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CARLYLE'S


ESSAY ON BURNS

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The Lake English Classics

EDITED BY

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Instructor in English in the University of Chicago

The Lake English Classics

BURNS

BY

THOMAS CARLYLE

EDITED FOR SCHOOL USE

BY

GEORGE B. AITON

STATE INSPECTOR OF HIGH SCHOOLS, MINNESOTA

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PREFACE

This edition of Carlyle's *Essay on Burns* has been prepared for the use of students in secondary schools. It presents the text as the author left it, and such introduction and notes as are thought likely to assist the student.

With this purpose in mind, the sketches of Carlyle and Burns have been restricted to the parts of their lives pertinent to the essay under consideration. It is impossible within the brief limits of an introduction to give a balanced account of two remarkable men and an equally remarkable essay. For an adequate life of the essayist the reader is referred to Froude's *Carlyle* and to Carlyle's own *Reminiscences* and *Letters*. The most satisfactory view of Burns may be had from Dr. Chambers's *Life and Works of Robert Burns* (4 vols. Longman's), but Blackie's *Burns*, in the Great Writers Series, will answer. It is sufficient for our purpose to sketch an outline of Carlyle's life, indicating how by study he became a thinker, what he stood for and why he was the particular man of letters to write an essay on Burns that would repay study.

To this must be added the pertinent facts of Burns's life, in order that Carlyle's references may be understood. We shall also desire some account of the place this essay fills in literature.

A short list of reference books is given to emphasize the importance of having and using a serviceable school library. A list of those of Burns's poems which Carlyle mentions has been arranged in chronological order. The notes are intended merely to clear up certain allusions or to call attention to important thought. It has not been considered advisable to give explanations of what may be inferred from the text, or to embarrass the student with remarks upon proper names with which he is already familiar. A like desire to disencumber the notes has led to the insertion, in the glossary, of such Lowland words as are found in Carlyle's numerous but always judicious quotations.

G. B. A.

MINNEAPOLIS, August, 1898.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

CARLYLE

The Carlyles were a rough-riding, hard-striking border family about the Firth of Solway, who shared the vicissitudes of the Cameronians and finally subsided into industrious, Bible-reading mechanics and farmers. They were honest and temperate, but men not to be trifled with. James Carlyle, the father of Thomas, had the family characteristics. He was a skilful stone-mason, having indeed built his own house, the best in Ecclefechan. He was a man of integrity and despatch, strong and active both in body and in mind. Somewhat austere to strangers, he was well spoken under ordinary circumstances, but had a tongue that could rasp and a temper which he bequeathed to his son, in whom it was said that on occasion it would "boil like a geyser." Carlyle's mother, a Margaret Aitken, appears to have been a woman of force and intelligence, well read for her day and independent in her thinking, but somewhat milder in disposition than the Carlyle type. Father and mother, they were an exemplary couple. Thomas, born December 4, 1795, the oldest of their nine children, has characterized his mother as, "A woman of to me the fairest descent, that of the

pious, the just and the wise." Of his father, he says: "More remarkable man than my father I have never met in my journey through life; sterling sincerity in thought, word, and deed, most quiet but capable of blazing into whirlwinds when needful, and such a flash of just insight and brief natural eloquence and emphasis, true to every feature of it, as I have never known in any other. Humour of a most grim Scandinavian type he occasionally had; wit rarely or never—too serious for wit. My excellent mother, with perhaps the deeper piety in most senses, had also the most sport. No man of my day, or hardly any man, can have had better parents." We are interested in this account of Carlyle's ancestry because ability does not spring from the dull-witted in a single generation. Education of the right sort will improve any mind, but a boy without good blood in him cannot make much of a man.

The Carlyles were prosperous while their children were growing up. Their housekeeping, though simple, was scrupulously neat. The children ran barefoot in summer and had an abundance of the simple but exceedingly nutritious food of the Scottish peasantry, consisting chiefly of oatmeal porridge, scones, milk, cheese and potatoes. Carlyle's mother began to teach him so early that he could not remember the time when he was unable to read. At seven he was sent to the village school and pronounced ready for Latin. At

ten he was fondly destined for the Presbyterian ministry, and was sent to the grammar school at Annan, a few miles down the valley, where he learned to overcome homesickness, bullies, French, Latin, mathematics and the Greek alphabet—not a bad beginning for one who was to become versed in literature.

In the autumn of 1809, though he was not quite fourteen, it was decided, despite the shaking of wise heads in the village, to send Thomas Carlyle to the University of Edinburgh. Carlyle's parents deserve credit for their self-sacrifice, for Thomas was now old enough to labor, and his help would have been very acceptable; but parental pride came to the rescue, and Thomas, though he never became a minister, fully justified all expectations. Up Annandale and over the fells, twenty miles a day, every foot of the way historic ground—and Carlyle just the kind of boy to enjoy it—he trudged, to Edinburgh. According to the custom prevailing among the sons of working people, Carlyle boarded himself while at the university, depending mainly on provisions sent from home by the carrier, the weekly arrival of whose cart was a social feature of the countryside. As a student, he worked hard and read omnivorously, gaining recognition, strangely enough, in the department of mathematics only. He himself intimates that the library was the best part of the university. "Nay, from the chaos of that library, I succeeded in fishing up

more books than had been known to the keeper thereof."

Having in due time brought his university course to a conclusion, Carlyle registered as a non-resident divinity student. He left the old library and his scanty quarters for home, as, indeed, he had not failed to do at the end of each college year. Fortunately the mathematical instructorship in the Annan school fell vacant, and Carlyle, now nineteen years old, received the appointment at a salary of about £60 a year, quite sufficient to render him independent and to put him in the way of saving something for a future course, still supposed to be theology. The young instructor is said to have done his work faithfully, but to have disliked teaching. He shunned society; shut himself up with his books, and spent his vacations with his parents, who had now removed with the entire family to the farm of Mainhill, a few miles up the road Carlyle used to take for the university. Two years passed in this way, when university influence procured him a better position as master of a new classical and mathematical school at the sea-coast town of Kirkcaldy, some twenty miles to the north of Edinburgh. Here he had the friendship and the companionship of Edward Irving, also an Annandale boy, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh and a rural divinity student, but now master of a competing school in Kirkcaldy. Carlyle, doubtless through the influence of his new

friend, with whom he walked and talked summer nights on the Kirkcaldy sands, and with whom he spent vacation times in the Highlands, now began to enjoy society more and to hate "schoolmastering" worse. More than this, the ministry, never attractive to him, now seemed intolerable, and though he had hitherto complied with the non-resident requirement of a sermon a year, delivered at the university, and had but two years to wait for ordination, he applied for his father's consent, reluctantly but silently granted, and in 1818 resigned at Kirkcaldy, cancelled his registration as a divinity student by suffering it to lapse, and with £90, the savings of four years, began the study of law.

Irving, who resigned his Kirkcaldy position at the same time, soon had a call to Glasgow as an assistant of the renowned Dr. Chalmers, but as for Carlyle he "was poor, unpopular, unknown, . . . proud, shy, at once so insignificant looking, and so grim and sorrowful." He settled in rooms at Edinburgh again, and "once more the Ecclefechan carrier brought up the weekly or monthly supplies of oatmeal cakes and butter." Carlyle, in these years, is sincerely to be pitied. If it had been possible for some publisher to recognize his talent and to put him at work, even in a humble way, he might have been saved years of poignant distress, and might have escaped the severe attacks of mental as well as bodily dyspepsia, from which he

suffered all his life. We cannot say. Young people of mettle always struggle before they settle into the harness of life, and it may be that this mental unrest and hovering over the brink of despair were necessary before his mind could break its bonds and utter its message to the world. At all events, he secured a private pupil now and again at two guineas a month; he found some employment as a writer of articles for *Brewster's Encyclopædia*, and, all in all, with the aid from home, got on without using his £90. With the solace of summers at Mainhill and an occasional stay and a tramp with Irving at Glasgow, he fancied at times he might like the law, but even in his most cheerful letters one can see that he was fiercely at war with life and faint at heart for fear of being ultimately worsted in the conflict. Finally, the outlook brightened. Some recognition came to him by way of his encyclopædia articles; he got on a footing which justified correspondence with publishers; law was abandoned. Brewster gave him a check one day for fifteen guineas. He was able to send his father a pair of spectacles and his mother a golden guinea. Heartened by this upward fortune, he could ask himself, "What art thou afraid of? Wherefore like a coward dost thou forever pip and whimper and go cowering and trembling? . . . Ever from that time the temper of my misery was changed; not fear or whining sorrow was it, but indignation and grim, fire-eyed defiance."

At twenty-six, then, the victory was practically won. Carlyle was to be a man of letters. He was well versed in French literature; in German he was doubtless the best read man of Great Britain. Another year, and Irving, who had gone from Glasgow to London, put him in the way of tutoring two young men by the name of Buller, whose parents removed to Edinburgh that their sons might attend the university. This arrangement yielded £200 a year. Carlyle had, moreover, all the literary work by way of encyclopædia and magazine articles he could find time to do, and thereafter, though never in affluent circumstances, financial considerations do not appear to have given him legitimate cause for distress.

Four crowded years now passed rapidly. Carlyle tutored, translated Legendre, sent his mother a new bonnet, helped his father with money for the farm, assisted his brother John at the medical school, walked the sands of the Firth, climbed Arthur's Seat, visited Miss Welsh, of whom more hereafter, wrote a life of Schiller for the *London Magazine*, parted company with the Bullers most amicably, and returned to Mainhill. Here he translated *Wilhelm Meister*, and arranged for its publication at a compensation of £180 for the first edition and £250 for the second. Correspondence with Goethe followed. Carlyle then visited London. He saw Irving, called on various publishers, and met the literary celebrities of the day. His rever-

ence for literary people received a shock, he revised his estimates, and effaced several lights from his literary firmament or reduced them to stars of lesser magnitude. He terrified the simple-hearted folk at Mainhill by venturing across the Channel, even to Paris, but returning safe, rented the small farm of Hoddam Hill, enjoyed its quiet, lost some money in its management, and finally "flitted" with his father and the whole family to a larger farm and house called Scotsbrig, near Ecclefechan. Then followed four years of intense and now well-directed effort, for the details of which the student is referred to Froude's admirable *Life of Carlyle*.

One cannot keep up courage in an intellectual life without friends. They need not be many, but they must be staunch. Irving was a firm friend to Carlyle, and he was the means of introducing him to another. Before taking a school at Kirkcaldy, Irving had taught at Haddington, the birth-place of John Knox, less than twenty miles east of Edinburgh. Here he became much interested in Jane Baillie Welsh, a young girl of beautiful person and unusual intellectual quickness, whose studies he continued to direct until he went to Glasgow. During the summer of 1821, returning to Edinburgh for a visit, as was his wont, he took Carlyle from his supposed law studies, and together they walked out to Haddington, taking the short cuts and byways, talking as they went. Here Carlyle met Miss Welsh, who united with Irving in

admiration of his vigorous understanding and racy speech, while Carlyle no less admired her vivacity and literary appreciation. Under these circumstances, there was little difficulty in arranging that he should direct her reading. A fast friendship ensued. Carlyle had no hope of aspiring to one of her high social position, and she had no thought of marrying a penniless peasant's son in a single lodging, but friends they were, and during his years of greatest struggle, she was his literary confidante, never doubting his ultimate success. Society at her feet she cared not a rap for; the young man of genius, of flawless private life, struggling out of obscurity, she did care for; his future became the sole object of her solicitude; she entered into his plans with energy and hopefulness, and even visited the Carlyle home at Mainhill.

Finally, after many misgivings and prudential hesitations, they decided to face the world together. Miss Welsh was the daughter of an eminent surgeon, who at his death had left his property (the house at Haddington, some investments and a farm near Dumfries) to his only daughter for the support of herself and her mother; now, on her marriage to Carlyle, with a mixture of characteristic pride and generosity, she turned all the property over to her mother. Carlyle and Miss Welsh were married in October, 1826, and began house-keeping the same day in a small dwelling at Comely Bank, in the suburbs of Edinburgh. The home

was comfortably furnished from Haddington. Mrs. Carlyle had a faculty for entertaining little parties, her social standing was unquestioned, and the literary people of Edinburgh were pleased to be her guests. Among these visitors at Comely Bank came one who, after Irving and Jane Welsh, must be counted Carlyle's closest friend, no less a person than the brilliant Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*. The *Edinburgh Review* was started in 1802 by a coterie of brilliant young men who were dissatisfied with current criticism as emanating from those who had books to sell. Jeffrey was the first editor-in-chief. Contributors were paid liberally, and from the first the new quarterly took high standing for wit and ability. It was an honor to be a contributor, and quite the proper thing to be a subscriber. Under the influence of this new friendship that never failed, Carlyle set fire to a novel he could not have completed, and became a contributor to this, the most influential quarterly of the day. Carlyle's first article was creditable; his second, on the *State of German Literature*, attracted the attention of the best minds in Europe.

Carlyle, however, was dissatisfied with city life. He wanted undisturbed quiet for his hours of writing, and he pined for the solitude of the moors for his hours of thinking. Mrs. Carlyle was a delicate, refined woman, accustomed to the town and to intelligent society, yet she yielded out

of regard to her husband and his future. The way seemed to open naturally. Mrs. Welsh, Jane's mother, had not been successful in obtaining a thrifty tenant for Craigenputtock, the Dumfriesshire farm, so Alexander Carlyle, a brother who had not succeeded particularly well with Carlyle's experiment at Hoddam Hill, was placed in charge of Craigenputtock. The farm-house was enlarged and put in repair; six teams drew the household stuff from Edinburgh. Mrs. Carlyle turned her back on the comforts she had been accustomed to, and for seven years the Carlyles took up their home at the farmstead of Craigenputtock, on the bleak hills seventeen miles from Dumfries and the postoffice. Here Jeffrey came to see them, here our American Emerson came for the night's visit later recorded in *English Traits*, and here Carlyle, not yet perfectly happy, made the following entry in his diary: "Finished a paper on Burns, September 16, 1828, at this Devil's Den, Craigenputtock."

We have followed Carlyle thus minutely from Ecclefechan to Craigenputtock to show that his final success—mastery is the better word—was achieved by working for it. Carlyle inherited a capacious, constructive mind and power of expression, but if reading and studying and digging at books, with prolonged and agonizing thinking, ever brought a mind to its full development, it did in him. And, though many other pieces of work

were done at Craigenputtock, we do not at this time need the details, however interesting, of Carlyle's later life there, nor, indeed, anything but the barest record of the life that followed. After writing *Sartor Resartus*, he removed in 1834 to London to secure library facilities. Mrs. Carlyle resumed her tea-parties, which became one of the features of literary London, and guarded her husband's study for thirty-two years while he scolded and fumed and wrote his *French Revolution*, his *Heroes and Hero Worship, Past and Present*, *Life and Letters of Oliver Cromwell*, *Life of Sterling*, and *Life of Frederick the Great*, his writings extending in all to thirty volumes.

In 1866 he was elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, whither he journeyed and where, after delivering an address of noble power, he left the hall amid the tumultuous applause of the body of students, no doubt the most gratifying and fit recognition he had ever received. But before he could rejoin his wife in London, that high-minded and gifted woman, in the midst of her gladness for his new honor, had passed away. Carlyle lived another fifteen years to mourn her loss, but his spirit was broken, his pen was no longer in service. In 1881, he ended a life, stern, impetuous, irritable, but, "in the weightier matters of the law, without speck or flaw. From his earliest years, in the home at Ecclefechan, at school, at college, we see invariably the same innocence of heart and

uprightness and integrity of action. As a child, as a boy, as a man, he had been true in word, and honest and just in deed." By his own request, made with true Scottish loyalty, his remains were not deposited in Westminster Abbey, but in the churchyard of Ecclefechan. Perhaps no man has exercised a greater influence on the thought of this century.

BURNS

It is to be wished that the testimony to Carlyle's private character could be given to Burns's as well. A recent critic says that Burns is good enough as he is, but, unfortunately, it is not so, for in the poet's unrestrained hours, even of his later years, he committed acts which to this day cause his admirers to hang their heads and to wish that he had possessed some strong, unselfish friend to hold him to the ways of his forefathers.

Like Carlyle, Burns was well born, none better. His father and his mother were Lowland peasants, hardworking, frugal, and in straitened circumstances, but with an indigenous culture far above the vulgarity of life, a culture which one comes upon throughout Anglo-Saxondom, and which, under favorable circumstances, has reached its highest development in the hills of New England. Robert Burns was born January 25, 1759, in a straw-thatched cottage, a half hour's walk out of Ayr, to a father and a mother belonging to

that better peasant element which on both sides of the Atlantic has forced the world to hold the term, "common people," in respect. His father was a gardener, tilling a few acres of his own but also working for wages. In the *Cotter's Saturday Night* Burns gives a picture of his father with "his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes," and of his mother, "wi' her needles and her shears." Family circumstances were such that Robert, a strong boy, large of his age, was needed in the small tasks of tillage, but in one way he was fortunate. His mother had an extraordinary store of folk-lore songs and ballads, and his father made an effort to surround his children with good reading and to entertain them with instructive conversation. Schooling, moreover, was not neglected altogether. The lad was started at school when five years of age, and had an occasional term of prized instruction until he was a youth grown.

