Carlyle on Burns

By John Muir

Glasgow: Wm. Hodge & Co.

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"To the present Editor it has seemed possible some glimmering of light, for here and there a human soul, might lie in these confused Paper Masses now entrusted to him ; wherefore he determines to edit the same."—*Past and Present.*

Preface

THOMAS CARLYLE is best known to the world as a writer on Burns, by his Essay on the Poet. But this Essay is so well known that I need not do more than merely remind the reader, satiated with the Bacchanalian insipidity of anniversary dinners, that this deliverance is by universal consent considered to be the best that has ever been said on the subject with which it deals.

In addition to this Essay, there are to be found scattered throughout Carlyle's writings and collateral books — English and foreign — numerous passages on Burns which are known only to students of the by-ways of literature. It has been my aim to collect, translate, and arrange these passages in such a form, and with such editorial helps, as may assist the general reader to understand the true value and significance of these fragments.

As the circumstances in which he lived and the subjects which occupied his thoughts when these passages were written gave a colouring to these fragmentary utterances on his great countryman, I have intercalated a short sketch of Carlyle's life and a strict chronology of his productions. Viewed in the light of this biographical information, the passages will not

appear so disjointed and pointless as they otherwise might seem, read apart from the context of the subjects which the author evidently intended they should illustrate.

I have refrained from loading my pages with a mass of notes and references, which could only interest students. I have preferred making sure of my information and presenting it in the form of connecting narrative, as perhaps more acceptable to the reader.

To Mr. John P. Anderson, of the British Museum, I am obliged for procuring me a copy of Carlyle's review of Heintze's translation of Burns into German, and to my friend Mr. David Wilson, Deputy-Commissioner, Burmah, for drawing my attention to this almost unknown article, not the least of the many things brought to light by his *Mr. Froude and Thomas Carlyle.* This little review of Heintze will be none the less welcomed by the reader that it has hitherto escaped the notice not only of Carlyle's biographers, but, what is more remarkable still, of his bibliographers.

JOHN MUIR.

12 ALBERT DRIVE, CROSSHILL,
GLASGOW, *4th December*, 1897.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

TOWARDS the close of last century, Ecclefechan presented an appearance differing little from its aspect to-day. Lying in a hollow surrounded by wooded slopes, it consisted of two rows of houses of a plain, unornamental character, which were annually whitewashed in honour of the village fair. Down one side of this single street, at that period, ran an open brook, which has been immortalised in *Sartor Resartus* as "the little Kuhbach," but which is now, for sanitary reasons, built over. The street is irregularly formed, a circumstance due not only to the

disposition of the houses, but also to the windings of the little stream which gushes kindly by, wimpling and gurgling on its way to join the Mein water at the foot of the town, before the Mein loses itself in the river Annan. On the west side of the burn the houses are of single and two stories, almost alternately, which, when seen from a distance, resemble the battlements of an imposing fortress.

In this little village Robert Burns might frequently have been seen during the last years of his life, while acting temporarily as supervisor of excise during the illness of that official. He made at least two visits to Ecclefechan, a record of which has been preserved in print. One of these visits is recorded by an individual who was lying in the womb of Eternity at the time of the Poet's first recorded visit; and the other, which took place early in the spring of the year prior to his death, has been recorded by Burns himself. On the day following his entry into Ecclefechan he

had the misfortune to be snowed up; and, to break the monotony of his enforced imprisonment in the village inn, he imbibed to an extent which has left perceptible traces of a suggestive nature on the orthography of a letter to George Thomson, from which I borrow the following extract—a strange mixture of humour, exaggeration, and unconscious ungratefulness:—

> You cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write you. In the course of my duty as supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late), I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked little village. I would have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress. I have tried to "gae back the gate I cam again," but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner a scraper has been torturing cat-gut in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hand of a butcher, and thinks himself, *on that very account*, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget my miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them: like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed), I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am very drunk, at your service!

The reader, knowing the Poet's unreserve, will not, I think, be disposed to accept the above statements as a circumstantial account of the conditions under which the letter was written. Could any man, in the situation described by Burns, have written such a letter? I think not. Indeed, most of Burns's letters to Thomson seem to have been often of the nature of practical jokes played by a humorist upon an essentially dull, serious man. Be this as it may, it is to be regretted that our Poet so far forgot himself as to call sweet Ecclefechan by the uncomplimentary epithets he has used in describing that now famous village. Little did he dream, in his barleycornian humour, of the destinies of Ecclefechan infants; one of whom, named Thomas Carlyle, born on the fourth of December of the very year of Burns's unlucky visit, was afterwards to be known to the world as the most sympathetic interpreter of his life and writings.

It is not improbable that Burns, as he sat at the window of the village inn on that bleak,

February day, more than a hundred years ago, enjoying his post-prandial glass, and watching the snowflakes melting in the spated stream, may perhaps have cast his eyes on a white-washed two-storey house on the opposite side of the street, and a little way from the hostelry. If he did, he may have observed a man with a stern, resolute face; clear, intelligent eyes; and a strong, rather than refined, but not a coarse, mouth. This man, a stone-mason to trade, is well known to his neighbours as a person of great force of character, and much respected in the district, not less for his moral worth than for his natural strength of intellect. He is one year older than the Poet, but outlived his ill-starred contemporary thirty-six years. James Carlyle, the name of the individual I have endeavoured to describe, chanced on one of Burns's visits to Ecclefechan to see the subject of his eldest son's future Essay and Lecture. But I cannot do better than allow the younger Carlyle to contrast these two remarkable men, with his reflections

thereon, for James Carlyle, in his own way, was quite as remarkable as Robert Burns:—

The more I reflect on it, the more must I admire how completely Nature had taught my Father; how completely he was devoted to his Work, to the Task of his Life; and content to let *all* pass by unheeded that had not relation to this. It is a singular fact, for example, that though a man of such openness and clearness, he had never, I believe, read three pages of *Burns's Poems*. Not even when all about him became noisy and enthusiastic (I the loudest) on that matter, did he feel it worth his while to renew his investigations of it, or once turn his face towards it. The Poetry *he* liked (he did not call it Poetry) was truth and the wisdom of Reality. Burns, indeed, could have done nothing for him. As high a Greatness hung over his world as over that of Burns (the everlasting greatness of the Infinite itself); neither was he, like Burns, called to rebel against the world, but to labour patiently at his Task there; "uniting the Possible with the Necessary" to bring out the Real (wherein also lay an Ideal). Burns could not have in any way strengthened him in his course; and, therefore, was for him a phenomenon merely. Nay, Rumour had been so busy with Burns, and Destiny and his own desert had in very deed so marred his name, that the good rather avoided him. Yet it was not with aversion that my Father regarded Burns; at worse, with indifference and neglect. I have heard him

speak of once seeing him: standing at "Rob Scott's Smithy" (at Ecclefechan, no doubt superintending some work), he heard some one say, "There is the Poet Burns"; he went out to look and saw a man with boots on, like a well-dressed farmer, walking down the village on the opposite side of the burn. This was all the relation these two men ever had; they were very nearly coevals. I know Robert Burns, and I knew my Father; yet were you to ask me which had the greater natural faculty, I might perhaps actually pause before replying! Burns had an infinitely wider Education; my Father a far wholesomer; besides, the one was a man of Musical Utterance, and the other wholly a man of action, even with speech subservient thereto. Never, of all the men I have seen, has one come personally in my way in whom the Endowment from Nature and the Arena from Fortune were so utterly out of all proportion. I have said this often, and partly *know* it. As a man of speculation (bad Culture ever unfolded him) he must have gone wild and desperate like Burns; but he was a man of conduct, and work kept him all right. What strange, shapeable creatures we are!

Although the elder Carlyle looked on Burns with the indifference ascribed to him by his gifted son, it was far otherwise with Thomas Carlyle, whose love and admiration of our Poet goes back to the opening years of the

present century, when young Carlyle was acting as mathematical teacher in Annan Academy, where he had been educated before going to Edinburgh University. In one of his letters to an old college friend we have a pleasant glimpse of Carlyle's early enthusiasm for Burns—an enthusiasm which subsequently developed into what Carlyle, borrowing a phrase of Hume's, called "hero worship," which ultimately found expression in his famous Essay and Lecture, and in numerous passages, pitched on a somewhat higher key of rapturous admiration, scattered throughout his works, and now, for the first time, gathered together and published in book form :—

It was near two o'clock when we got to Dumfries, and being consequently prevented from getting within a league of St. Michael's, we saw the ceremony of laying the stone, exactly as well as if we had been in the grand square of Timbuctoo. Yet, notwithstanding this—notwithstanding that all the scullions in Dumfriesshire were "let slip," notwithstanding the cantering and parading of the Ettrick yeomen, notwithstanding the paper caps, the figured roquelaures, the magic

lanterns of freemasonry, it was a striking scene—Scotland paying the tribute of well-earned honour to one of the noblest of her sons. It is a great pity that the monument will not be over his grave; many inconveniences ought to have been submitted to in order to gain this point.

In this account of the laying of the foundation stone of the Burns Mausoleum in St. Michael's churchyard, Dumfries, Carlyle seems to have overlooked the fact that the remains of the Poet could be transferred to the memorial. This was afterwards done. But to Carlyle, as to many others, the original grave, with the plain tombstone, inscribed simply with the Poet's name, was a far more touching memorial than the Mausoleum. On this point, one of his biographers says, in ignorance of the letter just quoted:—

It was probably during the Annan days that Carlyle went to Dumfries to see the grave of Burns. This glimpse of his boyhood, a picture that must henceforth be treasured in the Scottish heart, he gave to an American visitor a few years ago, during a walk from Chelsea to Piccadilly. He told of his early admiration of Burns—how he used to creep into the churchyard

of Dumfries, when a little boy, and find the tomb of the Poet, and sit and read the simple inscription by the hour. "There it was," he said, "in the midst of poor fellow-labourers and artizans, and the name—Robert Burns!" At morn, at noon, at eventide, he loved to go and read that name. Thus were thoughts dimly suggested to the mind of the boy, that quickened and grew, till at length, in his manhood, they found expression in what was the first—and seems likely to be the last—worthy and all-sufficing exposition of the life and works of the Scottish bard.

Another reminiscence of Carlyle's Annan days relates to a person whose connection with our Poet left the same unfavourable impression on Carlyle that it has made on many others:—

Musical Thomson (memorable, rather than venerable, as the publisher of Burns's Songs), him I saw one evening in the reading-room [at Annan], a clean-shaved, commonplace old gentleman in scratch wig, whom we [Carlyle and Irving] spoke to a few words and took a good look of.

The following extract from a letter of Burns to Thomson seems to have struck Carlyle very forcibly, and to have inspired

two remarkable passages which I shall afterwards quote:—

> As to remuneration, you may think my songs either *above* or *below* price, for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, fee, hire, &c., would be downright sodomy of soul!

Upon which singular passage Carlyle remarks, in his dramatic fashion:—

> In the most heroic age, as in the most unheroic, he [the heroic man] will have to say, as Burns said proudly and humbly of his little Scottish Songs—little dewdrops of celestial melody in an age when so much was unmelodious—"By Heaven, they shall either be invaluable or of no value; I do not need your guineas for them!"

Comparing this with what Burns actually said, the reader will observe that the passage is evidently quoted from memory. In another place, Carlyle refers to the same subject in a quieter and more effective way, thus:—

> Some brief, pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him in the composition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at the employment;

and how, too, he spurned all other reward for it but what the labour itself brought him. For the soul of Burns, though scathed and marred, was yet living in its full moral strength, though sharply conscious of its errors and abasement; and here in his destitution and degradation, was one act of seeming nobleness and self-devotedness left even for him to perform. He felt, too, that with all the "thoughtless follies" that had "laid him low," the world was unjust and cruel to him; and he silently appealed to another and calmer time. Not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country: so he cast from him the poor sixpence a day, and served zealously as a Volunteer. Let us not grudge him this last luxury of his existence; let him not have appealed to us in vain! The money was not necessary to him; he struggled through without it: long since these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts for ever.

I may as well save the reader the trouble of hunting up the verse from which Carlyle quotes the touching words in the above extract:—

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!

Before two years had passed, Carlyle gave up his situation in Annan, having been appointed to the mastership of a Kirkcaldy school. Here he formed the famous friendship with Edward Irving (about which he afterwards wrote so beautifully), a young man from Annan, who had taught a school at Haddington, and had acted as tutor to Jane Baillie Welsh, who afterwards became Carlyle's wife, but who narrowly escaped becoming the spouse of her tutor.

