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BURNS AND THE KIRK:

A Review

OF

WHAT THE POET DID FOR THE RE-
LIGIOUS AND SOCIAL REGENERATION
OF THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE.

BY

ALEXANDER WEBSTER.

*Than tyrant's law or bigot's ban,
More mighty is your simplest word;
The free heart of an honest man
Than crosier or the sword.*

WHITTIER.

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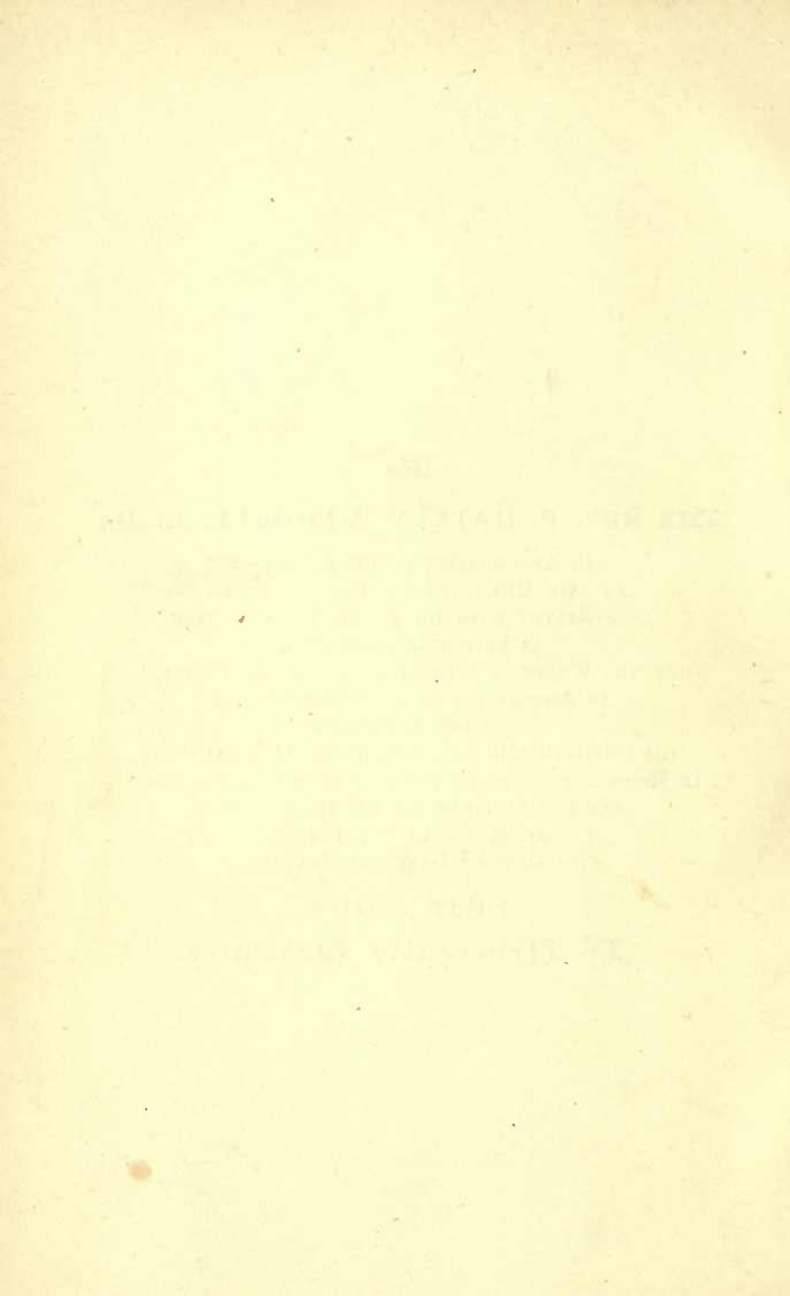
To

THE REV. P. HATELY WADDELL, LL.D.,

IN APPRECIATION OF HIS ELOQUENCE
AS THE EULOGIST OF ROBERT BURNS,
IN SYMPATHY WITH HIS PATRIOTIC ENTHUSIASM
AS EDITOR AND EXPOSITOR
OF THE WORKS OF "THE PROPHET OF THE PEOPLE,"
IN ADMIRATION OF HIS SYNTHETIC ART
AS THE AUTHOR OF
THE "SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY" OF OUR NATIONAL POET,
IN RESPECT FOR HIS PROPHETIC POWER AS A PREACHER,
AND IN GRATITUDE FOR HIS HELP OF SOUL
AS MY PASTOR AND FRIEND
IN DAYS OF DARKSOME TRAVAIL,

THIS BOOK

Is Reverently Dedicated.





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*The outworn rite, the old abuse,
The pious fraud transparent grown,
The good held captive in the use
Of wrong alone,—
These wait their doom from that great law
Which makes the past time serve to-day ;
And fresher life the world shall draw
From their decay.*

WHITTIER.



P R E F A C E .

THE purpose of this book is to show the reforming work that lay at the hand of Robert Burns in the field of religion and morality, how he took up the task to which, by his poetic endowments, he was divinely called, and the urgent necessity the represently is for the continuance and fulfilment of his work.

It appears to the author that the influence of the poetry of Burns, especially in matters pertaining to religion, has grievously suffered from arrested development ; that the influences of orthodoxy and conventionalism have counteracted and prevented the action of the liberating, purifying, and recreative energies latent in the poems inspired by a restless impulse of religious reform. As the witch Sycorax imprisoned Ariel, so sacerdotalism, in foolish fear (moved to avenge as well as to protect itself), incarcerated Burns. It could not brook criticism, it resisted reform, and therefore caged the critic and reformer.

Burns, the rustic, singing of love, we know and adore ; but Burns, the prophet of religious reform, with a weighty message to the Kirk and Society, we have not yet even recognised. The love-lyrics of Burns have regenerated the Scottish heart, and literally put new songs of sweetness and purity into the mouth of the Scottish man. But the reforming poems of Burns, couched in humorous satire, parables written for after-comers to read and understand, prophetic utterances charged with perpetual regenerating power for the soul, have not been read and assimilated in the spirit of reform. They have been kept as a dead letter

by the power which devitalizes all that it touches—the power of orthodox formalism.

To help to release the regenerative spirit of the prophetic poems of Burns is the aim of this essay. The author is well aware of the ambitious nature of his aim, and is deeply sensible of the lowness of his literary reach; but he is urged to venture his effort by the conviction that the object he has in view is real and good, and needs to be presented to those who, loving Burns, are also lovers of religious truth and moral right.

The matter of the Book was composed for delivery in the ordinary course of Sunday-evening lecturing, and its somewhat magnified form has to be excused by the fact that one who speaks popularly has to aim at broad and yet vivid effects. It is hoped that, on being presented to a wider public, the popular form of the matter will commend itself. It will be found that the chapters overlap each other here and there: that is accounted for by the intervals at which they were originally written and delivered; but, perhaps, “line upon line and precept upon precept” will not be objected to.

The author, as lecturer, was placed where he was at liberty and expected to speak freely, and he trusts that, though without a bond on his utterance, he has kept within the truth. He is sensible that “the rigid feature” may resert his words with fresh rigidity, but he trusts that there will be many to whom his interpretation will come as a new and welcome reading of the works of their adored poet, and also as a fresh stimulus to thought and action for the sake of religious and moral rightness of life.

It only remains to be said that the dedication of the book to the Rev. Dr. Waddell does not imply his approval of the theological and economic doctrines expressed in it.



Burns as a Re-Maker of Scottish Religion.

ALTHOUGH much has been written about our national poet, and although his poems are valued more highly than any others that “sing the loves, the joys” of the Scottish people, and “the rural scenes and pleasures” of Scottish soil, in the Scottish tongue, there is still something to be said regarding his work for religion’s sake, and a higher increment of value to be added to his writings on account of their perpetual influence in favour of religious reasonableness and honesty.

Those who have inspired the motives, and shaped the forms of our religion have not done justice to Burns, but have represented him as profane in his satirical criticisms of the clergy and of ideas and practices held sacred—one who, in fact, did grievous harm to religion. Even the admirers of the poet have not given to his distinct, deliberate, and detergent soothsayings on religious matters the high place they deserve. A few enthusiasts only, who are looked upon as fanatics, regard Burns as worthy of high rank as a poet-prophet for his work as a religious critic and exposé of cant in religion.