When Burns was seven years old, his father removed to the farm of Mt. Oliphant. At fifteen, Robert was the principal breadwinner of the family; in 1773, he composed his first song, *Handsome Nell*, in honor of the village blacksmith's daughter. In 1777 the family removed to Lochlea, an unprofitable farm in the parish of Tarbolton. In 1778 Burns was fortunate enough to secure a summer term of schooling at Kirkoswald, where it is said he ate his meals with Fergusson's poems in one hand and his spoon in the other. Returning to the

farm, he composed *Poor Mailie's Elegy*, *Winter*, and other early pieces, under an awakened ambition to become a poet of the people, or, as he loved to put it, a Scottish bard. Then in casting about for some means of bettering his own circumstances and of helping the family, Burns worked for some months in a kind of partnership at the flaxdresser's trade in Irvine; but, during a New Year's carousal, the shop took fire and burned to the ground. Burns returned to Lochlea without a penny and much the worse in morals. Three years later, in 1784, his father died, and Burns, with his brother Gilbert, took the family to their fourth home, the farm of Mossgiel, in Mauchline.

His best work, indeed, most of his good work, was done here. It will be interesting to note that the body of the poems mentioned by Carlyle (pp. 67-78) were written during the two or three short years at Mossgiel, before Burns had much idea of his own value. Of Burns at Mossgiel, we have an interesting account. He was now twenty-six years old, and labored on the farm with his brother, carrying a book about in his pocket during the day, reading as he rested against the plough, or, as the mood was on him, thinking out his theme. At night he climbed to his attic room, where he had contrived a rude table, and committed his thoughts to paper before he went to rest. His subjects afford variety enough, and happily none are from books. Some old tune, or some border ballad running in his

mind, some church fracas, the death of an old neighbor, or even the loss of his pet sheep, brought forth a poem. He wrote ballads, epistles, epitaphs, satires, dedications. He attacked the clergy and praised the devil, but never belittled religion. He wrote a poem, it has been cleverly said, to each lass in the parish, and, finally, in ecstasy, wrote a poem to them collectively. He wrote of winter, spring, and summer, of rivers, braes, and uplands. Dreams, regret, and despondency called forth expression. A mouse, a daisy, a suet pudding, a favorite mare, a calf, the toothache, a stormy night, and even a louse, are made the subjects of poems which must be read to be appreciated. They are a revelation, and justify Carlyle's dictum that genius can never have far to seek for a subject.

Burns's poems were composed for a local audience, often for a single eye, or, at most, for a local paper. Whatever hope he may have had of future distinction, he took no step to secure outside recognition, and, were the truth known, he was only too proud of the rip-roaring, thigh-slapping applause of the numerous convivial gatherings in which he was easily first.

Evidently his heart was not in farming. Numerous amatory experiences which mar this as well as other periods of his life, and constantly increasing indebtedness, involved him in embarrassments, and led to his casting about for means to leave the

country. After some thought and not a little encouragement from acquaintances, Burns decided to raise money by publishing a small volume of his poems at Kilmarnock. This was before enterprise had concentrated so largely in the cities, and, to his surprise as well as relief, the edition sold so well as to clear off his obligations and enable him to arrange for his departure to the plantations of Jamaica. He had, in fact, sent his box to Greenock, at that time the sailing port of Glasgow, and was himself on the way thither when a letter from Dr. Blacklock of Edinburgh came into his hands, expressing the high favor with which his Kilmarnock volume had been received. Burns at once changed his mind. He resolved to go to Edinburgh to seek an appointment in the excise, and to canvass the desirability of a new edition of his poems.

His presence in Edinburgh created a furor. The gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt subscribed in advance for a hundred copies of his poems, and the newly-discovered ploughman poet was the lion of the day. For the time Burns felt rich; he had been lionized by the society of the capital city of Scotland, and he had money in his pocket. He now made a long-desired tour of the border between England and Scotland, so rich in traditions of minstrelsy. Returning to Mossgiel, he again took a trip, this time into the Highlands. A considerable sum of money, which came in from the sale of

his Edinburgh edition, he generously shared with his brother and the rest of the family. In 1788, he obtained the desired post in the excise, formally married Jean Armour, by whom he had already had two children under an irregular but morally binding form of marriage, and rented Ellisland, near Dumfries. But Burns was spoiled. His farm ran behind under hired help, he wasted time among discreditable companions, and had it not been for the £60 derived annually from his exciseship, his family would have been in need. *To Mary in Heaven*, *Auld Lang Syne*, and *Tam O'Shanter* were composed at Ellisland, but, on the whole, Burns never recovered from the glimpses he had of "high life" in Edinburgh. In 1790, he removed with his family to Dumfries, living henceforth on his income as an officer and some small return from his poems. At Dumfries, he fell into disrepute, we cannot say undeservedly, his self-respect faded away, and he was but the shadow of what he might have been when, in 1796, he died.

Robert Burns was a sad bundle of contradictions. Education and independence he sacrificed freely to keep father and mother above want—Carlyle himself had no deeper respect for the piety and uprightness of his parents—yet Burns rejected their most serious admonitions. No poet before or since has surpassed Burns in seeing the true dignity of productive labor; yet work irked him, and he allowed himself in his letters to speak contemptuously of

miry furrows and offensive barnyard surroundings. None saw more keenly the injustice of rank and the emptiness of title; yet he permitted lack of social distinction to embitter his existence. A man could hardly have been more desirous for sympathy and respect; certainly no one ever threw away opportunity with a more prodigal hand.

The lives of Burns and Carlyle afford perfect contrast. Carlyle's parents seem to have set him apart for study from his earliest childhood. Burns's parents did what they could, but depended upon the poet's labor beyond the period when he ought to have had a home and a family of his own. Carlyle's education was as thorough as Scotland could offer; the muse found Burns literally at the tail of a plough. Carlyle was cautious and thrifty; Burns was reckless and prodigal. In their methods of work there is the same difference. Carlyle wasted no moments; he blocked out his subject, and sat down to it as methodically as ever Roman laid siege to a city. Burns assumed no responsibility, cared not a straw how his subject might come, but when a thought took shape in his mind wrote it off. Give Carlyle a subject, a library, his meals and seclusion, and he would heat and forge and weld until he had his thought in appropriate form for presentation. Let Burns alone, make no effort to direct him, let him move among men and among the fields until something casually stirred him, and he would sink into the proper mood,—and

then a poem. Each had the proper training for his own kind of composition, and each in his own sphere is among the few. Carlyle, however, is constructive; Burns is creative. Carlyle's essay is a search for value; in Burns's poems may be found the treasure.

COMMENTS ON THE ESSAY

To derive full benefit from Carlyle's essay on Burns, it should be read repeatedly. The first reading should be off-hand and free, without note or explanation. It would be well to copy the fashion of Lowell, who was fond of reading alone under some large willows near his home, for the serious thoughtfulness and quiet uplift that are the true reader's guests steal in only when they are sure of their host to themselves. This first time one should read simply because he is interested. Then, for class purposes, the essay should be read with dictionary and cyclopædia of names at hand. Words must be weighed, references looked up, and allusions made clear. While one should cultivate a rangy method of getting through a book, a reader who makes any pretension to exact information owes it to himself to do a given amount of close verbal reading something after the fashion of translating a foreign text.

This essay, like any other, may also be regarded from more than one point of view, which it were well, perhaps, to distinguish carefully.

a. AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF CARLYLE'S STYLE. Carlyle's writings are difficult to classify. *Heroes and Hero Worship*, *Cromwell*, *Frederick the Great*, and the *French Revolution* are in a way historical, yet they are not primarily history. Carlyle's fame is not that of an historian. His theory of history and of the hero at the helm is founded on a distrust of the ability of the common people to work out their own affairs. His discussions of questions of the day in *Chartism* and *Past and Present*, share with the writings of Ruskin the delusion that leaders will arise among the well-to-do who shall devote themselves to the interests of the masses, the people on the other hand becoming grateful and, above all, obedient. The nineteenth century idea of government emanating from the people and exercised by themselves in their own interests, he seems unable to disassociate from violence, subversion and lawless disobedience. Historians will go to Carlyle for lurid descriptions and minute details, but not for authentic statement, nor for the theory of history. Political economists and teachers of social science will draw on Carlyle for scathing indictments of evil, but he is utterly impracticable; his ideas of political reform have had little acceptance. It is as a criticism of life, as an appeal to conscience that his political writings have so powerfully influenced, not indeed popular legislation directly, but personal conduct. They rank primarily as contributions to literature, and Carlyle's

standing is that of a man of letters. It is just and proper, therefore, that a study of Carlyle should be based on his *Miscellanies* or *Essays*, which include his best literary work.

First to attract the attention of a student is Carlyle's peculiar choice and forceful use of words. The vocabulary used by the family at Ecclefechan, a vocabulary from which he never departed, was a remarkably apt one, drawn from two unsurpassed sources, the dialect of the Lowlands and King James's Translation. To this Carlyle added, by dint of prodigious reading, almost the entire vocabulary known to metaphysics, theology, history, biography, and polite literature. Familiarity with German and French and the ancient languages rendered him superior to lexicons and made him an authority unto himself. He not only felt competent, but was competent to use any word that suited his meaning. *Fire-eyed*, perhaps borrowed from Shakspeare, is a favorite word. Many unusual words, such as *poet-soul* and *ale-vapors*, he probably coined on the spot, without giving the origin of the words a second thought, provided they met his needs. One has only to choose a paragraph at random and attempt to substitute synonyms to become impressed with the fitness of Carlyle's vocabulary.

In some other respects one feels that he might have improved, for Carlyle is hard to understand. His *Burns* was written under the most favorable circumstances, and is considered one of his clearest

and best pieces of writing. Yet it is by no means easy to follow his thought. He pays little attention to the reader. The thought is there; if the reader cannot get it, let him qualify. Carlyle's allusions are frequent and pertinent but indiscriminating, and at times certainly unduly recondite. An author who shreds into his writings bits of fact or information gathered up in his walks and conversation, or more probably unearthed from old volumes that may not be opened again for generations, if ever, is not likely to be popular. In reading this essay, for instance, it is easy to trace many phrases and words to their source in border history, in the Scriptures, or in Shakspeare, but the average reader can hardly realize how full every line is of hidden fire. With here a word from a ballad, and there a word from Lamentations, called up by the relationship of the ballad to Burns's poem or by a train of reflection upon the contrasting characters of the Scottish bard and the Hebrew prophet, it would be impossible to determine what association of ideas moulded Carlyle's phraseology, unless one were to pass through his experiences. The most diligent student, even by giving a lifetime to the study of Lowland life, Scottish poetry and Carlyle's literary antecedents, would be unable to read out of this essay all that the author wrote into it. There is all the more need, therefore, for a careful study of the points it is possible to clear up.

An attempt to bring the essay as a whole, or by paragraphs, or even sentence by sentence, within the rules of modern composition is unavailing. It would not be easy to give a reason for the occurrence of paragraphs in their present order; entire groups of paragraphs might be shifted to another position; it is difficult to bring the essay within any reasonable kind of topical analysis. Yet it would be more difficult to suggest an arrangement of greater effectiveness. One might as well try to rearrange the stones in a wall as to rearrange Carlyle's sentences. In matters of punctuation and capitalization and sentence structure, too, Carlyle must be taken as he is.

Carlyle's whole life was a protest against thinking as other people pretend to think, and against doing as other people do. To be sure, he had boundless sympathy and coveted appreciation. In his correspondence with Goethe, and possibly in some of his letters to Emerson, he shows a desire to propitiate, to be pleasant; but ordinarily he makes no effort to write in an acceptable, not to say pleasing, manner. If Carlyle did not care to please, he did care to be believed. Criticism of his style, retort for his sharp sayings, personal attack, any amount of vituperation, might fall on his armored sides and he would lie at anchor grim and silent; but doubt his sincerity, venture to question his colors and he would train his guns upon you instantly. Had Carlyle known that this essay would some day

be used for class purposes, his only concern would have been to have students find and accept his thought.

Carlyle himself says that composition was a slow and even painful task. As a lad he had seen his industrious father choose stones and true them with a hammer, and lift them into place and level them with smaller pieces, and imbed them all in mortar to build up an honest wall. So, as a man, Carlyle chose rugged thoughts, shaped and fitted them and laid them in a wealth of allusions and supporting facts to build up an honest essay; and he has succeeded. We may, indeed, pick out a bit of mortar here and point out a want of harmony in the granitic colors there, but this essay is still a fitting monument to its builder, a simple, enduring piece of workmanship, the very materialization of his own rules for the honest craftsman, be he in literature or any other honorable walk in life. "No slop work ever dropped from his pen. He never wrote down a word which he had not weighed, nor a sentence which he had not assured himself contained a truth." No better exemplification of his literary method can be chosen than his paper on Burns.

b. AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF BURNS. It was no doubt the author's intention to say a conclusive word about Burns. He had a feeling that, while noise enough had been made over Burns, the popular applause was indiscriminating

and not based upon a genuine perception of merit. Carlyle was peculiarly well fitted to write on this subject. Froude says, "It is one of the very best of his essays, and was composed with an evidently very peculiar interest, because the outward circumstances of Burns's life, his origin, his early surroundings, his situation as a man of genius born in a farmhouse not many miles distant, among the same people and the same associations as were so familiar to himself, could not fail to make him think often of himself while he was writing about his countryman." Carlyle's estimate has been very generally accepted, and future critics can hardly reverse his judgment. They will have greater length of perspective, but this advantage will be offset by want of sympathy. They cannot be a part of what Burns and Carlyle were, for the land of Burns, the land of Carlyle, is fast becoming a part of the outside world. Local culture, long indigenous, is merging into cosmopolitanism. Stevenson and Barrie and Watson are indeed worthy weavers of the Scottish plaid, but they are not Carlyle and Burns.

If the essay be studied for the light it throws on Burns and for a criticism of his poetry, a good life of Burns should be read first, and Burns's more important poems should be made familiar. For a further contribution in Carlyle's best vein, the student should read a few pages of *Burns, the Hero as a Man of Letters*, in *Heroes and Hero Worship*.

c. AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE THEORY OF LITERATURE. Carlyle's theory of literature, his enunciation of the rules which should govern literary utterance and in accordance with which judgment should be passed—that is to say, his ideas of literary criticism—are entirely subordinate in the plan of the essay. They are given briefly in a few paragraphs, only to justify the reviewer's dogmas and to support his critique of Burns's poetry and life. When an author considers every word he writes as important, it is unlikely that he knows when he says his best things, but Carlyle's theory of literature, first clearly enunciated in this essay, is his surest claim to fame. Reference has been made to the difficulty of tracing Carlyle's allusions, but there is no difficulty in tracing his influence. Once on the alert, it is astonishingly easy to note the indebtedness of modern criticism to him. Of American writers we may mention Emerson and Lowell and Whipple and Stedman as freely acknowledging his influence. In England, Matthew Arnold extended and applied the ideas of Carlyle's essay. It holds a fundamental piece of literary criticism which has underlain and stimulated the literary activity of the Victorian age. Poets, novelists and critics have squared their writings or sealed their verdicts, consciously or unconsciously, in accordance with the message sent by that lone man with the beetling brow down from the moors of Craigenputtock to the *Edinburgh Review*. Carlyle's ideas of what literature should

be and, consequently, by what standard it should be judged, are stated so clearly that it would be unfair to the student to summarize them here instead of permitting him to gather and arrange them for himself.

One other point should be noticed, for it marks the beginning of better things in literary criticism. Carlyle was a man of spotless integrity. His life was trying to his friends, but he laid it down without a blot. He hated the way of the transgressor with a hatred akin to savagery. Yet in this essay, overlooking Burns's slips and wrong-doing, he throws over him the mantle of charity, takes him by the hand, calls him countryman, and says to the world: Behold, here is a Man, his works do speak for him.

Even with judicious notes at hand not a little work in a library is desirable. For tributes to Burns the poems of Whittier, Lowell and Wordsworth should be put under contribution. Encyclopædia articles on Burns and Carlyle should be consulted. Frequent references to a large dictionary and the *Century Cyclopædia of Names* are almost indispensable. For the literary conditions of the times of Carlyle and Burns, consult Welsh's *Development of English Literature*. The recent edition of Burns's Poems, by Andrew Lang, since it is inexpensive and carefully done, is probably the most appropriate edition for a school library.

The following additional reference books are carefully selected as those most likely to repay study.

CARLYLE

- Thomas Carlyle*, Froude.
- Reminiscences*, Carlyle.
- Correspondence*, Carlyle-Emerson.
- Correspondence*, Carlyle-Goethe.
- Letters and Memorials*, Carlyle, Jane Welsh.
- Critical Miscellanies*, Morley.
- Literary Essays*, Vol. II., Lowell.
- Emerson* (Discourses in America), Arnold.
- English Traits*, Emerson.
- Thomas Carlyle* (English Men of Letters Series), Nichol.
- Fresh Fields*, Burroughs.
- Corrected Impressions*, Saintsbury.

BURNS

- Life and Works of Robert Burns*, Chambers.
- The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, Lang.
- Life of Burns* (Great Writers Series), Blackie.
- History of English Literature*, Taine.
- Familiar Studies of Men and Books*, Stevenson.
- Letters* (Camelot Classics), Burns.
- The Study of Poetry (Essays in Criticism)*, Arnold.
- Heroes and Hero Worship*, Carlyle.
- Miscellanies*, Emerson.

POEMS OF BURNS NAMED IN THE ESSAY

1783 Poor Mailie's Elegy.

{ Epistle to William Simpson.
The Holy Fair.
Halloween.

