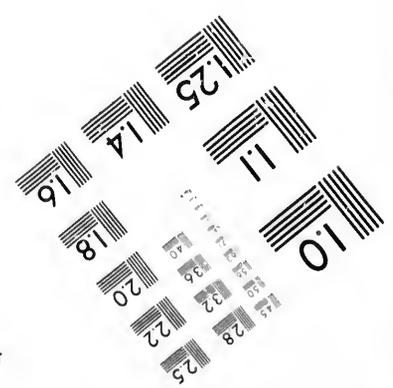
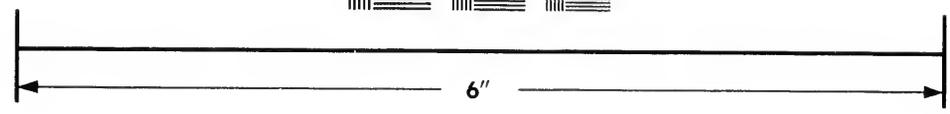
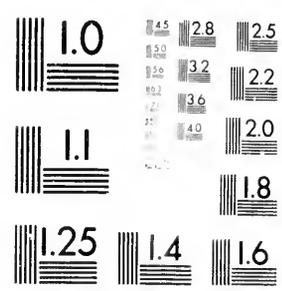


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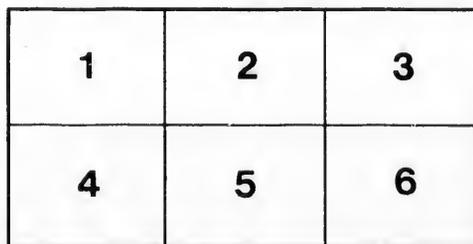
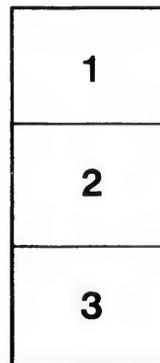
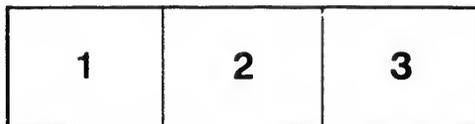
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Ingersoll, Robert G.

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I

## Col. Ingersoll on Burns.

COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL, who, on his appearance on the platform, was received with loud applause, spoke as follows:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: We have met to-night to honor the memory of a great poet—possibly the next to the greatest that has ever written in our language. If I should give him the place which he is entitled to, taking into consideration what he has done for me, I should place him second, one above him and only one—Shakespeare. (Applause).

We are here to-night, I say, to honor a poet, and it may be well enough to inquire, in the first place, what is a poet? What is poetry? Every one has some idea of a poet, and this idea is born of his experience, of his impressions, of his education, and depends largely on whether his soul has burst into blossom. There have been more nations than poets. Many people imagine that poetry is a kind of art, depending upon certain rules, and that it is only necessary to find out the rules, and if that were all, possibly it would be impossible to find out the rules. These rules have never been found, and yet the great poet follows them unconsciously, and the great poet is as unconscious as nature, and the product of the highest art seems always to be felt instead of thought. The finest definition perhaps that has been given is this: "As nature unconsciously produces that which appears to be the result of conscience, so the great artist conscientiously produces that which appears to have been an unconscious result."

### WHAT POETRY IS.

Poetry, after all, must rest on the experience of men. It must sit by the fireside of the heart. It must have to do with this world, with the place in which we live, with the men and women we know, with our loves, with our hopes, with our fears and with our joys. The cloud compelling Jupiters, the ox-eyed Junos, the feather-heeled Mercuries, and the Minervas that spring fully armed from the thick skull of some imaginary god, are not poetical. (Laughter and applause). We know nothing of them, and by no possibility can we sympathise with them. Such poets, or poems about such people or such phantoms are ingenious, but they are not poetic, and they never will and never can touch the heart.

I was taught that Milton was a wonderful poet, and, above all others, sublime. I have read Milton once. Few people ever read him twice. (Much laughter). With splendid words, with magnificent mythological imagery, he musters the heavenly militia, put

epaulets on the shoulders of God and describes the devil as an artillery officer of the first rank. (Renewed laughter.) Then he describes the battles in which immortals undertake the impossible task of killing each other. And this is called poetry! This is called sublime!