Before we can account for a man like Burns, understand his mission, and give the proper value to his work, we require to take wide views of Providence, of Inspiration, and of Sacred Literature. He is a phenomenon in history and

in literature as remarkable in kind as is Isaiah, or any of the Hebrew prophets.

[Born in the lowest rank, of parents and an ancestry in which there was nothing extraordinary in the way of mind, with a bare education, and no unusual mental incitement, he rose to show that he was most richly endowed with poetic power, and to sing to his country's heart as no poet ever did before or has done since.]

How can we account for him? Whence came his genius? There is no visible cause of his poetic power. We cannot find anything in the line of his descent that leads up to it. If an angel had announced to William Burness and Agnes Brown on their marriage day, on the 15th December, 1757, that they would have such a son, they would hardly have credited the prophecy. They were, no doubt, a remarkable pair. The bridegroom "a man of presence, with decided features, the upper lip especially being indicative of severe resolution; a man of the purest morality, of the sternest integrity, of strong will, and stronger silent sympathies; a man of reading, of acquirements, of capacity beyond thousands in his sphere;" the bride, a woman "of commanding aspect," presenting "the striking anomaly of rich red hair, with deep dark eyes . . . with the loftiest sense of female dignity in her bosom . . . and who had a fund of traditionary words, and music of her own"—a remarkable pair, indeed, but still the son born to them in the first month of the second year after their marriage, is not wholly accounted for by them. The "great dark eyes" of the mother, "brimful of eloquence and piety," and "the passion that was secretly interwoven like electricity with the shining hair, and that flowed out silently around her from every glistening tip," may account for much, but not for all. If any "wise men from the east" had come near the banks of "bonnie Doon" in their search for the King of Scottish song, of whose birth they had been forewarned, they would hardly have thought of halting at "the rude clay biggan," built by the hands of William Burness "during intervals of husbandry." And yet, as has been said, "William Burness, the stern, taciturn, God-fearing man, and Agnes Brown, the pure-

hearted, truthful, loving woman, with the rich red hair and great dark eyes, have begotten a miracle; have become earthly co-editors for the world of a divinely-illuminated offspring."

The genius of Burns cannot be truly accounted for except on the supposition of an Infinite Providence that divinely works through Nature, moulding man. One of the fundamental ideas of those whose religion is rational is that God works everywhere and always for one beneficent purpose, and according to one law; that His Spirit knows no limit of sympathy or operation, but throughout the world, as well as in Judea, raises specially-endowed men to be fellow-workers with him. They hold that a line cannot be drawn across human history up to which God's presence came but went not beyond; that no one can truly say of such a line "this division marks the cessation of God's inspiration: *this* is sacred territory, and *that* is not." Nowhere can a circle be drawn round any country or people with the declaration "that alone is God's country; these are God's people." The Universe throughout is made of the same materials, pervaded by the same energies, and ruled by the same laws. Mankind are one in Nature and experience. Everywhere the things of Nature utter the same truths, and wherever there is an adjusted human consciousness the conscience is impressed with the same convictions. There is no place where natural law does not hold. There never was a time when men found themselves without the Presence of the Power that works for Righteousness.

It is to the discredit of orthodoxy (which still resents the reforming satire of Burns) that it affirms a division in time marking a hemisphere of God's presence and another of His absence, and a distinction in literature by which some writings are made sacred and others profane. In manifest inconsistency with its own assertion of God's omnipresence and unchangeableness, orthodoxy persists in teaching that God is not with men now as He once was, that the era of inspiration is long since past, and that there is no sacred modern literature. But the rational theist declares that the present generation is not orphaned; that God is to it all that He ever was (aye, and more) to any generation of the

past. It is a pitiable example of self-bereavement when men look far back for God instead of around, and are content with words *about* God when they might enjoy direct speech with Him.

There is a divineness in Scottish history as well as in Jewish history ; a providence in the life of Scotchmen as there was in the life of Hebrew men ; an inspiration in the literature of Scotland no less divine than that of the literature of "the Holy Land." Why should we imagine that our "land of brown heath and shaggy wood, land of the mountain and the flood" is less "holy" than the land of Israel ? The same Creative Power that reared Moriah, Sinai, and Tabor, shaped Ben Lomond, Ben Nevis, and Cairngorm : the Divine Energy that sent Jordan gushing on its way made the courses of the streams of our own country : the Providence that placed the Lake of Galilee no less surely scooped out the basins of the lochs which lave the rocky roots of our hills. The character and mission of the Scottish people are, by the divine purpose, as certainly ruled as were those of the Jewish people. Our historians, without any profanity or unveracity, might have written—"The Lord commanded William Wallace, saying set my people free," even as the Hebrew historian wrote—"The Lord commanded Moses," &c. And, likewise, they might have recorded that God spoke by the mouth of His servant John Knox, and made Robert Burns His poetic messenger, and Thomas Carlyle His latter-day prophet, with as much truthfulness as the old recorders tell that God spoke through Samuel, and David, and Elijah. Life is as wonderful, as divine in its nature, and as fateful here to-day, as ever it was anywhere ; and until we realise that, and understand that *we* may have an original relation to the Infinite Life-giver, and are called to be fellow-labourers with Him, and have to sanctify ourselves for our work as devoutly as any Hebrew hero ever did, we will not live highly and holily.

The gospel for this day of ours is the gospel of a present God, of a perpetual and impartial inspiration, of the sacredness of the hour that now is, of the total divineness of the human endowments possessed by men to-day, of the sanctity

of all proper human work, and the vital importance of whatsoever men think, and say, and do. We are now engaged with affairs as worthy of "holy writ" as were the affairs with which the children of Israel had to do, and we are making history which has as good a right to become part of "the Bible of the race" as that which is included in the writings in the canon of inspired books. If we could but realise that, surely we would perform our duties with a dignity as devout as that shown by any Hebrew patriarch, and show something in our lives of the fervour of the first Christian Apostles.

No one with such ideas can doubt that a man so pre-eminently endowed with poetic power as Burns proved himself to be had a mission to fulfil which was in its nature as sacred as any ever appointed for a Hebrew prophet. Such a man does not appear in the heaven of humanity by chance, anymore than a star appears by chance in the heaven of night. Some divine reason there is for the man as for the star.

At the very time when Burns found in his heart a burning desire to "to mak' some usefu' plan or book, or sing a sang at least" for "puir auld Scotia's sake," there was urgent need of a power to purge the passions of the Scottish people of grossness, and to recreate moral and religious emotion; and to do that, Burns was divinely endowed and called.

In order to see what he actually did for religion, and to connect him with similarly commissioned men elsewhere, we require to perceive that a tendency toward corruption is inevitably involved in ecclesiastical institutions. The progress of thought reveals the grossness of primitive theological conceptions, and causes a perpetual casting-away of ideas that are out-grown, and the same influences cause a concurrent detection of the emptiness and uselessness of ancient religious ceremonies, and a throwing aside of rites once regarded as sacred. Such are the healthy detections and reforms of religious development. But there are other things which usually accompany ecclesiastical institutions. The ecclesiastical power itself tends to dogmatism and despotism. The priest is apt to presume upon his office, to regard him-

self as a specially privileged person, and to exercise an authority of an arbitrary kind. He enforces (in all sincerity) belief in the dogmas of his Church, compels participation in its sacraments, and persecutes and kills in the carrying out of his power.

And when a Church becomes established, it becomes the worldly interest of men to attach themselves to it ; and they profess to believe its creed and to join heartily in its practices for the sake of material advantage. Thus all sorts of hypocrisies, shams, and falsities of conduct and character are maintained in Church connections.]

But, after the priest has developed his priestcraft, there arises a man of a different character to oppose the priesthood. He is one who has deep intellectual insight, intense moral convictions, and lofty religious feeling. He has a higher conception of Deity than that of the priest ; sees that religion as it is in practice is gross ; that the power of the priest debases men ; and he moves for reform. That is the genesis of the prophet. He invariably rises to protest against priestcraft. He calls men to cast off the priestly yoke, to think for themselves, to worship according to their own conscience, to be thoroughly true in religion. In his reforming zeal he overturns the abominable altar, burns the desecrated temple, tramples under foot the false creed, and calls the earnest to build anew on higher ground and with better ideas.

Such evidently was the forth-coming of the Hebrew prophets, whose writings form the best part of the Old Testament. We find Isaiah, the greatest of them, declaring, in explicit and burning terms, the utter corruptness and abominableness of the rites and ceremonies maintained by the priests. From him onwards the strain of prophecy rises high and fierce against the priestly and ruling classes. Without exception, the prophets were democratic in their sympathies, haters of oppression, lovers of righteousness, brave, just, and advanced men who wrought for the emancipation and enlightenment of the people. And it appears they were mostly from the humbler ranks, men whom the Spirit of God found at the plough, the sheepcote, or the fig-yard,

and commissioned to speak out against the established and respected wrong.