1785 { To a Mouse.
The Jolly Beggars. A Cantata.
The Cotter's Saturday Night.
Address to the Deil.
Scotch Drink.

1786 { The Auld Farmer's New-Year-Morning Saluta-
tion to his Auld Mare, Maggie.
To a Mountain Daisy.
The Brigs of Ayr.
Farewell to the Banks of Ayr.
A Winter Night.

1787 Epistle to Mrs. Scott of Wauchope House.

1788 M'Pherson's Farewell.

{ Ode—Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald of
Auchencruive.
1789 { The Wounded Hare.
Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut.
To Mary in Heaven.

1790 { Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson.
Tam O'Shanter: A Tale.

1792 { Duncan Gray.
Open the Door to Me, oh.
Bruce's Address at Bannockburn.

CARLYLE'S ESSAY ON
BURNS

This essay first appeared as a leading article, or perhaps better, as a literary criticism, in the *Edinburgh Review* for December, 1828, under the following heading:

ART. I. *The Life of Robert Burns.*

By J. G. Lockhart, LL.B., Edinburgh, 1828.

Eleven years later Carlyle collected his papers from the pages of several periodicals, and republished them. He was never fond of long titles and this essay he named with a single luminous word *Burns*. While professedly writing a book review it is interesting to note that Carlyle refers to Lockhart in but three places; in the first sentence of the second paragraph, in the fourth paragraph, and in the two quotations on pages 99 and 110.

BURNS

In the modern arrangements of society, it is no uncommon thing that a man of genius must, like Butler, “ask for bread and receive a stone;” for, in spite of our grand maxim of supply and demand, 5 it is by no means the highest excellence that men are most forward to recognize. The inventor of a spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the 10 contrary. We do not know whether it is not an aggravation of the injustice, that there is generally a posthumous retribution. Robert Burns, in the course of Nature, might yet have been living; but his short life was spent in toil and penury; and he 15 died, in the prime of his manhood, miserable and neglected: and yet already a brave mausoleum shines over his dust, and more than one splendid monument has been reared in other places to his fame; the street where he languished in poverty is 20 called by his name; the highest personages in our literature have been proud to appear as his commentators and admirers; and here is the *sixth* narrative of his *Life* that has been given to the world!

Mr. Lockhart thinks it necessary to apologize for this new attempt on such a subject: but his readers, we believe, will readily acquit him; or, at worst, will censure only the performance of his task, not the choice of it. The character of Burns, 5 indeed, is a theme that cannot easily become either trite or exhausted; and will probably gain rather than lose in its dimensions by the distance to which it is removed by Time. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet; and this is prob- 10 ably true; but the fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's. For it is certain that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, nay, per- 15 haps painfully feel, toiling at their side through the poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves. Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's, and neighbour of John à Combe's, had snatched an hour or two 20 from the preservation of his game, and written us a Life of Shakspeare! What dissertations should we not have had,—not on *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, but on the wool-trade, and deer-stealing, and the libel and vagrant laws; and how the Poacher 25 became a Player; and how Sir Thomas and Mr. John had Christian bowels, and did not push him to extremities! In like manner, we believe, with respect to Burns, that till the companions of his pilgrimage, the Honorable Excise Commission- 30

ers, and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and the Dumfries Aristocracy, and all the Squires and Earls, equally with the Ayr Writers, and the New and Old Light Clergy, whom he had to do
5 with, shall have become invisible in the darkness of the Past, or visible only by light borrowed from *his* juxtaposition, it will be difficult to measure him by any true standard, or to estimate what he really was and did, in the eighteenth century, for
10 his country and the world. It will be difficult, we say; but still a fair problem for literary historians; and repeated attempts will give us repeated approximations.

His former Biographers have done something, no
15 doubt, but by no means a great deal, to assist us. Dr. Currie and Mr. Walker, the principal of these writers, have both, we think, mistaken one essentially important thing: Their own and the world's true relation to their author, and the style in which
20 it became such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr. Currie loved the poet truly; more perhaps than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself; yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronizing, apologetic air; as if the polite
25 public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar and gentleman, should do such honour to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith; and
30 regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's

biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what he saw. Mr. Walker offends more deeply in the same kind: and both err alike in presenting us with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues and vices, 5 instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity. This, however, is not painting a portrait; but gauging the length and breadth of the several features, and jotting down their dimensions in arithmetical ciphers. Nay, it is not so 10 much as that: for we are yet to learn by what arts or instruments the mind *could* be so measured and gauged.

Mr. Lockhart, we are happy to say, has avoided both these errors. He uniformly treats Burns as 15 the high and remarkable man the public voice has now pronounced him to be: and in delineating him, he has avoided the method of separate generalities, and rather sought for characteristic incidents, habits, actions, sayings; in a word, for 20 aspects which exhibit the whole man, as he looked and lived among his fellows. The book accordingly, with all its deficiencies, gives more insight, we think, into the true character of Burns, than any prior biography: though, being written on the 25 very popular and condensed scheme of an article for *Constable's Miscellany*, it has less depth than we could have wished and expected from a writer of such power; and contains rather more, and more multifarious quotations than belong of right to an 30

original production. Indeed, Mr. Lockhart's own writing is generally so good, so clear, direct, and nervous, that we seldom wish to see it making place for another man's. However, the spirit of the
5 work is throughout candid, tolerant, and anxiously conciliating; compliments and praises are liberally distributed, on all hands, to great and small; and, as Mr. Morris Birkbeck observes of the society in the backwoods of America, "the courtesies of
10 polite life are never lost sight of for a moment." But there are better things than these in the volume; and we can safely testify, not only that it is easily and pleasantly read a first time, but may even be without difficulty read again.

15 Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents,—though of these we are still every day receiving some fresh acces-
20 sion,—as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character
25 recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent them-
30 selves to his mind? How did coexisting circum- ✓

stances modify him from without; how did he modify these from within? (With what endeavours and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and what suffering sink under them?) In one word, what and how produced was the effect of 5 society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in Biography. ✓
Few individuals, indeed, can deserve such a study; 10 and many *lives* will be written, and, for the gratification of innocent curiosity, ought to be written, and read and forgotten, which are not in this sense *biographies*. But Burns, if we mistake not, is one of these few individuals; and such a study, at least 15 with such a result, he has not yet obtained. Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but we offer them with goodwill, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those they are intended for. 20

Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again 25 awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time. It is true, the "nine days" have long since

elapsed; and the very continuance of this clamour proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more
5 exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be well-nigh shorn of that casual radiance, he appears not only as a true British poet, but as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did
10 little. He did much, if we consider where and how. If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very materials to discover; for the metal he worked in lay hid under the desert, where no eye but his had guessed its
15 existence; and we may almost say that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity,
without help, without instruction, without model; or with models only of the meanest sort. An
20 educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from
25 all past ages. How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain forever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of
30 his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine

may remove mountains; but no dwarf will hew them down with a pickaxe: and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had 5 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 10 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 15 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 20 haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labour, a gift which Time has now pronounced imperishable. [Add to all this, that his darksome drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindest era of his whole life;] and that he died in his 25 thirty-seventh year: and then ask, If it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? (Alas, his Sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at noon! 30)

Shrouded in such baleful vapours, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendour, enlightening the world: but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those
5 clouds with rainbow and orient colours, into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently gazed on with wonder and tears!

We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is exposition rather than admiration that our readers
10 require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business; we are not so sure of
15 this; but, at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy: time and
20 means were not lent him for this; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed
30 utterly sad a scene; whether Napoleon himself, left to brawl with Sir Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock, "amid the melancholy main," presented to the reflecting mind such a "spectacle of pity and fear," as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler, and perhaps greater soul, wasting itself away in a
30 hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and closer round him, till only death

✓ opened him an outlet. Conquerors are a class of men with whom, for most part, the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathizing loftiness, and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons inspire us in general with any affection; at best it may excite amazement; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe. (But 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 recognized 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
5 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"
10 of Winter delights him; he dwells with a sad and
oft-returning fondness in 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*
15 *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! But observe him
chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What
warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling; what
20 trustful, boundless love; what generous exaggera-
tion 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
25 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-
30 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 5 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 10 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 15 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 20 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 25 friendship; unbosoms himself, often to the unworthy; and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship. And yet he was "quick to learn;" a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises 30

afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a generous credulity in his heart. And so did our Peasant show himself
5 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 quarreling with smugglers and vintners, com-
10 puting 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.

X All that remains of Burns, the Writings he has
15 left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete; that wanted all things for completeness: culture, leisure, true effort, nay,
20 even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions; poured forth with little premeditation; expressing, by such means as offered, the passion, opinion, or humour of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted
25 him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his strength, to fuse and mould it in the concentrated fire of his genius. To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments, would be at once unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless, there

is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have: for after fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste, they 5 still continue to be read; nay, are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively; and this not only by literary virtuosos, and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard, unlettered, 10 and truly natural class, who read little, and especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the 15 English tongue is spoken, are well worth inquiring into. After every just deduction, it seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

To answer this question will not lead us far. 20 The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognized: his *Sincerity*, his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic 25 sentimentalities; no wiredrawn refinings, either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from 30

hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and laboured amidst, that he describes: those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, 5 noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it with such melody and modulation as he can; "in homely rustic jingle;" but it 10 is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*, is applicable in a wider sense than 15 the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart; and other men, so strangely are we 20 all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above the speaker, or below him; but in either case, his words, if they are earnest and sincere, will find some response within 25 us; for in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.

This may appear a very simple principle, and one which Burns had little merit in discovering. 30 True, the discovery is easy enough; but the prac-

tical appliance is not easy; is indeed the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with, and which scarcely one in the hundred ever fairly surmounts. A head too dull to discriminate the true from the false; a heart too dull to love the one at all risks, and to hate the other in spite of all temptations, are alike fatal to a writer. With either, or, as more commonly happens, with both of these deficiencies, combine a love of distinction, a wish to be original, which is seldom wanting; and we have Affectation, the bane of literature, as Cant, its elder brother, is of morals. How often does the one and the other front us, in poetry, as in life! Great poets themselves are not always free of this vice; nay, it is precisely on a certain sort and degree of greatness that it is most commonly ingrafted. A strong effort after excellence will sometimes solace itself with a mere shadow of success; he who has much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. Byron, for instance, was no common man: yet if we examine his poetry with this view, we shall find it far enough from faultless. Generally speaking, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the divine fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed to the taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even nausea. Are his Harolds and Giaours, we would ask, real men; we mean, poetically consistent and conceivable men? Do not these characters, does not the character of their

author, which more or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing put on for the occasion; no natural or possible mode of being, but something intended to look much grander than nature?

5 Surely, all these stormful agonies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt, and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous humour, is more like the brawling of a player in some paltry tragedy,

10 which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life, which is to last three-score and ten years. To our minds there is a taint of this sort, something which we should call theatrical, false, affected, in every one of these

15 otherwise so powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*, especially the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *sincere* work, he ever wrote; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, as he was; and seemed so intent on his sub-

20 ject as, for moments, to forget himself. Yet Byron hated this vice; we believe, heartily detested it: nay, he had declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment, which might seem

25 the simplest of all: to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without errors involuntary or wilful! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affecta-

30 tion. He is an honest man, and an honest writer.

In his successes and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever clear, simple, true, and glitters with no lustre but his own. We reckon this to be a great virtue; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral. 5

Here, however, let us say, it is to the Poetry of Burns that we now allude; to those writings which he had time to meditate, and where no special reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his endeavour to fulfil it. Certain of his 10 Letters, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. Here, doubtless, there is not the same natural truth of style; but on the contrary, something not only stiff, but strained and twisted; a certain high-flown inflated tone; 15 the stilting emphasis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of even his poorest verses. Thus no man, it would appear, is altogether unaffected. Does not Shakspeare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bombast! But 20 even with regard to these Letters of Burns, it is but fair to state that he had two excuses. The first was his comparative deficiency in language. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force, and even gracefulness, is not master of 25 English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second 30

and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained; whom therefore he is either
5 forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his Letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as
10 one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.

But we return to his Poetry. In addition to its
15 Sincerity, it has another peculiar merit, which indeed is but a mode, or perhaps a means, of the foregoing: this displays itself in his choice of subjects; or rather in his indifference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjects
20 interesting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is forever seeking in external circumstances the help which can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form or comeliness: home is not poetical, but
25 prosaic; it is in some past, distant, conventional heroic world, that poetry resides for him; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-coloured Novels and ironmailed Epics,
30 with their locality not on the earth, but somewhere

nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans, and copper-coloured Chiefs in wampum, and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who 5 on all hands swarm in our poetry. Peace be with them! But yet, as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets, "a sermon on the duty of staying at home." Let them be sure that heroic 10 ages and heroic climates can do little for them. That form of life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our own, than simply because it is different; and even this attraction must be of the most transient sort. For will, not 15 our own age, one day, be an ancient one; and have as quaint a costume as the rest; not contrasted with the rest, therefore, but ranked along with them, in respect of quaintness? Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed beyond 20 his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born; or because he wrote what passed in God's world, and in the heart of man, which is the same after thirty centuries? Let our poets look to this: is their feeling really finer, truer, and their vision 25 deeper than that of other men,—they have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it not so,—they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favour, even from the highest.

The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek 30

for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because
5 he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavours; its unspeakable
10 aspirations, its fears and hopes that wander through Eternity; and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death-bed,
15 though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life
20 and nature is as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision has been given him. Has life no
25 meanings for him which another cannot equally decipher; then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.

In this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, better manifests his capability,
30 better proves the truth of his genius, than if he

had by his own strength kept the whole Minerva Press going, to the end of his literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of Nature's own making; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition being requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort of training; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance "the elder dramatists," and so learned a poetic language; as if poetry lay in the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told he must be bred in a certain rank, and must be on confidential footing with the higher classes; because, above all things, he must see the world. As to seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, if he have but eyesight to see it with. Without eyesight, indeed, the task might be hard. The blind or the purblind man "travels from Dan to Beersheba, and finds it all barren." But happily every poet is born *in* the world; and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour he lives. ¶ The mysterious workmanship of man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable darkness of man's destiny, reveal themselves not only in capital cities and crowded saloons, but in every hut and hamlet where men have their abode. ¶ Nay, do not the elements of all human virtues and all human vices; the passions at once of a Borgia and of a Luther, lie written, in stronger or fainter lines, in the consciousness of

every individual bosom that has practised honest self-examination? Truly, this same world may be seen in Mossgiel and Tarbolton, if we look well, as clearly as it ever came to light in Crockford's, or
5 the Tuileries itself.

But sometimes still harder requisitions are laid on the poor aspirant to poetry; for it is hinted that he should have *been born* two centuries ago; inasmuch as poetry, about that date, vanished from the
10 earth, and became no longer attainable by men! Such cobweb speculations have, now and then, overhung the field of literature; but they obstruct not the growth of any plant there: the Shakespeare or the Burns, unconsciously, and merely as
15 he walks onward, silently brushes them away. Is not every genius an impossibility till he appear? Why do we call him new and original, if *we* saw where his marble was lying, and what fabric he could rear from it? It is not the material, but the
20 workman that is wanting. It is not the dark *place* that hinders, but the dim *eye*. A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it; found it a *man's* life, and therefore significant to men.
25 A thousand battle-fields remain unsung; but the *Wounded Hare* has not perished without its memorial; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from its dumb agonies, because a poet was there. Our *Halloween* had passed and repassed, in rude awe
30 and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no

Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl: neither was the *Holy Fair* any *Council of Trent* or *Roman Jubilee*; but nevertheless *Superstition* and *Hypocrisy* and *Fun* having been propitious to him, in this man's hand it 5 became a poem, instinct with satire and genuine comic life. Let but the true poet be given us, we repeat it, place him where and how you will; and true poetry will not be wanting.

Independently of the essential gift of poetic feel- 10 ing, as we have now attempted to describe it, a certain rugged sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written; a virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life and hardy natural men. 15 There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness: he is tender, he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart, or inflames it, with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see that in this 20 man there was the gentleness, the trembling pity of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardour of a hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire; as lightning lurks in the drops of the summer cloud. He has a resonance in his 25 bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his "lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit." And observe with what a fierce prompt force he grasps his subject, be it 30

what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discovered? No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question; and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten. Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? No poet of any age or nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand, and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre, so clear and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with a burnt stick; and yet the burin of a Retzsch is not more expressive or exact.