We have been taught, also, that Dante was a wonderful poet. He describes, with infinite minuteness, the pains and agonies endured by the damned in the torture dungeons of God. But there was one good thing about Dante—and for that one thing I have forgiven him many faults. He had the religious democracy in his heart and the courage to see a Pope in hell. That is something to be thankful for. (Laughter.) So the sonnets of Petrarch are as unmeaning as the promises of candidates. They are filled, not with genuine passion, not with what another feels, but with what one supposes a lover might feel.

Poetry cannot be written by rule. It is not a trade. It is not a profession. Let the critics lay down the laws of poetry and the true poet will violate them all. By the rule, such as the critics make, you can construct skeletons, but you cannot clothe them with flesh; you cannot put sight in their eyes and passion in their hearts. That is not to be done by rule. It can be done only by following the impulses of the heart, the winged fancies of a wonderful brain; by wandering from ruts and from paths, keeping step with the rhythmic ebb and flow of the throbbing blood.

#### SCOTTISH POETRY IN THE OLDEN TIME.

In the old time, in Scotland, most of the so-called poetry was written by pedagogues and parsons—gentlemen that found out what little they knew about the living world by reading the dead languages, by studying the epitaphs in the cemeteries of literature. They knew nothing of any living thing that they themselves thought poetic; the men then living were not worth writing about. The women then alive were not beautiful enough to attract their scholarly attention. They bestowed their praise on the dead, on dust, on skeletons, on phantoms—phantoms, that if they did not live here, were supposed to live somewhere else. They put metaphysics, or endeavored to—that is to say Calvinism—into their poetry. Imagine a Calvinistic poet. As a matter of fact a Calvinist never was and never will be a poet. That infamous creed takes all the poetry out of this world. If the existence of the Calvinistic, the orthodox Christian creed can be demonstrated, another poet would never live in this world, (laughter) and have a pretty poor show in the next. In those days they made poetry about geography, poetry about the Scotch kirk and, would you believe it, even about the law. The critics then always looked for mistakes, not beauties, not for perfection

of expression and feeling ; syntax ; grammar. These gentlemen would object to the clouds, because they are not square. And at one time it was thought the scenery, the grand and beautiful in nature, made the poet. Let me tell you to-night : It is the poet who makes the scenery, the scenery never made a poet and never made an artist in the world. The poet makes the scenery. Holland has produced far more genius than the Alps. There is not much scenery in Holland.

POETS MAKE THE SCENERY.

Where nature is prodigal, where the crags kiss the clouds, man is over-awed, overpowered and becomes small. In England and Scotland the hills are low ; nothing in the scenery is calculated to arouse poetic life, and yet those countries have produced the greatest and the most magnificent of poets of all time. The truth is the poets make the scenery. The place where man has died for man is grander than any snow-crowned summit in the world, the place where man has loved and suffered. (Applause.)

A poem itself is something like scenery, and let me say right here that there is greater scenery in this world than the physical. There are mental seas and continents and ranges of mountains and constellations of the imagination greater than the eye has ever yet beheld. A poem is something like a mountain stream that ripples into light and then lost in shadow ripples along with a kind of wild joy under over hanging boughs, and then leaps and hurls its spray on high over some cascade, and then running peacefully along over pebbly bottoms, babbling of joy, murmuring delight and then sweeping along to its old mother, the sea. A mountainous stream is a poem in itself.

Thousands and millions of men live poems, but do not write them ; but every great poem that was ever written has been lived by the man who wrote it. (Applause). I say to-night that every good and self-denying man, every man who lives and labors for those he loves, for wife and child, is a living poem. The loving mother rocking the cradle, singing the slumber song, is living a poem, and the man who bares his breast through shot and shell for the right has lived a poem, and the poor woman in the tenement, sewing and looking with her poor blurred eyes upon her work for the love of her child, is living a perfect poem, and all the pioneers and all the builders of home, and all the brave men of the world, and all the brave and loving women have all been poets in action, whether they have ever written one word or not. (Great applause.)

SCOTLAND PROUD OF BURNS.