In the summer of 1818 Irving gave up his school at Kirkcaldy and removed to Edinburgh; and later in the same year Carlyle also "kicked the schoolmaster function over," having resolved "that I, for my part, would prefer to perish in a ditch, if necessary, than continue living by such a trade." The bent of his mind will best be seen from this quotation :—

> I was timorously aiming towards literature. I thought in audacious moments I might perhaps earn some trifle that way by honest labour somehow to help my finance. But, in fact, there came little enough of produce or finance to me from that source, and for the first years

absolutely none, in spite of my diligent and desperate efforts, which are sad to me to think of even now.

Carlyle's literary work of this melancholy period consisted of contributions to various publications, which even his genius has scarcely rescued from oblivion.

Through the suggestion of his faithful friend, Edward Irving (who had entered on his ministry in London), Carlyle, in 1822, became tutor to Charles Buller. This took him, after a time, from Edinburgh to London, and a two-fold influence was now at work stimulating his literary activity. He continued with the Bullers for two years, during which time he published his *Life of Schiller*. During 1824 he published two translated works—Legendre's *Elements of Geometry*, and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*.

Carlyle has recorded a reminiscence of Burns, told to him by one of his London friends—"the noble lady" of his and Irving's correspondence, Mrs. Basil Montagu, to whom, as Miss Benson, the Poet had addressed a letter

enclosing a copy of the sonnet which he composed on his thirty-fourth birthday. Carlyle says :—

In early life she had made some visits to Nithsdale (to the Craiks of Arbigland), and had seen Burns, of whom her worship continued fervent, her few recollections always a jewel she was ready to produce. She must have been strikingly beautiful at that time, and Burns's recognition and adoration would not be wanting ; the most royally courteous of mankind she always defined him, as the first mark of his genius. I think I have heard that, at a ball at Dumfries, she had frugally constructed some dress by sewing real flowers upon it, and shone by that bit of art and by her fine bearing, as the cynosure of all eyes. Her father, I gradually understood (not from herself), had been a man of inconsiderable wealth or position, a wine merchant in York, his name Benson.

Perhaps Carlyle had the above reminiscence in his mind when he wrote the following passage, which I transcribe from one of his most scathing books :—

No "politer" man was to be found in Britain than the rustic Robert Burns : high duchesses were captivated with the chivalrous ways of the man ; recognised that here was the true chivalry and divine nobleness of

bearing—as indeed they well might—now when the Peasant God and Norse Thor had come down among them again! Chivalry this, if not as they do chivalry in Drury Lane or West End Drawing-rooms, yet as they do it in Valhalla and the General Assembly of the Gods. For, indeed, who *invented* chivalry, politeness, or anything that is noble and melodious and beautiful among us, except, precisely, the like of Johnson and Burns?

But Mrs. Montagu has left on record a much more preferable account of her meeting with Burns than that given by Carlyle. It is so little known and so characteristic of the Poet, that I do not hesitate to quote it here as explanatory of and supplementary to Carlyle's reminiscences:—

I dined with Burns at Arbigland; he was witty, drank as others drank, was long in coming to the tea table. It was then the fashion for young ladies to be busy with something—I was working a flower, and asked the Poet if he would do a bit of my work. "Oh," said he, "you think my hand unsteady with wine. I cannot work a flower, Madam, but I can thread a needle." He pulled the thread from the needle, and re-threaded it in a moment. "Can a tipsy man do that?" He talked to me of his children, particularly of his eldest boy, whom he praised as a lad

of promise. "And yet, Madam," he said, with a sarcastic glance, "I hope he will turn out a glorious blockhead, and so make his fortune."

The lad here referred to, the Poet's eldest son, Robert Burns, Junior ("the laird"), did not turn out a glorious blockhead, and consequently failed to realise the fortune which his fond parent had predicted, had Nature, and her best beloved Bard, been less kind to him. He spent the best part of his life in the Stamp Office, London, from which he retired on a small annuity, and removed permanently to Dumfries, just one year before the death of his mother. In 1895, his grandson, Robert Burns the Fourth, died near Edinburgh in poverty; an ineffectual appeal having been made to the public on his behalf by a few kindly-disposed individuals.

It was during his visits to Miss Welsh at Haddington, to whom he had been introduced by Irving, that Carlyle made the acquaintance of the Poet's brother Gilbert, who was at that time acting as factor on Lord Blantyre's

Lennoxton estate, near Bolton, and about three miles from Haddington, the birthplace of John Knox, from whom Miss Welsh was descended on the maternal side. Carlyle derived a good deal of information from Gilbert concerning his brother, which he afterwards put to good use. He refers to Gilbert Burns, in his Essay on the Poet, as "the best evidence"; and in his Lecture, as "Burns's Brother Gilbert, a man of much sense and worth"; and in one of his letters he speaks of him as "a most estimable man." In this connection I may here quote a letter written by Miss Welsh many years after she had become Mrs. Carlyle:—

That little picture of your visit to Grant's Braes! How pretty, how dream-like! Awaking so many recollections of my own young visiting there! The dinners of rice and currants—a very few currrants—kind, thrifty Mrs. Gilbert Burns used to give me, and such a welcome! Of play-fellows, boys and girls—all, I fancy, dead now—who made my Saturdays at Grant's Braes *white* days for me! I went to see the dear old home when I was last at Sunny Bank, and found the new prosaic farmhouse in its stead, and it was as if my heart had knocked against it! A sort of (moral)

blow in the breast is what I feel always at these sudden revelations of the new, strange, uncared-for thing usurping the place of the thing one knew as well as one's self, and had all sorts of associations with, and had hung the fondest memories on! When I first saw Mrs. Somerville (of mathematical celebrity), I was struck with her exact likeness to Mrs. Gilbert Burns—minus the geniality and plus the feathers on her head—and I remember remarking to my husband that, after all, Mrs. Burns was far the cleverer woman of the two, inasmuch as to bring up *twelve* children, as these young Burnses were brought up, and keep up such a comfortable house as Grant's Braes, all on eighty pounds a year, was a much more intricate problem than the reconcilement of the Physical Sciences! And Mr. Carlyle cordially agreed with me.

The friend to whom Mrs. Carlyle addressed the above letter has also recorded his remembrance of a visit in early life to Grant's Braes :—

Grant's Braes happened to be the residence of Gilbert Burns, the elder brother of the Poet. He was standing at his door . . . and brought me into the house. I sat patiently and wonderingly by one side of the fireplace, and, young as I was, I felt a sort of awe. I knew about Burns and his songs, and a kind of reverential feeling possessed me as I sat in his brother's

house. I had often seen Gilbert in church, where he was an elder, and had marked him, especially on sacramental occasions, when he solemnly dispensed the sacred bread. He had a splendid head, with high forehead and "lyart haffets wearing thin and bare." The lower part of his face was less refined than that of his brother: the mouth larger, the chin well developed, indicating stronger moral qualities.

Carlyle married Miss Welsh on October 17, 1826. The young couple took up house in Comely Bank, Edinburgh. Here he wrote *Wotton Reinfred*, an unfinished novel containing much of the rough material out of which part of *Sartor Resartus* was afterwards fashioned; and published *German Romance.*

The Carlyles left the Scottish Metropolis after a residence of only eighteen months, and settled on Craigenputtoch, a small estate belonging to Mrs. Carlyle, situated about fifteen miles north-west of Dumfries. It was from this moorland retreat, where *Sartor* and most of his Essays were written, that Carlyle sent forth the magnificent Essay on Burns, con-

cerning which he wrote to Goethe under date September 25, 1828, as follows:—

> The only thing of any moment I have written since I came hither is an "Essay on Burns" for the next number of the *Edinburgh Review*, which, I suppose, will be published in a few weeks. Perhaps you have never heard of this Burns; and yet he was a man of the most decisive genius, but born in the rank of a peasant, and miserably wasted away by the complexities of his strange situation; so that all he effected was comparatively a trifle, and he died before middle age. We English, especially we Scotch, love Burns more than any other poet we have had for centuries. It has often struck me to remark that he was born a few months only before Schiller, in the year 1759, and that neither of these two men, of whom I reckon Burns, perhaps naturally, even the greater, ever heard the other's name, but that they shone as stars in opposite hemispheres, the little atmosphere of the earth intercepting their mutual light.

Carlyle is in error in saying that the German and Scottish poets were unknown to each other; and it would have given him great pleasure had he known, as he may have learned afterwards, that Burns possessed a copy of Schiller's *Robbers*, and that he had also read Goethe's

Werter, both of which had become popular in this country on being translated into English; and were, moreover, of a nature, both in subject and method of treatment, likely to attract our National Bard.

Readers of Carlyle must have noticed with what fondness he dwells on the births of such of his heroes as chanced to be born in the same year; and this fact of Schiller having been born a few months after Burns, which he refers to above as having often struck him, was present to his mind when writing his *Life of Schiller*, in which will be found the following passage:—

> Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller was a native of Marbach, a small town of Wurtemberg, situated on the banks of the Nekar. He was born on the 10th of November, 1759—a few months later than our own Robert Burns.

In the same biography he institutes the following comparison of *Wilhelm Tell*, produced in 1804, and Schiller's delineation of Swiss peasant life, with the peasantry of Burns's *Cottar's Saturday Night*:—

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The highest quality of art is to conceal itself: these peasants of Schiller's are what everyone imagines he could imitate successfully; yet, in the hands of any but a true and strong-minded poet, they dwindle into repulsive coarseness or mawkish insipidity. Among our own writers who have tried such subjects, we remember none that has succeeded equally with Schiller. One potent, but ill-fated genius, has, in far different circumstances and with far other means, shown that he could have equalled him. The *Cottar's Saturday Night* of Burns is, in its own humble way, as quietly beautiful, as *simplex munditiis*, as the scenes of *Tell*. No other has even approached them, though some gifted persons have attempted it.

Apposite this comparison by a British critic of Burns's work with that of Schiller may be placed Sainte-Beuve's remarks on the same poem, and Aloisius Bertrand's description of the interior of a farmhouse, whither he had gone for shelter from a storm:—

By the side of this, we may set the Poet Burns's famous piece, *The Cottar's Saturday Night*. We should then see in what respect, quite apart from the poetic form, the latter maintains a great superiority. For, where Bertrand strives, above all, to be picturesque, Burns shows himself—in addition to this—cordial, moral,

Christian, patriotic. His episode of Jenny introduces and personifies the chastity of emotion; the Bible, read aloud, casts a religious glow over the whole scene. Then come those lofty thoughts upon the greatness of old Scotland, which is based on such home scenes as this: *Sic fortis Etruria crevit.*

Replying to Carlyle's letter on June 25th, 1829, Goethe says:—

With your countryman Burns, who, if he were still living, would be your neighbour, I am sufficiently acquainted to prize him. The mention of him in your letter leads me to take up his poems again, and especially to read once more the story of his life, which, truly, like the history of many a fair genius, is extremely sad.

The poetic gift is seldom united with the gift of managing life, and making good any adequate position.

In his poems I have recognised a free spirit, capable of grasping the moment with vigour, and winning gladness from it. To my regret, I could gather this from a few pieces only, for the Scottish dialect makes most of his poems perplexing to us, and both time and opportunity are wanting for the explanation of them in detail.

Writing again on the 5th of October, 1830,

Goethe communicates the interesting information that—

> A young man of much talent, and successful as a translator, is busy with Burns. I take an eager interest in the work.

Such intelligence could hardly fail to give Carlyle great satisfaction. This appears in a letter to another German correspondent:—

> That one of my fellow-associates is engaged with a translation of our much-loved Burns is an incident which no Briton can take due notice of without interest. May this world-wide Nature singer and people's poet find fit treatment at his [Kaufmann's] hands! In these Scotch wood-notes wild, if they might find fit echo in a foreign tongue, linger sighings of the eternal melodies, which are the more stirring on account of their simplicity. By all manner of Britons Burns's Poems are talked of and sung, read and re-read from childhood upward. The translation thereof is no doubt beset with difficulties extreme—in the idiomatic turns of Scottish speech, those tender outbursts, and that simple rustic charm of Scottish dialect; which, notwithstanding, the German tongue before all others is fitted to faithfully picture and truly body forth. My best wishes go with Herr Kaufmann in his difficult undertaking.

"Fellow-associates" refers to Kaufmann,

who was a member of the Berlin Society for Foreign Literature, of which Carlyle was a foreign honorary member. His *Gedichte von Robert Burns*, published in 1839, was the first translation of Burns into German. We shall presently see that Carlyle, after examining Kaufmann's work, had but a poor opinion of the "young man's" abilities, so laudably referred to by Goethe, who, as the result now shows, was a little too sanguine.