Of this last excellence, the plainest and most comprehensive of all, being indeed the root and foundation of *every* sort of talent, poetical or intellectual, we could produce innumerable instances from the writings of Burns. Take these glimpses of a snow-storm from his *Winter Night* (the italics are ours):

When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r,
 And Phœbus *gies a short-liv'd glowr*
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r
Or whirling drift:

'Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
 Poor labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
 While burns *wi' snawy wreeths upchok'd*
 Wild-eddying swirl,
 Or thro' the mining outlet bock'd
 Down headlong hurl. 5

Are there not "descriptive touches" here? The describer *saw* this thing; the essential feature and true likeness of every circumstance in it; saw, and not with the eye only. "Poor labour locked in 10 sweet sleep;" the dead stillness of man, unconscious, vanquished, yet not unprotected, while such strife of the material elements rages, and seems to reign supreme in loneliness: this is of the heart as well as of the eye!—Look also at his image of a thaw, 15 and prophesied fall of the *Auld Brig*:

When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains
 Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
 When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
 Or stately Lugar's *mossy* fountains *boil*, 20
 Or where the Greenock winds his *moorland* course,
 Or haunted Garpal* draws his feeble source,
 Arous'd by blust'ring winds and *spotting* thowes,
In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat, 25
Sweeps dams and mills and brigs a' to the gate;
 And from Glenbuck down to the Rottonkey,
 Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd *tumbling* sea;
 Then down ye'll hurl, Deil nor ye never rise!
 And *dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.* 30

The last line is in itself a Poussin-picture of that Deluge! The welkin has, as it were, bent down

**Fabulosus* Hydaspes!

with its weight; the “gumlie jaups” and the “pouring skies” are mingled together; it is a world of rain and ruin.—In respect of mere clearness and minute fidelity, the *Farmer’s* commendation of his *Auld Mare*, in plough or in cart, may vie with Homer’s Smithy of the Cyclops, or yoking of Priam’s Chariot. Nor have we forgotten stout *Burn-the-Wind* and his brawny customers, inspired by *Scotch Drink*: but it is needless to multiply examples. One other trait of a much finer sort we select from multitudes of such among his *Songs*. It gives, in a single line, to the saddest-feeling the saddest environment and local habitation:

15 *The pale Moon is setting beyond the white wave,
 And Time is setting wi’ me, O;
 Farewell, false friends! false lover, farewell!
 I’ll nae mair trouble them nor thee, O.*

This clearness of sight we have called the foundation of all talent; for in fact, unless we *see* our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in our understanding, our imagination, our affections? Yet it is not in itself, perhaps, a very high excellence; but capable of being united indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary powers. 25 Homer surpasses all men in this quality: but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that may 30 exist along with it. In all the three cases we have

mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity; their descriptions are detailed, ample and lovingly exact; Homer's fire bursts through, from time to time, as if by accident; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his; words more memorable, now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigour and laconic pith? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. We hear of "a gentleman that derived his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God." Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward, he says, "*red-wat-shod*:" giving in this one word, a full vision of horror and carnage; perhaps too frightfully accurate for Art!

In fact, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigour of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, and in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him, with some surprise: "All the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have

pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities." But this, if we mistake not, is at all times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment.

5 Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague, random tunefulness of nature, is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined from them; 10 but rather the result of their general harmony and completion. The feelings, the gifts, that exist in the Poet are those that exist, with more or less development, in every human soul: the imagination which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the 15 same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does the Poet speak to men, with power, but by being still more a man than they? Shakspeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, 20 has shown an Understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, or indited a *Novum Organum*. What Burns's force of understanding may have been, we have less means of judging: it had to dwell among the humblest 25 objects; never saw Philosophy; never rose, except by natural effort and for short intervals, into the region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication, if no proof sufficient, remains for us in his works: we discern the brawny movements of a 30 gigantic though untutored strength; and can

understand how, in conversation, his quick sure insight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, have amazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

But, unless we mistake, the intellectual gift of Burns is fine as well as strong. The more delicate relations of things could not well have escaped his eye, for they were intimately present to his heart. The logic of the senate and the forum is indispensable, but not all-sufficient; nay, perhaps the highest Truth is that which will the most certainly elude it. For this logic works by words, and "the highest," it has been said, "cannot be expressed in words." We are not without tokens of an openness for this higher truth also, of a keen though uncultivated sense for it, having existed in Burns. Mr. Stewart, it will be remembered, "wonders," in the passage above quoted, that Burns had formed some distinct conception of the "doctrine of association." We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him. Here for instance:

"We know nothing," thus writes he, "or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the fox glove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I

view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling
5 an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident; or do these workings argue something
10 within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave."

15 Force and fineness of understanding are often spoken of as something different from general force and fineness of nature, as something partly independent of them. The necessities of language so require it; but in truth these qualities are not
20 distinct and independent: except in special cases, and from special causes, they ever go together. A man of strong understanding is generally a man of strong character; neither is delicacy in the one kind often divided from delicacy in the other.
25 No one, at all events, is ignorant that in the Poetry of Burns keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling; that his *light* is not more pervading than his *warmth*. He is a man of the most impassioned temper; with passions not strong
30 only, but noble, and of the sort in which great virtues and great poems take their rise. It is reverence, it is love towards all Nature that

inspires him, that opens his eyes to its beauty, and makes heart and voice eloquent in its praise. There is a true old saying, that "Love furthers knowledge:" but above all, it is the living essence of that knowledge which makes poets; the first principle of its existence, increase, activity. Of Burns's fervid affection, his generous all-embracing Love, we have spoken already, as of the grand distinction of his nature, seen equally in word and deed, in his Life and in his Writings. It were easy to multiply examples. Not man only, but all that environs man in the material and moral universe, is lovely in his sight: "the hoary hawthorn," the "troop of gray plover," the "solitary curlew," all are dear to him; all live in this Earth along with him, and to all he is knit as in mysterious brotherhood. How touching is it, for instance, that, amidst the gloom of personal misery, brooding over the wintry desolation without him and within him, he thinks of the "ourie cattle" and "silly sheep," and their sufferings in the pitiless storm!

I thought me on the ourie cattle,
 Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
 O' wintry war,
 Or thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle, 25
 Beneath a scaur.
 Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,
 That in the merry months o' spring
 Delighted me to hear thee sing,
 What comes o' thee? 30
 Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
 And close thy ee?

The tenant of the mean hut, with its "ragged roof and chinky wall," has a heart to pity even these! This is worth several homilies on Mercy; for it is the voice of Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all realms of being; nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him. The very Devil he cannot hate with right orthodoxy:

10 But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben;
 O, wad ye tak a thought and men'!
 Ye aiblins might,—I dinna ken,—
 Still hae a stake;
 I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
 Even for your sake!

15 " 'He is the father of curses and lies,' said Dr. Slop; 'and is cursed and damned already.'—'I am sorry for it,' quoth my uncle Toby!'—A Poet without Love were a physical and metaphysical impossibility.

20 But has it not been said, in contradiction to this principle, that "Indignation makes verses"? It has been so said, and is true enough: but the contradiction is apparent, not real. The Indignation which makes verses is, properly speaking, an
 25 inverted Love; the love of some right, some worth, some goodness, belonging to ourselves or others, which has been injured, and which this tempestuous feeling issues forth to defend and avenge. No selfish fury of heart, existing there as a primary
 30 feeling, and without its opposite, ever produced

much Poetry: otherwise, we suppose, the Tiger were the most musical of all our choristers. Johnson said he loved a good hater; by which he must have meant, not so much one that hated violently, as one that hated wisely; hated baseness 5 from love of nobleness. However, in spite of Johnson's paradox, tolerable enough for once in speech, but which need not have been so often adopted in print since then, we rather believe that good men deal sparingly in hatred, either wise or 10 unwise: nay, that a "good" hater is still a desideratum in this world. The Devil, at least, who passes for the chief and best of that class, is said to be nowise an amiable character.

Of the verses which Indignation makes, Burns 15 has also given us specimens: and among the best that were ever given. Who will forget his "*Dweller in yon Dungeon dark;*" a piece that might have been chanted by the Furies of Æschylus? The secrets of the infernal Pit are 20 laid bare; a boundless, baleful "darkness visible;" and streaks of hell-fire quivering madly in its black haggard bosom!

Dweller in yon Dungeon dark,
 Hangman of Creation, mark!
 Who in widow's weeds appears,
 Laden with unhonoured years,
 Noosing with care a bursting purse,
 Baited with many a deadly curse?

25

Why should we speak of "*Scots wha hae wi'*" 30

Wallace bled;” since all know of it, from the king to the meanest of his subjects? This dithyrambic was composed on horseback; in riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest Galloway moor, in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet’s looks, forbore to speak,—judiciously enough, for a man composing *Bruce’s Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. Doubtless this stern hymn was singing itself, as he formed it, through the soul of Burns: but to the external ear, it should be sung with the throat of the whirlwind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war-ode; the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen.

Another wild stormful Song, that dwells in our ear and mind with a strange tenacity, is *Macpherson’s Farewell*. Perhaps there is something in the tradition itself that coöperates. For was not this grim Celt, this shaggy Northland Cacus, that “lived a life of sturt and strife, and died by treacherie,”—was not he too one of the Nimrods and Napoleons of the earth, in the arena of his own remote misty glens, for want of a clearer and wider one? Nay, was there not a touch of grace given him? A fibre of love and softness, of poetry itself, must have lived in his savage heart: for he composed that air the night before his execution; on the wings of that poor melody, his better soul would soar away above oblivion, pain, and all the

ignominy and despair, which, like an avalanche, was hurling him to the abyss! Here also, as at Thebes, and in Pelops' line, was material Fate matched against man's Free-will; matched in bitterest though obscure duel; and the ethereal soul ⁵ sank not, even in its blindness, without a cry which has survived it. But who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul; words that we never listen to without a strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling? 10

*Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows-tree.*

Under a lighter disguise, the same principle of ¹⁵ Love, which we have recognized as the great characteristic of Burns, and of all true poets, occasionally manifests itself in the shape of Humour. Everywhere, indeed, in his sunny moods, a full buoyant flood of mirth rolls through the mind of ²⁰ Burns; he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all Nature. We speak not of his bold and often irresistible faculty of caricature; for this is Drollery rather than Humour: but a much tenderer sportfulness dwells ²⁵ in him; and comes forth here and there, in evanescent and beautiful touches; as in his *Address to the Mouse*, or the *Farmer's Mare*, or in his *Elegy on poor Mailie*, which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces ³⁰

there are traits of a Humour as fine as that of Sterne; yet altogether different, original, peculiar,—the Humour of Burns.

Of the tenderness, the playful pathos, and many
5 other kindred qualities of Burns's Poetry, much
more might be said; but now, with these poor out-
lines of a sketch, we must prepare to quit this part
of our subject. To speak of his individual Writ-
ings, adequately and with any detail, would lead us
10 far beyond our limits. As already hinted, we can
look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical
language, deserving the name of Poems: they are
rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense;
yet seldom essentially melodious, aerial, poetical.
15 *Tam o' Shanter* itself, which enjoys so high a favour,
does not appear to us at all decisively to come under
this last category. It is not so much a poem, as a
piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of
the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone
20 back, much less carried us back, into that dark,
earnest, wondering age, when the tradition was
believed, and when it took its rise; he does not
attempt, by any new-modeling of his supernatural
ware, to strike anew that deep, mysterious chord of
25 human nature, which once responded to such
things; and which lives in us too, and will forever
live, though silent now, or vibrating with far other
notes, and to far different issues. Our German
readers will understand us, when we say that he is
30 not the Tieck but the Musäus of this tale.

Externally it is all green and living; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The piece does not properly cohere: the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay, the idea of such a bridge is laughed at; and thus the Tragedy of the adventure becomes a mere drunken phantasmagoria, or many-coloured spectrum painted on ale-vapours, and the Farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to the deep, varied, genial power displayed in what he has actually accomplished; but we find far more "Shakspear-ean" qualities, as these of *Tam o' Shanter* have been fondly named, in many of his other pieces; nay, we incline to believe that this latter might have been written, all but quite as well, by a man who, in place of genius, had only possessed talent.

Perhaps we may venture to say, that the most strictly poetical of all his "poems" is one which does not appear in Currie's Edition; but has been often printed before and since, under the humble title of *The Jolly Beggars*. The subject truly is among the lowest in Nature; but it only the more shows our Poet's gift in raising it into the domain of Art. To our minds, this piece seems thoroughly compacted; melted together, refined; and poured

forth in one flood of true *liquid* harmony. It is light, airy, soft of movement; yet sharp and precise in its details; every face is a portrait: that *raucle carlin*, that *wee Apollo*, that *Son of Mars*,
5 are Scottish, yet ideal; the scene is at once a dream, and the very Ragcastle of "Poosie-Nansie." Farther, it seems in a considerable degree complete, a real self-supporting Whole, which is the highest merit in a poem. The blanket of the
10 Night is drawn asunder for a moment; in full, ruddy, flaming light, these rough tatterdemalions are seen in their boisterous revel; for the strong pulse of Life vindicates its right to gladness even here; and when the curtain closes, we prolong the
15 action, without effort; the next day as the last, our *Caird* and our *Balladmonger* are singing and soldiering; their "brats and callets" are hawking, begging, cheating; and some other night, in new combinations, they will wring from Fate another
20 hour of wassail and good cheer. Apart from the universal sympathy with man which this again bespeaks in Burns, a genuine inspiration and no inconsiderable technical talent are manifested here. There is the fidelity, humour, warm life, and
25 accurate painting and grouping of some Teniers, for whom hostlers and carousing peasants are not without significance. It would be strange, doubtless, to call this the best of Burns's writings: we mean to say only that it seems to us the most per-
30 fect of its kind, as a piece of poetical composition,

strictly so called. In the *Beggars' Opera*, in the *Beggars' Bush*, as other critics have already remarked, there is nothing which, in real poetic vigour, equals this *Cantata*; nothing, as we think, which comes within many degrees of it. 5

But by far the most finished, complete, and truly inspired pieces of Burns are, without dispute, to be found among his *Songs*. It is here that, although through a small aperture, his light shines with least obstruction; in its highest beauty and pure 10 sunny clearness. The reason may be, that Song is a brief, simple species of composition; and requires nothing so much for its perfection as genuine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. Yet the Song has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules 15 which in most cases are poorly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as felt. We might write a long essay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that Britain has yet produced: for indeed, since the era of Queen Elizabeth, 20 we know not that, by any other hand, aught truly worth attention has been accomplished in this department. True, we have songs enough "by persons of quality;" we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals; many a rhymed speech "in the 25 flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal Bishop," rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some tint of a sentimental sensuality; all which many persons cease not from

endeavouring to sing; though for most part, we fear, the music is but from the throat outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the *Soul*; not in which, but in a certain inane Limbo
5 of the Fancy, or even in some vaporous debatable-land on the outskirts of the Nervous System, most of such madrigals and rhymed speeches seem to have originated.

With the Songs of Burns we must not name
10 these things. Independently of the clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his Songs are honest in another point of view: in form, as well as in spirit. They do not *affect* to be set to music, but they actually and in themselves
15 are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of Harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said*, or spouted, in rhetorical com-
20 pleteness and coherence; but *sung*, in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of the whole mind. We consider this to be the essence of a song; and that no songs since the little careless catches, and as it
25 were drops of song, which Shakspeare has here and there sprinkled over his plays, fulfil this condition in nearly the same degree as most of Burns's do. Such grace and truth of external movement, too, presupposes in general a corresponding force
30 and truth of sentiment and inward meaning. The

songs of Burns are not more perfect in the former quality than in the latter. With what tenderness he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his joy; he burns with the sternest ire, 5 or laughs with the loudest or slyest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, "sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear." If we farther take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flowing revel 10 in "*Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut*," to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven*; from the glad kind greeting of *Auld Langsyne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray*, to the fire-eyed fury of "*Scots wha hae wi' Wallace b'ied*," he 15 has found a tone and words for every mood of man's heart,—it will seem small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him. 20

It is on his Songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend: nor, if our Fletcher's aphorism is true, shall we account this a small influence. "Let me make the songs of a people," said he, 25 "and you shall make its laws." Surely, if ever any Poet might have equaled himself with Legislators on this ground, it was Burns. His Songs are already part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all 30

ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-coloured joy and woe of existence, the *name*, the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name and
5 voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest.

10 In another point of view, moreover, we incline to think that Burns's influence may have been considerable: we mean, as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland. Among the great changes which
15 British, particularly Scottish, literature has undergone since that period, one of the greatest will be found to consist in its remarkable increase of nationality. Even the English writers, most popular in Burns's time, were little distinguished
20 for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling; literature was, as it were, without any local environment; was not nourished by the affec-
25 tions which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and Glovers seemed to write almost as if *in vacuo*; the thing written bears no mark of place; it is not written so much for Englishmen, as for men; or rather, which is the inevitable result of this, for
30 certain Generalizations which philosophy termed

men. Goldsmith is an exception: not so Johnson; the scene of his *Rambler* is little more English than that of his *Rasselas*.

But if such was, in some degree, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case 5 with Scotland. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very singular aspect; unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva, where the same state of matters appears still to continue. For a long period after Scotland 10 became British, we had no literature: at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston was writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of* 15 *Man*. Then came the schisms in our National Church, and the fiercer schisms in our Body Politic: Theologic ink, and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country: however, it was 20 only obscured, not obliterated. Lord Kames made nearly the first attempt, and a tolerably clumsy one, at writing English; and ere long, Hume; Robertson, Smith, and a whole host of followers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this 25 brilliant resuscitation of our "fervid genius," there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous; except, perhaps, the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we sometimes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. 30

It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English; our culture was almost exclusively French. It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, 5 Batteux and Boileau, that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher; it was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political speculations; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith. 10 Hume was too rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them: but neither had he aught to do with Scotland; Edinburgh, equally with La Flèche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in which he not so 15 much morally *lived*, as metaphysically *investigated*. Never, perhaps, was there a class of writers so clear and well-ordered, yet so totally destitute, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay, of any human affection whatever. The French 20 wits of the period were as unpatriotic: but their general deficiency in moral principle, not to say their avowed sensuality and unbelief in all virtue, strictly so called, render this accountable enough. We hope there is a patriotism founded on some- 25 thing better than prejudice; that our country may be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy; that in loving and justly prizing all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern Motherland, and the venerable 30 Structure of social and moral Life, which Mind

has through long ages been building up for us there. Surely there is nourishment for the better part of man's heart in all this: surely the roots that have fixed themselves in the very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up 5 not into briars, but into roses, in the field of his life! Our Scottish sages have no such propensities: the field of their life shows neither briars nor roses; but only a flat, continuous thrashing-floor for Logic, whereon all questions, from the "Doctrine 10 of Rent" to the "Natural History of Religion," are thrashed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality!

With Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature, it cannot be denied that much of this evil is 15 past, or rapidly passing away: our chief literary men, whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like a French Colony, or some knot of Propaganda Missionaries; but like natural-born subjects of the soil, partaking and 20 sympathizing in all our attachments, humours, and habits. Our literature no longer grows in water but in mould, and with the true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due to Burns, or to any other individual, it 25 might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. But his example, in the fearless adoption of domestic subjects, could not but operate from afar; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever 30

burn with a warmer glow than in that of Burns: "a tide of Scottish prejudice," as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, "had been poured along his veins; and he felt that it would
 5 boil there till the flood-gates shut in eternal rest." It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his country, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him,—that of Scottish Song; and how eagerly he entered on it,
 10 how devotedly he laboured there! In his toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him; it is the little happy-valley of his careworn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to
 15 snatch one other name from the oblivion that was covering it! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end:

. . . A wish (I mind its power),
 A wish, that to my latest hour
 20 Shall strongly heave my breast,—
 That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
 Some usefu' plan or book could make,
 Or sing a sang at least.
 The rough bur-thistle, spreading wide
 25 Amang the bearded bear,
 I turn'd my weeding-clips aside,
 And spared the symbol dear.

But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, which has already detained us too long.
 30 Far more interesting than any of his written works, as it appears to us, are his acted ones: the

Nothing

Y^e d^o F^o r^o m^o s^h l^o p^o

Life he willed and was fated to lead among his fellow-men. These Poems are but like little rhymed fragments scattered here and there in the grand unrhymed Romance of his earthly existence; and it is only when intercalated in this at their ⁵ proper places, that they attain their full measure of significance. And this too, alas, was but a fragment! The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched; some columns, porticos, firm masses of building, stand completed; the rest more or less ¹⁰ clearly indicated; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only studious and friendly eyes can now trace towards the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning; and rises among us, beautiful and ¹⁵ sad, at once unfinished and a ruin! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his Poems, and justice required that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it must often be accepted for the fulfilment; much more is this the case in regard to ²⁰ his Life, the sum and result of all his endeavours, where his difficulties came upon him not in detail only, but in mass; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay, was mistaken, and altogether marred. ²⁵

Properly speaking, there is but one era in the life of Burns, and that the earliest. We have not youth and manhood, but only youth: for to the end, we discern no decisive change in the complexion of his character; in his thirty-seventh ³⁰

year, he is still, as it were, in youth. With all that resoluteness of judgment, that penetrating insight, and singular maturity of intellectual power, exhibited in his writings, he never attains to any
5 clearness regarding himself; to the last, he never ascertains his peculiar aim, even with such distinctness as is common among ordinary men; and therefore never can pursue it with that singleness of will, which insures success and some contentment to
10 such men. To the last, he wavers between two purposes: glorying in his talent, like a true poet, he yet cannot consent to make this his chief and sole glory, and to follow it as the one thing needful, through poverty or riches, through good or evil
15 report. Another far meaner ambition still cleaves to him; he must dream and struggle about a certain "Rock of Independence"; which, natural and even admirable as it might be, was still but a warring with the world, on the comparatively insignificant
20 ground of his being more completely or less completely supplied with money than others; of his standing at a higher or at a lower altitude in general estimation than others. For the world still appears to him, as to the young, in borrowed
25 colours: he expects from it what it cannot give to any man; seeks for contentment, not within himself, in action and wise effort, but from without, in the kindness of circumstances, in love, friendship, honour, pecuniary ease. He would be happy,
30 not actively and in himself, but passively and from

some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labour, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny. Thus, like a young man, he cannot gird himself up for any worthy well-calculated goal, but swerves to and fro, between 5 passionate hope and remorseful disappointment: rushing onwards with a deep tempestuous force, he surmounts or breaks asunder many a barrier; travels, nay, advances far, but advancing only under uncertain guidance, is ever and anon turned from 10 his path; and to the last cannot reach the only true happiness of a man, that of clear decided Activity in the sphere for which, by nature and circumstances, he has been fitted and appointed.

We do not say these things in dispraise of 15 Burns; nay, perhaps, they but interest us the more in his favour. (This blessing is not given soonest to the best; but rather, it is often the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it; for where most is to be developed, most time may be required to 20 develop it.) A complex condition had been assigned him from without; as complex a condition from within: no "preëstablished harmony" existed between the clay soil of Mossgiel and the empyrean soul of Robert Burns; it was not wonderful that 25 the adjustment between them should have been long postponed, and his arm long cumbered, and his sight confused, in so vast and discordant an economy as he had been appointed steward over. Byron was, at his death, but a year younger than 30

Burns; and through life, as it might have appeared, far more simply situated: yet in him too we can trace no such adjustment, no such moral manhood; but at best, and only a little before his
5 end, the beginning of what seemed such.

By much the most striking incident in Burns's Life is his journey to Edinburgh; but perhaps a still more important one is his residence at Irvine, so early as in his twenty-third year. Hitherto his
10 life had been poor and toilworn; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy. In his parentage, deducting outward circumstances, he had every reason to reckon himself fortunate. His father was a man of thought-
15 ful, intense, earnest character, as the best of our peasants are; valuing knowledge, possessing some, and, what is far better and rarer, open-minded for more: a man with a keen insight and devout heart; reverent towards God, friendly therefore at
20 once and fearless, towards all that God has made: in one word, though but a hard-handed peasant, a complete and fully unfolded *Man*. Such a father is seldom found in any rank in society; and was worth descending far in society to seek. Unfor-
25 tunately, he was very poor; had he been even a little richer, almost never so little, the whole might have issued far otherwise. (Mighty events turn on a straw; the crossing of a brook decides the conquest of the world.) Had this William
30 Burns's small seven acres of nursery-ground any-

wise prospered, the boy Robert had been sent to school; had struggled forward, as so many weaker men do, to some university; come forth not as a rustic wonder, but as a regular well-trained intellectual workman, and changed the whole course of 5 British Literature,—for it lay in him to have done this! But the nursery did not prosper; poverty sank his whole family below the help of even our cheap school-system: Burns remained a hard-worked ploughboy, and British literature took its 10 own course. Nevertheless, even in this rugged scene there is much to nourish him. If he drudges, it is with his brother, and for his father and mother, whom he loves, and would fain shield from want. Wisdom is not banished from their 15 poor hearth, nor the balm of natural feeling: the solemn words, “*Let us worship God,*” are heard there from a priest-like father; if threatenings of unjust men throw mother and children into tears, these are tears not of grief only, but of holiest 20 affection; every heart in that humble group feels itself the closer knit to every other; in their hard warfare they are there together, a “little band of brethren.” Neither are such tears, and the deep beauty that dwells in them, their only portion. 25 Light visits the hearts as it does the eyes of all living: there is a force, too, in this youth, that enables him to trample on misfortune; nay, to bind it under his feet to make him sport. For a bold, warm, buoyant humour of character has been 30

given him; and so the thick-coming shapes of evil are welcomed with a gay, friendly irony, and in their closest pressure he bates no jot of heart or hope. Vague yearnings of ambition fail not, as he
 5 grows up; dreamy fancies hang like cloud-cities around him; the curtain of Existence is slowly rising, in many-coloured splendour and gloom: and the auroral light of first love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is on his path; and so he walks

10 in glory and in joy,

Behind his plough, upon the mountain side.

We ourselves know, from the best evidence, that up to this date Burns was happy; nay, that he was the gayest, brightest, most fantastic, fascinating
 15 being to be found in the world; more so even than he afterwards appeared. But now, at this early age, he quits the paternal roof; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices, which a
 20 certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering on active life; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to steep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood
 25 can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much with this class of philosophers; we hope they are mistaken: for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any
 30 stage, be forced and fated not only to meet but to

yield to them, and even serve for a term in their leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all events, it cannot be the training one receives in this Devil's service, but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true 5 manly Action. We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for con- 10 tentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world; that a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing. Manhood begins when we have in any way made 15 truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we 20 are free. Surely, such lessons as this last, which, in one shape or other, is the grand lesson for every mortal man, are better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, than 25 in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us, when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite. Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was already learning it, in his father's cottage, 30

he would have learned it fully, which he never did; and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow.

It seems to us another circumstance of fatal
5 import in Burns's history, that at this time too he became involved in the religious quarrels of his district; that he was enlisted and feasted, as the fighting man of the New-Light Priesthood, in their highly unprofitable warfare. At the tables
10 of these free-minded clergy he learned much more than was needful for him. Such liberal ridicule of fanaticism awakened in his mind scruples about Religion itself; and a whole world of Doubts, which it required quite another set of conjurors
15 than these men to exorcise. We do not say that such an intellect as his could have escaped similar doubts at some period of his history; or even that he could, at a later period, have come through them altogether victorious and unharmed; but it
20 seems peculiarly unfortunate that this time, above all others, should have been fixed for the encounter. For now, with principles assailed by evil example from without, by "passions raging like demons" from within, he had little need of skeptical mis-
25 givings to whisper treason in the heat of the battle, or to cut off his retreat if he were already defeated. He loses his feeling of innocence; his mind is at variance with itself; the old divinity no longer presides there; but wild Desires and wild Repent-
30 ance alternately oppress him. Ere long, too, he


has committed himself before the world; his character for sobriety, dear to a Scottish peasant as few corrupted worldlings can even conceive, is destroyed in the eyes of men; and his only refuge consists in trying to disbelieve his guiltiness, and 5 is but a refuge of lies. The blackest desperation now gathers over him, broken only by red lightnings of remorse. The whole fabric of his life is blasted asunder; for now not only his character, but his personal liberty, is to be lost; men and 10 Fortune are leagued for his hurt; "hungry Ruin has him in the wind." He sees no escape but the saddest of all: exile from his loved country, to a country in every sense inhospitable and abhorrent to him. While the "gloomy night is gathering 15 fast," in mental storm and solitude, as well as in physical, he sings his wild farewell to Scotland:

Farewell, my friends; farewell, my foes!
 My peace with these, my love with those:
 The bursting tears my heart declare; 20
 Adieu, my native banks of Ayr!

Light breaks suddenly in on him in floods; but still a false transitory light, and no real sunshine. He is invited to Edinburgh; hastens thither with anticipating heart; is welcomed as in a triumph, 25 and with universal blandishment and acclamation; whatever is wisest, whatever is greatest or loveliest there, gathers round him, to gaze on his face, to show him honour, sympathy, affection. Burns's appearance among the sages and nobles of Edin- 30

burgh must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern Literature; almost like the appearance of some Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics. For it is nowise as
5 a “mockery king,” set there by favour, transiently and for a purpose, that he will let himself be treated; still less is he a mad Rienzi, whose sudden elevation turns his too weak head; but he stands there on his own basis; cool, unastonished, holding
10 his equal rank from Nature herself; putting forth no claim which there is not strength *in* him, as well as about him, to vindicate. Mr. Lockhart has some forcible observations on this point:

“It needs no effort of imagination,” says he, “to
15 conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the
20 plough-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation a most thorough conviction, that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting
25 even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bonsmots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment,
30 impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble,—nay, to tremble visibly,—beneath the fear-

less touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of 5 doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less 10 magnificent; with wit, in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves."  15

The farther we remove from this scene, the more singular will it seem to us: details of the exterior aspect of it are already full of interest. Most readers recollect Mr. Walker's personal interviews with Burns as among the best passages of his Nar- 20 rative: a time will come when this reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott's, slight though it is, will also be precious:

"As for Burns," writes Sir Walter, "I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 25 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him: but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country; 30 the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings

to dinner; but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several
 5 gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked, and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by
 10 a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side,—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:

15 “Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
 Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain;
 Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,—
 The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
 Gave the sad presage of his future years,
 The child of misery, baptized in tears.”

20 Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were; and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's
 25 called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present; he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleas-
 30 ure.

His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His
 35 features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth's picture: but

to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch 5 school, *i. e.*, none of your modern agriculturists who kept labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and 10 temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect 15 self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to 20 express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognize me, as I could not expect he should. He was much 25 caressed in Edinburgh: but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

I remember, on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather 30 limited; and also that, having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models: there was doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only 35 to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner.

He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station or information more perfectly free from
5 either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late
10 Duchess of Gordon remark this.—I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since.”

The conduct of Burns under this dazzling blaze of favour; the calm, unaffected, manly manner in
15 which he not only bore it, but estimated its value, has justly been regarded as the best proof that could be given of his real vigour and integrity of mind. A little natural vanity, some touches of hypocritical modesty, some glimmerings of affecta-
20 tion, at least some fear of being thought affected, we could have pardoned in almost any man; but no such indication is to be traced here. In his unexampled situation the young peasant is not a moment perplexed; so many strange lights do not
25 confuse him, do not lead him astray. Nevertheless, we cannot but perceive that this winter did him great and lasting injury. A somewhat clearer knowledge of men’s affairs, scarcely of their characters, it did afford him; but a sharper feeling of
30 Fortune’s unequal arrangements in their social destiny it also left with him. He had seen the gay and gorgeous arena, in which the powerful are

born to play their parts; nay, had himself stood in the midst of it; and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but a looker-on, and had no part or lot in that splendid game. From this time a jealous indignant fear of social degradation takes 5 possession of him; and perverts, so far as aught could pervert, his private contentment, and his feelings towards his richer fellows. It was clear to Burns that he had talent enough to make a fortune, or a hundred fortunes, could he but have rightly 10 willed this; it was clear also that he willed something far different, and therefore could not make one. Unhappy it was that he had not power to choose the one, and reject the other; but must halt forever between two opinions, two objects; 15 making hampered advancement towards either. But so is it with many men: we "long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price;" and so stand chaffering with Fate, in vexatious altercation, till the night come, and our fair is over! 20

The Edinburgh Learned of that period were in general more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart: with the exception of the good old Blacklock, whose help was too ineffectual, scarcely one among them seems to have looked at 25 Burns with any true sympathy, or indeed much otherwise than as at a highly curious *thing*. By the great also he is treated in the customary fashion; entertained at their tables and dismissed: certain modica of pudding and praise are, from 30

time to time, gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence; which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished, and each party goes his several way. At the end of this strange season, Burns
5 gloomily sums up his gains and losses, and meditates on the chaotic future. In money he is somewhat richer; in fame and the show of happiness, infinitely richer; but in the substance of it, as poor as ever. Nay, poorer; for his heart is now
10 maddened still more with the fever of worldly Ambition; and through long years the disease will rack him with unprofitable sufferings, and weaken his strength for all true and nobler aims.

What Burns was next to do or to avoid; how a man
15 so circumstanced was now to guide himself towards his true advantage, might at this point of time have been a question for the wisest. It was a question, too, which apparently he was left altogether to answer for himself: of his learned or
20 rich patrons it had not struck any individual to turn a thought on this so trivial matter. Without claiming for Burns the praise of perfect sagacity, we must say that his Excise and Farm scheme does not seem to us a very unreasonable one; that we
25 should be at a loss, even now, to suggest one decidedly better. Certain of his admirers have felt scandalized at his ever resolving to *gauge*; and would have had him lie at the pool, till the spirit of Patronage stirred the waters, that so, with one
30 friendly plunge, all his sorrows might be healed.

Unwise counsellors! They know not the manner of this spirit; and how, in the lap of most golden dreams, a man might have happiness, were it not that in the interim he must die of hunger! It reflects credit on the manliness and sound sense of 5 Burns, that he felt so early on what ground he was standing; and preferred self-help, on the humblest scale, to dependence and inaction, though with hope of far more splendid possibilities. But even these possibilities were not rejected in his scheme: 10 he might expect, if it chanced that he *had* any friend, to rise, in no long period, into something even like opulence and leisure; while again, if it chanced that he had no friend, he could still live in security; and for the rest, he "did not intend to 15 borrow honour from any profession." We think, then, that his plan was honest and well-calculated: all turned on the execution of it. Doubtless it failed; yet not, we believe, from any vice inherent in itself. Nay, after all, it was no failure of 20 external means, but of internal, that overtook Burns. His was no bankruptcy of the purse, but of the soul; to his last day, he owed no man anything.

Meanwhile he begins well: with two good and wise actions. His donation to his mother, munifi- 25 cent from a man whose income had lately been seven pounds a-year, was worthy of him, and not more than worthy. Generous also, and worthy of him, was his treatment of the woman whose life's welfare now depended on his pleasure. A friendly 30

observer might have hoped serene days for him: his mind is on the true road to peace with itself: what clearness he still wants will be given as he proceeds; for the best teacher of duties that still
5 lie dim to us, is the Practice of those we see and have at hand. Had the "patrons of genius," who could give him nothing, but taken nothing from him, at least nothing more! The wounds of his heart would have healed; vulgar ambition would
10 have died away. Toil and Frugality would have been welcome, since Virtue dwelt with them; and Poetry would have shone through them as of old: and in her clear ethereal light, which was his own by birthright, he might have looked down on his
15 earthly destiny and all its obstructions, not with patience only, but with love.