But to-night we are going to talk about a poet ; one who poured out his soul in the music of song. How does a country become great ? By producing great folks. Why is it that Scotland, when

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-

tages, discussing about the will of the Creator, what he intended to do, and in their efforts to harmonize his goodness with having made such a climate as there was in Scotland they had a pretty time of it. We also had a metaphysical peasantry in New England, and there while they were whipping Quakers and persecuting others they were discussing those questions of fore-ordination and predestination and the perseverance of the saints, that is to say, the five points of Calvinism. They were a very smart, sharp people, and they sharpened their minds with these questions. For many years the Scotch had been ruled by the clergy. You would not think it possible for one Scotchman to rule another if you ever got acquainted with two Scotchmen. (Laughter).

And yet it is true that the clergy had a wonderful influence in Scotland, and why? It so happened that the religion of Scotland became so mixed and mingled with patriotism, or the love of Scotland, that those who loved Scotland took the side of the Scotch kirk. If any other country and any other religion attacked Scotland and its religion the result was that Scotland and the religion went into partnership. And in that way the clergy had an immense influence on that country. This of course drew the priest and the people together, and the priest naturally took advantage of the situation. (Laughter.) They not only determined upon the religious path to be pursued by the people, but they went into every detail of life, and there never was established in the world a more dreadful tyranny than that of the Scotch kirk. They gravely discussed the question whether it was right for a father to endeavor to save his son from drowning who had fallen in the water on Sunday. When the Scotch church had anathematized a child, the question was whether the mother had a right to feed that boy. And it was decided that she had not.

Why, do you know, they executed a poor fellow about the end of that century for wishing he was in hell, in order that he might get warm, and for having added, that in his judgment Moses was a sleight-of-hand performer.

Still the spirit of trade was growing. The merchant drives out the missionary, and always has, everywhere. That is the reason that the man who has something to sell will always beat the gentleman who has something to give, or that he pretends to give. At that time in Scotland a few men had become famous. David Hume, one of the sublimest of men; a great man, a serene man, one who, had he lived in the olden time, would have stood side by side with Zeno; a great man of whom Scotland will be prouder as the years go by, and as Scotland gets more and more civilized. Then there was Ramsay, Reid, Robertson, Beattie, and many others. But the great bulk of the Scotch people at that time were orthodox in every drop of their blood.

## AS TO TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

It was a Scotchwoman who on being asked, "Auntie, do you really believe in total depravity?" answered, "I do, I do." "And do you think," he said, "it is a good doctrine?" "Yes I do, and I think it is a great pity that more don't live up to it." They were orthodox and they stood by the doctrine. Why in those blessed days before communion Sunday they would often meet on Friday and have three sermons, three on Saturday and four on Sunday and wind up with a kind of gospel spree on Monday. They loved it. I think it was Heinrich Heine who said, "It is not true, it is not true that the damned in hell are compelled to hear all the sermons preached on earth." He says this is not true. This shows that there is some mercy even in hell. (Much laughter).

## ALCOHOL AND RELIGION.

Sometimes I have thought that the Scotch were saved from the gloom of Calvinism by intoxicating liquors. I think there is something in it. It may be John Barleycorn really saved the Scotch from the divine dyspepsia of Calvinism. I really think there must be something in it. I believe the Puritan was saved from his religion by rum. Had there been no rum in New England they would have been persecuting quakers there until this day. So I think schnapps must have saved Holland; and yet in spite of Calvinism, in spite of the mists and fogs, and in spite of the abominable winters of Scotland, that country produced the sweetest and tenderest song of all the world, and the greatest and noblest of all our singers, the one who gave us the greatest and noblest song, and that was Robert Burns. (Applause).

Robert Burns was a child of the people. I am glad of it. Robert Burns was a peasant, a plowman and yet a poet.

And why is it that millions and millions of men and women love this man? Why is it? He was a Scotchman, and all the tendrils of his heart struck deep in Scotland soil. He voiced the ideals of the best and greatest of his race and of his blood. He was patriotic to the last fibre and yet he is as dear to the citizens of the great Republic as to Scotia's sons and daughters. (Applause.) And why? We, of course, admit that all great poetry has a national flavor. It tastes of the soil. No matter how great it is, how wide, how universal, the flavor of locality is never lost. We love Burns because he made common life beautiful, because he idealised sun-burned girls who worked in the field, because he put honest labor above titled idleness, because he made the cottage far more poetic than the palace, because he painted the simple joys and ecstasies and raptures of sincere love and because he put native common sense above the culture of students. We love him because he was independent, sturdy, self-

poised, social, generous, thrilled by a look, by a touch, full of pity, carrying the sorrows of others in his heart, those even of enemies; hating to see anybody suffer, lamenting the death of everything, even of trees and flowers. We love him because he was a natural democrat, and because he hated tyranny in every form. We love him because he was always on the side of the people and felt the throb of progress.