Writing to Goethe, in reply to his letter of 5th October, 1830, Carlyle makes the following remarks on Burns, *apropos* the publication of the correspondence between Schiller and Goethe :—

> In Schiller himself there is almost a spirit-like abstraction; yet a painful isolation, except from you, is also manifest: we could figure him as some Prometheus stealing fire, indeed, from Heaven; but to whom also the Gods, as punishment, had sent chains and a gnawing vulture. How different was his fate from our own poor Burns, blest with an equal talent, as high a spirit, but smitten with a far heavier curse, and to whom no guiding friend, warmly as his heart could love, and still long for Wisdom, was ever given!

One such as you might have saved him, and nothing else would; but only the vain, the idle, the dissipated gathered round him—he was alone among his kind, and courage and patience at last failed him, and he lost all that made him man. He was of Schiller's age: in the second year of that fair Weimar union, Burns perished miserably, deserted and disgraced, in that same Dumfries where they have erected Mausoleums over him, now that it is all unavailing, and would buy a scrap of his handwriting as if it were bank-paper. Such is the sad history which, in generation after generation, is too often repeated to us.

Having here come upon Burns, I will add my heartiest wishes, not unmixed with considerable fears of a negative result, that your young translator may be successful with him. The changeful, too fugitive expressiveness of his diction is one great charm with Burns; at all times hard to seize by a translator, and no doubt doubly so when hidden in the rough guise of our Scottish provincial dialect. Besides, his chief, indeed his only, true poetical writings are songs, which are of all the most unmanageable. Otherwise Burns is only a Volksdichter, more notable for shrewd sense, passionate attachment, and a certain rustic humour, than any higher qualities. I shall be full of curiosity to see your countryman's version, the first, I believe, into any foreign tongue: if he fail, beyond the limits of poetical and translatorial licence, the highest kindness we can do him here will be to forget him; the whole British nation is passion-

ately attached to Burns; the very inn windows where he chanced to scribble in idle hours, with his versifying and often satirical diamond, have all been unglassed, and the scribbled panes sold into distant quarters, there to be hung up in frames! There is an infinite dilettantism in the world; but also a certain universal love for spiritual light, and "reverence for what is above us."

The quotation marked off with inverted commas is taken from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, a work which Carlyle translated early in his literary career. It was frequently quoted by Carlyle, and is, so to speak, sprinkled over a large number of his pages.

Carlyle is in error in thinking Kaufmann's version "the first into any foreign tongue." That honour belongs to MM. James Ayton and J. B. Mesnard, whose translation into French appeared at Paris in 1826. But even so early as 1788, Dr. Moore's son had translated portions of Burns's poems into Latin. But to translate Burns into Latin, or indeed into almost any other language, is like translating Rabelais into Hebrew.

"In the second year of that fair Weimar union, Burns perished." That is to say, the Schiller-Goethe friendship began in 1794, and our Poet, as all the world knows, died in 1796 —over a hundred years now.

It will perhaps surprise the reader when I mention a fact not generally known, namely, that the above letter of Carlyle's and the one dated September 25, 1828, were both written in German.

To the German translation of Carlyle's *Life of Schiller* (*Schiller's Leben*) Goethe contributed a lengthy Preface and Introduction of great interest, from which I make the following excerpts:—

> As now from that region we enjoy, in what so closely concerns us here, a sincere and pure sympathy in these ethic and æsthetic efforts of ours, which may be regarded as a special trait in the German character, we must now on our part look about for whatever of the same sort lies near their own hearts. I refer at once to the name of Burns, concerning whom a letter of Mr. Carlyle's contained the following passage.

The passage quoted by Goethe is that given

above from the letter dated September 25th, 1828. The German poet goes on to say:—

Yet Robert Burns was better known to us than our friend conjectured. The charming poem, *John Barleycorn*, had come to us anonymously, and being deservedly praised, led to many attempts to appropriate it in our own language. *John Barleycorn* (*Hans Gerstenkorn*), a valiant man, has many enemies, who incessantly persecute and harm him, at length even threaten to kill him outright. From all these injuries, however, he finally emerges triumphant, for the special blessing and cheer of eager beer-drinkers. In this lively, happy anthropomorphism, Burns is at once seen to be a genuine poet.

On further investigation we found the poem in the edition of his works of 1822, to which a sketch of his life is prefixed, instructing us, in some manner at least, as to his outward circumstances. Those of his poems that we have made our own convinced us of his extraordinary talent, and we regretted that the Scottish dialect proved a hindrance precisely where he must have attained his finest and most natural expression. On the whole, however, we have carried our studies so far that we can subscribe to the laudatory statement quoted below as agreeing with our own conviction.

For the rest, how far this Burns of ours may be known in Germany beyond what the Conversations-Lexicon reports of him I should be unable to say, being ignorant

of the new literary movements in Germany; still, I would at anyrate set the friends of foreign literature upon the right road by mentioning the *Life of Robert Burns*, by J. G. Lockhart, Edinburgh, 1828, criticised by our friend in the *Edinburgh Review*, December, 1828.

The following passages translated from this article will, it may be hoped, arouse an eager desire to become thoroughly acquainted with the work and with the man himself.

The reader will be curious to see the passages selected and translated by the German poet from Carlyle's Essay on Burns, for the benefit of his countrymen, and included in the final edition of the Works of Goethe, as revised and edited by himself towards the end of his long career as the foremost Man of Letters then living, and the greatest of all German writers. The passages, which are amongst the very finest Carlyle ever wrote, as translated by Goethe, are as follows:—

Burns was born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen, and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind, if it accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil, nay, of penury and desponding apprehension

of the worst evils; and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rhymes of a Ferguson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty, he sinks not under all these impediments: through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his lynx eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself into intellectual expertness. Impelled by the expansive movement of his own irrepressible soul, he struggles forward into the general view; and, with haughty modesty, lays down before us, as the fruit of his labour, a gift, which Time has now pronounced imperishable.

A true Poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the "Eternal Melodies," is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation: we see in him a freer, purer development of whatever is noblest in ourselves; his life is a rich lesson to us; and we mourn his death as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

Such a gift had Nature, in her bounty, bestowed on us in Robert Burns; but, with queenlike indifference, she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment; and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognised it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given. Destiny — for so in our ignorance we must speak — his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for

him, and that spirit, which might have soared could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom; and died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal Nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The "Daisy" falls not unheeded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that "wee, cowering, timorous beastie," cast forth, after all its provident pains, to "thole the sleety dribble and cranreuch cauld." The "hoar visage" of Winter delights him; he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness on these scenes of solemn desolation; but the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for "it raises his thoughts to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind.*" A true Poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music! What warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling; what trustful, boundless love; what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he prizes as the paragons of Earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion, but in the rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him: Poverty is indeed his companion, but Love also, and Courage; the simple feelings, the worth, the noble-

ness, that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart: and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul; and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in the highest. He has a just, self-consciousness, which too often degenerates into pride; yet it is a noble pride, for defence, not for offence; no cold suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The Peasant Poet bears himself, we might say, like a King in exile; he is cast among the low, and feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward he can repel, the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye, under which the "insolence of condescension" cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and Manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay, throws himself into their arms, and, as it were, entreats them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despondency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship. And yet he was "quick to learn"; a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the shallowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a

generous credulity in his heart. And so did our Peasant show himself among us; "a soul like an Æolian Harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody." And this was he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarrelling with smugglers and vintners, computing excise-dues upon tallow, and gauging ale-barrels! In such toils was that mighty spirit sorrowfully wasted, and a hundred years may pass on before another such is given us to waste.

Goethe, speaking in his own person, goes on to say:—

And as we wish the Germans joy in their Schiller, so, with the same feeling, will we congratulate the Scots. They have indeed bestowed on our friend Schiller so much attention and sympathy that it would be but just if we, in like manner, should introduce their Burns to our people. Some young member of the honourable society to which, as a whole, the present pages are dedicated, would find his time and labour abundantly rewarded should he determine to perform this friendly service in return to a nation so worthy of honour, and faithfully carry out his undertaking. We esteem this highly-praised Robert Burns among the first poetical spirits which the past century has produced.

Carlyle, it seems to me, in the first paragraph quoted by Goethe, gives a very imperfect

account of the literary origins of Burns, and greatly underrates the Poet's indebtedness to Ramsay and Fergusson, and the rest of his predecessors. He quite ignores the fact that even as a song-writer, which Carlyle thinks is the ultimate basis on which the fame of Burns will be found to rest, our Poet only continued and improved what Ramsay, Fergusson, and others had so well begun. Even some of the words and phrases which Carlyle commends for their picturesque beauty and graphic force are borrowed from the elder, and, unfortunately, in many cases, nameless, Scots Minstrels. Speaking of a phrase which occurs in one of his poems, Carlyle says:—

> Our Scottish forefathers in the battlefield struggled forward "red-wat-shod": in this one word, a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for art!

Burns seems to have borrowed the phrase from the fine old ballad of Otterbourne:—

> The Gordons gude, in English blude,
> *They wat their hose and shoon;*
> The Lindsays flew like fire about,
> Till all the fray was done.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

As was to be expected, Goethe, with that marvellous catholicity of poetic insight for which he was remarkable above all men, gives a more adequate account of the secret of Burns's success as a National Poet, in a conversation with Dr. Eckermann, who reports the German poet as saying:—

Take Burns, for example. Wherein lies the cause of his greatness, except that the old songs of his forefathers were still living in the mouths of his people, that they were, so to speak, sung to him in his cradle, that as a boy he grew up amongst them, and the high excellence of these models so dwelt in him, that he had in them a living basis on which he could proceed? And, further, wherein is he great except that his own songs at once found receptive ears among his people? they were re-echoed by the reapers and binders in the fields, and he was greeted with them by his boon companions in the ale-house. How poor in comparison do things seem with us in Germany! For how many of our old, no less significant songs were alive in the hearts of the people, even when I was a youth? Herder and those who followed after him had to begin, first of all, to collect them; to drag them from oblivion; then they were at last to be had in the libraries. And, later, what songs have not Bürger and Voss composed! Who can say that they are less

aluable or less national than those of the excellent Burns? And yet, which of them has become living so that the people can re-echo them? They have been written and published, and they stand in libraries and take the common fate of German poets. Then, of my own songs, which of them is living? One and another is perhaps now and then sung by a pretty girl at the piano, but among the common people all is silence. With what feelings must I look back upon the time when Italian fishermen sang to me fragments of Tasso!

As the reader was informed above, Herr Kaufmann was the "young member" who attempted to carry out Goethe's suggestion regarding a rendering of Burns into German. His work lies before me, and from its pages I transcribe the ballad so enthusiastically praised by Goethe, together with Burns's version, so that the German as well as the English reader may have an opportunity of judging with what degree of success Kaufmann has executed his task:—

HANS GERSTENKORN.

(JOHN BARLEYCORN).

Drei Könige im Morgenland,
Die hatten einst gedroht
Mit einem hohen heil'gen Eid
Hans Gerstenkorn den Lod.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

There was three Kings into the east,
  Three Kings both great and high,
And they ha'e sworn a solemn oath
  John Barleycorn should die.

Mit einen Pfluge pflugten sie
  Ihm Schollen auf sein Haupt,
Und schwuren drauf, des Lebens sey
  Hans Gerstenkorn beraubt.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
  Put clods upon his head;
And they ha'e sworn a solemn oath
  John Barleycorn was dead.

Doch freundlich kam der holde Lenz
  Mit warmem Regenfall
Da macht Hans Gerstenkorn sich auf,
  Und uberrascht sie all'.

But the cheerful spring came kindly on,
  And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
  And sore surpris'd them all.

Die heisze Sommersonne kam,
  Gar Krastig wuchs er da,
Und Speere starrten um sein Haupt,
  Dasz Keiner ihm Ram' nah.

The sultry suns of summer came,
  And he grew thick and strong;
His head well arm'd wi' pointed spears,
  That no one should him wrong.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

Der stille, milde Herbst trat ein,
De ward er matt und bleich,
Sein wankend Knie, sein hangend Haupt
Zeigt an, er sinke Gleich.

The sober autumn entered mild,
When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

Die Farbe schwand ihm mehr und mehr,
Das Alter brach den Muth,
Da fingen seine Feinde an
Zu zeigen ihre Muth.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage.

Mit einer Waffe, lang und sharf,
Am Knie man ab ihn hieb,
Un band ihn auf den wagen feist,
So reicht wie einen Dieb.

They've ta'en a weapon long and sharp
And cut him by the knee;
Then tied him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

Dann legte man ihn auf den Bauch,
Und schlug auf ihm herum,
Und hing darauft im Wind ihn auf,
Und dreht' ihn um und um.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

They laid him down upon his back,
  And cudgell'd him full sore ;
They hung him up before the storm,
  And turned him o'er and o'er.

