithful exposition of Scottish manners, customs and superstitions, and to the world a glowing picture of Scottish landscape.

To Burns, as already said, we assign the first place among poets of the second class. The subject matter of his compositions awards him a place in this rank of lyric poets, and the foremost position therein is given him on account of his excellence in invention and imitation, the two great requisites for poetic art. His powers of invention are displayed in his lively descriptions of supernatural beings, their appearance and operations, as they exist in the popular mind. His *Tam O'Shanter* and

a number of lesser productions abound in this particular quality. The beauties of imitation stand prominently forth in his many representations of real life and natural scenery, in the enjoyment of which the author seems to have put his whole heart and soul.

The gifted poet has stamped his personality upon all his works, so we see that the qualities of his poems, tenderness and love, humour and sarcasm, the buoyancy of spirit struggling against despondency were the qualities of his soul. That many irregularities occurred in the life of Burns, is unhappily too true, but they are often exaggerated, and to him are attributed offensive songs and expressions that he neither wrote nor uttered. Unfortunately for him in early youth, by the death of his father he was thrown among companions that proved to be his bad angels, and in manhood his fame gathered around him men whose company led him further astray. We do not attempt an apology for his improprieties of life or writings, for unfortunately he fell into grave and serious errors, but on the other hand the most severe critics are obliged to admit that he possessed qualities eminently redeeming.

Having fallen a victim to a lingering disease, he died in his thirty-seventh year; His life was indeed a sorrowful one ; prosperity and adversity constantly struggling to gain the mastery over him, for they were equally his enemies. His body returned to its parent dust, but his memory still lives on fresh and green in the hearts of his admiring countrymen.

"Rear high thy grand majestic hills.  
 Thy sheltered valleys proudly spread,  
 And Scotia, pour thy thousand rills,  
 And wave thy heaths with blossoms red ;  
 But never more shall poet tread,  
 Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,  
 Since he, the sweetest bard, is dead  
 That ever breathed the soothing strain."

D. R. MACDONALD, '89