#### THE POET'S EDUCATION AND GENIUS.

We know that he read but little. He had but few books, had but little of what we call education, only an outline of history, a little philosophy, none possibly in the highest sense, his library consisting of but a few volumes, among them Stackhouse's "History of the Bible," one play of Shakespeare that Shakespeare did not write, and the poems of Ossian written by another man. Burns, however, was a man of genius. This is why we love him. He did not have to read much.

A man of genius is something like a spring, something that suggests no labor. A spring bubbling from the earth seems to be a perpetual free gift of nature. There is no thought of toil. The water comes flowing over the white pebbles and comes without effort, no machinery, no pipes, no engines, no waterworks, nothing that suggests expense or trouble or a mortgage (laughter) and so with a natural poet, it wont do to compare him with the educated, with the polished and with the industrious. He is a spring. And Burns seems to have done everything without effort. His poems wrote themselves. He was overflowing with sympathies and ideas and suggestions on every subject, but there is no midnight oil, there is nothing in him of the student; there is no suggestion of one of his poems having been re-written or re-cast. No trouble. There is in his heart a poetical April and May and all the poetic seeds burst into sudden life. In a moment the seed is a plant, the plant is a blossom and the fruit is given to the world. He looks at everything from a natural point of view, and he had the sense to write about men and women with whom he was acquainted. He cared nothing for mythology, nothing for the legends of the Greeks and Romans. He drew nothing from history. Everything he speaks about was within his reach, and he knew it from centre to circumference, all his figures and comparisons perfectly natural

#### MADE GODDESSES OF WOMEN.

He does not endeavor to make angels of fine ladies. He takes the servant girls with whom he is acquainted, the dairymaids that he knows, and he put wings on those servants and those dairymaids and makes them angels that the angels themselves would be envious of. That is what Robert Burns did. He did not make women of goddesses but he made goddesses of women. This man, so natural, keeping his cheek so close to the breast of nature, never

thought that Pope and Churchill and Thomson were poets. Some things we cannot account for. His first poem was addressed to the daughter of the blacksmith. Next he was in love with Ellison Begbie—offered her his heart and hand and was refused. She was a servant working in a family. Jean Armour, his wife, was the daughter of a tailor, and her father objected to his daughter, being the daughter of a respectable tailor, uniting herself in marriage with Robert Burns. Highland Mary was a servant, a milkmaid. Burns, as I say, did not make women of goddesses, but he made goddesses of women. After all the highest art keeps close to the ground. If you want to be sublime cling to the grass. (Laughter). There never was a picture painted of a palace that was poetic. A palace suggests weariness and pomp and circumstance and responsibility. If you want that which is poetic you must paint a cottage with climbing vines, with trees in bloom, with bees that make their singing journeys around the house, with children natural. The simple necessary things of life are always poetic. Take for instance one of the books of the Bible. The song of Solomon. They believed for many years that Solomon wrote that song, but the moment I read it I knew he did not, and I now know that he did not. (Laughter). And I will tell you why. Solomon was king, and in the song he praises the palace. He dwells on the delights of the king's chambers. Now that was written by a peasant who believed that the palace was filled with joy. Had it been written by a king, one who knew better, he would have had happiness in the cottage, in the field, under the arching vine. And if you read Solomon's song some time, if you have time to waste, you will find that I am right on that subject. (Laughter.) Fine ladies robed in jewels are not poetic. Never. They are artificial, but not artistic. After all, art is the highest possible expression of the natural. It must not suggest labor or toil or trouble or responsibility. It must suggest liberty and freedom.