And speak they did, plainly and courageously. Sometimes their voice is like the sound of a trumpet blown loud and clear on a mountain top, and which travels on the still air as a bold challenge to the high-priest at his lofty altar. It is heard as it echoes among the hills asking "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands? saith the Lord." Anon it sounds amid thunder, and lightning, and storm, hoarse and fitful through the rent and rumbling clouds, with mutterings of vengeance, and flashes of fire in it, as if it would blast the altar, and sweep away the high place for ever. At other times it is a low, pathetic voice, pleading through suppressed sorrow for contrition in the people, and for a fresh and earnest endeavour after religious faithfulness. Now its tones are those of a faithful warrior-leader addressing his soldiers, and mixing his words with shrill scorn of the enemy; then it changes to the low, sobbing prayer of a captive in a dungeon; again it is the voice of strongly-roused anger impeaching injustice; and anon it becomes the joyous utterance of a loving mother blessing her obedient children, and hopefully predicting a glorious future. These prophets utter their passion for righteousness in every mood and tense; they exhaust the vocabulary of moral earnestness, and sound the whole gamut of religious emotion in proclaiming it.

It is with these men that Robert Burns has to be placed. He certainly was a prophet of religious truthfulness and sincerity, one who, according to the character of his genius, uttered an effective call to the soul of his people on behalf of "pure and undefiled religion." But in placing him with the Hebrew prophets we need not measure him with any of them, not even with the one to whose call he compares his own. We may simply hold that he has to be classed as a prophet. The time in which he lived was different from that in which the Hebrew prophets lived; he belonged to another race of people, and his endowments were other than theirs. But the work which he did as the critic

of the Kirk, and the winnower of religion was essentially the same as theirs. In his day "the solemn assembly" was as abominable to a healthy soul as it was in the day of Isaiah; revelry of the grossest kind followed "the sacrament;" every ecclesiastical meeting was an occasion for drinking, and at ordinations and such like, ministers and elders "got fou thegither."

The Pharisee was as common then in Scotland as he was in Judea when Jesus was daily followed by him. Hypocrisy put on its most brazen look, and calculatingly cultivated the "art o' hidin.'" The atmosphere of religion was utterly unhealthy, and the moral condition of the people was one of diseased debasement. The ministry was corrupt; there was no earnestness of mind or heart in it; its offices were performed with perfunctory formalism.

And the spirit of social revolution was in the air; it had caused democratic eruptions in France, the thrill of which was felt in Scotland. But the Church was insensate, so debased, in fact, as to be incapable of any great moral effort. Here and there a "new light" man appeared, but only with an unavailing flicker.

The reformation of Knox required to be reformed. Carlyle said—"there is nothing in the history of Scotland of world-interest but this reformation by Knox." But that reformation suffered deformation. It took away one yoke, but prepared another. The Protestantism which it introduced became as popish as was the popery it superseded. Altars, vestments, and images were banished, only to give place to pulpits, creeds, and clergy, in which the spirit of papacy took new form. Instead of the Pope's word there was the dogmatic standard, in place of the missal there was the catechism, in room of the mass there was the fenced sacrament. It was a change of form rather than a change of spirit; a change of masters, and not an actual change from slavery to freedom. Presbyter proved but "priest writ large." The "Book of Discipline" became a tyranny. "The First Blast" turned into the sound of a Pharisee's trumpet. "The Book of Common Prayer" led to formalism.

It was given to Burns to fulfil Knox. The note of a new-deliverance had to be sounded : the song for captives to be freed had to be sung. Religious liberty required to be recreated, a new interest in religion had to be awakened, and a new spirit aroused in the Scottish soul.


In these circumstances Burns lifted up his prophetic voice with deliberate intent to purify the religion of his country. He did not speak in prose, but in poetic form, and in his native tongue. Indeed, he could not do otherwise, for he was the divinely-elected and gifted poet of his people. It is said in the Koran—"To every people God giveth a prophet in their own tongue." Robert Burns was God's gift to the Scottish people.

Burns said his say on religious matters chiefly in that remarkable series of satirical poems consisting of "The Holy Fair," "Holy Willie's Prayer," "The Ordination," "Address to the Unco Guid," and "The Kirk's Alarm." With a true instinct he decided to give his utterances the form of humorous satire. It is here that Burns is apt to be misjudged. Some may think it ridiculous to place him, as a writer of humorous and satirical poems, beside the Hebrew prophets. Their writings are solemn, stately, and severe in style, and altogether want the element of humour. The Hebrew prophets were too intently serious to smile as they wrote ; they could not unbend to play with their subject ; and they never thought of trying to cause laughter. Their words are ironical and sarcastic sometimes, but are never humorous. Their style has formed a standard of religious writing by which it has been decided that humour is profane. And the application of that standard has been carried so far as to make "the rigid feature" the only becoming countenance of religion. Laughter is deemed improper to a pious man ; and it is regarded as a mark of Christ's divinity that he never was seen to smile. All that is unhealthy. The faculty in human nature which has in it the sense of humour is as divine as any of our other faculties, and the feelings which spontaneously express themselves in laughter are as natural and healthy in their operation as any of our other feelings. "All humour," as has been truly said, "mainly depends

upon a persistent tendency in the human race toward emptiness, purblindness, and silliness—qualities not peculiar to to any special class of persons, but common, at certain times and in certain relations, to all. The humour consists in subjecting the fantasies and figments of our vanity and dullness to the sane light of simple good sense, and the quality of the humour is determined by the manner in which this is done. Most humour has the same general object—the abatement of folly.”

The humour of Burns is “as morally justifiable as it is artistically exquisite.” Sometimes it is “a gentle and amiable process,” the subdued ripple of his mirthful sympathy, by which folly is irresistibly and purifyingly led to laugh at itself, and at other times it is more stringent, and becomes a satirical lash of a foolishness too infatuated with its folly to be open to easy conviction.

Professor Blackie well said of the series of satirical poems referred to:—“In the satirical war which Burns entered into with the high-flying party of the Church, the verdict of time, I think I may safely say, has proved he was in the right. The abuses so strongly castigated were real abuses ; and, if the Ayrshire ploughman used all the armoury of brilliant wit, broad humour, and keen satire to put them down, he was only using that weapon which, in ‘Reynard the Fox’ and other popular productions of the middle ages, had proved the most effective against that class of men with whom he had to deal. All classes of men are the better for being publicly laughed at on occasions ; ridicule is the most powerful weapon against that monstrous self-importance of corporate bodies, which makes them ever and anon play fantastic tricks before high heaven, which made the angels weep. But, for the follies of the clergy, the sanctity of their professional avocation is too often the seven-hided shield of Ajax, which required the might of a Hector to pierce. Such a Hector was Burns to the Scottish Church ; and, though a sensitive, pious mind will naturally shrink from the bold exposure of devout abuses in holy things in the ‘Holy Fair’ and other similiar satires, on a broad view of the matter we cannot but think that the castigation was reasonable, and



“Auld Wives’ Fables.”

“*The Holy Fair.*”



HERE are good reasons for believing that “The Holy Fair” was written by Burns in the summer of 1785, he being then in his twenty-sixth year, and co-partner with his brother in the farm of Mossgiel, near Mauchline. “The poetic genius” of his country found him, as he himself said, at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over him. She bade him “sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes, and rural pleasures of his natal soil in his native tongue.”

No “rural scene” visible at Mauchline could have more deeply impressed the sensitive mind of the poet than “The Holy Fair.” The religious gathering known by that term was held in the open Churchyard of Mauchline on the very spot where the cattle-market or common fair at other times was held. There, facing the Cowgate, the preaching tent was pitched, and in and around it the crowds collected. The Session books of Mauchline show that at the time when Burns was there, with all his senses open for “fine remarkin’,” “the actual attendance at the ‘tables’ ranged from twelve to fourteen hundred,” and if we add to these the number of

those who were not communicants, we get a gathering more than sufficient to crowd the yard.