In eine Wassergrube tief,
  Da stieszen sie im Grimm
Hinein den armen Gerstenkorn :
  Da sin knun oder schwimm !

They filléd up a darksome pit
  With water to the brim ;
They heavéd in John Barleycorn,
  There let him sink or swim.

Sie breiten aus ihn auf dem Grund,
  Und qualen ihn noch mehr,
Und zeigt ein Lebenszeichen sich,
  So reiben sie ihn sehr.

They laid him out upon the floor,
  To work him farther woe :
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
  They toss'd him to and fro.

Sie braten langsam an der Glut
  Das Mark ihm in Gebein ;
Am schlimmsten macht's ein Muller ihm
  Der malmt ihn zwischen Stein.

They wasted o'er a scorching flame
  The marrow of his bones ;
But a miller us'd him worst of all—
  He crush'd him 'tween two stones.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

Sie zapfen ihm sein Herzblut ab,
  Und trinken's in die Rund',
Und mehr, je mehr sie trinken, fleiszt
  Von Freude jeder Wund.

And they ha'e ta'en his very heart's blood,
  And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
  Their joy did more abound.

Hans Gerstenkorn, der war ein Held,
  Gar tapfer stolz und gut,
Drum wenn sein Blut ihr trinkt, fogleich
  Hebt kuhn sich euer Muth.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
  Of noble enterprise;
For if you do but taste his blood,
  'Twill make your courage rise.

Es macht, dasz man sein Leid vergiszt,
  Es wurzt uns jedes Gluck,
Es macht, dasz eine Wittwe singt,
  Perlt auch die Thran' im Blick.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;
  'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
  Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Drum lebe hoch Hans Gerstenkorn!
  Kinm jeder's Glas zur Hand,
Kie fehlen tausend Enkel ihm
  Im alten Schottenland!

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great prosperity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

No more striking and convincing example of the truth of Goethe's view of Burns as a folks-poet could anywhere be found than the above ballad. Perhaps Goethe was not aware of the fact that Burns avowedly composed the ballad on the plan of one which, in various forms, had been long current among the people. If any reader, curious in such matters, will take the trouble of comparing Burns's ballad with the version printed in the ballad collections from the black-letter copy in the Pepysian Library, he will see at a glance to what extent Burns was indebted to his forbears. To look upon Burns, as the two Carlyles seem to have done, as a "phenomenon," without education and owing nothing to his poetic forerunners, is as unfair to Burns and them as it is misleading to the public. The explanation is that Carlyle knew little and cared nothing for the vast body of poetry which

went to the making of Burns as assuredly as the study of the German language and literature made Carlyle what he is. But the subject is too wide for adequate treatment here.

A more important contribution to Burns literature than that of Kaufmann's, both on its own merits and as having drawn from Carlyle two deliverances which fall to be recorded here, was the translation by Julius Heintze, one of whose friends seems to have sent a copy to Carlyle who acknowledged receipt of the gift in the following letter which was published in a privately-printed book, and which seems to me too valuable not to find a place here, the more so as it is not likely to be known to many of my readers. At all events, it forms a fitting introduction to Carlyle's short review of Heintze's translation :—

Will you return many thanks on my part to Herr Heintze for the gift you were good enough to forward from him? You judged rightly that it would give me pleasure. Germany will have to get acquainted with Burns yet. Four translations in one year do seem to betoken that it wants not the will towards that! Of

Kaufmann's projected version I recollect hearing once from Goethe; nay, I think I saw some specimens of it, which, however, did not seem to promise much. That his and Herr Heintze's and two other translations had actually come forth in print was entirely new to me.

This work I find to be done throughout in a really meritorious manner, all things considered. The grammatical sense is in general accurately seized, a thing not easy to do always in such a case. The poetical expression and physiognomy is given also, more or less; if not always Burns's, then Heintze's, who, I find, has one of his own too. Some songs I would even call felicitously done; I have read nine that were not done creditably. Perhaps the one counsel I would venture to give Herr Heintze were this: in all cases *to learn the tune* first. Thomson's collection of Scotch songs, Johnson's collection, or other like works are not difficult to procure; and all the Germans are musicians. The tune is the *soul* of a true song; that is to say, if it be a song at all, if it have any *soul.* Burns always strummed upon the fiddle till he got his head and mind *filled* with the tune (such is his own account), then came the words, the thoughts, all singing themselves by that. There is tune in every syllable. They are the truest songs, these of Burns, that we have in Europe for a a long while. The prime root of Herr Heintze's shortcomings, when he has come short, one might define to be this: that he had forsaken the

tune, that he did not know the tune. Pray tell him so, if you judge it worth while.

I should guess, further, that the Germans would like well to be acquainted with Burns as a man, no less than a singer. Herr Heintze might make himself at home in this; his sketch of Burns's life already indicates that he is on the way thither. He ought to *read* Lockhart's life, Cunningham's life, Currie's life—above all, the letters of Burns himself, with annotations, till he make the whole present to his own conception. Much might be selected, which once judiciously put together, the whole world would like to read on that side of the sea as on this.

My brave German friends, if their honest hearts are not all changed since I used to know them as a nation, would hail with welcome this rugged Saxon brother; one of the strongest, noblest men; a Scottish *Thor*, as I sometimes call him—a true Peasant-Thunder-god, as the old Scandinavian was.

With many thanks and compliments to yourself, with grateful pleasure in the past, and good hope in the future towards your friend.

The above letter is substantially the same as a short review of Heintze's translation which Carlyle seems to have contributed to the *Examiner* of Sunday, September 27, 1840, and which, but for the following notice of it by

Espinasse in his "Recollections," might never have been recovered, as no bibliographer of Carlyle down till now had ever discovered it:—

Up to the time I am writing, Carlyle had contributed only one article to the *Examiner;* of his subsequent contributions to it more in a future chapter. He did not include that one article in any edition of his works, and it has escaped the notice not only of his biographers, but, what is more remarkable, of his bibliographers. It was a pleasant little review of Heintze's German translation of selected poems of Burns, from which, not then such a Prussophile as he became, Carlyle noted the absence of any version of "A man's a man for a' that," as a lay the sentiment of which would not be acceptable to certain persons in the Berlin of those days.

And now, without note or comment, I will transcribe the article referred to:—

Genius, like murder, "will out." Here is the Scottish Ploughman done partly into German verse. It is very curious to see the old familiar face of the "Peasant Thunder-god," as our engravers have a hundred times given it (for want of a better and truer to give), reproduced here from German copper, with the rugged facsimile, *Robert Burns, Poet,* engraved by Schwerdgeburth of Weimar! This man wrote in the dialect of obscure peasants; as a ploughman in the shire of Ayr; as a guager in the little burgh of Dumfries; but he has

travelled far since then. A polished, almost fastidious Goethe is drawn from his artistic height to comment lovingly on this fiery son of Nature, whom he recognises for a brother; and Goethe's countrymen, we find, have produced *four* versions, or select versions, of him this summer! So goes it. Let but any son of Adam, in the obscurest slough of human existence, in the rudest dialect of men, utter from the heart of him a genuine word—all sons of Adam feel it to *be* genuine, and will lay hold of it as the undoubted possession of all. Such a word, if it do come from the heart, has by-and-by to go into all hearts; to be reproduced in all corners of the articulate-speaking world; till, consciously or unconsciously, all mankind have got the good of it. For indeed, not this man or that man, but mankind, is the true owner of such a word—it was spoken from the general heart that belongs to us all.

Whether the Germans mean now to run upon Burns, and produce translation on translation of him, thick as blackberries—thick as English *Fausts*—we cannot say. Four in one summer do seem to be enough! But the Germans themselves can look to that. What we have to report is that there are four: Kaufmann's from Berlin, this of Heintze's from Brunswick—both these reported to be good; then two others, names not given, which probably are rather bad. We ourselves know little of Kaufmann, of the other two nothing at all. But this Heintze, in smart blue octavo, from "the firm of George Westermann, Braunschweig"—him we will salute with

some kind of welcome, if merely as the first that has arrived here.

Considering all things, it must be said that Herr Heintze has done his task in a decidedly creditable manner. The selection of pieces is good; if perhaps not the best. *For a' that, and a' that*, is not one of the songs chosen; the German latitude, we suppose, did not well admit it. One could have liked to see

> The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
> The man's the gowd for a' that,

how it would have sounded in German; but perhaps some Schmidt-Phiseldeck would not have liked!

Heintze in general has seized the grammatical sense very correctly; a thing which in translating from Ayrshire Scotch cannot always have been easy. Neither has the poetical expression entirely evaporated, as the risk was: for the most part there *is* a kind of poetical expression; if not Burns's, then something which a German may have taken to be Burns's. Herr Heintze himself has clearly some music in his head. In one or two instances, of singular felicity, we have, as it were, the very Burns, with all his graces and rhythms; and always, over and above the mere prosaic sense, there is a poetic something which afar off resembles Burns. We should say in general that Herr Heintze had not always learnt the *tune* of his song. Burns's songs have a *tune*, so as few or rather as no modern songs we know have.

Every thought, every turn of phrase, *sings* itself: the tune modulates it all, shapes it as a soul does the body it is to dwell in. The tune is always the soul of a song, in this sense; that is to say, provided the song be a true song, and have any soul! As Herr Heintze, it would seem, purposes to go on translating Burns, let us recommend him to procure *Thomson's Collection*, or some such musical work; and before entering on any song, fill his head and heart with the melody of it, and never start till his whole mind is singing to it; the words will then come dancing to the right measure, in every syllable of them a tune.

Green grow the rashes, O, is but indifferently given here: "Grün werden nun die Binsen, O," is even grammatically incorrect; the meaning is not that the rushes are now *becoming* green, but that they stand habitually in that state: "grün wächst das Binsenkraut" gives the sense, and would have also preserved the tune. However, that is not the worst. *Rashes*, except as a kind of rough rhyme for lasses, is of no particular significance; but *as* such a rhyme, the whole song rests on it; and Heintze's accordingly is either no song or another. A perfect translator would have to find some equivalent German word *signifying* this or that, rushes, ragweed, water-cresses, it matters little; but *rhyming* to "Madchen" (to "weiberchen" were better), as this does to "lasses"; otherwise it is not to the purpose.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O ;
Her 'prentice hand she tried on man,
And then she made the lasses, O.
Green grow the rashes, O, etc.

Perhaps about a half of Herr Heintze's songs are decidedly below what he could make them, did he know the tune, and stand honestly by it. We have met grammatically with no important blunder, but one ; a very excusable blunder, but of a rather sad effect where it stands. In *Macpherson's Farewell* Herr Heintze has considered that those words, "He played a spring, and danced it round below the gallows tree," must signify the *leap* a condemned robber gives from the ladder, and his *dance*—alas, too hideous a dance for singing of! "*Spring*" he did not know to mean *dancing-tune*, which a man plays on his fiddle, dancing to it ; and so, of this wild burden,

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he ;
He played a spring and danced it round
Below the gallows tree.

Herr Heintze has made this altogether horrible one :—

So ging er froh und wohlgemuth
Und unerschrocken fort ;
Ein Sprung—dann tantzt' er in der Luft [Ach Gott !]
Am Galgenstamme dort.

But let us now, by way of counterpoise, give Heintze's best translation, the best we have fallen in with: that of *Duncan Gray.* Readers who know, and all song readers and singers might as well know, what the jovial, genial humour of the original is, will find that it bounds along with little less expressiveness in German than in Scotch. *Freit*, indeed, is far inferior as a singing or speaking phrase to *wooing o't;* but that and several other things we must even put up with. Hear Heintze:—

Duncan Gray kam her zu frein,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Als zu Christnacht wir voll Wein,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Gretchen that gewaltig dick,
Gab ihm manchen schwöden Blick;
Duncan fuhr erschreckt Zurück,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!

Duncan bat und Duncan fleht',
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Sie blieb taub wie Ailsa Craig,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Duncan seufzt in Liebesnoth,
Weinte sich die Augen roth
Sprach von Strick und Wassertod,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!

Zeit und Glück sind Ebb' und Fluth,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Berschmähte Lieb' gar wehe thut
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit?

Soll ich, sprach er, wie ein Fant
Sterben, weil sie hirnverbrannt?
Geh sie doch—ins Pfefferland!
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!

Wie's nun kam genug's hat Grund
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Sie ward krank—als er gesund,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Ihren Busen Etwàs druckt,
Bis ein Seufzer sie erguickt,
Und was aus dem Aug 'ihr blickt!
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!

Duncan hatt' ein meiches Herz,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Und mit Gretchem war's kein Scherz,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!
Duncan konnt 'ihr Tod nicht Tein,
Und den Zorn weigt' Mitleid ein;
Nun sind froh sie in Berein,
Ha, ha, die lust'ge Freit!