#### BURNS THE POET OF LOVE.

Burns, above all things—and that is why we love him, maybe—was the poet of love. To him woman was divine, and in the light in her eyes this peasant stood transfigured. Love changed this plowman to a king. The plaid became a robe of purple. The poor man became the poet, and the laborer was the ennobled man who stood like a descended God. In his "Vision" his native muse tells the story of his conversion and how he came to write. Was there ever a sweeter singer? Will there ever be a sweeter song written than "Bonny Doon," and there is in it, too, a wealth of philosophy. A poor broken-hearted girl wandering by a stream says to a bird: "Thou'lt break my heart, thou bonny bird."

There is an idea that when the weather is bad, when it is over-

cast, when all is gloom, that then the heart of man cannot bear its trouble as it can in the sunshine. That is a mistake. By far the greater number of suicides are committed when the sun shines, and when all is life and gaiety in the world, and the poor wretch, with such rack and ruin in his heart, compares the sunshine of the earth with the darkness within, and the contrast he cannot bear. Burns understood that philosophy long before the statistics had verified the fact.

It would consume days to give you, to go over those tender lines, lines wet with the heart's blood, lines that throb and thrill, lines that glow like flame, lines full of love and death, the beautiful, the sublime, the pathetic; but the most beautiful love poem that I know, that I have ever read, one pure as the tear of gratitude, is to "Mary in Heaven." Had Burns written nothing else, every man who has ever loved woman would keep the name of Burns within his heart.

Above all of Scotland's queens rises this pure and gentle girl made deathless by the love of Robert Burns. (Applause.)

#### SOME OF BURNS' MASTERPIECES.

A ploughman and a servant, a peasant and a milkmaid, the two most royal children that Scotland boasts; royal because upon the brow of the peasant is the laurel crown, and in the hand of the milkmaid is the sceptre that stirs all hearts. Burns was also a poet of home, the poet of the fireside, of the father and mother and child, and all the purest that is in wedded life. In the "Cottar's Saturday Night," one of the noblest and sweetest poems in the literature of our world, is the description of the cottar going home from his labors, and it is a great picture that will live as long as language lives. And in the same poem is described the courtship. It is lovely, beautiful. Where is there in this world a more beautiful and more touching picture than that of the old couple sitting on the ingleside with clasped hands? There never will be a greater poem upon this subject than "John Anderson, my Jo." Burns taught that love of wife and child was the highest kind of love, and the noblest. Burns finally sums up what you would call the whole duty of man in one of his letters to Dr. Blacklock. To make a happy fireside was the highest aim in human life. I wish something as good as that had been said on Sinai. (Laughter.)

To mak a happy fireside clime for wears and wife  
That's the true pathos and sublime o' human life.

I wish that had been written in stone. (Applause.)

#### HE KNEW THE ART OF STOPPING.

Burns had another art, the art of stopping; the art of stopping at the right place. Nothing is more difficult than this. It is very hard to end a play. It is very hard to get the right kind of a roof

on a house. There is not one story-teller in a thousand that knows just the place where the rocket ought to explode. They go on talking after the stick has come down. (Laughter.)

Burns wrote short poems, and why? All poems are short. There cannot be a long poem any more than there can be a long joke. (Laughter.) Burns knew when to stop. I believe the best example of an ending perfectly accomplished you will find in his "Vision." There comes into his house, into that auld clay biggin', his muse, the spirit of a beautiful woman, and tells him what he can do, and what he can't do as a poet. He converses with her, he has a long talk with her and now the thing is how to get her out of the house. You may think that it is an easy thing. It is easy enough to get yourself into difficulty, but not to get out. But I was struck with the beautiful manner in which Burns got that angel out of the house. "And like a passing thought, she fled, in light away." That is the way he got her out of the house. (Loud laughter.)

Burns above all that I know was a poet of friendship. "Should auld acquaintance be forgot." Wherever those who speak the English language assemble, wherever the Anglo Saxon people meet with clasp and smile, "Auld Lang Syne" will tremble in the happy air. And it is never to be forgotten