Intended to be a “solemn assembly,” the gathering had degenerated into a sensuous revel. Under the guise of a sacrament it was really a spree. Even the communicants set themselves for a time of sanctimonious sensuality, and the great crowd of hangers-on made no secret of the fact that they came for the fun of the fair. Those who had often seen the fair testified to several of the editors of the poet’s works that every detail in the poem was true to the letter. There can be no doubt that there were houses of public entertainment on all sides of the gathering—“Nanse Tinnock’s in the rear, ‘Poosie Nansie’s,’ ‘Johnny Dow’s,’ and others in front”—all doing a roaring trade. Though the whole scene is freely treated by Burns, there is no untruthfulness in it. The Rev. Mr. Reid, of New Cumnock, to whom a copy of the poem was shown ere it was published, declared, “in his usual tone of tearful sorrow, that the worst thing about it was, it was *just ower true*.” Burns looked at the whole scene with humour and indignation in his eye, and saw the incongruity, indecency, and profanity of it, and determined to ply his satirical power on the scandalous revel.

Along with his gift of mirthful humour Burns had an endowment of seriousness which caused his mirth, when exercised on solemn themes, to take a satirical form. Satire is severe humour; and by his constitution and education he was disposed to express his deepest feelings satirically. He received from his father a religious training of an unusual kind. His heterodox parent prepared a little manual of theology in the form of a dialogue for the use of his children, and by it it was made plain that William Burness was no Calvinist. The orthodox dogmas of the Atonement, the Trinity, and Eternal Torment were not taught to Burns, but something very different. In a letter to Dr. Moore, Burns wrote, “Polemical divinity about this time [when Burns was in Irvine, learning flax-dressing] was putting the country half-mad, and I, ambitious of shining in conversation parties on Sundays, at funerals, &c., used to puzzle

Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion that I raised the hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour."

All the more serious were the religious impressions of Burns because they were the result of original and intelligent training, and the sincere adoption of his own reason. There can be no doubt with those who study his training and his own expressions of religious belief that he utterly detested Calvinism, and with it all Pharisaism, sensationalism, indecency, and sham in religion. He was taught to think thoroughly, fearlessly, and reverently on religious matters, to care far more to be reasonable than to be orthodox, to put away all pretence and have the courage of his convictions.

It was his training that made Burns express his indignation at the scandalous indecencies and profanities of "The Holy Fair." The whole thing seemed to him to be utterly immoral and irreligious, and he speedily brought all the resources of his satire to bear against it. It is clear that he regarded the entire proceedings as a complete travesty of a sacrament. His objections were not merely against the incidentals, but were also against the essentials of the fair. Burns was not a Puritan; but he saw in the hilarity, levity, and licensed revelry which had become attached to the fair a desecration of the occasion. He perceived the incongruousness of serious preaching to those who came to a carnival, and the utter unreality of worship amid such surroundings. The relays of ministers provided for the tent-preaching seemed to him to be examples of vain attempts to whip up artificial feeling which were as pitiable as they were comical. To listen to descriptions of the tragedy of Calvary, accompanied with declarations of the wrath of God and fiery judgment to come, amid conditions so farcical—in the motley crowd, more bent on sensuous than on spiritual things—was to him a discordant thing. If his thoughts went back, as we may well suppose them doing, to the quiet and solemn scene in the upper room in which the humble supper was partaken of by Jesus and his disciples, he would be painfully struck by the contrast between that scene and

the scene of “*The Holy Fair.*” Perhaps the question came to his mind, Is this the sort of celebration that Jesus intended as the commemoration of his self-sacrificing life? Is this carnival the memorial of a sacrifice? Is this sanctimoniousness anything like the sincerity and wholesomeness of religious feeling desired by Jesus? Is this show and sound in harmony with the retirement and quiet advised by Jesus in connection with worship?

The longer he thought on these things Burns would see how far different the Holy Fair was from the celebration of the sacrament intended by Christ; and as he listened to the matter preached, and heard the death of Christ described as a penalty exacted from the innocent instead of from the guilty by an angry God whose vengeance could not otherwise be appeased, he would be still more shocked. He could not believe the preacher when he affirmed that God had cursed mankind on account of the fall of Adam and had doomed all to eternal torment. Such conduct appeared to him to be altogether unfatherly, and he could not credit the assertion that God had done so. And doubtless he saw a very serious flaw in the argument of the Atonement. It was asserted that all men fell in Adam, and that Christ took upon him the guilt and bore the punishment of all, and yet it was affirmed that only *some* would be saved. The transaction had a fatal leak in it. Why would not all be saved when all fell and all were the children of God, and when the guilt of all was borne by Christ? The whole thing was done independent of mankind: the Fall was not their doing nor was the Atonement theirs. The scheme of redemption was devised and executed apart from them; and why was not the salvation of all secured? How could anything on the part of man hinder salvation when the sacrifice of Jesus was effectual and God was satisfied? The whole thing would seem a bewildering confusion to Burns, and he would turn away from it as from a superstitious orgie. Especially sickening would it be to him when he caught and analysed the leading motive of the scene. That motive was the fear of hell. It was that fear which, like the hangman’s whip, the preachers used to lash their hearer’s feelings into the

condition of alarm necessary to the acceptance of "salvation." Spasmodic emotion of that sort is unhealthy and irreligious. Fear of its father is a low motive to awaken in a child. No true atonement can ever be realised between a just father and a sinful child on the ground of fear. A child alarmed at its father will crouch before him, but will not fling itself into his arms. Love alone can produce atonement.

All preaching that seeks to awaken terror, to make us rush panic-stricken from the doom of God, and all working upon the soul by revivalistic stimulation is spiritually mischievous. If God is our Father, if He is perfectly loving, and if He holds our destiny in His fatherly hands, why should we be afraid of Him or alarmed at the thought of anything in His discipline? It is a serious thing to live, to have upon us the trust of human endowments, and to possess the power to use these rightly or wrongly; and no one who realizes what human life means can take being lightly or be careless of his errand here; but there is no reason why we should be terrified for anything that God has devised for us.

With such thoughts in his mind, Burns would perceive the irreligious and spiritually hurtful character of the Holy Fair, and, so far from recognising it as Christian in its nature, would discern the paganism of it. It was, in fact, a survival of the old heathen feast-day. The various ancient races had their annual festal day, when they offered to their deities the fruits of the soil and drank hilariously. We have in Leviticus a command concerning one of these days requiring the Hebrews to partake of their corn and wine when they offered the first fruits to God. And we may gather from other accounts that their feast-day became a day of wild hilarity. Mixing with the Canaanites, they imitated their observance of feast-days. "The worship of the Canaanite gods was very wild and unrestrained. Singing and dancing in a strange, wild fashion formed a part of it, and when the worshippers had drunk deeply in honour of their gods, and were shouting and dancing wildly in their praise, those who saw them thought that the spirit of the deities had come down into their midst, and was filling their

hearts with thoughts of them.” Such frenzy was catching, and there can be no doubt that the Israelites, when settled in Canaan beside the natives, adopted many of their practices, and that *their* feasts became drunken and frenzied. To stimulate their inspiration and realise a more ecstatic frenzy they made their drink more and more intoxicating by intensified fermentation, and turned the solemn feast into a sensual orgie.

In the New Testament we find hints of the continuation of the same sort of revelry by the early Christians. Wherever the Romish Church has been or is we find festal days sanctioned by the priesthood ; and in Italy every spring the carnival is celebrated with “ masks and madness.” In Scotland the Holy Fair was a survival of the old paganism assimilated by Christianity. At Mauchline, in “ Nause Tinnocks ” and other change-houses, those who came to the Fair got the drink which corresponded to the sacred drink drunk in Canaan thousands of years before by hilarious Hebrews on similar occasions ! Perceiving the heathenishness of the Holy Fair, Burns let loose his mirth at the ragged and tattered survival. It was to him a sacrament in masquerade, a grotesque pagan remnant unbecoming to a Christian people. But notice what it is that he does : he satirises the *external* scene only : he does not enter the Church itself to set the reforming mirth agoing there. He takes to do only with the Pharisaic show, the open pretence, the visible cant. When the communicants go *in* to the “ tables ” he remains outside ; he dares not meddle with the privacies of religion. He lets his satire play consumingly upon every outward indecorum and public sham, and what he does is effectual. At the touch of his satire, the Holy Fair, in self-convicting shame, shrivelled up as an unsightly and abominable thing, and Scotland saw it no more !

