

undeveloped by the expansion of classic study, he realized the great truth of the Eternal Harmony.

In assigning to Burns his proper place among the great of our race, let us apply another principle, which may be heterodox or not, but which we believe to be true. A man's genius is in proportion to his influence on mankind, and by the effect of his life-work on his brother-men only, may we judge of his worth. It is true that critics tell us Rossetti has caught the great idea of omnipresent beauty, that Ben Jonson is a model in poetic style, that Jane Austen is a better novelist than Dickens. But who would now compare Rossetti or Ben Jonson with Coleridge or Sir Walter Scott, or where is there one in fifty who has ever heard of Jane Austen? A poet is a poet only, or a novelist a novelist in the truest sense, where he strikes some chord of universal feeling; and whenever that touch is felt can we not cry out and own our masters? If genius is but an idle name or but an empty title, who would be a genius?

Is there any need of asking what influence Burns has had on mankind? His work comes down the ages, not by the narrow pathway of scholastic thought, but on the unmeasured breadth of the common daily life. He is not so much in the halls of learning as in the village shop and cottage home. We may admire the creations of imperial Milton with more abject amazement, or dream with Tennyson in richer valleys,—but Burns! Above our cradles were his ditties sung! How many a childhood's stream has been a "bonnie Doon" or "winding Nith"! How often the mouldering ruin has been a haunted kirk! In later years, perhaps, it was only a broken blossom, nourished on Canadian hills, that recalled the mountain daisy of Scotland, and the ploughshare of a farmer that gave it immortality!

So,—many a little song of his has inwoven, as it were, a ray of light into the fringing gloom of the darkening years—, perhaps to shine some day, when the last "Lang Syne" is sung, out to the unutterable deep!

Yet does it not seem almost unaccountable that he did write poetry at all? No one before had ever seen anything poetical in connection with the life he lived. As Carlyle says:—"The metal he worked in lay hid under the desert moor, where no eye but his had guessed his existence; and we may almost say, that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity, without help, without instruction, without models, or with models only of the meanest sort." He could not wander among the ruins of old castles and abbeys; nor lie upon the heathy ledges of the southern hills, to dream of fairy forms and pastoral enjoyment. The sleeping rivers of valleys haunted by the muse were here wild, turbid streams, like that of his own life.

Who could suspect that there was poetry in a muddy, rain-swept landscape, that beauty lurked in a barren upland or hazy valley! But these were full of beauty, full of song for him; and, between the stormy seasons he caught glimpses, unseen by others, of the full great splendor of the cosmos. The breezes as they drifted in the twilight hours from beyond the twilit seas; the streamlet rippling through the glen, mosses dipping into its swirling current, clouds wandering like pilgrims across the illimitable blue, stars that twinkled out beyond the sunset tinge, and the storms that dripped across the brown fields, or whirled the autumn leaves along the bare forest-paths. All these, yes, all the world of nature, all the life and beauty, the simple or the glorious in nature or humanity, and in humanity by nature, was to him a single melody, which, thrilling his very heart, would not be prisoned in him alone, but, reaching forth upon the winds, swept like a heavenly voice the great blue vault of human-kind.

And looking from the present to the future ages, while his lute-like songs of love and elegies of ended hopes repeat the same life-story of other generations, and so continue to steal into the inner heart of the world, I venture to say that the battle-song of the last war to fight will not be that of a

classical Tennyson (great and powerful as he may be), nor of a meditative Wordsworth, nor philosophic Browning; but it will be that inspiring psalm, with whose rhythm our hearts have so often throbbed, and with the sentiments of which the whole age is instinct:

"That man's a man for a' that."

It has been said by some that the dialectic verse and limited range of subjects from which Burns had to draw must always keep him in a narrow field of the literature of the world. Indeed such a statement seems almost an axiom; but truth is stranger than fiction once more, and we find among the first to translate, and the warmest of foreign peoples in appreciation, is a nation of philosophers. Shakespeare and Burns are to the German nation two of the greatest and best known types of English literature. The claim of a universal constituency for our poet is, perhaps, more than the warmest admirer of his work would make; but the fact remains that somehow—by that mysterious power we cannot analyze—Burns has become cosmopolitan. Perhaps it may be that the idylls of the peasant life between the Clyde and Solway may be little different from what would be the natural product of the peasant by the Rhine.

But over this aspect of his work it will scarcely pay us to say any more; for, as the centuries pass, the one great thing to notice, along with the progress of the science and arts, is the progress of the Anglo-Saxon tongue. Slowly but surely it is rising over the scattered nations, some day, we believe, to be the universal language, and as it grows and carries with it its rich heritage of song, at no sound will the blood throb quicker than at the full-hearted rhymes of Robert Burns. And we venture to predict that far on in future centuries, when even our classics are no more remembered, some simple song of a then perhaps forgotten poet may carry down the ages the stream of manly life that welled up amidst the barrenness of a Scottish peasant's farm.

JAMES T. SHOTWELL.

PAGES FROM A POET'S DIARY.

(ABSTRACTED BY FELIX OF '98.)

I.

Our sojourn here is only for a day,
Whose threatening night doth mar its silver morn,
Yet I have solaced been and cheered away
By dear delights of sweetest Poesy born;
So will I dedicate my little hour
To increase of her beauty's dower,
In hope to add some modest gift of mine
That may, in years to be,
Rejoice the worshipper at this fair shrine
Which hath so sheltered me.

II.

I as a lover am of maidens twain,
Of whom the one, of sweet and placid mien,
Constant and gentle, has beloved been
Since first my heart could feel that pleasant pain;
The other dark, and various, and vain,
Now beams upon me, smiling and serene,
Now storms again like Egypt's wrangling queen
Whom Shakespeare crowned to an unending reign—
The quiet woods, the changing waters, these
With diverse charms divide my doubtful breast,
For still amid the glory of the seas
My thoughts return to where the squirrels nest,
And, lying happy on a wooded steep,
My wayward spirit, still, doth seek th' uncovered deep.