#### BURN'S MATCHLESS DRINKING SONGS.

Burns was the friend of the merry meeting. He has written the best drinking songs ever written by mortal man, and say what we will against intemperance, say what we will against alcohol, I feel towards it somewhat as Burns did towards the devil, that he had some good sides. (Laughter.) It is somewhat difficult to be exceedingly sociable on cold water. There does go with wine, there does go I say with that, a certain good-fellowship, a certain flow of thought, a certain amplitude of feeling. (Laughter.) Nothing else can produce it so far as I know, and there never was a people on the earth that could pass the cup or glass with a more delightful smile than the sons of Scotland. (Much laughter.) Burns was the poet of a good Scotch drink. And it is somewhat wonderful a man said to me to-night: "No nation has ever amounted to anything without they drank a good deal." All these temperance nations, he says, have gone backwards. Well, you can study that out for yourself. (Laughter.) But I do think that the little old song of "Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut" is the best drinking song that was ever written. And, do you know, I went down to that little place where "Willie brewed the peck o' maut" and I felt like taking a drink myself, when I read that drinking song of Burns:

“ We are na fou ; we're no that fou,  
 But just a drappie in our e'e ;  
 The cock may craw, the day may daw,  
 But aye we'll taste the barley bree.”

There is no better drinking song than that in the world, and I would have liked to have been there that night.

I have a good notion to tell you something. Not long ago I was dining with some gentlemen, and next me sat a minister. (Laughter). He was bound to get into good company for once in his life. (Renewed laughter). He was talking a little on the subject of religion, and I finally asked him, “ Now,” said I, “ you have talked so much about the apostles and the Lord, and all that sort of thing ; now will you be honor bright with me and answer me a question ?” Well, he said he would. Said I, “ Which would you rather spend the evening with, one of the apostles or Robert Burns ?” Well, he says, “ If I tell you, you won't tell on me, will you ?” Well, I said, “ I know what your answer is then, because if you had been going to say one of the apostles, you would never have told me not to tell.”

Burns knew that poets could not be made. He knew that education had nothing to do with genius. He knew the university could not furnish capacity nor genius, it could not furnish that divine atmosphere.

#### AN ARTIST AND A DEMOCRAT.

Besides this, Burns was a very great artist. He has painted some of the most powerful word pictures in the human language. His description of a brook in “Hallowe'en” is one of the most exquisite things that has ever been my good fortune to read.

“ Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,  
 As thro' the glen it wimpl't ;  
 Whyles round a rocky scar it strays ;  
 Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't ;  
 Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,  
 Wi' bickerin', dancin' dazzle,  
 Whyles cookit underneath the braes,  
 Below the spreading hazel,  
 Unseen that nicht.”

Just read that over to yourselves some day five or six times. All his work is of this character, so beautiful, so simple and so natural. It is splendid. Take the picture in Highland Mary. He pictures love in the breast of a sweet girl. It is beautiful. Think too of his description at the commencement of his vision. That shows his descriptive powers at their very best, and proves what a true poet this man is.

There is another reason why we love Robert Burns. He is a Democrat of the right kind. (Applause). He was in every fibre of his being a sincere democrat, and not for the sake of revenue. (Much laughter). He was a believer in the people, and in the sacred rights of man. He believed that honest peasants were superior to titled parasites. He knew the so-called gentry of his time. In one of his letters to a friend he says it takes a few dashes into the world to give a young man a proper, decent regard for the poor insignificant devils of mechanics and peasantry. He understood the gentry. He knew the crushing spirit of caste, the infernally cruel spirit of caste, the spirit that despises the useful and that depreciates the work of the toiler, those who bear the burdens of this world.

Burns rebelled against the injustice of his time, against the artificial distinctions among men. His loyal soul broke out in that magnificent protest which took the form of what is, perhaps, the greatest of all his poems, "A Man's a Man for A' That."

Every line of that poem came throbbing with life from his great heart, and since that poem has been written there has been more manhood in this world. (Great applause.) Men have been prouder of their hearts and of themselves, without taking into account whether they were clothed in robes or rags.

If there is anything nobler in our language, I have never read it. No grander Declaration of Independence was ever given to the world. It is the apotheosis of independence since it was written. It is the forerunner of that very day when men will be brothers the world over.

#### THE THEOLOGY OF BURNS.

Burns was not only a poet, not only the poet of love and friendship, not only an artist, and not only a democrat, but in his heart he was a theologian. He had theology too. He was superior in heart and brain to the theologians of his time. He knew that the creed of John Calvin was cruel and absurd, and he attacked it with all his might and main. He was not awed by the clergy, and he cared but very little for authority. He insisted on thinking for himself. Some times he may have faltered a little, fearing that some friend of his might take offence. Sometimes he would say or write a word or two in favor of the Bible, and sometimes he addressed the kirk in words of scorn. But there is one thing he did that I like, perhaps above all—he laughed at the dogma of eternal pain. He knew that if man was to suffer forever that God must be a dreadful tyrant, a monster. The dear old doctrine that man is totally depraved he threw aside. He refused absolutely to receive it.