We shall be glad to hear of Herr Heintze's progress in this work of translating Burns. Probably not more than half his songs are given here; of his poems only some three, *To the Daisy*, *The Mouse*, and *Man was made to Mourn*—an imperfect sample. To a man meritoriously bent on making Burns known to his countrymen, we would recommend, as more decisively legible at least, the *Letters of Burns*. The whole or part of these, intercalated at the due place in the

Poet's history, would show the Germans a man they have not yet seen, and perhaps would like to see. Heintze has given a praiseworthy sketch by way of *Life*, but seems not to have read it well. He has not even sufficiently consulted his Goethe. Let him read Cunningham, Currie, above all, the *Letters* themselves, and then see what he does see, and what he has got to tell his people about that. Right good speed to him.

After finishing the review of Heintze's translation, Carlyle presented the book to Major James Glencairn Burns, the Poet's second son.

In 1834 the Carlyles removed from Craigenputtock to London. They took up their abode in the house No. 5 (now re-numbered 24), Cheyne Row, Chelsea, which was their first and only house in London, Carlyle continuing to reside there till the day of his death—that is, for the long space of forty-seven years. In 1837 he delivered a series of six lectures on *German Literature*, a record of which has not been preserved. In the following year he gave a second series, his subject being *On the History of Literature, or the Successive Periods of European Culture*, which have recently been

published; and issued *The French Revolution: A History*—notable, in the first instance, as the first book which bore on its title-page the name of Thomas Carlyle. Next year he again took the platform, his subject being *The Revolutions of Modern Europe*, which have shared the fate of the lectures on *German Literature*. In 1839 *Chartism* was published; and in the following year he delivered what was to prove his last series of six lectures—*On Heroes and Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*, published in book form in 1841. In this book, for some reason or other not easily understood, he classified Burns, not as a Poet, but as a Man of Letters—not, however, going so far as to dub him an "English Man of Letters," as the fashion of some is—and speaks eloquently of the Poet's heroism; the whole deliverance being pitched on a high key of rapturous admiration. *Past and Present* was published in 1843; and two years afterwards he gave to the world *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, with Elucidations*. The year 1850 is notable for

the publication of *Latter Day Pamphlets;* and a year afterwards *The Life of John Sterling* took the reading public by surprise.

During the time the Cromwell volumes were in preparation, we get a picture of Carlyle and a self-revelation of his wife in one of her letters from which I extract the following:—

My husband goes on, still *willing* to write this life of Cromwell under the most desperate apprehension that it will "never come to anything," as if people had the use of their faculties in all states of the atmosphere! And so he does himself a deal of harm and nobody any good. He came into this room the other morning when I was sitting peacefully darning his stockings, and laid a great bundle of papers on my fire, enough to have kindled the chimney, if it had not been, providentially, swept quite lately—the kindling of a chimney subjecting one here in London to the awful visitation of three fire-engines, besides a fine of five pounds! I fancied it the contents of his waste-paper basket that he was ridding himself of by this summary process. But happening to look up at his face, I saw in its grim, concentrated self-complacency the astounding truth that it was all his labour since he returned from Scotland that had been there sent up the vent in smoke. "He had discovered overnight," he said, "that he must take up the *damnable thing* on quite a new tack!" Oh, a very *damnable thing* indeed! I tell

you in secret, I begin to be seriously afraid that his *Life of Cromwell* is going to have the same strange fate as the child of a certain French Marchioness that I once read of, which never could *get* itself *born*, though carried about in her for twenty years till she died! A wit is said to have once asked this poor woman if "Madame was not thinking of swallowing a tutor for her son." So one might ask Carlyle if he is not thinking of swallowing a publisher for his book, only that he is too miserable, poor fellow, without the addition of being laughed at. In lamenting his slow progress, or, rather, non-progress, he said to me one day, with a *naïveté* altogether touching: "Well, they may *twaddle* as they like about the miseries of a bad conscience, but I should like to know whether Judas Iscariot was *more* miserable than Thomas Carlyle, who never did anything *criminal, so far as he remembers!*" Ah, my dear, this is all very easy to *write* about, but to *transact!*

In his forty-seventh year Carlyle addressed himself to his greatest task, *The History of Frederick the Great*, completed in six volumes, forming nearly a third part of all that he had written, and representing the labours of upwards of fourteen years. The first two volumes were published in 1856, the third and fourth in 1862, and the last instalment early in 1865. In

November of the same year he was elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, his "dear old *Alma Mater*." On the 21st of April of the following year, in the midst of the rectorial celebrations, Mrs. Carlyle died, "suddenly snatched away from him, and the light of his life as if gone out." In 1875 the illustrious sage finished his literary labours by publishing *Early Kings of Norway*, and *The Portraits of John Knox*. He had now reached his eightieth birthday, and on the 4th of December he was presented with a gold medal and congratulatory address, signed by all the leading men and women of the day in literature, science, and art, in commemoration of the event.

The venerable seer passed away on the 5th of February, 1881, aged eighty-six years and two months. His remains were interred beside those of his father and mother in the little churchyard of Ecclefechan; Mrs. Carlyle having been laid by the side of her father in the chancel of Haddington Old Abbey Church. They had no family. His books,

says Carlyle, "are our only children—and in a true sense these are verily ours, and will perhaps live some time in the world after we are both gone."

It is only stating what has been said repeatedly, that Burns and Carlyle had many qualities in common, which is the secret of Carlyle's success as a writer on Burns. His broad sympathies, keen susceptibilities, and penetrating intellect, combined with an artistic discrimination and thorough earnestness and sterling honesty of purpose, gave Carlyle an ascendency over every other writer on the subject. Stripping Burns of all the fine linen and dirty patchwork with which some in their enthusiasm and others in their villainy had draped him, he *re-Sartorized* this Joseph-coated hero, and presented him to the world in his own inspiring mantle, heedless as to whether it were fashionable or not, provided he came by it honestly. Carlyle believed that even the Devil is not nearly so black as he is painted; and, looking around him, he found

much "dirty linen" which, with his washing tub, *sincerity*, he alone could make clean and presentable to the world. The first to undergo the cleansing operation was Burns; next, Cromwell; and, lastly, Frederick the Great. Such a literary laundry was Carlyle's noise-proof and dirt-proof study.

As a fitting introduction to the excerpts that follow, I cannot do better than quote our author's opinion of modern hero-worship:—

> I think that we, on the whole, do our hero-worship worse than any nation in the world ever did it before: that the Burns an Exciseman, the Byron a Literary Lion, are intrinsically, all things considered, a baser and falser phenomenon than the Odin a God, the Mahomet a prophet of God.

Carlyle is no less severe on those people who are continually protesting that the age of chivalry and poetry is gone. Like Mirabeau, who said to his secretary, "Ne me dites jamais ce bête de mot," Carlyle dislikes the word "impossible" as heartily as Napoleon himself:—

> In Art, in Practice, innumerable critics demonstrate that most things are henceforth impossible; that we are

got once for all into the region of perennial commonplace, and must contentedly continue there. Let such critics demonstrate; it is the nature of them! What harm is in it? Poetry, once well demonstrated to be impossible, arises in Burns, arises in Goethe.

William Burnes, the Poet's father, has never, in the whole range of literature, had a more able and touching exposition of his heroism than in the following exquisite passage:—

Beautiful it is to see and understand that no worth, known or unknown, *can* die even in this earth. The work an unknown good man has done is like a vein of water flowing hidden underground, secretly making the ground green; it flows and flows—it joins itself with other veins and veinlets; one day it will start forth as a visible perennial well. Ten dumb centuries had made the speaking Dante; a well he of many veinlets. William Burnes, or Burns, was a poor peasant; could not prosper in his "seven acres of nursery ground," nor any enterprise of trade and toil; had to "thole a factor's snash," and read attorney-letters, in his poor hut, "which threw us all into tears": a man of no money-capital at all, of no account at all: yet a brave man, a wise and just, in evil fortune faithful, unconquerable to the death. And there wept withal, among the others, a boy named *Robert*, with a heart of melting pity, of

greatness and fiery wrath; and *his* voice, fashioned here by the poor father, does it not already reach like a great elegy—like a stern prophecy—to the ends of the world? "Let me make the songs, and you shall make the laws!" What chancellor, king, senator, begirt with never such sumptuosity, dyed-velvet, blaring and celebrity, could you have named in England that was so momentous as that William Burnes? Courage!

After this panegyric on the father of our Poet, from the pen of the greatest writer of the nineteenth century, the reader will not be surprised to find the encomiastic strain heightened when he speaks of the son:—

From the lowest and broadest stratum of society, where the births are by the million, there was born, almost in our own memory, a Robert Burns, son of one who "had not capital for his poor moor-farm of twenty pounds a year." Robert Burns never had the smallest chance to get into Parliament, much as Robert Burns deserved, for all our sakes, to have been found there. For the man—it was not known to men purblind, sunk in their poor, dim, vulgar element, but might have been known to men of insight, who had any loyalty or any royalty of their own—was a born King of men: full of valour, and intelligence, and heroic nobleness; fit for other work than to break his heart among poor mortals gauging beer! Him no

Ten-Pound constituency chose, nor did any Reforming Premier, in the deep-sunk British nation overwhelmed in foggy stupor, with the lode-stars all gone out for it; there was no whisper of a notion that it could be desirable to choose him—except to come and dine with you, and in the interim to gauge. And yet heaven-born Mr. Pitt, at that period, was by no means without need of Heroic Intellect for other purposes than gauging! But sorrowful strangulation by red-tape, much *tighter* then than it now is, when so many revolutionary earthquakes have tussled it, quite tied up the meagre Pitt; and he said, on hearing of this Burns and his sad hampered case: "Literature will take care of itself"—"Yes, and of you, too, if you don't mind it!" answers one.

However, the patrons of genius in our Scottish metropolis were not so callous as the great statesman:—

A Scottish poet, "proud of his name and country," *can* apply fervently to "Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt," and be made a gauger of beer-barrels, and tragical, immortal, broken-hearted singer; the stifled echo of his melody, audible through long centuries, one other note of "that sacred *Miserere*," that rises up to heaven, out of all times and lands.

Carlyle is fond of comparing Burns to Apollo and the Teutonic god Thor, to whom

Thursday, or Thor's-day, was dedicated by our ancestors:—

And so, like Apollo taken for a Neatherd, and perhaps for none of the best, on the Admetus establishment, this new Norse Thor had to put-up with what was going; to gauge ale, and be thankful; pouring his celestial sunlight through Scottish Song-writing—the narrowest chink ever offered to a Thunder-god before! And the meagre Pitt, and his Dundasses and red-tape Phantasms (growing very ghastly now to think of), did not in the least know or understand, the impious, god-forgetting mortals, that Heroic Intellects, if Heaven were pleased to send such, were the one salvation for the world and for them and all of us. No; they "had done very well without such"; did not see the use of such; went along "very well" without such; well presided over by that singular Heroic Intellect called George the Third: and the Thunder-god, as was rather fit of him, departed early, still in the noon of life, somewhat weary of gauging ale!—O Peter, what a scandalous, torpid element of yellow London fog, favourable to owls only and their mousing operations, has blotted out the stars of Heaven for us these several generations back —which, I rejoice to see, is now visibly about to take itself away again, or perhaps to be *dispelled* in a very tremendous manner!

But we have not done with this Georgius

Tertius yet. The great philosopher is more and more enraged (if a philosopher may be allowed to get angry with downright stupidity), the longer he contemplates the history of that miserable era, and contrasts the pig-headedness of the King with the transcendent genius of the Poet:—

> George the Third is Defender of something we call "the Faith" in these years; George the Third is head charioteer of the Destinies of England, to guide them through the gulf of French Revolutions, American Independencies; and Robert Burns is Gauger of ale in Dumfries. It is an Iliad in a nutshell. The physiognomy of a world now verging towards dissolution, reduced now to spasms and death-throes, lies pictured in that one fact—which astonishes nobody, except at me for being astonished at it. The fruit of long ages of confirmed Valethood, entirely confirmed as into a Law of Nature; cloth-worship and quack-worship: entirely *confirmed* Valethood—which will have to *un*-confirm itself again; God knows, with difficulty enough!