What is called “ The Lord’s Supper ” still remains in orthodoxy, and the old ideas of a vengeful God, an eternal hell, and a substitutionary sacrifice remain with it. The celebration of it is still regarded as a charm to avert the wrath of God, and there are those who attend Church on

Sacrament Sundays with much Pharisaic display, and seldom, if ever, on any other day. It is a warrant of respectability to take the Sacrament, a passport to social favour, a form that many go through for a show. Do we not still need some courageous satirist to purify the practices connected with the Sacrament?

The phrase "Auld Wives' Fables" exposes a form of hypocrisy of a very scandalous nature. It occurs in the stanza in which one of the most detestable of pulpit liars is described:—

"Wee Miller niest the guard relieves,
An' orthodoxy raibles,
Tho' in his heart he well believes,
An' thinks it auld wives' fables;
But faith! the birkie wants a manse,
So cannillie he hums them;
Altho' his carnal wit and sense
Like hafflins-wise o'ercomes him
At times that day."

It must be admitted that Burns was hard on the clergy, and it is no wonder that they gave him an ill name. Their looks, their gestures, their words in the pulpit are taken in hand by his humour unsparingly. Round the five preachers of the Fair his satire plays, cutting deeply wherever it touches, but with a kindly power cutting to improve. They seem to take bodily shape in his verses, and to stand living before us while the poet lets us see through them with his wondrous art of representation. Moodie, "rattlin' and thumpin'" as he "clears the points o' faith"; Smith, with "his English style, and gesture fine," opening out his "cauld harangues on practice and on morals"; Peebles, "meek and mim"; Miller, raibling orthodoxy; Russell, with "piercin' words, like Highlan' swords," waking echoes among the hills by "his talk o' hell"—each re-appears vividly to the mind's eye as the lines are read in which they are immortalised as unconscious grotesque figures in a demoralised solemn assembly. The satirical portraits would be inexcusable were they not sketched in the interest of religious decorum and reality. They are not the caricatures of a jester at religion, but the accurate drawings of one who sought to show

orthodoxy its own image as it appeared in profane circumstances of its own making. The laughter which he raised as he pointed the finger of ridicule at it was healthy, purifying, regenerating laughter. He felt with the Hebrew psalmist that there were some things at which even "He that sits in heaven shall laugh," and the sanctimonious grotesqueness of the Holy Fair was one of these. And the mannerisms and notions at which he shot his satire were free game; they were the parasites, the excrescences, the deformities, the vices of religion.

And, in criticising the clergy, Burns only followed the example of the Hebrew prophets. Their writings are full of impeachments of the priests and of denunciations of sacerdotal infidelity and iniquity. Indeed, it has ever been the work of the prophet to oppose the priest. Despotic and corrupt priestcraft necessitates the prophet; he is called to rise up against it. The prophet is not, as is popularly supposed, one who foretells events to come, but is one who emphasises present duty, the obligations resting on the powers that be to do justice, to pursue truth, and fulfil righteousness. In the exercises of their function the Hebrew prophets reviewed the priesthood, exposed its views, and declared for its abolition. They had no humour, but they had no lack of indignation. In the name of God they set the thunder, the lightning, and the whirlwind upon the clergy of their day, and made them a hissing to the people.

In the same spirit, but with loftier power, Jesus dealt with the priests and Pharisees of his day, and showed that it is the prophet's function to protect the people against priestcraft, and to win for them liberty of thought and action. It is always necessary to urge people to think thoroughly of religious matters, and to have the courage of their thoughts, to show them how to be on their guard against the assumption of authority and the dictation of a privileged class. In Scotland, especially in the day of Burns, it was necessary to do this, for the people trembled before their pastors and dared not exercise any freedom with them. They had to believe what they were ordered by the clergy, to behave as they were

bidden, and, in general, to do exactly as they were told. An artificial awe was gathered around the Church, the clergy were regarded as a sacred caste, and everything ecclesiastical had terror in it. The Lairds were the aristocracy of the State, and the clergy were the aristocracy of the Church: the one class had privileges over soil and the other had privileges over the soul, and both were to the people as "the Lord's anointed." Both presumed on their place and power, and it was urgently needful that the people should be delivered from them. It was needful to do exactly what Burns did—viz., to realise the natural humour of the people, and let it be freely used upon the clergy. That was the most effective way of relaxing "the rigid feature," and letting health into religion. It was much, then, that Burns made it possible for men to smile in presence of a minister, and even to laugh when they were tickled with the humour of sanctimoniousness.

But while Burns scourged the clergy with his satire he did not spare the laity. His "sub-acid humour" bit into their conscience also. In this poem he pictures them in their superstitious condition, listening, open-mouthed, to the "cantharidian" preaching, and then pouring out in thrangs "to gie the jars and barrels a lift" whenever practical morality is introduced. How scathingly he terms them "an *elect* swatch," "the real judges," "the godly," and "yill-caup commentators!" How he drives their carnal cant, their sensual solemnity, their "pint-stoup" piety, like chaff before the wind of his sarcasm! "Like priest, like people," and Burns let both feel the dints of his satirical weapon. It was his mission to work for religious reasonableness and moral integrity amongst the laity as well as amongst the clergy. He was trained to think intelligently on religious matters, to follow the light that came to his own reason, and he knew that without rational conviction the profession of religion is a sham. To attain to rational conviction men must determine that the conditions of religious thought shall be such as enable the mind to act freely. There must be no bondage to any creed, no committal to any dogma, no fear of ecclesiastical power. The mind, opened to all existent

knowledge, should be trained to understand and assimilate that knowledge, and taught to stand in awe of the truth alone. There should not be anywhere within the sphere of religion any assumption of infallibility and finality in book or creed, but each age, each generation, each individual ought to be allowed to form their religious thoughts according to their own intelligence. It is as ridiculous to confine God to one book as it would be to confine Him to one natural element. No one would think of saying God is in the law of gravitation, but is not in any other law ; and why should we say He is in the Bible and not in any other holy book ? It is as preposterous to say God once spoke directly to man as it would be to say the sun once shone on our earth ages ago. And it is as unreasonable to say that one class of men should think for another as it would be to say that one class of men should eat for another. All men by nature have the same rights : no generation can take from another the right to think : no body of men can deprive others of the right to use their reason.

But Burns saw that such was being done in effect by ecclesiastical power. He saw that the putting into the hands of the people, as an infallible authority, a book which they were forbidden to criticise, to doubt, to try to understand, or even to read in any rational way, prevented freedom of mind and originality in religion. I fancy I hear him asking, Why should the Hebrews prevent Scotchmen from having their own ideas of God. Why should it be thought that the first Christians formed Christianity for all time ? Should not each age write its own books and have its own religious life ? Burns saw that the Bible as it was commonly used was a fetter to the soul, a literal prison-house to religion. And he saw no less clearly that the old dogmas prevented new thought.

While the dogmatic affirmations of the Shorter Catechism were taught authoritatively to children their minds were likely to be permanently prejudiced in favour of them, and no proper personal conviction had any chance of being formed within their mind. The dogmatic system made its votaries slaves to the dead. And by the despotism of ecclesiasticism generally the people, as Burns saw, were made

mere serfs. They were in mental slavery just as really as if a visible fetter had been on their mind. And the worst phase of it was that the people were not aware of it, or were too slavish to make any great effort to throw it off. When a man here and there realised the irrationality of orthodoxy he was tempted to hold his tongue, or, if obliged to speak, to tell a falsehood for the sake of bread. It is that phase of the religious sham that Burns deals with in the stanza in which "wee Miller" is introduced. Of all the preachers he satirizes none is so contemptible as this raibler of orthodoxy. We smile at "Moodie's" "rattlin' and thumpin'," and are amused by his eldritch gestures, albeit his face is ugly; we sympathize with "Smith's" moral powers and reason; we can tolerate the "antidote" of "Peebles"; we can respect "Black Russell," even with his harrowing talk of hell, because his sincerity is unimpeachable; but we can have nothing but contempt for the base creature who cannily preaches what he weel believes to be "auld wives' fables," because he "wants a manse." It appears to me that Burns singles out this insincere sharger, this canny hypocrite, this little scamp of the pulpit for the deepest cuts of his scourge. The adjective "wee," though it may have fitted his diminutive physical stature, is evidently used in a double sense, and indicates a detestable littleness of mind, an altogether contemptible smallness of conscience. We have the measure of the man's *soul* in the epithet "wee," and when we join it to the term "birkie," we have before us the photograph of a vain conscienceless creature, ready to do anything to gain a position—an upsetting little Pharisee, ambitious to be respectable. He has brains, and he has used them. He is convinced that orthodoxy is "auld wives' fables," but he has decided to sell his convictions for a pulpit, to barter his conscience for a manse. He has intellect enough to let him know how to gain his own selfish ends, but not conscience enough to make him serve the truth. He knows he is a cheat, and his better knowledge almost overcomes him as he hums the fables, but he thinks on the manse and puts the cant on thicker. He stands before us as the basest of clerical Pharisees.

