

from an inexhaustible spring. And whether he sings in a joyous and hilarious strain some rollicking wine song, or weeps over his country's sorrows in strains of pathetic tenderness, or bursts forth in martial tones, the muse is ever at his side and whispers in his ear the very language of the gods. His poetry, sparkling with the purest gems of thought, is clothed in a richness of diction, a felicity of expression, an elegance of fancy and a depth of feeling which render it truly exquisite. Its fault, if it can be termed such, is that it is too exquisite. Moore possessed such a wealth of glowing imagery, and deals it out so unsparingly, that he intoxicates us with its very richness. Wherever we look we see only dainties. His poems are not decorated with "patches of purple." They are all purple. He speaks in metaphors, and seldom descends to the language of ordinary mortals. Therefore, having no standard whereby to judge of all this loveliness we do not appreciate it as it deserves. Just as we cannot enjoy a meal of sweetmeats, neither can we enjoy much of Moore at a time. He is the dessert of the literary banquet, sweetest to the palate, though not the most substantial of the viands. His poetry consists not of the grand and the sublime. It rolls not along like the thunder of Milton, inspiring us with admiration and awe, but like the lightning, it is rapid, clear, and vivid; like the *Aurora Borealis* it is soft, calm and variegated. Moore lives not in the undercurrents of nature: but he plays upon the surface, skimming along the wavelets, drinking in the sunshine, and seeing mirrored in the laughing surface only the image of his own happiness.

It has been contended that these melodies smell too much of the lamp; that they are overwrought, and too highly coloured; but those who make this charge judge Moore's style by the standard of

other and less brilliant minds. This is not fair to Moore. What would be loud and overstrained in another poet is his ordinary language. Not only this, but Moore, being no mean musician, and being especially enamoured with the music of his own country, could comprehend the strong passions and lofty sentiments which it breathed, and by means of that unequalled felicity of expression could give voice to them in the rich and figurative style which they required. When the mere playing on the pianoforte by Moore of that air known as "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old," caused Robert Emmet who sat beside him to leap from his chair exclaiming, "Oh that I were at the head of twenty thousand men marching to that air," it should not be wondered at that a poet of Moore's sensitive nature should clothe such music in soul-stirring poetry.

Moore had a great aversion for seeing these melodies crowded into a volume without the music, saying that they were nothing without it; and Coleridge said that the music "twined round them and overtopped them like the honeysuckle." There is no doubt that they lose a great deal of their charm when divorced from the music. But they were never intended to be divorced from the music, and he who has only read them can form but a very poor opinion of Moore's Irish Melodies. But when sung, they will always touch a responsive chord in an Irishman's heart in whatever quarter of the world he may be, and as his thoughts revert to his own Green Isle, borne thither on these sweet strains, he will thank God for having given to his race a bard in whose song that which is sweetest and noblest in the Irish character is glorified in words of undying beauty.

JOHN R. O'CONNOR, '92.