But the reader will exclaim: "To what purpose are those lacerating passages, and how is the thing to be put right?"—thinking that perhaps our philosopher, like old Homer—whom

Horace accuses of nodding occasionally—is here napping; but Carlyle has a remedy, actually in working order, and tested by the experience of the Arabians—no mean judges, be it spoken—for a period of some thousand years:—

> Alas, the defect, as we must often urge and again urge, is less a defect of telescopes than of some eyesight. Those superstitious blockheads of the Twelfth Century had no telescopes, but they had still an eye; not ballot-boxes; only reverence for Worth, abhorrence of Unworth. It is the way with all barbarians. Thus Mr. Sale informs me, the old Arab Tribes would gather in liveliest *gaudeamus*, and sing, and kindle bonfires, and wreathe crowns of honour, and solemnly thank the gods that, in their Tribe, too, a Poet had shown himself. As indeed they well might; for what usefuler, I say not nobler and heavenlier thing could the gods, doing their very kindest, send to any Tribe or Nation, in any time or circumstance? I declare to thee, my afflicted quack-ridden brother, in spite of thy astonishment, it is very lamentable! We English find a Poet, as brave a man as has been made for a hundred years or so anywhere under the Sun; and do we kindle bonfires, or thank the gods? Not at all. We, taking due counsel of it, set the man to gauge ale-barrels in the Burgh of Dumfries; and pique ourselves on our "patronage of genius."

Genius, Poet: do we know what these words mean? An inspired Soul once more vouchsafed us, direct from Nature's own great fire-heart, to see the Truth, and speak it, and do it; Nature's own sacred voice heard once more athwart the dreary boundless element of hear-saying and canting, of twaddle and poltroonery, in which the bewildered Earth, nigh perishing, has *lost its way*. Hear once more, ye bewildered, benighted mortals; listen once again to a voice from the inner Light-sea and Flame-sea, Nature's and Truth's own heart; know the fact of your Existence what it is, put away the Cant of it which it is *not;* and knowing, do, and let it be well with you!

Carlyle thinks, too, that much might be done for the furtherance of the Reign of the Aristocracy of Talent by the landed classes, as if it were not the interest of these classes to prevent the reign of what must prove destructive to their claims; let us hear him on this point:—

Will he awaken, be alive again, and have a soul; or is this death-fit very death? It is a question of questions, for himself and for us all! Alas, is there no noble work for this man too? Has not he thick-headed ignorant boors; lazy, enslaved farmers; weedy lands? Lands! Has not he weary. heavy-laden ploughers of land; immortal souls of men, ploughing, ditching, day-

drudging; bare of back, empty of stomach, nigh desperate of heart; and none peaceably to help them but he, under Heaven? Does he find, with his three hundred thousand pounds, no noble thing trodden down in the thoroughfares, which it were god-like to help up? Can he do nothing for his Burns but make a Gauger of him; lionise him, bedinner him, for a foolish while; then whistle him down the wind, to desperation and bitter death? His work too is difficult, in these modern, far-dislocated ages. But it may be done; it may be tried; it must be done.

Whereupon he gives an instance of where and by whom it is done:—

A modern Duke of Weimar, not a god he either, but a human duke, levied, as I reckon, in rents and taxes and all incomings whatsoever, less than several of our English Dukes do in rents alone. The Duke of Weimar, with these incomings, had to govern, judge, defend, every way administer *his* Dukedom. He does all this as few others did; and he improves lands besides all this, makes river-embankments, maintains not soldiers only but Universities and Institutions—and in his Court were these four men: Wieland, Herder, Schiller, Goethe. Not as parasites, which was impossible; not as table-wits and poetic Katerfeltoes; but as noble spiritual men working under a noble Practical Man. Shielded by him from many miseries; perhaps from many shortcomings,

destructive aberrations. Heaven had sent, once more, heavenly light into the world; and this man's honour was that he gave it welcome. A new noble kind of clergy, under an old but still noble kind of King! I reckon that this one Duke of Weimar did more for the Culture of his Nation than all the English Dukes and *Duces* now extant, or that were extant since Henry the Eighth gave them the Church Lands to eat, have done for theirs! I am ashamed, I am alarmed for my English Dukes: what word have I to say?

Commenting on Frederick the Great's simple style of living, and how the king would not even allow his servants to black his boots, Carlyle says:—

The Art-manufacture of your Friedrich can come very cheap, it would appear, if once nature have done her part in regard to him, and there be mere honest will on the part of the bystanders. Thus Samuel Johnson, too, cost next to nothing in the way of board and entertainment in this world. And a Robert Burns, remarkable modern Thor, a Peasant-God in these sunk ages, with a touch of melodious *runes* in him (since all else lay under ban for the poor fellow), was raised on frugal oatmeal, at an expense of perhaps half-a-crown a week.

This is literally true. We have it on the Poet's authority that he has existed on a little

more than half that sum. With a fling of contemptuous defiance at fortune, he sings, with reference to the servility of authors:—

> In all the clamorous cry of starving want,
> They dun benevolence with shameless front;
> Oblige them, patronise their tinsel lays,
> They persecute you all your future days!
> Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
> My horny fist assume the plough again;
> The piebald jacket let me patch once more,
> *On eighteenpence a week I've lived before.*

Another passage, *apropos* Johnson and Burns, may be quoted here:—

To no man does Fortune throw open all the Kingdoms of the world, and say: It is thine; choose where thou wilt dwell! To the most she opens hardly the smallest cranny or doghutch, and says, not without asperity: There, that is thine while thou canst keep it; nestle thyself there, and bless Heaven! Alas, men must fit themselves into many things: some forty years ago, for instance, the noblest and ablest Man in all the British lands might be seen, not swaying the royal sceptre, or the pontiff's censer, on the pinnacle of the World, but gauging ale-tubs in the little burgh of Dumfries! Johnson came a little nearer the mark than Burns; but with him, too, "strength was mournfully

denied its arena"; he too had to fight Fortune at strange odds all his life long.

It has been contended that, after Carlyle has said all he has to say about Mirabeau, the facts do not justify his estimate of his genius. However this may be, certain it is that our Poet, in the passage about to be quoted, has for once found himself in company worthy of his acquaintance. Carlyle, as a sort of literary Lord Chamberlain, ushers our Poet into the Temple of Fame in the following characteristic though ceremonious manner:—

Truly, looking now into the matter, we might say, in spite of the gossips, that on this whole Planet, in those years, there was hardly born such a man-child as this same, in the "Mansion-house of Bignon, not far from Paris," whom they named Gabriel Honoré. Nowhere, we say, came there a stouter or braver into this earth; whither they come marching by the legion and the myriad, out of Eternity and Night! Except, indeed, what is notable enough, one other that arrived some few months later, at the town of Frankfort-on-Mayn, and got christened *Johann Wolfgang Goethe.* Then again, in some ten years more, there came another, still liker Gabriel Honoré in his brawny ways. It was into a

mean hut that this one came, an infirm hut (which the wind blew down at the time), in the shire of Ayr, in Scotland: him they named *Robert Burns*. These, in that epoch, were the Well-born of the World; by whom the world's history was to be carried on. Ah, could the well-born of the world be always rightly bred, rightly intreated there, what a world were it! But it is not so; it is the reverse of so. And then few, like that Frankfort one, can peaceably vanquish the world, with its black imbroglios, and shine above it, in serene help of it, like a sun! The most can but *Titanically* vanquish it, or be vanquished by it: hence, instead of light (stillest and strongest of things), we have but lightning, red fire, and oftentimes conflagrations, which are very woful.

Those who deplore the imperfect education which Burns received had better read the following extract before they pour forth their lamentations and patronisingly contemplate his "crumbs of Latin and scraps of French," as some people phrase it, in that dainty manner which sits so easy on the tribe of cheap patrons. Commenting on the rigid system of education enforced by the old Marquis on his son, Count Mirabeau, Carlyle goes on to say:—

How much better was Burns's education (though this, too, went on under the grimmest pressures) on the wild

hill-side, by the brave peasant's hearth, with no theory of education at all, but poverty, toil, tempest, and the handles of the plough!

Some of these quotations have such a far-reaching, perennial significance, quite apart from their value as appreciations of the life and genius of Burns, that I do not hesitate to transcribe a passage such as this:—

A man willing to work, and unable to find work, is perhaps the saddest sight that Fortune's inequality exhibits under this sun. Burns expresses feelingly what thoughts it gave him: a poor man seeking *work;* seeking leave to toil that he might be fed and sheltered! That he might but be put on a level with the four-footed workers of the Planet which is his! There is not a horse willing to work but can get food and shelter in requital; a thing this two-footed worker has to seek for, to solicit occasionally in vain. He is nobody's two-footed worker; he is not even anybody's slave. And yet he is a *two*-footed worker; it is currently reported there is an immortal soul in him, sent down out of Heaven into the Earth; and one beholds him *seeking* for this! Nay, what will a wise Legislature say if it turn out that he cannot find it; that the answer to their postulate proposition is not affirmative but negative?

The poem of Burns's which Carlyle had

in his mind when he penned the above passage is that from which the following stanzas are borrowed—the most mournful of all his dirges:—

> See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,
> So abject, mean, and vile;
> Who begs a brother of the earth
> To give him leave to toil;
> And see his lordly fellow-worm
> The poor petition spurn,
> Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
> And helpless offspring mourn.
>
> If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
> By Nature's law design'd—
> Why was an independent wish
> E'er planted in my mind?
> If not, why am I subject to
> His cruelty, or scorn?
> Or why has Man the will and pow'r
> To make his fellow mourn?

Carlyle seizes every opportunity of introducing even the slightest mention of his Hero; and, as in the following passage, sometimes gives information not generally known. Speaking of Edward Irving's father, Gavin Irving, he says:—

Gavin was bailie in Annan when the furious election sung by Burns ("there were five carlines in the south" —five burghs, namely), took place. Gavin voted the right way (Duke of Queensberry's way) and got for his two brothers each the lease of a snug Queensberry farm, which grew even the snugger, as dissolute old Queensberry developed himself more and more into a cynical egoist, sensualist, and hater of his next heir (the Buccleuch, not a Douglas but a Scott, who now holds both dukedoms), a story well-known over Scotland, and of altogether lively interest in Annandale (where it meant entail-leases and large sums of money) during several years of my youth.

A favourite metaphor with writers on Burns is to liken the Poet to a skylark, in reference to the naturalness of his song and the genuineness of his singing. It is an image that has presented itself to many minds, especially to those of the numberless poets who have sung the praises of Burns; some of whose references may be quoted as introducing a very fine passage from Carlyle which falls to be recorded here, in pursuance of the object the writer has in view in collecting these fragments.

Longfellow sings—

I see amid the fields of Ayr
A ploughman who, in foul and fair,
Sings at his task
So clear, we know not if it is
The laverock's song we hear or his,
Nor care to ask.

Equally fine is James Graham's reference to Burns in one of his poems:—

Thou simple bird,
Of all the vocal quire, dwell'st in a home
The humblest; yet thy morning song ascends
Nearest to Heaven—sweet emblem of his song,
Who sang thee wakening by the daisy's side!

The reference here, in the last two lines, is to Burns and the second verse of his poem on the daisy; a verse which has been greatly admired from the time of Henry Mackenzie, who first struck the note of admiration:—

Alas! it's no' thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie Lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling East.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

Carlyle, in prose, even surpasses the two poets from whom I have just quoted :—

They are something, too, those humble, genuine lark-notes of a Burns—skylark, starting from the humble furrow, far overhead into the blue depths, and singing to us so genuinely there. For all true singing is of the nature of worship ; as, indeed, all true *working* may be said to be—whereof such *singing* is but the record, and fit melodious presentation, to us.

I have already quoted more than one passage in which Carlyle insists on the necessity of Hero Worship. In nearly every instance he gives Burns as an example of how poorly such worship flourishes in these islands :—

It was a rude, gross error, that of counting the Great Man a god. Yet let us say that it is difficult to know *what* he is, or how to account of him and receive him! The most significant feature in the history of an epoch is the manner it has of welcoming a Great Man. Ever, to the true instincts of men, there is something godlike in him. Whether they shall take him to be a god, to be a prophet, or what they shall take him to be? that is ever a grand question ; by their way of answering that, we shall see, as through a little window, into the very heart of these men's spiritual condition. For at bottom the Great Man, as he comes from the hand of

Nature, is ever the same kind of thing: Odin, Luther, Johnson, Burns; I hope to make it appear that these are all originally of one stuff; that only in the world's reception of them, and the shapes they assume, are they so immeasurably diverse. The worship of Odin astonishes us—to fall prostrate before the Great Man, into *deliquium* of love and wonder over him, and feel in their hearts that he was a denizen of the skies, a god! This was imperfect enough: but to welcome, for example, a Burns as we did, was that what we can call perfect? The most precious gift that Heaven can give to the Earth; a man of "genius" as we call it; the Soul of a Man actually sent down from the skies with a God's-message to us—this we waste away as an idle artificial firework, sent to amuse us a little, and sink it into ashes, wreck, and ineffectuality; *such* reception of a Great Man I do not call very perfect either! Looking into the heart of the thing, one may perhaps call that of Burns a still uglier phenomenon, betokening still sadder imperfections in mankind's ways, than the Scandinavian method itself! To fall into mere unreasoning *deliquium* of love and admiration was not good; but such unreasoning, nay, irrational, supercilious no-love at all is perhaps still worse! It is a thing for ever changing, this of Hero-worship: different in each age, difficult to do well in any age. Indeed, the heart of the whole business of the age, one may say, is to do it well.