It is not merely to change the scene in his drama of the profaned sacrament that Burns, after Miller has hummed his "auld wives' fables," makes the "change-house" fill with the hearers. A dishonest ministry leads to a debased people. Once before in the poem there is a rush to the jars and barrels, but the thrangs are "the godly" (those who profess to be such). They prefer whisky to morality, the reamin' swats to the shine of reason, and they are off at the first break to the drink. But it is the mass of the hearers who fill the change-house, but and ben, after insincerity has exposed itself. With one accord the people cry out "for bakes and gills" after the preacher is done who preached with a "manse" in his eye. It is as if they said, "Why should not we as well as the ministers set our affections on sensuous things? why ought we to be true to conscience when they are not? why should we sacrifice our desires when they indulge theirs? Why should we be better than they are? Send round the dram!" So the "Leeze me on Drink!" comes in appropriately as the fitting sequel to the insincere humming of Orthodoxy. After the pint-stoup had clattered not even Black Russell with his "piercin' words" could rally the people to proper hearing again. The toddy made them insensible to the terror of the "vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit, fill'd fou o' lowan brimstane." The Holy Fair was a profane revel by which nothing benefited but the public-house.

Now, I suppose he would be regarded as a fanatical abstainer, or one who has fanciful ideas, who would assert that there is a connection between orthodoxy and intemperance, or that the insincere preacher is a procurator to the publican. But it is a fact that in the drinking customs of to-day we have a survival of old, sacred, hilarious practices. In the spirit-shop, the publican, and the bacchanalian song of to-day, we have degenerate representatives of the ancient drinking-temple, the wine-bibbing priest, and the hilarious hymn. That, however, is a connection of antiquarian interest. There is a vital connection between orthodoxy and intemperance and sensuality generally which is obvious

enough, and which it is important to note. Orthodoxy provides no employment for the mind or recreation for the body. It forbids thought, enshrouds ignorance, and fosters superstition. It frowns on amusement, and is a foe to natural mirth. It objects to the theatre, the music-hall, and the dancing-room, and gives nothing instead of these but the prayer-meeting. What, then, can the mass of the people do but frequent the public-house? The dens provided for them to live in by such men as "Holy Willie" are not such as to make them wish to spend their nights in them. The conditions of labour into which they are forced by those who are reckoned "the godly" are such as render recreation of some sort—aye, a quick and powerful stimulation of some sort, a necessity; and what can they do but say "Leeze me on drink!" and tak' aff their dram? It is a fact that the countries most closely priest-ridden are the most drunken and sensualised? The criminal statistics of Great Britain show that the farther away from orthodoxy the criminals are they are the fewer. The Catholic Church generally leads, then follows the Church of England, and so on through the ranks of dissent till you come to Unitarians and the like, when the number of criminals goes down to nothing. The reason is plain—the more people have to think about, the more they are encouraged and helped to cultivate their mental faculties, the more they are interested and engaged in living things, the higher they are raised above all sorts of sensuality and debasement. It is an indisputable fact that along with heterodoxy there is to be found a much higher degree of morality than there is with orthodoxy. Indeed, atheism itself might shame orthodoxy in this respect. Orthodoxy has always ruled morality out of court, has never made religion a thing of "the living present," nor helped man practically to develop his humanity.

But in a still more direct sense orthodoxy has had a demoralising influence. Its social influence has always been on the side of mammon. It has ever countenanced snug selfishness. It is not without good reason that we may take "Wee Miller" as a representative of living clergymen who, for the sake of a "manse," preach different to what they

believe. But a short time ago Professor Nichol, of Glasgow, wrote as follows in an article on Dr. Service :—"We find the majority of our latitudinarian churchmen speaking under a veil of conscientious or cautious reservations. They teach what they hold to be truth, but not the whole truth ; or they waste their reforming energies on trivialities about organs or hymns, or, passing from muddy metaphysics to hazy sentiment, try to reconcile contradictions ; when called to account on the graver matters of the law, they are prone to transfer or explain away their heresies, and play the part of sheep in wolves' clothing, or they become diplomatists, of whom is not the kingdom of heaven." That is true regarding leading men in all churches. They view many of the dogmas of the Church as "auld wives fables" ; but they keep to their manes. When the clergy do so, what can the laity do ?

We undoubtedly have religious profanity in our day, though it does not take the form of the profanity of the Holy Fair. We have not such scenes of external indecorum as are depicted by Burns ; but we have an internal profanity which is worse. It is openly confessed that Church connection is totally depraved to worldly purposes. A seat in a popular church, or an office in it, is part of the stock-in-trade of the man of the world—a means of securing business. Orthodoxy is the Satan of the age, that offers all the kingdoms of the world to whoever will worship as it bids. All the roads to wealth and honour start from the kirk. Do you want an appointment to some high office ? Make friends with the leading clergy. Do you wish to be in the way to make money ? Make yourself prominent in the kirk. Do you seek to get a good, steady job ? Take a seat in the respectable church and send your children to the Sunday School, and the foreman will make it all right for you. The orthodox church is now simply a huge hiring market, in which all kinds of situations are procurable. There is no secret made about it. Not one in a hundred attends church as a believer in what is taught therein : indeed, the thought of reflecting men is utterly away from orthodoxy : attendance is given because the competitive conditions of life require it. The majority of those who crowd the respectable

churches positively disbelieve the dogmas preached therein, but they keep up the sham of profession. Orthodoxy is to them a collection of "auld wives' fables," but they want to be respected, and make show of believing it. They have no fear of the devil; but they have a mortal terror of Mrs. Grundy. They have no dread of being "cast into hell"; but they are afraid of being cast out of the circle of worldly influence. The whole thing is a scandalous sham which implies a present demoralization of character and a future destruction of orthodoxy, with all its desecration of religion. We need to change the emphasis and the motive of religion. We put the emphasis of it on the Sunday, Church attendance, and what are called "the Sacraments." We say a man is religious if he respects "the Lord's Day," goes regularly to Church, has his children baptized, and observes the "Communion." So conventional has this idea of religion become that it is the only one that has any moral power over those who profess to be religious. Without any apparent sense of incongruity men who keep Sunday holy in the customary way keep other days in the most unholy fashion. The elder of the kirk, who is found on the front seat, or at "the plate" on Sunday, is found in his distillery, brewery, or spirit-shop on Monday, busy making or selling that which causes all manner of unholiness. The manufacturer passes from Sunday to Monday to plan how he may undersell his rival, and spends a busy week in planning adulterations, reductions in cost (generally at the expense of the workers), and cunning devices to make his goods take the market. The landlord goes from his Sunday worship to secure his rack-rent, to sign the warrant for a widow's eviction, and otherwise to maintain the fraud of private property in land. The house-proprietor closes his Bible to open the rent-book of his slum property to see if he cannot force a higher rate per cent. out of it, heedless of the fact that his houses are not fit for human occupancy. The merchant ceases from glorifying God to recommence the game of grab called business, to concoct a more mendacious advertisement, to continue to vent the licensed lies of commerce,

and to carry his savings to the bank as if he were serving God and not Mammon.

There is the most urgent need of a strenuous movement for radical reality in religion, for the insurgence of reformatory moral earnestness, for the regeneration of all the motives and forces of life. All thoughtful men who are convinced of the current debasement of life and who are earnestly anxious to see a higher strain of living ought to combine devoutly for the uplifting of being. Determined especially to make religion thoroughly true, to clear the creeds of all superstition and falsity and the Church of every sham, they ought to lift up their voice for a religious organization based on scientific truth, and maintained for the further pursuit of the true, an organization to secure freedom to reason in its religious life and to foster the natural piety of the soul by setting it face to face with the sublimities of the living universe ; a Church which will stand for the highest that is known and the best that can be done ; a ministry in touch with all the vitalities of thought and conduct, devoted to the study and exposition of living things, and to the practical development of human nature and the leading of humanity ever up and on. Only thus can "auld wives' fables" yield to the new man's facts, only thus can religion healthily live, and morality have a truly serviceable being.





“Ane to Heaven and Ten to Self.”