He understood the hypocrites of his time. "They tak' religion in their mouth," says he. Can you conceive what a detestation

he had of hypocrites? The strongest thing that was ever written against Calvinism is "Holy Willie's Prayer." In this poem you will find the Calvinistic creed stated with perfect fairness and accuracy. In this poem Burns nailed Calvinism to the cross. He put it on the rack and bound it to the stake.

BURNS'S "CONCESSIONS" TO ORTHODOXY.

In 1787 Burns, being still a theologian, made some slight concessions in letters written to friends who were of the orthodox faith. These must have been written in the spirit of flattery. It is not for me to say exactly what Burns believed. I am going to let *him* say it: "An honest man has nothing to fear." That is pretty good doctrine, no matter whether he believes in the Bible or not. If that part of us called mind does survive, then I say:—  
▲way with the old-wife prejudices and doctrines.

Burns' religion was of the same stamp as that of Voltaire, of Thomas Jefferson, of Thomas Paine and of Abraham Lincoln.

Burns also said another thing in which there is a vast amount of wisdom, when he asks this question: "Why has a religious turn of mind always a tendency to narrow and harden the heart?"

BURNS AND TENNYSON COMPARED.

A little while ago one of the greatest poets died, and I was reading one of his volumes and at the same time during the same period reading a little from Robert Burns, and the difference between these two men struck me so forcibly that I concluded to say something about it to-night. Tennyson was a piece of rare china decorated by the highest art. Burns was made of honest human clay molded by sympathy and love. Tennyson dwelt in his fancy for the most part with kings and queens, with lords and ladies and with counts and nobles. Burns lingered by the fireside of the poor and humble, in the thatched cottage of the peasant. He loved men and women and without regard to the outlook. Tennyson was touched by place and birth and by the insignia given by birth and chance of fortune. As he grew old he grew narrower, and less in touch with the world around him. Tennyson was ingenious, Burns ingenuous. Tennyson had intellectual taste. Burns' brain was the servant of his heart. One was exclusive, and the other pressed the world against his breast. Burns was touched by wrongs and injustice. Tennyson touched art on many sides, writing no doubt of lordly things, dealing with the vast poesies of his brain, and he satisfied the taste of cultured men. Tennyson is always self-possessed. He possesses in abundance poetic sympathy, but lacks the fire and the flame. Burns dwells on simple things, on things that touch the heart and arouse the highest sympathies of men. The religion of Burns was great enough to include everything. Tennyson's imagination lived in a palace. The imagination of Burns dwelt lower down, among the people; his

heart went out to them and he recorded the poems of their simple lives in imperishable verse. His songs were sweet harmonies drawn from the breast of nature.

Tennyson, as I say, satisfied in many ways the tastes of cultured men, and he is always perfectly self-possessed. From his heart there emanates no burst of song that thrills and inspires. No one ever thinks of him as having been carried away by stormy feelings, but as a great artist he has a claim, an undisputed claim to a high place in the world of letters. Burns dealt with simple things, with those that touch the heart of the husband and wife, the mother and the pure young girl. He spoke of the common things, of life and love and death, and joy and hope. His sympathies were in accord with the hearts of his fellow-men. Both men were great poets. Tennyson appealed to the intellectual in his readers, Burns to the tenderest feelings of the soul. Men admire Tennyson. Men love Robert Burns. (Great applause.)