CARLYLE ON BURNS

In more than one passage, already quoted, Carlyle compares Burns to Mirabeau. "They differ widely in vesture," he admits; but, he argues, "look at them intrinsically. There is the same burly, thick-necked strength of body as of soul." Elsewhere he says:—

I confess I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be *all* sorts of men. The Poet who could merely sit on a chair and compose stanzas would never make a stanza worth much. He could not sing the Heroic warrior, unless he himself were at least a Heroic warrior too. I fancy there is in him the Politician, the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher—in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these. So, too, I cannot understand how a Mirabeau, with that great glowing heart, with the fire that was in it, with the bursting tears that were in it, could not have written verses, tragedies, poems, and touched all hearts in that way, had his course of life and education led him thitherward. The grand fundamental character is that of Great Man; that the man be great. Napoleon has words in him which are like Austerlitz Battles. Louis Fourteenth's Marshals are a kind of poetical men withal; the things Turenne says are full of sagacity and geniality, like sayings of Samuel Johnson. The great heart, the clear, deep-seeing eye: there it lies; no man whatever, in what province soever, can prosper at all

without these. Petrarch and Boccaccio did diplomatic messages, it seems, quite well: one can easily believe it; they had done things a little harder than these! Burns, a gifted song-writer, might have made a still better Mirabeau. Shakespeare—one knows not what *he* could not have made, in the supreme degree.

This similarity of Burns to Mirabeau has also been pointed out by Mr. Henley in his essay on the Poet—an essay which, in every other respect, is the very antithesis of Carlyle's, being what I suppose Mr. Henley would call a natural, in opposition to a phenomenal, exposition of the genius of Burns. A reviewer in the *Times*, ignorant of Carlyle, having referred to Mr. Henley's parallel as "a happy originality," it may be quoted here:—

Speaking broadly, I can call none to mind who, in strength and genius and temperament, presents so close a general likeness to Burns as Mirabeau. Born a noble, and given an opportunity commensurate with himself, Burns would certainly have done such work as Mirabeau's, and done it at least as well. Born a Scots peasant, Mirabeau must as certainly have lived the life and died the death of Burns. In truth, it is only the fortune of war that we remember the one by

his conduct of the Revolution, which called his highest capacities into action, while we turn to the other for his verses, which are the outcome (so Maria Riddell thought, and was not alone in thinking) of by no means his strongest gift.

Equally frequent has Carlyle referred to an incident in the life of Burns, during the Poet's first visit to Edinburgh. It is an incident calculated indeed to make one pause and ponder; and one need not wonder that it should once more fall to be recorded here, in a slightly different form, as the reader may see, by comparing the following passage with some of those already given:—

High Duchesses, and ostlers of inns, gather round the Scottish rustic, Burns—a strange feeling dwelling in each that they never heard a man like this; that, on the whole, this is the man! In the secret heart of these people it still dimly reveals itself, though there is no accredited way of uttering it at present, that this rustic, with his black brows and flashing sun-eyes, and strange words moving laughter and tears, is of a dignity far beyond all others, incommensurable with all others. Do not we feel it so? But now, were Dilettantism, Scepticism, Triviality, and all that sorrowful brood cast out of us—as, by God's blessing, they shall one day be; were faith in the

shows of things entirely swept out, replaced by clear faith in the *things*, so that a man acted on the impulse of that only, and counted the other non-extant, what a new livelier feeling towards this Burns were it!

The reader may remember that one of the most powerful passages on Burns quoted from Carlyle closed with a reference to the application which was made to Pitt, the then Prime Minister, on behalf of the Poet. He returns to the subject once again:—

I say, of all Priesthoods, Aristocracies, Governing Classes at present extant in the world, there is no class comparable for importance to that Priesthood of the Writers of Books. This is a fact which he who runs may read—and draw inferences from. "Literature will take care of itself," answered Mr. Pitt, when applied to for some help for Burns. "Yes," adds Mr. Southey, "it will take care of itself; *and of you too*, if you do not look to it!"

I may bring these jottings to an end by transcribing a few notes, interesting when viewed from the standpoint from which I have treated the subject, but otherwise of little importance. In his sketch of Wordsworth, Carlyle says:—

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I tried him with Burns, of whom he had sung tender recognition ; but Burns also turned out to be a limited, inferior creature, any genius he had a theme for one's pathos rather.

The reader who is acquainted with Wordsworth's prose and poetical writings on Burns will not need to be told that he did not consider the Poet "a limited, inferior creature"; and certainly, as "a theme for one's pathos," Wordsworth's lines on the Poet have seldom been equalled. Witness these verses in the favourite stave of Burns:—

Too frail to keep the lofty vow
That must have followed when his brow
Was wreathed—"The Vision" tells us how—
With holly spray,
He faltered, drifted to and fro,
And passed away.

Well might such thoughts, dear sister, throng
Our minds when lingering, all too long,
Over the grave of Burns we hung,
In social grief—
Indulged as if it were a wrong
To seek relief.

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But leaving each unquiet theme
Where gentlest judgments may misdeem,
And prompt to welcome every gleam
Of good and fair,
Let us beside this limpid stream
Breathe hopeful air.

Enough of sorrow, wreck, and blight;
Think rather of those moments bright
When to the unconsciousness of right
His course was true,
When Wisdom prospered in his sight
And virtue grew.

Yes, freely let our hands expand,
Freely as in youth's season bland,
When side by side, his Book in hand,
We wont to stay,
Our pleasure varying at command
Of each sweet Lay.

How oft inspired must he have trode
Those pathways, yon far-stretching road!
There lurks his home; in that Abode,
With mirth elate,
Or in his nobly pensive mood,
The Rustic sate.

Proud thoughts that Image overawes,
Before it humbly let us pause,
And ask of Nature, from which cause
And by what rules
She trained her BURNS to win applause
That shames the Schools.

Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen:
He rules, mid winter snows, and when
Bees fill their hives
Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives.

What need of fields in some far clime
Where Heroes, Sages, Bards sublime,
And all that fetched the flowing rhyme
From genuine springs,
Shall dwell together till old Time
Folds up his wings?

Sweet Mercy! to the gates of Heaven
The minstrel lead, his sins forgiven;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven
With vain endeavour,
And memory of Earth's bitter leaven,
Effaced for ever.

But why to him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail heart the purest share
With all that live?—
The best of what we do and are
Just God forgive!

The probability is that Carlyle misunderstood Wordsworth, and that the Lake poet only objected to the songs of Burns, for which Carlyle, as we have seen, had an especial fond-

ness, but for which, as will be presently seen, Wordsworth cared little. At least, I can see no other way of harmonizing his conversation, as reported by Carlyle, with his published writings on Burns. I am confirmed in this view of the matter by a passage in Mr. Aubrey de Vere's recollections of Lord Tennyson, in which he chronicles a curious incident which happened:—

> "Read the exquisite songs of Burns," he [Tennyson] exclaimed. "In shape each of them has the perfection of the berry; in light the radiance of the dew-drop; you forget for its sake those stupid things, his serious pieces!" The same day I met Wordsworth, and named Burns to him. Wordsworth praised him even more vehemently than Tennyson had done, as the great genius who had brought Poetry back to Nature; but ended: "Of course I refer to his serious efforts, such as the *Cottar's Saturday Night;* those foolish little amatory songs of his one has to forget." I told the tale to Henry Taylor that evening, and his answer was: "Burns's exquisite songs and Burns's serious efforts are to me alike tedious and disagreeable reading." So much for the infallibility of poets in their own art!

Although not exactly pertinent to the subject of this essay, I may here quote the following

passage from Mr. de Vere's *Recollections*, which were published soon after the Tennyson memoir :—

I was his convert and owed him loyalty. The book had been my guide book in Scotland. It did not guide me to the best hotels or to the best views ; but it guided me to the heart of a "never-vanquished nation" and him who sat there enthroned. I read his book on mountain and moor, by the fruitful slope and the torrent's fall, by the woodland red with the embers of the dying year, and by the cottage hearth. It had interpreted for me everything that I came across, whether of character or of manners, whether of mirthful or of sad. I saw all things with Burns's eyes ; and Scotland became in turn the interpreter of Burns. During my farewell visit to Edinburgh I wrote a poem in token of gratitude to Burns.

In the Diary of his Trip to Paris, under Sunday (the "unco guid" reader need not be unduly shocked), Carlyle writes :—

After coffee, English talk ; winded up with *(obligato)* readings of Burns, which were not very successful, in my own surmise.

Carlyle was very fond of reading and reciting the Poems of Burns. Professor Masson says of him in this respect :—

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He was a tremendous enthusiast about Burns, as you may understand from his essay. He was never so happy as when reciting Burns, to whom he did full justice. *The Jolly Beggars* was a special favourite.

In one of his letters to Clarinda, Burns says :—

Let us pray with the honest weaver of Kilbarchan, "Lord, send us a' a guid conceit o' oursel's!" or in the words of the auld sang—

"Who does me disdain, I can scorn them again,
And I'll never mind any such foes."

Carlyle, in one of his essays, alludes to this most original prayer, changing the *locale:*—

Fortune, it is said, favours the brave; and the prayer of Burns's Kilmarnock weaver is not always unheard of Heaven.

And Mrs. Carlyle, in the letter already quoted, in which she gives an amusing account of the burning of the Cromwell manuscripts, perpetrates and extends her husband's error by changing not only the locality, but the profession of the individual whose prayer is quoted by Burns and referred to by Carlyle :—

God help us well through it! And, as the Kilmarnock preacher prayed, "Give us all a good conceit of ourselves," for this is what is chiefly wanted here at present! If my husband had half the *conceit of himself* which shines so conspicuous in some writers I could name, he would "take it *aisy*," and regenerate the world with rose-water (*twaddle*) as *they* do, instead of ruining his digestive organs in the manufacture of *oil of vitriol* for that purpose!

Perhaps Mrs. Carlyle thought the prayer more befitting the clergy, who are proverbial for their modesty!

I cannot end this patching and stitching without placing one aspect of Carlyle's attitude to Burns worship in its proper light. I refer to his persistent refusal to countenance by his presence or furtherance the annual Saturnalia held ostensibly to commemorate the birthday of Burns, but in reality for such purposes as are only too apparent to those who care to look beneath the surface a little. Carlyle knew—none better—that ninety-nine out of every hundred persons that meet yearly to celebrate the birthday of Burns know little and care less

for the works of the man under the auspices of whose name they meet than for the good fare and generous liquor without which these gatherings would be as dull as they are said to be brilliant. Not that Carlyle had any repugnance to good cheer. By no means. He was no ascetic or rigid teetotaler, but a man who, from all accounts we have of him, could both eat and drink as sociably as any other man. But the cant and sham of the thing disgusted him. He much preferred using his eloquence for the promotion of such objects as he could approve of. One of these which did not fail to gain his enthusiastic support was the project set on foot in 1842 by Richard Monckton Milnes (afterwards Lord Houghton), Dr. Chambers, and others, to secure for Mrs. Begg, the Poet's youngest and only surviving sister, a Government pension of twenty pounds per annum, with reversion of ten pounds to each of her two daughters. In announcing the success of the application, Carlyle wrote to Mrs. Begg :—

Properly, however, you do not owe this to anybody but to your own illustrious Brother, whose noble life—wasted tragically away—pleads now aloud to all men of every rank and class for some humanity to his last surviving sister. May God give you all good of this gift, and make it really useful to you! You need not answer this letter; it is a mere luxury that I give myself in writing it.

Between the interest consequent on the death of Mrs. Begg and the excitement caused by the preparations for the Centenary Celebrations of 1859, a project was set on foot to raise a thousand pounds with the view of purchasing a small annuity for the Misses Begg. Carlyle again lent his services by addressing the following letter to the editor of the *Ayr Advertiser*:—

I very much approve your and Mr. Milnes's notion about the Misses Begg, and I hope you will not fail to get your plan executed with all the energy and skill possible, and with corresponding success. Could all the eloquence that will be uttered over the world on the 25th inst., or even all the tavern bills that will be incurred, but convert themselves into solid cash for these two interesting persons, what a sum were there of benefit received and of loss avoided to all parties

concerned! serving indigent merit on the one hand, and saving, on the other hand, what is too truly a frightful (though eloquent) expenditure of *pavement* to a certain *locality* we have all heard of!