“*Holy Willie's Prayer.*”

IT is necessary that the first word in “Holy Willie's Prayer,” considered as a satire on sanctimonious sensuality, should be addressed to those who think that such a poem, if dealt with by a minister of religion, should be touched only to be condemned.

All the religious satires of Burns deal in an open way with carnal passions, and the fact has to be carefully faced. We may deeply regret the fleshliness of these remarkable poems, but we have to acknowledge that it is there simply because it was in the very constitution of Scotchmen ; and Burns could not overlook its presence there. A nation so virile as the Scotch could hardly be without its natural inheritance of “passions wild and strong.” Burns found in himself and his brethren a burning legacy of lasciviousness—loves lamentable leprosy. That was the shameful and almost inveterate characteristic, which, under God's knowledge of the fact, he had to confront as one anxious to serve his brethren. He was made in all things like unto his fellows, and suffered, being tempted as they were ; but, struggling to be free, he sang

the holier love into being and chased the foul lust almost to death. If we must in this connection think of the sensuality of Burns himself, we must note that he was not called to be a saint. It was not given to him to be free from the passions of the sons of the soil, and to go with untempted and unsmirched affection among the fair women of his rustic sphere.

Bred to the plough, he was called, even by the excess of passion in him, to undertake the casting-out of the demon of sensuous lust from the Scottish soul. Indeed, the tillage of the spiritual affections of his countrymen was placed in his hands. The soil of Scottish humanity was wild and wanton. There were wastes in it that needed to be reclaimed, malarious marshes that required to be drained, thorny ground that called for the uprooter. There was poison, disease, and death in the soul. Burns was, therefore, divinely commanded to take his moral implements—the harrow of satire, the weeder of wit, the plough of humour and pathos, and the seed-bag of sympathy, and go forth to till and sow afresh the soil of the soul. Right well did he work, though the things he had to clear away and put out of mind had hold of his own soul as well as of the souls of others. Should we mind to-day, as we enjoy the fairer fields and sweeter atmosphere which he greatly helped to make, the splashes of mire, the stains of the filth, the glints of grossness we see in the soul of Burns?

He had to work in rank and foul fields, and could not escape defilement. He had to go into drains choked with dirt, and it would have been a miracle if he had not been soiled. He had to scour the road of song scavenger-like, to clear it of the festering heaps that lay on it, and it was not to be expected that he could keep himself unstained. It would be shameful impertinence and base ingratitude in any Scotchman to seek out and make a show of the spots on the garments of the man who redeemed the passions of his people and gave them a holier course!

Fully to apprehend and appreciate what Burns did in cleansing the soul from the leprosy of sensuality, we require to know what is not pleasant to learn—the filthiness, indecency, and wantonness of the songs commonly sung before

and in his day. Sensuality in its coarsest and most debasing form was fostered and made respectable by these songs : their direct object was to minister to and glorify the animal passions, and through them contamination spread universally among the people. But Burns stayed the leprosy as if by magic. He purged the coarseness out of many songs, and put out of existence those that could not be purged by marrying their airs to pure and beautiful words of his own. "These old Scottish melodies," said Thomas Aird, (himself a poet) "sweet and strong though they were, strong and sweet were all the more from their very strength and sweetness a moral plague, from the indecent words to which many of them had been set. How was the plague to be stayed ? All the preachers in the land could not divorce the grossness from the music. The only way was to put something better in its stead. That inestimable something . . . Burns gave us. And, in doing so, he accomplished a social reform beyond the power of pulpit or Parliament to effect."

And, in considering the carnalism of the Scottish soul in the present connection, we have to remember that it had, in certain ways, the shelter of religion. Religion itself was carnal. It made no appeal for high character. The whole concern was for sound believing. Personal righteousness was made of no account in salvation. Men were taught to believe that their best deeds were hateful to God, and that only through imputed righteousness could they be saved. There was no inducement to personal virtue. Men did not know what to do with themselves. They had to *appear* virtuous while they knew they had no virtue. Hypocrisy took the place of actual purity. The Church, on account of its dogmas of total depravity and imputed righteousness, could not cope with sensualism. Its solemn days gave opportunities for the indulgence of latent lust. Its leading men were known to be sinners in a sensual sense. And, what was worst of all, perhaps, its book of religious rule contained much that carnalism might feed upon. What, then, was to be done by one whose mission it was to make religion real ? Nothing else could be done but to deal plainly, and with as much effect as possible, with the existent

leprosy. To *preach* at it was unavailing, and so Burns took it in hand with the power of humorous satire, and did more to abate it than the Church had been able to do. And this must be said regarding the treatment of lasciviousness by Burns—he exposes the grossness and spiritual evil of it. He takes it where he finds it in religious connections and shames it with his satire. It would have been mere pretence to have overlooked it in connection with the solemn meeting, and mere prudery not to have noticed it in the hypocrite. Necessity was laid upon him to expose the evil, and to try to end it.

And it must be confessed that the inheritance of carnalism is with us still. It is of no avail to blink it, for it is with us as one of our most inveterate immoralities. The Church regrets it, and publishes its yearly report about it, and passes its stale and powerless resolution. We have been too long utterly dishonest with ourselves in this matter, and should now openly and wisely deal with it and work it out of our life. However, those who object to Burns for his free dealing with our national carnalism, and would close his works because of it, have to be reminded that there is the same thing in the Bible. That same lasciviousness was the besetting sin of the patriarchs and also of the early Christians. There are cases of fleshliness recorded in detail in the Old Testament, and allusions to fleshly feelings and practices in the Epistles of Paul which cannot but bring the blush to the cheek of the reader. And in the Old Testament sensuousness has a license, and even a special divine permission, which it certainly has not in the writings of Burns. Even in the writings of the prophets there are symbols of a very fleshly character. We have allowed a very superstitious reverence for the letter of the Bible to blind us to the fact that much of it on account of its sensuousness is unfit to be read by children, and even by adults whose passions are tame. There are passages which no minister dare read to his congregation; and why should we be asked to close our Burns and open our Bible?

The fact is, Burns could no more help referring to existent carnalism than the Hebrew prophets could help

referring to that which confronted them. If we blame him we must also blame them. But, to be honest, we have to admit that he holds the sanctimonious sensualist up to abhorrence, while the Hebrew historians pass no word of rebuke on the lustful patriarchs, nor even condemn the concubinage of the chosen Kings of Israel.

"It is worthy of particular notice," as has been truly said by a discriminating critic of Burns, "that in poems or songs of a certain class, from which offence in most cases must inevitably arise, and in which want of taste, actual grossness, or indecency most commonly prevail, there is a singular absence of every offensive element in Burns. There are, it appears, no fewer than twenty-six instances in which such subjects have been treated by him, or referred to, directly or indirectly, either in original composition, or by revision and remodelling of ancient songs; and, although some of these are by no means either suited or intended for indiscriminate reading, yet there is only one, or at the most two cases, in which passion or imagination borders on impropriety; and only one in which indignation for personal wrong—as in '*Holy Willie's Prayer*'—deepens into indecent scorn. We do not affirm too much when we say that this painful topic, so frequently suggested both by the manners of the people, and by the traditions of their literature, and by his own individual experience, was ever treated with so great variety of style, ranging from the deepest pathos to the highest scorn, or invested with so much popular interest in mere fragments, or handled with so much delicacy of taste, and with so little moral impropriety of any kind, and always with some moral compensation of repentance and regret, or of actual atonement made for injury attendant, by any one writer in prose or poetry who ever lived."

The man held up to perpetual scorn as "*Holy Willie*" was one William Fisher, a member of the Kirk-session of Mauchline, by which Burns was censured for immorality. The said "*Holy Willie*" was "*a pharisaical impostor of the most abominable kind.*" An elder of the Kirk, profuse in professions of piety, he was, nevertheless, "*an arrant knave.*"

He was detected in fraudulent appropriation of the poor's money, and was at last found drunk and dead in a ditch. It was his knowledge of the man's real character that made Burns write his scathing satire. However keenly he felt his own desert of condemnation he could not take it without protest from such a man. He felt that the system by which the Church dealt with those guilty of sins of the flesh was altogether wrong, and was made contemptible and injurious to all concerned by being wrought out by such canting sensualists as William Fisher. And so he let loose his scornful indignation against the man and the Church. The result is "one of the boldest and most effective satires on hypocrisy and unconscious blasphemy ever written. It is a purely dramatic performance, and implies no irreverence whatever on the writer's part ; but, on the contrary, manifests his own profoundest detestation of, and contempt for, every variety of imposture in the name of religion. The language employed would, indeed, be blasphemous enough in any other view of it, but as it stands in the mouth of such a worshipper, it is the most characteristic embodiment ever imagined of the unspoken thoughts and "desires of the flesh and of the mind" in one afflicted with a demon of sensuality." In this "Prayer," Burns places in the confessional the egotistic and gross soul, and lets us overhear its revolting confession. Certain of its own election to eternal bliss, with unblushing familiarity it pours its filthy cant into the ear of God. Shame almost makes us stop our ears as we hear the nasty confessions, and yet such exposure had to be made and studied. The moral pathologist has to deal with all diseases of the conscience, and this disease of hypocrisy, which is a simulation of health while all within is utterly putrid and loathsome, is one which needs the most careful study and treatment. It was a disease that Burns had to expose, though it seems he was unwilling to make the exposure public—the poem not being published during his life-time.