But the patrons of genius would not have it so. Picturesque tourists,* all manner of fashionable

*There is one little sketch by certain "English gentlemen" of this class, which, though adopted in Currie's Narrative, and since then repeated in most others, we have all along felt an invincible disposition to regard as imaginary: "On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of fox-skin on his head, a loose greatcoat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broadsword. It was Burns." Now, we rather think, it was *not* Burns. For, to say nothing of the fox-skin cap, the loose and quite Hibernian watchcoat with the belt, what are we to make of this "enormous Highland broadsword" depending from him? More especially,

danglers after literature, and, far worse, all manner of convivial Mæcenases, hovered round him in his retreat; and his good as well as his weak qualities secured them influence over him. He was flattered by their notice; and his warm social nature made 5 it impossible for him to shake them off, and hold on his way apart from them. These men, as we believe, were proximately the means of his ruin. Not that they meant him any ill; they only meant themselves a little good; if he suffered harm, let 10 *him* look to it! But they wasted his precious time and his precious talent; they disturbed his composure, broke down his returning habits of temperance and assiduous contented exertion. Their pampering was baneful to him; their cruelty, 15 which soon followed, was equally baneful. The old grudge against Fortune's inequality awoke with new bitterness in their neighbourhood; and Burns had no retreat but to "the Rock of Independence," which is but an air-castle after all, that 20 looks well at a distance, but will screen no one from real wind and wet. Flushed with irregular excitement, exasperated alternately by contempt of others and contempt of himself, Burns was no longer

as there is no word of parish constables on the outlook to see whether, as Dennis phrases it, he had an eye to his own midriff or that of the public! Burns, of all men, had the least need, and the least tendency, to seek for distinction either in his own eyes or those of others, by such poor mummeries.

regaining his peace of mind, but fast losing it forever. There was a hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did not now approve what he was doing.

5 Amid the vapours of unwise enjoyment, of bootless remorse, and angry discontent with Fate, his true loadstar, a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay, with Famine if it must be so, was too often altogether hidden from his eyes. And yet he sailed a
10 sea where without some such loadstar there was no right steering. Meteors of French Politics rise before him, but these were not *his* stars. An accident this, which hastened, but did not originate, his worst distresses. In the mad contentions of that
15 time, he comes in collision with certain official Superiors; is wounded by them; cruelly lacerated, we should say, could a dead mechanical implement, in any case, be called cruel; and shrinks, in indignant pain, into deeper self-seclusion, into gloomier
20 moodiness than ever. His life has now lost its unity: it is a life of fragments; led with little aim, beyond the melancholy one of securing its own continuance,—in fits of wild false joy when such offered, and of black despondency when they
25 passed away. His character before the world begins to suffer: calumny is busy with him; for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends. Some faults he has fallen into, and a thousand misfortunes; but deep criminality is what he stands
30 accused of, and they that are *not* without sin cast

the first stone at him! For is he not a well-wisher to the French Revolution, a Jacobin, and therefore in that one act guilty of all? These accusations, political and moral, it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little ⁵ to credit them. Nay, his convivial Mæcenases themselves were not the last to do it. There is reason to believe that, in his later years, the Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person no ¹⁰ longer worthy of their acquaintance. That painful class, stationed, in all provincial cities, behind the outmost breastwork of Gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of Grocerdom and Grazierness, had actually seen ¹⁵ dishonour in the society of Burns, and branded him with their veto; had, as we vulgarly say, *cut* him! We find one passage in this Work of Mr. Lockhart's, which will not out of our thoughts: 20

“A gentleman of that county, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to, has often told me that he was seldom more grieved than when, riding into Dumfries one fine summer evening about this time to attend a county ball, he saw Burns ²⁵ walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognize him. The horseman ³⁰ dismounted, and joined Burns, who, on his proposing to cross the street, said: ‘Nay, nay, my young friend, that’s

all over now;' and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad:

5 "His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new;
But now he lets 't wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himsel dowie upon the corn-bing.

O, were we young as we ance hae been,
We suld hae been galloping down on yon green,
And linking it ower the lily-white lea!
10 *And werena my heart light, I wad die."*

It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after reciting these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner; and taking his young
15 friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived."

Alas! when we think that Burns now sleeps "where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart,"* and that most of those fair dames and
20 frizzled gentlemen already lie at his side, where the breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down,—who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart, and make man unmerciful to his brother!

25 It was not now to be hoped that the genius of Burns would ever reach maturity, or accomplish aught worthy of itself. His spirit was jarred in its melody; not the soft breath of natural feeling, but the rude hand of Fate, was now sweeping over the

**Ubi sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit.*
Swift's Epitaph.

strings. And yet what harmony was in him, what music even in his discords! How the wild tones had a charm for the simplest and the wisest; and all men felt and knew that here also was one of the Gifted! "If he entered an inn at midnight, after 5 all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled!" Some brief pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him, in the compo- 10 sition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at this 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 15 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" 20 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 25 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 30

would have been gone; and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts forever.

We are here arrived at the crisis of Burns's life; 5 for matters had now taken such a shape with him as could not long continue. If improvement was not to be looked for, Nature could only for a limited time maintain this dark and maddening warfare against the world and itself. We are not medically 10 informed whether any continuance of years was, at this period, probable for Burns; whether his death is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The 15 latter seems to be the likelier opinion; and yet it is by no means a certain one. At all events, as we have said, *some* change could not be very distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns: clear poetical activity; madness; 20 or death. The first, with longer life, was still possible, though not probable, for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it; and yet Burns had an iron resolution; could he but have seen and felt, that not only his highest glory, but 25 his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes, lay here. The second was still less probable; for his mind was ever among the clearest and firmest. So the milder third gate was opened for him; and he passed, not softly, yet speedily, into that 30 still country where the hailstorms and fire-showers

do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load!

Contemplating this sad end of Burns, and how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy, generous minds have sometimes 5 figured to themselves, with a reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him; that by counsel, true affection, and friendly ministrations, he might have been saved to himself and the world. We question whether there is not more tenderness 10 of heart than soundness of judgment in these suggestions. It seems dubious to us whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual could have lent Burns any effectual help. Counsel, which seldom profits any one, he did not need; in 15 his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well perhaps as any man ever did; but the persuasion which would have availed him, lies not so much in the head as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted 20 much to implant it. As to money again, we do not believe that this was his essential want; or well see how any private man could, even presupposing Burns's consent, have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of 25 decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, that two men, in any rank of society, could hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it as a necessary gift, without injury to the moral

entireness of one or both. [But so stands the fact: Friendship, in the old heroic sense of that term, no longer exists; except in the cases of kindred or other legal affinity, it is in reality no longer
5 expected, or recognized as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced "Patronage," that is, pecuniary or other economic furtherance, to be "twice cursed;" cursing him that gives, and him that takes! And thus, in regard to
10 outward matters also it has become the rule, as in regard to inward it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself.] Such, we say, is the principle
15 of modern Honour; naturally enough growing out of that sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality. Many a poet has been poorer than Burns; but no one was ever prouder: we may question whether,
20 without great precautions, even a pension from Royalty would not have galled and encumbered, more than actually assisted him.

Still less, therefore, are we disposed to join with another class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the
25 higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of him. We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall readily
30 admit, however, that much was to be done for

Burns; that many a poisoned arrow might have been warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path, cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; and light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some fewer pangs. Nay, we shall grant farther, and for Burns it is granting much, that, with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him: patronage, unless once cursed, needed not to have been twice so. At all events, the poor promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted: it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay, it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of all this, however, did any of them do; or apparently attempt, or wish to do: so much is granted against them. But what then is the amount of their blame? Simply that they were men of the world, and walked by the principles of such men; that they treated Burns, as other nobles and other commoners had done other poets; as the English did Shakspeare; as King Charles and his Cavaliers did Butler, as King Philip and his Grandees did Cervantes. Do men gather grapes of thorns; or shall we cut down our thorns for yielding only a *fence* and haws? How, indeed, could the "nobility and gentry of his native land"

hold out any help to this "Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country"? Were the nobility and gentry so much as able rightly to help themselves? Had they not their game to preserve; their borough
5 interests to strengthen; dinners, therefore, of various kinds to eat and give? Were their means more than adequate to all this business, or less than adequate? Less than adequate, in general; few of them in reality were richer than Burns; many of
10 them were poorer; for sometimes they had to wring their supplies, as with thumbscrews, from the hard hand, and, in their need of guineas, to forget their duty of mercy: which Burns was never reduced to do. Let us pity and forgive them. The game they
15 preserved and shot, the dinners they ate and gave, the borough interests they strengthened, the *little* Babylons they severally builded by the glory of their might, are all melted or melting back into the primeval Chaos, as man's merely selfish
20 endeavours are fated to do: and here was an action, extending, in virtue of its worldly influence, we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature, beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness itself; this action was
25 offered them to do, and light was not given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them. But better than pity, let us go and *do otherwise*. Human suffering did not end with the life of Burns; neither was the solemn mandate, "Love
30 one another, bear one another's burdens," given to

the rich only, but to all men. True, we shall find no Burns to relieve, to assuage by our aid or our pity; but celestial natures, groaning under the fardels of a weary life, we shall still find; and that wretchedness which Fate has rendered *voiceless* 5 and *tuneless*, is not the least wretched, but the most.

Still, we do not think that the blame of Burns's failure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more, rather than with less, kindness than it usually shows to such 10 men. [It has ever, we fear, shown but small favour to its Teachers: hunger and nakedness, perils and revilings, the prison, the cross, the poison-chalice, have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for Wisdom, the welcome 15 with which it has greeted those who have come to enlighten and purify.] Homer and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles, belong to old days; but the world's Martyrology was not completed with these. Roger Bacon and Galileo languish in priestly dun- 20 geons; Tasso pines in the cell of a madhouse; Camoens dies begging on the streets of Lisbon. So neglected, so "persecuted they the Prophets," not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's 25 order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age; that he has no right to expect great kindness from it, but rather is bound to do it great kindness; that Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of the world's goodness; 30

and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

Where, then, does it lie? We are forced to answer: With himself; it is his inward, not his
5 outward, misfortunes that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise; seldom is a life morally wrecked but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement, some want less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions
10 no creature without implanting in it the strength needful for its action and duration; least of all does she so neglect her masterpiece and darling, the poetic soul. Neither can we believe that it is in the power of *any* external circumstances utterly
15 to ruin the mind of a man; nay, if proper wisdom be given him, even so much as to affect its essential health and beauty. The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is Death; nothing more *can* lie in the cup of human woe: yet many men, in all
20 ages, have triumphed over Death, and led it captive; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves, into a seal and immortal consecration for all that their past life had achieved. What has been done, may be done
25 again: nay, it is but the degree and not the kind of such heroism that differs in different seasons; for without some portion of this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness, of Self-denial in all its forms, no good man, in any
30 scene or time, has ever attained to be good.

We have already stated the error of Burns; and mourned over it, rather than blamed it. It was the want of unity in his purposes, of consistency in his aims; the hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the 5 spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature. Burns was nothing wholly; and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves. The heart, not of a mere hot-blooded, popular 10 Verse-monger, or poetical *Restaurateur*, but of a true Poet and Singer, worthy of the old religious heroic times, had been given him: and he fell in an age, not of heroism and religion, but of scepticism, selfishness, and triviality, when true 15 Nobleness was little understood, and its place supplied by a hollow, dissocial, altogether barren and unfruitful principle of Pride. The influences of that age, his open, kind, susceptible nature, to say nothing of his highly untoward situation, made 20 it more than usually difficult for him to cast aside, or rightly subordinate; the better spirit that was within him ever sternly demanded its rights, its supremacy: he spent his life in endeavouring to reconcile these two; and lost it, as he must lose it, 25 without reconciling them.

Burns was born poor; and born also to continue poor, for he would not endeavour to be otherwise: this it had been well could he have once for all admitted, and considered as finally settled. He 30

was poor, truly; but hundreds even of his own class and order of minds have been poorer, yet have suffered nothing deadly from it: nay, his own Father had a far sorer battle with ungrateful
5 destiny than his was; and he did not yield to it, but died courageously warring, and to all moral intents prevailing, against it. True, Burns had little means, had even little time for poetry, his only
10 real pursuit and vocation; but so much the more precious was what little he had. In all these external respects his case was hard; but very far from the hardest. Poverty, incessant drudgery, and much worse evils, it has often been the lot of
15 Poets and wise men to strive with, and their glory to conquer. Locke was banished as a traitor; and wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding* sheltering himself in a Dutch garret. Was Milton rich or at his ease when he composed *Paradise Lost*? Not only low, but fallen from a height;
20 not only poor, but impoverished; in darkness and with dangers compassed round, he sang his immortal song, and found fit audience, though few. Did not Cervantes finish his work, a maimed soldier and in prison? Nay, was not the *Araucana*, which
25 Spain acknowledges as its Epic, written without even the aid of paper; on scraps of leather, as the stout fighter and voyager snatched any moment from that wild warfare?

And what, then, had these men, which Burns
30 wanted? Two things; both which, it seems to us,

are indispensable for such men. [They had a true, religious principle of morals; and a single, not a double aim in their activity. They were not self-seekers and self-worshippers; but seekers and worshipers of something far better than Self. 5 Not personal enjoyment was their object; but a high, heroic idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom, in one or the other form, ever hovered before them; in which cause they neither shrank from suffering, nor called on the earth to 10 witness it as something wonderful; but patiently endured, counting it blessedness enough so to spend and be spent.] Thus the "golden-calf of Self-love," however curiously carved, was not their Deity; but the Invisible Goodness, which alone is man's 15 reasonable service. This feeling was as a celestial fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their otherwise too desolate existence. In a word, they willed one thing, to which all other things were subordinated 20 and made subservient; and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks; but its edge must be sharp and single: if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces, and will rend nothing.

Part of this superiority these men owed to their 25 age; in which heroism and devotedness were still practised, or at least not yet disbelieved in; but much of it likewise they owed to themselves. With Burns, again, it was different. His morality, in most of its practical points, is that of a mere worldly 30

man; enjoyment, in a finer or coarser shape, is the only thing he longs and strives for. A noble instinct sometimes raises him above this; but an instinct only, and acting only for moments. He has no
5 Religion; in the shallow age where his days were cast, Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light *forms* of Religion; and was, with these, becoming obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling
10 adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow of doubt. His religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, "a great Perhaps."

He loved Poetry warmly, and in his heart; could
15 he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry, as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied him. His
20 poetry is a stray vagrant gleam, which will not be extinguished within him, yet rises not to be the true light of his path, but is often a wildfire that misleads him. It was not necessary for Burns to be rich; to be, or to seem, "independent:" but it
25 *was* necessary for him to be at one with his own heart; to place what was highest in his nature highest also in his life: "to seek within himself for that consistency and sequence, which external events would forever refuse him." He was born a poet;
30 poetry was the celestial element of his being, and

should have been the soul of his whole endeavours. Lifted into that serene ether, whither he had wings given him to mount, he would have needed no other elevation: poverty, neglect, and all evil save the desecration of himself and his Art, were a small matter 5 to him; the pride and the passions of the world lay far beneath his feet; and he looked down alike on noble and slave, on prince and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of man, with clear recognition, with brotherly affection, with sympathy, with pity. 10 Nay, we question whether, for his culture as a Poet, poverty and much suffering for a season were not absolutely advantageous. Great men in looking back over their lives, have testified to that effect. "I would not for much," says Jean Paul, "that 15 I had been born richer." And yet Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in another place, he adds: "The prisoner's allowance is bread and water; and I had often only the latter." But the gold that is refined in the hottest furnace comes out the 20 purest; or, as he has himself expressed it, "the canary-bird sings sweeter the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage."

A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry; industry 25 which all true feeling sanctions, nay, prescribes, and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease 30

at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices; brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent him from heaven? Was it
5 his aim to *enjoy* life? Tomorrow he must go drudge as an Exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became moody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *amuck* against them
10 all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own or others' fault, ever know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with astonishment at the
15 natural strength and worth of his character.

Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness; but not in others; only in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly "respectability." We hope we have now heard
20 enough about the efficacy of wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay, have we not seen another instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a
25 Scottish ploughman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honours, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what does all this avail him? Is he
30 happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has a

poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the stars! Like Burns, he is only a proud man; might, like him, have "purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study 5 the character of Satan;" for Satan also is Byron's grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct. As in Burns's case, too, the celestial element will not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he 10 must not be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon. Byron, like Burns, is not happy; nay, he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged: the fire that is in him is not a 15 strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now—we look sadly into the ashes of a crater, which ere long will fill itself with snow!

Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries 20 to their generation, to teach it a higher Doctrine, a purer Truth; they had a message to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain, this divine behest lay smouldering within them; for they knew not what it meant, 25 and felt it only in mysterious anticipation; and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the Unconverted; yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as soft flattering singers, and in pleasant 30

fellowship, will they live there: they are first adulated, then persecuted; they accomplish little for others; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess, it is not without a certain mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern moral taught in this piece of history,—*twice* told us in our own time! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep, impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the Poet of his Age, to consider well what it is that he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this: “He who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem.” If he cannot first so make his life, then let him hasten from this arena; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils, are for him. Let him dwindle into a modish balladmonger; let him worship and besing the idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him. If, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity! Byron and Burns could not live as idol-priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them; and better it was for them that they could not. For it is not in the favour of the great or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the

inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favour and furtherance for literature; like the costliest 5 flower-jar enclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit; he cannot be 10 their menial, he cannot even be their partisan. At the peril of both parties, let no such union be attempted! Will a Courser of the Sun work softly in the harness of a Dray-horse? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing 15 light to all lands; will he lumber on mud high-ways, dragging ale for earthly appetites from door to door?

But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us to boundless lengths. We 20 had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay, from doubting that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried 25 at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such 30

men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on
5 what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the
10 breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay, the circle of a ginhorse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the ginhorse, and that of the
15 planet, will yield the same ratio when compared with them! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and
20 tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful: but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.

25 With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble; neither will his Works, even
30 as they are, pass away from the memory of men.

While the Shakspeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves; this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye: for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveler turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines!

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NOTES

Proper names easily found in biographical dictionaries are not given in the Notes or the Glossary, since the meager references possible here would be of little value. The few names which the student cannot readily find are inserted in the Glossary; all others the student should look up for himself. He will find sufficient material in any encyclopædia, or in the *Century Cyclopædia of Names*.

Page 43, Line 4. *Maxim of supply and demand.* Carlyle and Ruskin are one in denouncing Mill and his school of economists, insisting that the less capable should be protected against the miseries arising from free competition and from changes in methods of production.

As a matter of fact, Hargreaves, the inventor of the spinning-jenny, died, like Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, in poverty.

P. 43, L. 16. *Brave mausoleum.* Burns lies at Dumfries under a tomb of Grecian design, adorned with pillars and surmounted by an unfortunate tin dome. Within is a marble group representing the genius of Scotland throwing the mantle of inspiration about the poetic husbandman as he stands by his plough. Carlyle passed by this tomb many a time.

P. 46, L. 27. *Constable's Miscellany.* Archibald Constable ought to be remembered by the student. He was the original publisher of the *Edinburgh Review*, the first and ablest of the periodicals which characterize the early half of the century; he brought out the notable fifth and sixth editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He published many of Sir Walter Scott's works; also *Constable's Miscellany*, a series of standard works which set the pace for future publishers of popular editions. Constable stood for large ideas and strong

thought in his books, and for liberal compensation to authors and adequate returns from large sales, rather than high prices. Through the mismanagement of others his business affairs became entangled, and his immense establishment fell with a crash, involving Scott to the extent of £130,000. This greatest of British publishers died broken-hearted, about a year before this essay appeared.

P. 47, L. 21. *Our notions . . . appear extravagant. . . . Our own contributions . . . scanty and feeble.* It has been cleverly suggested that these and similar apologetic expressions were interpolated by Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Review*. Apology was certainly far from characteristic of Carlyle, and we learn from his *Life* by Froude that when the proof sheets came home from Jeffrey he found "the first part cut all into shreds—the body of a quadruped with the head of a bird," and although Carlyle successfully insisted that the wording of the manuscript should be restored on penalty of cancelling the article, he evidently alludes to this and similar experiences, in his letter to Emerson, when he speaks of "editorial blotches too, notes of admiration, dashes, 'we think,' etc., etc., common in Jeffrey's time in the *Edinburgh Review*."

P. 49, L. 18. *Without model.* Carlyle underestimates the sources of Burns's poetic inspiration. Andrew Lang, the keenest and best-balanced student of Burns now writing, says: "He was the most imitative of all men of poetic genius," and again: "In him Folk Song and Folk Romance, never wholly extinct, become consciously artistic. He is not in poetry an innovator, but a 'continuator.' He always has a model in the music and the lyrics of the people, in the humour and the measures of Lindsay and Dunbar, in the passion of the ballad singers."

P. 50, L. 6. *Most disadvantageous.* Quite the contrary—one not born of the people could never have become the poet of the people. On this point Jeffrey says: "Burns was placed in a situation more favorable, perhaps, to the development of great poetical talents than any other which could have been assigned him."

P. 50, L. 12. *Rhymes of a Ferguson.* Speaking again of Burns's indebtedness, Andrew Lang pithily says: "Fergusson he always acknowledged with equal justice and generosity as his Master. Burns is not one of the poets who fare *quo nulla priorum vestigia*. He almost always climbs by a trodden way, pursuing the track of a predecessor. But his genius, like a forest fire, obliterates the traces of other and earlier footsteps, so that his countrymen have more than half forgotten that true and rare genius, his predecessor, Fergusson."

P. 51, L. 8. *Exposition.* It is the province of the essayist to advance certain statements of importance and to make their meaning clear. He desires to present his views so positively and forcibly that they shall become the opinions of others. This is what Carlyle means by exposition. While he by no means confines himself strictly to this form of discourse, Carlyle's larger thoughts, be they correct or otherwise, should be sought in each paragraph. The student may for instance locate several prominent statements in this paragraph; reflection will enable him to select two or three as the more important; close thinking will arrive at the one thing Carlyle would have us understand forever. Search for this central line of thought; grasp the central thought firmly, let all else fall away; then go forward to the next paragraph. Do this to the end of the essay.

P. 53, L. 5. *The "Daisy."* The reference is to Burns's poem *To a Mountain Daisy*, which, with that *To a Mouse*, should be freshly re-read to give an understanding of this paragraph.

P. 53, L. 14. *Him that walketh.* Ps. civ.

P. 53, L. 30. *Straw roof.* To an American in a land of fine timber and cheap shingles, a straw roof has a thought of shiftlessness or poverty; to a Scotchman in a country of cheap labor and fine building stone, a wooden or frame house seems an unsubstantial makeshift. The thatches of Ayrshire were made of long, straight, clean straw, placed by a skilled workman, as carefully as a

carpenter would lay shingles. A well-thatched roof was considered comfortable.

P. 55, L. 8. *No fitter business.* A gaugership, a collectorship of excise, a position not differing essentially from that held by a deputy collector of internal revenue in this country, yet involving the collection of minor and aggravating taxes. If a housewife rendered out a cake of mutton tallow, Burns had to be on hand to weigh and tax it. If home-made ale were brewed he had to be on hand to gauge it and collect the trifling but exasperating duty. For his views read *The Devil's awa wi' the Exciseman*.

P. 55, L. 25. *The full collection of his strength.* It is a question whether the cast of mind capable of carrying out an extended project such as *Paradise Lost* could have produced the "mere occasional effusions" on which the reputation of Burns rests and which the world could ill spare. Carlyle returns to this point on page 94, where he conjectures the probable effect of a university training.

P. 56, L. 24. *Sincerity.* Compare Matthew Arnold: "The end and aim of all literature is a criticism of life." "Truth and seriousness of substance and matter, felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the best poets, are what institute a criticism of life made in conformity with the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." "The moment that we leave the small band of the very best poets, the true classics, and deal with poets of the next rank, we shall find that perfect truth and seriousness of matter in close alliance with perfect truth and felicity of manner, is the rule no longer."

P. 57, L. 13. *Horace's rule.* "*Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi.*" "If thou wouldst have me weep, thou must first feel grief thyself."

P. 58, L. 20. *Byron.* . . . *his poetry . . . not true.* We quote again from Matthew Arnold, taking the doubtful privilege of dropping out portions not needed here. "There is the Byron who posed, there is the Byron with his affectations and silliness. But when this theat-

rical and easily criticised personage betook himself to poetry, and when he had fairly warmed to his work, then he became another man; then the theatrical personage passed away: then a higher power took possession of him, and filled him."

P. 60, L. 6. *Poetry . . . which he had time to meditate.* Compare this thought with *poured forth with little premeditation.*

P. 61, L. 13. *Mrs. Dunlop.* An estimable lady who was so pleased with the *Cotter's Saturday Night* that she sent a messenger sixteen miles to Mossgiel with a note of appreciation. An exchange of letters and an honorable friendship followed. It is not strange that Burns's letters to Mrs. Dunlop should have been free and in a happy vein. This is the lady whose housekeeper returned a copy of the above mentioned poem with the remark: "Gentlemen and ladies may think muckle of this; but for me it's naething but what I saw in my faither's hoose every day, an' I dinna see hoo he could hae tell't it ony ither way."

P. 61, L. 29. *Rose-coloured Novels.* Carlyle held an unfavorable opinion of fiction both in prose and romantic verse. He was correspondingly out of sorts with a literary age in which the novel gained, we may say, an ascendancy. For his *Virgins of the Sun* we shall not go far wrong if we look into Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817); for *Knights of the Cross* and *malicious Saracens in turbans* we turn naturally to Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), and *Talisman* (1825); *copper-coloured chiefs in wampum* were doubtless suggested by Cooper's *Leather Stocking Tales*.

P. 62, L. 30. *The poet.* In this and the preceding passage we must enlarge our ordinary idea of poet, for in the largest sense the poet is not necessarily a writer or framer of verse, nor even a writer at all, but an imaginative thinker. Note Carlyle's definition at the close of this paragraph. Read Lowell's *Ode*, which contains a parallel thought.

P. 63, L. 14. *The fifth act of a Tragedy.* The closing act.

P. 65, L. 11. *Such cobweb speculations.* In a similar review article on Milton, contributed likewise to the *Edinburgh Review*, just three years and three months earlier, Macaulay says: "We think that as civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. . . . In proportion as men know more and think more, they look less at individuals, and more at classes. They, therefore, make better theories and worse poems." A spirited discussion arose and Carlyle here throws in a few sentences for Macaulay's especial comfort.

P. 66, L. 1. *No Theocritus till Burns.* A famous Greek poet, of Syracuse, 3rd century B. C., who wrote "charming little pictures of life." A word from Stedman and his translation of a bit from the Greek may serve to fix the reference in mind: "Theocritus created his own school, with no models except those obtainable from the popular mimes and catches of his own region; just as Burns, availing himself of the simple Scottish ballads, lifted the poetry of Scotland to an eminent and winsome individuality."

The red cicadas ceaselessly amid
 The shady boughs were chirping; from afar
 The tree-frog in the briars chanted shrill;
 The crest-larks and the thistle-finches sang,
 The turtle dove was plaining; tawny bees
 Were hovering round the fountain. All things near
 Smelt of the ripened summer, all things smelt
 Of fruit-time. Pears were rolling at our feet,
 And apples for the taking; to the ground
 The plum-tree staggered, burdened with its fruit;
 And we, meanwhile, brushed from a wine-jar's mouth
 The pitch four years unbroken.

—*The Thalysia.* THEOCRITUS, VII., 1, 2.

Compare Whittier's *Among the Hills.*

P. 67, L. 20. *Of this last excellence.* This apt paragraph with its three quotations must have been an afterthought, as it does not appear in the original *Review* article.

P. 69, L. 14. "*The pale Moon.*" This passage from *Open the Door to Me, Oh!* is evidently the worse for quoting. The verse should read.

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave
 And time is setting wi' me, oh!
 False friends, false love, farewell! for mair
 I'll ne'er trouble them, nor thee, oh!

P. 70, L. 14. *We hear of a gentleman.* Burns wrote the *Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson*, "a gentleman who held the patent for his Honors immediately from Almighty God." Jane Baillie Welsh, writing to a friend in 1826 just before her marriage to Carlyle, uses this statement in alluding to his peasant origin. The letter fell into Carlyle's hands after her death and touched him deeply.

P. 71, L. 5. *Poetry, except in such cases.* Jeffrey evidently thought this sentence not only an injustice to Keats, but also likely to reflect upon Carlyle. It first appeared in the following softened form in *The Review*: "Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where the whole consists in extreme sensibility, and a certain vague pervading tunefulness of nature, is no separate faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest or disjoined from them; but rather the result of their general harmony and completion." Carlyle upon the publication of his collected essays restored the original sentence.

P. 75, L. 20. *But has it not been said.* This and the paragraph following were also inserted by the author at a later date.

P. 77, L. 1. *Since all know of it.* Note the shade of meaning conveyed by the word *of*, which was also an afterthought inserted when the essay was revised.

P. 77, L. 6. *Forbore to speak.* The Galloway journey on horseback with Mr. Syme is well attested, but the composition of *Bruce's Address*, under the circumstances given, is discredited on excellent authority.

P. 80, L. 26. *The Jolly Beggars.* This paragraph is without meaning unless the poem itself be read.

P. 82, L. 9. *A small aperture.* Connect this expression in thought with *brief* in the next line, not with the number of Burns's songs.

P. 82, L. 24. *Wine-bred madrigals.* Carlyle is hitting away again at Keats, Shelley and their contemporaries.

P. 86, L. 9. *At Geneva.* There is this difference: The Edinburgh writers were natives who imported foreign literature and foreign ideas, while the writers of Geneva were foreigners attracted from all Europe by the free atmosphere of the Swiss city.

P. 88, L. 10. "*Doctrine of Rent.*" A theory put forth by Adam Smith, a professor in the University of Glasgow. His *Wealth of Nations* is considered the foundation of the science of political economy. Smith taught that true rent is the value of the product less the cost of production. According to this theory if a cultivator sell his crop for one hundred dollars, while the cost of raising and marketing the crop, including labor, is sixty-five dollars, the rent is thirty-five dollars, whether the cultivator pay the landholder twenty dollars or forty dollars or nothing at all for the use of the land.

P. 88, L. 11. "*Natural History of Religion.*" A treatise by David Hume, the author of a history of England and of other noted works. He held various official positions, but was repeatedly unsuccessful as an applicant for a professorship in the University of Glasgow. His writings and friendship powerfully influenced Adam Smith.

P. 88, L. 23. *Racy virtues of the soil.* This literature of the soil has a new growth in the writings of Stevenson, Barrie, Watson and Crockett, who have heeded the maxim laid down by Carlyle. See page 61 *et seq.*

P. 89, L. 18. "*A wish,*" *etc.* Quoted from the *Epistle to the Gwidwife of Wauchope House.* Let breast rhyme with least, and bear with dear. For weeding clips Currie says *weeding-heuk*, and Manson says *weeder-clips*.

P. 89, L. 30. *Far more interesting.* Surely a bit of one-sided intensity. Knowledge of the author's life lends interest to his works, but is not our interest in an author almost entirely due to the celebrity of his works? We have only to consider whether we could least afford to spare Burns's biography or Burns's poems.

P. 92, L. 17. *This blessing.* Singleness of aim and contentment in its attainment. Carlyle, least of all, ever got his own bearings.

P. 93, L. 28. *The crossing of a brook.* Caesar's crossing the Rubicon.

P. 94, L. 5. *Changed the whole course of British Literature.* The following comment could hardly be improved:

"I have not made much lament for the poverty of Burns. He had, probably, about as much schooling as Shakespeare; he had the best education for his genius. Better Scots poetry he could not have written had he been an Ireland scholar; and his business was to write Scots poetry. The people of whom he came he could not have represented as he did, if a long classical education and many academic years had come between him and the clay bigging of his birth. He could not have bettered *Tam O'Shanter*, or *Hallow E'en*, or *The Jolly Beggars*, if he had been steeped in Longinus and Quintilian, Dr. Blair his rhetoric, and the writings of Boileau. A man's work, after all, is what he could do and had to do. One fails to see how any change of worldly circumstance could have bettered the true work of Burns."—Andrew Lang.

P. 94, L. 9. *Cheap school-system.* For an idea of the interest the Scottish school-master takes in his bright boys, read an account of "Domsie" in *The Bonnie Briar Bush*. The difficulty in Burns's case was not the payment of a trifling tuition, but the need of his aid in the field. He was a large, active boy and became the mainstay of the family when others of his age were supposed to be in school.

P. 95, L. 13. *Burns was happy.* Carlyle has elsewhere made much of the drudgery of Burns's boyhood, but this sentence is more rational. It does not appear, although Burns thought he worked too hard, that his labor was any more severe than that of many an ordinary American boy.

P. 98, L. 17. *Farewell to Scotland.* The quotation is the concluding portion of Burns's *Farewell Song to the*

Banks of Ayr. The last line should read: "Farewell the bonnie banks of Ayr." "I composed this song," writes the poet, "as I conveyed my chest so far on my road to Greenock, where I was to embark in a few days for Jamaica. I meant it as my farewell dirge to my native land."

P. 106, L. 23. *He owed no man.* Not strictly true, as on more than one occasion the poet applied to friends for a loan: yet, in the main, the statement is just, for Burns dreaded a debt and at his death left few accounts unsettled.

P. 111, L. 2. *Lady Baillie's ballad.* These Scottish ballads are ruined unless the rhyme of the Scots is preserved. For instance *broo* rhymes with *new*, as if spelled *broo*; *been* rhymes with *green*, and *die* rhymes with *lea*, as if spelled *dee*.

P. 113, L. 27. *Clearest and firmest.* On the contrary, if Burns had possessed a character of even ordinary firmness he would have been more nearly able to live up to his ideals. Burns knew right from wrong as well as need be, but for want of decision, oscillated between hilarity and remorse, between disgraceful sinning and abject repentance.

P. 115, L. 6. *Patronage.* Until the Queen Anne period, the only way a man of letters could hope for a reasonable financial return for his labor, was to obtain patronage, that is to say, a gift or a pension from those of wealth or authority. The poet laureateship of England is a trace of patronage. Johnson's famous letter to Lord Chesterfield (1755), if it did not "ring the death knell," announced the serious illness and approaching end of literary almsgiving. We quote one passage, relating, as does indeed the entire letter, to his *Dictionary*:

"Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for

I never had a patron before. Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed until I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself."