And now, as concluding summary of the whole thing, I transcribe the lecture on Burns, as Man of Letters, which he never was in any sense, and, above all, in the sense in which Carlyle used the phrase:—

It was a curious phenomenon, in the withered, unbelieving, secondhand Eighteenth Century, that of a Hero starting up, among the artificial pasteboard figures and productions, in the guise of a Robert Burns. Like a little well in the rocky desert places,—like a sudden splendour of Heaven in the artificial Vauxhall! People knew not what to make of it. They took it for a piece of the Vauxhall fire-work; alas, it *let* itself be so taken, though struggling half-blindly, as in bitterness of death, against that! Perhaps no man had such a false reception from his fellow-men. Once more a very wasteful life-drama was enacted under the sun.

The tragedy of Burns's life is known to all of you. Surely we may say, if discrepancy between place held and place merited constitute perverseness of lot for a man, no lot could be more perverse than Burns's. Among those secondhand acting-figures, *mimes* for most part, of the Eighteenth Century, once more a giant

Original Man; one of those men who reach down to the perennial Deeps, who take rank with the Heroic among men: and he was born in a poor Ayrshire hut. The largest soul of all the British lands came among us in the shape of a hard-handed Scottish Peasant.

His Father, a poor toiling man, tried various things; did not succeed in any; was involved in continual difficulties. The Steward, Factor as the Scotch call him, used to send letters and threatenings, Burns says, "which threw us all into tears." The brave, hard-toiling, hard-suffering Father, his brave heroine of a wife; and those children, of whom Robert was one! In this Earth, so wide otherwise, no shelter for *them*. The letters "threw us all into tears": figure it. The brave Father, I say always;—a *silent* Hero and Poet; without whom the son had never been a speaking one! Burns's Schoolmaster came afterwards to London, learnt what good society was; but declares that in no meeting of men did he ever enjoy better discourse than at the hearth of this peasant. And his poor "seven acres of nursery-ground,"—not that, nor the miserable patch of clay-farm, nor anything he tried to get a living by, would prosper with him; he had a sore unequal battle all his days. But he stood to it valiantly; a wise, faithful, unconquerable man;—swallowing-down how many sore sufferings daily into silence; fighting like an unseen Hero,—nobody publishing newspaper paragraphs about his nobleness; voting pieces of plate to him! However, he was not lost: nothing is lost.

Robert is there; the outcome of him,—and indeed of many generations of such as him.

This Burns appeared under every disadvantage: uninstructed, poor, born only to hard manual toil; and writing, when it came to that, in a rustic special dialect, known only to a small province of the country he lived in. Had he written, even what he did write, in the general language of England, I doubt not he had already become universally recognised as being, or capable to be, one of our greatest men. That he should have tempted so many to penetrate through the rough husk of that dialect of his, is proof that there lay something far from common within it. He has gained a certain recognition, and is continuing to do so over all quarters of our wide Saxon world: wheresoever a Saxon dialect is spoken, it begins to be understood, by personal inspection of this and the other, that one of the most considerable Saxon men of the Eighteenth Century was an Ayrshire Peasant named Robert Burns. Yes, I will say, here too was a piece of the right Saxon stuff: strong as the Harz-rock, rooted in the depths of the world;—rock, yet with wells of living softness in it! A wild impetuous whirlwind of passion and faculty slumbered quiet there; such heavenly *melody* dwelling in the heart of it. A noble rough genuineness; homely, rustic, honest; true simplicity of strength: with its lightning fire, with its soft dewy pity;—like the old Norse Thor, the Peasant-god!—

Burns's Brother Gilbert, a man of much sense and

worth, has told me that Robert, in his young days, in spite of their hardship, was usually the gayest of speech; a fellow of infinite frolic, laughter, sense and heart; far pleasanter to hear there, stript cutting peats in the bog, or suchlike, than he ever afterwards knew him. I can well believe it. This basis of mirth (*"fond gaillard,"* as old Marquis Mirabeau calls it), a primal-element of sunshine and joyfulness, coupled with his other deep and earnest qualities, is one of the most attractive characteristics of Burns. A large fund of Hope dwells in him; spite of his tragical history, he is not a mourning man. He shakes his sorrows gallantly aside; bounds forth victorious over them. It is as the lion shaking "dew-drops from his mane"; as the swift-bounding horse, that *laughs* at the shaking of the spear. — But indeed, Hope, Mirth, of the sort like Burns's, are they not the outcome properly of warm generous affection,—such as is the beginning of all to every man?

You would think it strange if I called Burns the most gifted British soul we had in all that century of his: and yet I believe the day is coming when there will be little danger in saying so. His writings, all that he *did* under such obstructions, are only a poor fragment of him. Professor Stewart remarked very justly, what indeed is true of all Poets good for much, that his poetry was not any particular faculty; but the general result of a naturally vigorous original mind expressing itself in that way. Burns's gifts, expressed in conversation, are the theme of all that ever heard him. All kinds of

gifts: from the gracefulest utterances of courtesy, to the highest fire of passionate speech; loud floods of mirth, soft wailings of affection, laconic emphasis, clear piercing insight; all was in him. Witty duchesses celebrate him as a man whose speech "led them off their feet." This is beautiful; but still more beautiful that which Mr. Lockhart has recorded, which I have more than once alluded to, How the waiters and ostlers at inns would get out of bed, and come crowding to hear this man speak! Waiters and ostlers!—they too were men, and here was a man! I have heard much about his speech; but one of the best things I ever heard of it was, last year, from a venerable gentleman long familiar with him. That it was speech distinguished by always *having something in it.* "He spoke rather little than much," this old man told me; "sat rather silent in those early days, as in the company of persons above him; and always when he did speak, it was to throw new light on the matter." I know not why any one should ever speak otherwise!—But if we look at his general force of soul, his healthy *robustness* every way, the rugged downrightness, penetration, generous valour and manfulness that was in him,—where shall we readily find a better-gifted man?

Among the great men of the Eighteenth Century, I sometimes feel as if Burns might be found to resemble Mirabeau more than any other. They differ widely in vesture; yet look at them intrinsically. There is the same burly thick-necked strength of body as of soul;—

built, in both cases, on what the old Marquis calls a *fond gaillard.* By nature, by course of breeding, indeed by nation, Mirabeau has much more of bluster; a noisy, forward, unresting man. But the characteristic of Mirabeau too is veracity and sense, power of true *insight*, superiority of vision. The thing that he says is worth remembering. It is a flash of insight into some object or other: so do both these men speak. The same raging passions; capable too in both of manifesting themselves as the tenderest noble affections. Wit, wild laughter, energy, directness, sincerity: these were in both. The types of the two men are not dissimilar. Burns too could have governed, debated in National Assemblies; politicised, as few could. Alas, the courage which had to exhibit itself in capture of smuggling schooners in the Solway Frith; in keeping *silence* over so much, where no good speech, but only inarticulate rage was possible: this might have bellowed forth Ushers de Brézé and the like; and made itself visible to all men, in managing of kingdoms, in ruling of great ever-memorable epochs! But they said to him reprovingly, his Official Superiors said, and wrote: "You are to work, not think." Of your *thinking*-faculty, the greatest in this land, we have no need; you are to guage beer there; for that only are *you* wanted. Very notable;—and worth mentioning, though we know what is to be said and answered! As if Thought, Power of Thinking, were not, at all times, in all places and situations of the world, precisely the thing that *was* wanted.

The fatal man, is he not always the *un*thinking man, the man who cannot think and *see;* but only grope, and hallucinate, and *mis*see the nature of the thing he works with? He misses it, mis*takes* it as we say; takes it for one thing, and it *is* another thing,—and leaves him standing like a Futility there! He is the fatal man; unutterably fatal, put in the high places of men.—"Why complain of this?" say some: "Strength is mournfully denied its arena; that was true from of old." Doubtless: and the worse for the *arena*, answer I! *Complaining* profits little; stating of the truth may profit. That a Europe, with its French Revolution just breaking out, finds no need of a Burns except for gauging beer,—is a thing I, for one, cannot *rejoice* at!—

Once more we have to say here, that the chief quality of Burns is the *sincerity* of him. So in his Poetry, so in his Life. The Song he sings is not of fantasticalities; it is of a thing felt, really there; the prime merit of this, as of all in him, and of his Life generally, is truth. The Life of Burns is what we may call a great tragic sincerity. A sort of savage sincerity,—not cruel, far from that; but wild, wrestling naked with the truth of things. In that sense, there is something of the savage in all great men.

Hero-worship,—Odin, Burns? Well; these Men of Letters too were not without a kind of Hero-worship: but what a strange condition has that got into now! The waiters and ostlers of Scotch inns, prying about the door, eager to catch any word that fell from Burns, were doing unconscious reverence to the Heroic.

Johnson had his Boswell for worshipper. Rousseau had worshippers enough: princes calling on him in his mean garret; the great, the beautiful doing reverence to the poor moonstruck man. For himself a most portentous contradiction; the two ends of his life not to be brought into harmony. He sits at the tables of grandees; and has to copy music for his own living. He cannot even get his music copied. "By dint of dining out," says he, "I run the risk of dying by starvation at home." For his worshippers too a most questionable thing! If doing Hero-worship well or badly be the test of vital wellbeing or illbeing to a generation, can we say that *these* generations are very first-rate?—And yet our Heroic Men of Letters do teach, govern, are kings, priests, or what you like to call them; intrinsically there is no preventing it by any means whatever. The world *has* to obey him who thinks and sees in the world. The world can alter the manner of that; can either have it as blessed continuous summer sunshine, or as unblessed black thunder and tornado,—with unspeakable difference of profit for the world! The manner of it is very alterable; the matter and fact of it is not alterable by any power under the sky. Light; or, failing that, lightning: the world can take its choice. Not whether we call an Odin god, prophet, priest, or what we call him; but whether we believe the word he tells us: there it all lies. If it be a true word, we shall have to believe it; believing it, we shall have to do it. What *name* or welcome we give him or it, is a point that

concerns ourselves mainly. *It*, the new Truth, new deeper revealing of the Secret of this Universe, is verily of the nature of a message from on high; and must and will have itself obeyed.—

My last remark is on that notablest phasis of Burns's history,—his visit to Edinburgh. Often it seems to me as if his demeanour there were the highest proof he gave of what a fund of worth and genuine manhood was in him. If we think of it, few heavier burdens could be laid on the strength of a man. So sudden; all common *Lionism*, which ruins innumerable men, was as nothing to this. It is as if Napoleon had been made a King of, not gradually, but at once from the Artillery Lieutenancy in the Regiment La Fère. Burns, still only in his twenty-seventh year, is no longer even a ploughman; he is flying to the West Indies to escape disgrace and a jail. This month he is a ruined peasant, his wages seven pounds a year, and these gone from him: next month he is in the blaze of rank and beauty, handing down jewelled Duchesses to dinner; the cynosure of all eyes! Adversity is sometimes hard upon a man; but for one man who can stand prosperity, there are a hundred that will stand adversity. I admire much the way in which Burns met all this. Perhaps no man one could point out, was ever so sorely tried, and so little forgot himself. Tranquil, unastonished; not abashed, not inflated, neither awkwardness nor affectation: he feels that *he* there is the man Robert Burns; that the "rank is but the guinea-stamp"; that the

celebrity is but the candle-light, which will show *what* man, not in the least make him a better or other man! Alas, it may readily, unless he look to it, make him a *worse* man; a wretched inflated windbag,—inflated till he *burst* and become a *dead* lion; for whom, as some one has said, "there is no resurrection of the body"; worse than a living dog!—Burns is admirable here.

And yet, alas, as I have observed elsewhere, these Lion-hunters were the ruin and death of Burns. It was they that rendered it impossible for him to live! They gathered round him in his Farm; hindered his industry; no place was remote enough from them. He could not get his Lionism forgotten, honestly as he was disposed to do so. He falls into discontents, into miseries, faults; the world getting ever more desolate for him; health, character, peace of mind all gone;—solitary enough now. It is tragical to think of! These men came but to *see* him; it was out of no sympathy with him, nor no hatred to him. They came to get a little amusement: they got their amusement;—and the Hero's life went for it!

Richter says, in the Island of Sumatra there is a kind of "Light-chafers," large Fire-flies, which people stick upon spits, and illuminate the ways with at night. Persons of condition can thus travel with a pleasant radiance, which they much admire. Great honour to the Fire-flies! But—!—

THE END.

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"Besides its general value as a contribution to Burnsiana, the article on Burns's connection with Galston is of great local interest. The fullest possible information is here given as to Burns's intimacy and correspondence with Ellison Begbie and Dr. Smith. The gallery of characters also includes, "rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine" and "Wee Davock," whose connection with Burns was first made known by the writer."—*Kilmarnock Standard.*

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