

Pope, Cowper and others. The following is an extract from one of these poems:—

'Twas harvest now, and o'er the level fields,
Slow mov'd the golden gift which Ceres yields,
Congenial to the earth, the blushing morn,
With balmy dew-drops steep'd the ripening corn;
And every flow'r and every loaded spray
Spread its fresh foliage to the morning ray.

The elegy is the poet's forte. It is evident that he was a close student of Gray. He has the feeling and pathos of Gray, but not the polish. Twenty years labor was put upon the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Hogg was but twenty years old when he wrote his elegies. These facts should be taken into consideration to explain the relative polish of the two. Every verse of Gray's elegy is a polished gem. Hogg's are gems, but in the rough. Still two stanzas of "An Elegy" might be incorporated into Gray's, and its excellence would be in no wise diminished. The fault of Hogg is that he does not rise in the remainder of his elegies to the standard set in these two stanzas. What might they not have become with much care? Here are the stanzas:—

E'en now, perhaps, in some sequestered vale,
Where blooms the violet in its modest shade,
Some hoary minstrel tells the plaintive tale,
How worth and genius only bloom to fade.

But in a happier clime, where virtue thrives,
Fresh in the glow of an eternal bloom,
Who peaceful sinks in death again revives
To soar with triumph o'er his mortal doom.

James Hogg's boyish genius has another phase. There is a sparkling joy in other of his poems. The music in the ode "To Sensibility" is exquisite, the merry swing charming, the whole effect inspiring. It reminds one very much of Keats' *Fancy*.

Pleasing, painful, tender thing
Ever, ever on the wing,
Sent to cheer us from above,
Friend of pity, soul of love,—
Pause a while and let us trace
The well-formed beauties of thy face.
Now, I see the lily's pale
O'er thy wand'ring looks prevail—
Now, the rose's scarlet dye
O'er thy cheeks like streamers fly;
All at once the tints retire,
Eyes of dew and lips of fire.

Tenderness, sweetness, grace, power, sublimity, all appear in his poems, and one wonders that they can be written by one so young, for many were written at the age of twelve, and he brought out his book at the age of twenty-five. We quote from it here and there.

THE NATIVITY.

Hail, Lord of nature, form'd in nature's mould,
To earth subjected and by Heav'n foretold;
When rising waves no longer swell the main,
When stars no longer deck the ethereal plain,
When stops the sun and breezes cease to blow,
And rivers in their beds forget to flow—
Eternal years with unobstructed pace,
Shall tell the matchless wonders of thy grace.

THE CHURCHYARD.

Beside the narrow path so often trod
By falt'ring feet, with tears so oft bedewed,
The lonely cowslip rears his modest head,
And the green nightshade, emblem of the graves
That show the moon their grassy forms around,
Waves in the sullen blast of night. The stones
Whose half-worn letters, hieroglyphics old,
And nameless characters, by time defac'd,
Tell to the living where the dead are laid,
Promiscuous plac'd upon the level green,
(Tribute of friendship and affection warm),
Shade the rank herbage that from year to year
Grows unmolested on the holy spot.

TO THE SPIRIT OF POESY.

Oft in the lone, sequestered vale,
Led by thy charms, I've mov'd along,
Heard thy sweet notes in every gale,
Bewildered by the melting song.

Oft have I blest the wondrous power
That bade my ling'ring spirits rise,
But soon it fled, and one short hour
Left me involv'd in darker skies.

And oft from passion's wild alarm,
I've sought some shade of soft repose;
The heart that feels not pleasure's charm
Alike unconscious bears its woes.

It seems almost impossible to think that these poems were written by a boy, so much feeling and pathos is there in them. Generally, the youthful temperament is light and airy, given more to song than to elegy. But James Hogg seems to be an exception. He lays bare his heart, and it is a heart that is subject to deep impression, too. He feels

nature in all her moods, but especially does he sympathize with her in her serious mind, and thus is stamped upon his verse a genuine pathos.

He cannot lay claim to originality. He was too susceptible of impression to be original. His surroundings virtually made him. Goldsmith, Gray and Keats were early introduced into his life and were carefully studied by him. The result is that all the poems in this book, anyway, all the best ones, are images of his models. Goldsmith pervades the narrative poems, Gray, the elegies, and Keats the odes. He seems to have absorbed into himself the whole scope of their genius. Their spirit enters into his work and makes it almost as valuable as their own.

As regards his style externally, it is certainly very graceful and musical. The words flow along without a jar and the verses swing along without a break. This was all natural; it required no effort. It is seen even in the prose of his preface.

He understood himself very accurately. The injunction, "Know Thyself," is particularly applicable to the book. He must determine how high his music can carry him and then attempt no higher flight lest he meet with an ignominious fall. He may dash off a bright little lyric of love or a very graceful narrative, but let him think before he attempts an epic or a drama. Hogg understood this truth, and that he acted upon it is shown both in his poems and in his preface, by the style and excellence of the poems and the ideas presented in the preface. He says:—



JAMES HOGG.