#### HIS SPIRIT GOT HIM INTO TROUBLE.

Sometimes the outspoken expression of the poet, the impulses of his heart, made him enemies. He made enemies because he sympathized with the French revolution, and because he was glad that the American colonies had become a nation. At a banquet once, being asked to drink the health of Pitt, Burns said: "I will give you a better toast—George Washington." A little while after, when they wanted him to drink to the success of the English arms, Burns said: "No; I will drink this: May their success equal the justice of their cause." (Loud applause.) He sent three or four little cannon to the French convention, because he sympathized with the French revolution, and because of these little things, his love of liberty, of freedom and justice, at Dumfries he was suspected of being a traitor, and, as a result of these trivial things, as a result of that suspicion, Burns was obliged to join the Dumfries volunteers. And thereby hangs a tale. He had to buy a uniform, which he bought on credit—seven pounds. It was bought from Matthew Pen, and afterwards when he was sick, nigh unto death, when he had to be taken to the shore of the sea, Matthew Pen insisted on putting his emaciated body into jail for the money expended by Burns for the uniform in which to join the Dumfries volunteers, to prove that the man who wrote "Scots Wha Hae" was not a traitor. The last work he ever did in his life was to write two letters, one to a cousin to send him a few pounds to save him from the horrors of a jail. He came back to Dumfries a dying man, and for a few days longer, the brief space of time that he lived, all that time his brain was troubled with that claim of Matthew Pen. When he was dying, the very last words uttered by Robert Burns, with the vision of a jail in his mind, the last words that came from his lips were these: "That damned

scoundrel Matthew Pen." And when a few days before, knowing that he was to die, he begged that the awkward squad, meaning the Dumfries Volunteers, should not be allowed to fire over his grave, we have a true insight into what his feelings were. But they fired. They were bound to fire or die. (Much laughter.)

How that man rose above all his fellows in death! Do you know, there is something wonderful in death. What a repose! What a piece of sculpture! The common man dead looks royal, a genius dead, sublime.

#### A NOBLE TRIBUTE TO BURNS.

When a few years ago I visited all the places where Burns had been, from the little house of clay with one room where he was born, to the little house with one room where he now sleeps, I thought of this. Yes, I visited them all, all the places made immortal by his genius, in the field where love first touched his heart, in the field where he ploughed up the home of the mouse. I saw the cottage where Robert and Jean first lived as man and wife, and walked on "the banks and braes of bonnie Doon," and all the other places rendered immortal by his genius, and when I stood by his grave I said: This man was a great man. He was a radical. This man believed in the dignity of labor, in the nobility of the useful. This man believed in human love, in making a heaven here, in judging men by their deeds instead of by their wealth and title. This man believed in a pure heart and soul, and in the liberty of the soul, the liberty of thought and speech. This man believed in the rights of the individual, the sacred rights of individual independence. This man sympathized with the suffering and oppressed. This man had the genius to change suffering and sorrow into song, to enrich poverty and make it blessed to be poor, to fill the lives of the lowly with love and light. This man had the genius to make robes of glory out of squalid rags. The name of Robert Burns can never die. He is enrolled among the immortals and will live forever. (Applause.) This man left a legacy of riches untold, not only to Scotland but to the whole world. He enriched our language and among succeeding generations with a generous hand he has scattered the gems of thought. His heart blossomed in a thousand songs, songs for all times and seasons, suited to every experience of the heart and to every phase of thought; songs for the dawn of life, songs for the cradle, songs for growing boy and girlhood, songs for the hour of courtship and for the sweet and sacred relationship of man and wife; songs for the cheerless and the friendless, songs of love for the unloved, songs of joy for the joyless, songs for the vanished days, and songs that were filled with light and hope for days to come; songs for the sunshine and for the storm, songs that set the pulses throbbing and stir the heart of man.

## BURNS' COTTAGE IMMORTALIZED.

And when I was at his birth-place, at that very little clay house where he was born, standing in that sacred place, I wrote these lines:

“ Though Scotland boasts a thousand names,  
 Of patriot, king and peer,  
 The noblest, grandest of them all,  
 Was loved and cradled here.  
 Here lived the gentle peasant prince,  
 The loving cottar king,  
 Compared with whom the greatest prince  
 Is but a titled thing.

'Tis but a cot roofed in with straw,  
 A hovel made of clay ;  
 One door shuts out the snow and storm,  
 One window greets the day ;  
 And yet I stand within this room,  
 And hold all thrones in scorn ;  
 For here beneath this lowly roof,  
 Love's sweetest bard was born.

Within this hallowed hut I feel  
 Like one who clasps a shrine,  
 When the glad lips at last have touched  
 The something deemed divine.  
 And here the world through all the years,  
 As long as day returns,  
 The tribute of its love and tears,  
 Will pay to Robert Burns.