P. 116, L. 13. *The poor promotion.* A supervisorship of customs, a membership in the Board of Excise Commissioners.

P. 123, L. 4. *He has no Religion.* The author of the *Cotter's Saturday Night* had an essentially reverential nature. A master of ridicule, Burns nowhere ridicules the good; a thorn of perfect point in the side of the self-righteous, he is excelled by no poet in his admiration of honest piety. One cannot imagine that Burns ever laughed at a playmate for saying his prayers, or that he could hear blasphemy without shrinking. None would have resented more quickly than Carlyle, an intimation that Burns was an irreligious man, but he is right in that the poet lacked that fervid zeal, call it perhaps, partisanship, or better high resolve, that sends a man out determined that the right shall win. Burns's sympathies were on the side of right, but there is an unmistakable void in that he assumes no responsibility whatever, and he is to this extent irresponsible, without religion, though not irreverent.

"His creed was not orthodox, indeed, but it was sincere: he never lost sight and touch of the spiritual."—*Lang*.

"It must be admitted that in protesting against hypocrisy he has occasionally been led beyond the limits prescribed by good taste. This, with other offences against decorum, which here and there disfigure his pages, can only be condoned by an appeal to the general tone of his writing, which is reverential."—*Nichol*.

P. 126, L. 19. *Fill itself with snow.* Byron had now been dead but four years. What does the essayist mean by *snow*?

P. 127, L. 27. *Idol-priests.* Note the force; priests unto idols, *i.e.* ministers to false standards. Carlyle is fond of newly-compounded words, a trick he may have from the Germans.

GLOSSARY

AND INDEX TO INTRODUCTION

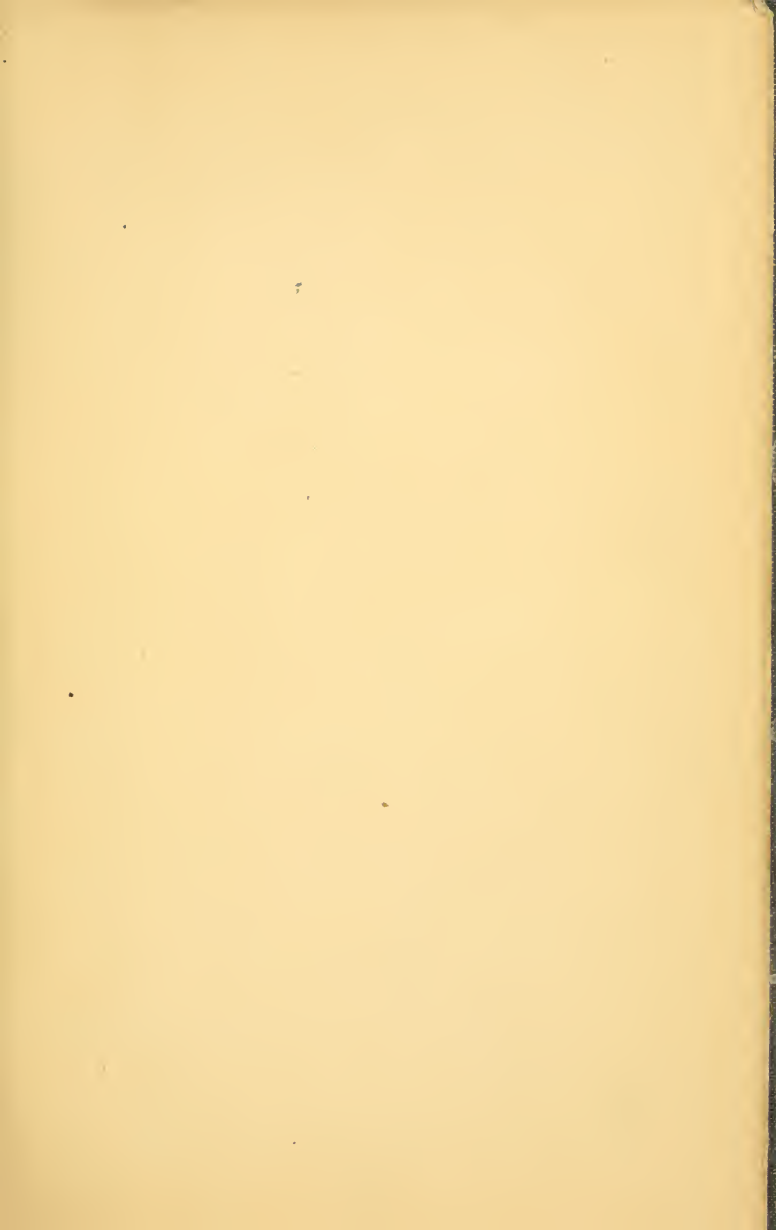
- A'**. All.
A'-day. All day.
Ae. One.
Aiblins. Perhaps.
AITKEN, MARGARET. P. 11
Amang. Among.
An'. And.
Ance. Once
Ane. One
ANNANDALE. P. 13.
ARAUCANA. A heroic poem in thirty-seven cantos, by the Spanish poet Alonzo de Ercilla. It celebrates the conquest of Arauco, a province of Chile, in which the author was one of the combatants. P. 121, l. 24.
ARMOUR, JEAN. P. 23.
Auld. Old.
Auld Brig. Read *The Brigs of Ayr*, in part a spirited dialogue between the old bridge and the new bridge in process of erection. In the passage quoted, the sprite of the Auld Brig is speaking and prophesies the fall of the New Brig—not the Auld Brig as Carlyle has it. The New Brig became unsafe and was taken down in 1877.
Auld Nickie ben. Old Nick. *Ben* denotes familiarity.
AYR. P. 23.
Bear. Barley.
Beastie. Diminutive of beast.
BEGGAR'S OPERA AND BEGGAR'S BUSH. The former by John Gay, the latter by Fletcher. Both are popular London plays representing the kind of life described in the *Jolly Beggars*. P. 82, l. 1.
Bide. To endure.
Bing. Heap.
BLACKLOCK, DOCTOR. See sketch of Burns's life (p. 27). Dr. Blacklock was a blind poet who depended on employing a university student to read to him. He was one of the first in Edinburgh to realize the value of Burns's *Kilmarnock* volume. P. 104, l. 24.
Bock'd. Disgorged.
Bonnie. Beautiful.
BOSTON, JOHN. Carlyle evidently refers here to Thomas Boston, a noted Scottish Presbyterian divine. He was the author of a large number of theological works which were extensively read. P. 86, l. 13.
Brats. Rags.
Brattle. Onset.
Brig. Bridge.
BURIN. An engraver's tool of tempered steel. P. 67, l. 19.
Burns. Brooks, streams.
BURNS, ROBERT.
Birth of. P. 23.
Early education. P. 24.
Composes his first song. P. 24.
Works as flaxdresser. P. 25.
Publishes his first volume. P. 27.
Visits Edinburgh. P. 27.
Marries Jean Armour. P. 28.
Appointed exciseman. P. 28.

- Removes to Dumfries. P. 28.
Dies. P. 28.
- Burn-the-wind. For Burnewin, the blacksmith.
- BUTLER. See p. 131, note to p. 43, l. 4.
- CACUS. A giant son of Vulcan, living among the hills on which Rome was built. He stole cattle from Hercules, and dragged them backward by their tails into his cave, so that their footsteps might not show the direction in which they had traveled. Hercules, however, traced them by their lowing, and slew Cacus. The reference is, of course, to Macpherson, also a stealer of cattle. P. 77, l. 20.
- Caird. Tinker.
- CALEDONIAN HUNT. An aristocratic association of the nobility and gentry in and about Edinburgh, whose influence in social matters was decisive. P. 45, l. 1.
- Callets. Wenches.
- Carlin. Old wife.
- CARLYLE, ALEXANDER. P. 21.
- CARLYLE, JAMES. P. 11.
- CARLYLE, THOMAS.
Birth of. P. 11.
Early education. P. 13.
Enters University of Edinburgh. P. 13.
Becomes divinity student. P. 14.
Mathematical instructor in Annan School. P. 14.
Master of Kirkcaldy classical school. P. 14.
Begins the study of law. P. 15.
Writes for *Brewster's Encyclopædia* P. 16.
Enters upon his literary career. P. 16.
Visits London. P. 17.
Meets Miss Welsh. P. 18.
Marries. P. 19.
Moves to London. P. 22.
- Elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University. P. 22.
Dies. P. 22.
Character of, contrasted with Burns. P. 29.
- Cauld. Cold.
- Chittering. Shivering.
- COMBE, JOHN a. A wealthy, but unpopular neighbor of Shakspeare. The latter is said to have written a satirical epitaph upon him. P. 44, l. 20.
- COMELY BANK. P. 19.
- CONSTABLE'S MISCELLANY. See p. 131, note to p. 46, l. 27.
- CRAIGENPUTTOCK. P. 21.
- Cranreuch. Hoar-frost.
- CROCKFORD'S. "A famous gaming club-house at No. 50, on the west side of St James street, London. It was built by William Crockford, originally a fishmonger, in 1827."—*The Century Cyclopædia of Names*. P. 65, l. 4.
- "DAISY." See p. 133, note to p. 53, l. 5.
- Deil. Devil.
- Diinna. Do not.
- "DOCTRINE OF RENT." See p. 138, note to p. 88, l. 10.
- Douce. Sober, respectable.
- Doure. Stubborn.
- Dowie. Disheartened.
- Dribble. Drizzle.
- DUMFRIES. P. 28.
- DUNLOP, MRS. See p. 135, note to p. 61, l. 13.
- ECCLEFECHAN. P. 11.
- EDINBURGH REVIEW. P. 20.
- Ee. Eye.
- ELLISLAND. P. 23.
- EXCISE COMMISSIONERS. A board or bureau charged with the collection of internal revenue. P. 44, l. 30.
See p. 134, note to p. 55, l. 8.
- Faither. Father.
- Fell. Keen, biting.

- FERGUSON. See p. 133, note to p. 50, l. 12.
- Fu'. Full.
- Gate. Way.
- GIAOURS (jowrs.) A term often used by Byron. The Turkish epithet for Christians, meaning infidels. P. 58, l. 28.
- Gies. Gives.
- GIN-HORSE. A horse that goes round and round in a circle, turning some kind of a mill or mechanical contrivance. P. 129, l. 11.
- Glowr. Gleam.
- GRAYS AND GLOVERS.—The reference is to Thomas Gray, the well-known poet, and to Richard Glover, an unimportant contemporary of Gray. This association of names betokens a decided underestimate of the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. P. 85, l. 25.
- GREENOCK. P. 27.
- Guid-man (or gude). The man of the house.
- Guid-woman. The woman of the house.
- Gumlie. Muddy.
- Hae. Have.
- HADDINGTON. P. 13.
- Happing. Hopping.
- Hing. Hang.
- HODDAM HILL. P. 13.
- Hoo. How.
- Hoose. House.
- IDOL-PRIESTS. See p. 142, note to p. 127, l. 27.
- Ilk. Each.
- INFLUENCE OF CARLYLE ON OTHER WRITERS. P. 37.
- IRVINE. P. 25.
- IRVING, EDWARD. P. 14.
- ISLE OF DOGS. A peninsula formed by a sudden bend of the Thames opposite Greenwich, reached by boat from London Bridge in a few minutes. P. 129, l. 24.
- Ither. Other.
- Jaups. Splashes
- JEAN PAUL. The literary pseudonym of Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, a German writer (1763-1825), whose published works reach sixty volumes. Carlyle wrote a review of Richter, to whom he thought he owed much. P. 124, l. 15.
- JEFFREY, FRANCIS. P. 20.
- Ken. Know.
- KILMARNOCK. P. 27.
- KIRKCALDY (Ker-caw/-dy). P. 14.
- KIRKOSWALD. P. 24.
- LA FLECHE. A French city on an affluent of the lower Loire where Hume resided for four years and wrote some of his earlier works. P. 87, l. 13.
- Lairing. Miring.
- Langsyne. Long since.
- Lift. Sky, heavens.
- Linking. Tripping along.
- LOCHLEA. P. 24.
- LOWE, SIR HUDSON. The British commander of St. Helena, where Napoleon ended his days a prisoner. P. 51, l. 24.
- LUCY, SIR THOMAS. A gentleman in the neighborhood of Stratford who is said to have had the young Shakspeare and his boon companions up before him for poaching in his deer park. Does Carlyle consider that a life of Shakspeare, by his early neighbors, would be valuable? P. 44, l. 19.
- MACPHERSON. Macpherson was a noted Scottish freebooter, hanged in 1700. P. 77, l. 17.
- MÆCENASES. An awkward word derived from Macenas, the literary patron of Virgil and Horace. The reference is to the Dumfries aristocracy. P. 108, l. 2
- MAINHILL. P. 14.
- Mair. More.

- MAUCHLINE. P. 25.
 Mauna. Must not.
 Maut. Malt.
 Men'. Mend.
 MINERVA PRESS. A London printing house, prolific of trashy novels. P. 64, l. 1.
 MOSSGIEL. P. 25.
 MT. OLIPHANT. P. 24.
 Muckle. Much.
 Nae. No.
 Naething. Nothing.
 "NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION." See p. 138, note to p. 88, l. 11.
 NEW AND OLD LIGHT. Terms applied to the radical and conservative factions of the Church of Scotland. P. 45, l. 4.
 NOVUM ORGANUM. The chief philosophical work of Francis Bacon, by many considered the founder of modern science. P. 71, l. 22.
 O'. Of.
 Ony. Any.
 Ourie. Shivering.
 Ower. Over.
 PATRONAGE. See p. 140, note to p. 115, l. 6.
 PLEBISCITA (plural of PLEBISCITUM). Originally laws enacted in ancient Rome by the lower rank of citizens. Now chiefly used by the French to designate a popular vote. The decision of the common people. P. 123, l. 27.
 POUSSIN. A noted French painter of historical and landscape pictures. "The Deluge," painted for Cardinal Richelieu, hangs in the Louvre with many of his best works, "admired rather as a duty than enjoyed by the spectator." Carlyle visited Paris in 1824, hence, no doubt, the allusion. P. 68, l. 31.
 RAMSEY, ALLAN. A Scottish poet (1686-1758). He wrote of real shepherds on Scottish hills, and may be regarded as the founder of that natural, unaffected school of Scottish poets which reached its culmination in Burns. P. 50, l. 12.
 RAMSGATE. A watering-place on the Isle of Thanet, sixty-five miles from London. P. 129, l. 23.
 Rantingly. Full of life.
 Raucle. Rough.
 Red-wat-shod. Wading in blood.
 RESTAURATEUR. The keeper of an inn, or restaurant. Carlyle defends Burns against the charge, then current, that he was a mere bar-room or public house versifier, providing entertainment for the house. P. 120, l. 11.
 RETZSCH. A German artist famous for his etchings illustrative of Goethe and Schiller's works, in which Carlyle was deeply read. P. 67, l. 19.
 ROTTONKEY. Given in critical editions of Burns's poems as Ratttonkey, which means the landing or quay of rats, *i.e.*, infested by rats. P. 68, l. 27.
 Rowes. Rolls.
 Sae. So.
 SALOONS. In the European, and particularly the French, use of the word, it means reception rooms or parlors. P. 64, l. 26.
 Sang. Song.
 Scaur. Cliff.
 SCOTSBRIG. P. 18.
 SI VIS ME FLERE. See p. 134, note to p. 57, l. 13.
 SLOP, DR. The quotation is from Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, in which Dr. Slop is a character. P. 75, l. 15.
 Snaw. Snow.
 Snaw-broo (snow-brew). Water and slush.
 Snawy. Snowy.

- Speat.** Torrent.
Sprattle. Scramble.
Spring. A lively dance.
STRAW ROOF. See p. 133, note to p. 53, l. 30.
STYLE, CARLYLE'S. See p. 31.
Suld. Should.
SUPPLY AND DEMAND, MAXIM OF. See p. 131, note to p. 43, l. 4.
Tak. Take.
Tam. Thomas.
TARBOLTON. P. 24.
Tell't (telled). Told.
TENIERS. A Flemish painter of peasant and village scenes. P. 81, l. 25.
THEOCRITUS. See p. 136, note to p. 66, l. 1.
THEORY OF LITERATURE, CARLYLE'S. P. 37.
Thole. Endure.
Thowes. Thaws.
TIECK — MUSAUS. Two German poets who drew their material from the folk-lore of their native land. Tieck entered the more fully into the spirit of times past. Carlyle had translated from both and held the first in high esteem. P. 79, l. 30.
Upo'. Upon.
VALCLUSA FOUNTAIN. The fountain of Vaucluse, ten miles east of Avignon. A mountain stream issues from this fountain, made famous by the poet Petrarch, who lived here and sung its praises. P. 130, l. 4
VIRGILIUM VIDI TANTUM. (Ovid). "I had a glimpse at least of Virgil." P. 100, l. 25.
VOCABULARY, CARLYLE'S. P. 32.
Wad. Would.
Wae (woe). Sorry.
Wee. Tiny, little.
Weel. Well.
WELSH, JANE BAILLIE. P. 18.
Werna. Were not.
Wha. Who
Wi'. With.
Wreeths. Wreaths.
WRITERS. Attorneys, not literary men. P. 45, l. 3.
Yon. Yonder.



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