"If I have been successful in describing the simple and genuine feelings of the heart, and if my performance shall be viewed in that light only, I freely confess that my ambition will be gratified and my hopes realized, since I have never aimed at anything beyond the cherished feelings and artless simplicity of nature."

Coming to his later poems, we find that none appeared in book form. The volume published in 1825 contained only the productions of his youth. He issued a number of poems in pamphlet form, but these have been lost, and we must look to the files of the *Fredericton Reporter* for his later works. The many contained in the *Reporter* give a clear likeness of his maturer style. His later ones carry all the grace and brilliant fancy of his earlier work, but are not so flexible. It, however, possesses more power, sublimity and scope. The imperfections that crop out frequently in the earlier poems disappear more in the later. He is more sustained. The signs of added years with its insight and stability are shown.

"The Consummation" is a perfect picture of darkness and despair. Sorrow and gloom pervade it throughout. The following is an illustration of his success when courting the muse in her sadness:—

The earth was charged with crime from wilds remote
Or where the city's spires in glittering pride
Pointed in solemn mockery to heaven,
Alike the voice of sin was heard to rise,
O'er all the spacious world no spot escap'd
The dark contagion, and the tainted air

Hung still and listless as the putrid fens
That gird the dead sea's shore; as night advanced,
No evening song of gratitude or prayer
Arose to speak the thanks or wants of men;
But sounds of drunken revels—guilty joys,
And voice of tyrants thundering their commands
Forth to their helpless slaves were heard throughout.

But there is a silver lining, and it is seen in "The Voices of the Clouds."

Afar in the realms of space we rise
Where the sun eternal reigns,
And we throw the light of a thousand dyes
O'er the wide earth's distant plains

O'er the teeming earth as on we go
Our course is never in vain,
For we gather the streams of the mountain snow
And we treasure them up again.

And when the north wind's sterile power
Has blighted the landscape o'er,
We shed our stores upon plant and flower,
And the earth is green once more.

The sun beholds our onward march,
And he speeds his fairest ray
To paint on our breast hope's beauteous arch,
Ere we melt in tears away.

Then these two moods, the dark and the bright, unite in the same poem, "The West Wind," which is a splendid descriptive piece:—

I come in my speed from the stormy caves,
Where the wide Pacific swells its waves,
Where the deep blue waters rise and flow,
As my breath o'er the lonely wastes I blow,
And the sea-bird speeds on its lonely wing,
Watching the course of the Ocean King.

Oh! then as the crashing thunders sound,
And the mountains quake and the rocks rebound
As the lightnings dart through the troubled air,
And the world is lit with the dismal glare,
I love on my tempest wing to fly,
And bear the bolts through the rending sky.

There is a patriotic core in his poetic breast that finds expression in "Lines on the Birth of the Prince of Wales." Had he lived in later times he had probably sung strongly a Canadian sentiment:—

Prince of the great! no slave may share
Thy country's genial clime with thee,
Or if he breathes thy native air,
'Tis but to breathe it and be free;
The sun that ever gilds thy grounds,
Sees not a slave within thy bounds.

From evil's foul transforming blight—
From slavish errors dang'rous chain—
From private fraud—from open fight—
Uninjur'd be thy future reign,—
First of the mighty, wise and free,
May Heaven protect both thine and thee!

Then he passes from the joy of a birth to the sorrow of a death, and indites some exquisite verses "To P. J. Allan," a young man of his acquaintance who showed much poetic promise, but whose genius was nipped in the bud. Hogg's nature was easily impressed and the loss of a friend affected him seriously and gave true pathos to his verse. He sings of his young friend in a beautiful metaphor.

Thus on some golden flower,
Beneath the night's calm hour
The clustering dew-drops makes their transient stay;
The sun comes forth in light—
They sparkle pure and bright

Then pass on the warm beam to Heaven away.
One of his finest poems, the most thoughtful, polished and impressive, is that entitled "What is God." The sentiment is grand, worthy of a Milton or a Tennyson. It commences as follows:

I asked the brook that wandered o'er
Its sparkling sands in ceaseless play;
Scattering bright flowers along its shore,
And health and verdure on its way:
Sweet stream! thy course is at His nod,
Say, canst thou tell me "What is God?"

The brook replied: "Full many a day,
I've bounded on my gladsome way:
Mirror'd the clouds—the sun—the sod—
The Spring alone I know as God."

I asked the flowers that reared their forms
'Neath where an aged oak tree grew;
Sheltered alike from sun and storms,
And nurtur'd in the virgin dew
If aught of Him they could express,
Who clothed them in their loveliness?

They answered mild—"The breath of Spring,
The silver brook's sweet murmuring—
And vernal sunbeams wak'd our sod,
But yet we know not what is God.