

the roll of nations is called, can stand up and proudly cry, "Here." It is because Robert Burns has lived. (Applause). It is Robert Burns that puts your well loved Scotland in the front rank of nations.

On the 25th of January, 1759, Robert Burns was born. He was born in a cottage made of mud, thatched with straw. His father was a gardener, and his mother a woman who knew a vast amount of poetry. Her memory was stored with songs—and this is all we know about her. From the first poverty was the companion of this babe—poverty the half-sister of Death. The father struggled as best he could. At last overcome, poor man, with misfortunes, he died, aged 63, leaving nothing except the memory of an upright man. This poor boy Robert attended school a little, a very little, down at the old Alloway Mill. He was taught a little by John Murdoch; a little by his father. That was his education—with this exception that whenever nature produces a genius the old mother holds him close to her heart, and whispers secrets to his ear that others cannot win in any university in this world.

That is the way it is.

In the year 1759 Scotland was emerging from the darkness, from the gloom and sorrow of Calvinism. The attention of the people had gradually been drawn from the other world—or rather from the other two worlds—(laughter) to this world. The commercial spirit, the interests of trade, were weaning men from the discussion of predestination, damnation and the secret decrees of God. The influence of the clergyman, whose influence had been enormous, was gradually diminishing, and the beggarly elements of this life were beginning to attract the attention of the Scotch. The people of Scotland at the time were rather poor. They had made but little progress in art and science, and the same is true of the rest of the world. They had been engaged for many years in fighting for what they called their political or theological rights, or to destroy the rights of others. (Laughter). They had great energy, great natural sense and courage, great intellectual animus. I must say they had courage without limit, and it may be well enough to add that they were as obstinate as they were undoubtedly brave. (Renewed laughter.)

#### A METAPHYSICAL PEASANTRY.

Several countries have had a metaphysical peasantry. Switzerland had one; men discussing on the eternal decrees, endeavoring to unravel the infinite puzzle, talking of fore-ordination, predestination and the saints and all that sort of thing. Holland had a metaphysical peasantry that also discussed fore-ordination. Scotland had a metaphysical peasantry, men living in thatched cot-