The fancied overhearing of such a prayer is not without high precedent. Burns was quite familiar with the parable in which Christ permits us to overhear a similar

prayer—the prayer of the Pharisee in the temple, and if warrant were needed for the form of the poem, that parable would be one. As for the terms of the poem, "they are there simply because they were brimful of truth and humour, and because the world with its hidden blasphemies, with its thin-veiled indecencies and hypocrisies, imperatively required to hear them."

But while we hear we require to discriminate. As Miss Cobbe has pointed out in *Ethical Studies*, the "fiend-like" and the "brute-like" sins are in their origin, and most commonly in their development, widely apart. "There are the sins which men commit under the influence of the animal passions—sins of unchastity, drunkenness, gluttony—and these rob them of their manhood's crown of self-control, and sink them for the time to the level of the brutes; and there are the sins which men commit under the influence of self-interest, hatred, and all the anti-social passions—sins of cruelty, perfidy, malice—and these do more than sink men to the level of the unmoral brutes; they degrade them to the likeness of devils. It is remarkable that Jesus treated sins of the brute-like order with almost startling leniency (See John viii., John iv., Mark xiv., Matthew xxvi). Not a word implies any hopeless condemnation of them. They are grievous sins, needing forgiveness; nay, their guilt may be incurred by impure looks and wishes, and to escape them (as the passages are generally understood) a man should pluck out his right eye or cut off his right hand. But always, while recognising their guilt, Christ treats them with a grave, divine pity and compassion, which perhaps, more than all besides in his teaching, has invested him with the grateful love of the human heart. He always holds out the prospect of forgiveness. No offence of the whole class is threatened with the final condemnation denounced so frequently and freely against the uncharitable and the cruel.

"And, on the other hand, in the treatment of the fiend-like order of sins, every case which comes up is judged with a severity quite inconsistent with the popular view of its relative guilt to that of the sins of the flesh. Whosoever is angry with his brother without cause is in danger of the

judgment ; and he who calls opprobrious names, of the Council and Gehenna. Reconciliation with an enemy is a duty having precedence of divine worship. All injuries are to be forgiven till seventy times seven, and no retaliation made for blows or robbery. Men who do not forgive their debtors as God has forgiven their greater debts will be cast into outer darkness. Those who neglect to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, or who see Lazarus in want and do not relieve him, will all be condemned to 'everlasting fire.' Whatever weight we may attach to such words they can only bear the meaning that Christ considered such mere omissions of charity as more hopeless than the sins of the brute-like order, for which he always held out prospect of pardon. His whole teaching in the matter may be summed up in the two cases :—To the woman taken in adultery, he says, 'Neither will I condemn thee ; go and sin no more.' To the men who "devoured widows' houses," he says, "How shall ye escape the damnation of hell ?"

And Miss Cobbe asks, "If, then, the summary of the peculiar morals of Christ must be admitted to place the fiend-like class of sins in the lowest category of condemnation, and the brute-like sins in another and far less hopeless one, what shall we say to the position these two classes take in the estimation of the stricter Christians of modern days ? Do we find among them the utmost horror, as of the worst of sins, of vindictiveness, malice, and hatred, of calling our brother 'fool,' of slander, of a selfish, self-centred life ? Do we find preachers condemning, as the most soul-destroying errors, evil words, and unkind actions, and bitter feelings, and better and more strict than our neighbours. When they speak of the sins of the flesh, and make appeals for Penitentiaries, or give temperance lectures, do they ever remind their hearers, sitting complacently in their well-cushioned pews, that they may be in a much worse spiritual condition, for all their well-ordered lives, their correct creed, their sacramental privileges, and right views about 'justification by faith,' than the poor 'lost souls' for whom their charity is implored ; and that Christ has assured us that 'harlots' 'go into the kingdom of heaven' before

Pharisees? Do they in their invectives against intoxication put always forward the truth, that the madness of hate and spite is devil-like, and the madness of wine only bestial; and that Christ used and blessed the 'fruit of the vine,' while he bade his disciples 'beware of the leaven of malice and uncharitableness?' We should need to reconstruct half the ethics of the Church if we should harmonise them in this great matter with the morals of Jesus, and in our estimate of the sanctity of various classes of society, the 'first' would henceforth be 'last and the last first.' How deep and far such a change would go it is startling to contemplate."

There are evidences that Burns had a glimpse of the distinction which Christ made between the "brute-like" and the "fiend-like" sins. He plainly saw that it was quite anomalous for the Church to have its cutty-stool for the sensual transgressor and none for the spiteful sinner. He felt that some allowance should be made for the animal nature, and a more Christ-like treatment of the brute-like offender should be practised. As a matter of fact, the Church had reversed the judgment of Christ, and placed its severest penalties where he placed the lightest. By its unchristian action it licensed the "fiendlike" sins, and allowed society, unrebuked, to be unsocial. Those who "devoured widows' houses" were its "pillars," while those who sinned in the flesh were its scapegoats. Many a one who had to take the rebuke of the session was less guilty in soul than the "elder" appointed to deliver the rebuke.

Thus it was that in the person of "Holy Willie," Burns smote the Church for its inconsistency. "Holy Willie" added to his "brute-like" sensuality the "fiend-like" scorn which was more immoral still, and so he had to be thoroughly condemned. The poet would not have been so hard on him had he been merely a sensualist. But he manifested the arrogance, self-conceit, and scorn of "the lowest orders" characteristic of the conventional sentiment fostered by the Church. In the poem he is the symbol of the inhumanity of the Church. It sent "ten to hell" for one to heaven, the ten being actually the better beings. Its hell was for

"the lower classes," who were forced down by social injustice, and who in their lowness were not so immoral as those above them, and for those who, in their greater rationalness and finer conscientiousness could not believe the dogmas of the Church. And so its "fiend-like" inhumanity had to be severely dealt with by the reforming pen of the poet.

And is there not a great deal of the "Holy Willie" in the morality (?) existent to-day? Orthodox morality, when it assumes a reformatory dress, talks in "high and mighty" fashion about the brutality of the masses, their sexual wildness, their "dens of incest," &c., and declares that the cause of their misery is "over-population." With an air of superior virtue it calls upon the masses to restrict the number of their children, to herd less together, to observe the decencies of life, &c. ; and offers its pot of paint and its window plant ! But not a word about the wickedness of the rich makers of the brutalising conditions, no condemnation of the immoral competition by which those who herd most closely together are required as a necessity of its profitable existence, no talk to those who are most guiltily concerned about the indecency of getting match boxes made at 2½d. a gross in order that the aristocratic shareholders may get their large dividends, or of other similar indecencies. Who are really the worst : those who live perforce in low conditions, or those who profit by their lowness? For one who lives in the "heaven" of modern society ten have to go to its hell : these ten support him in his paradise. Is that just? Do we not require to have "Holy Willie's Prayer" repeated in the hearing of the Pharisees of our day?

But it is with the invocation of the poem that we have now to deal :—

"O Thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha as its pleases best thyself,
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony gude or ill
They've done afore thee !"

These words, as every one who is familiar with the Shorter Catechism and the Confession of Faith knows, are

a literal statement of the dogma of election. It is plainly stated in these standards that God, out of His mere good pleasure, for His own glory, and not for anything they have done, has doomed myriads to eternal torment. The only point of difference between the poem and the creed is that the poem makes the proportion of the damned less than the creed makes it.

It appears that in the poem Burns marked his own disbelief in the doctrine of reprobation and unending misery. We have it on good authority that the family were regarded as Socinians, and there are many signs in his writings that Burns himself was a believer in the final salvation of the whole human race. He had hope even for "the deil."

The point that Burns seems to have wished to make good by the poem is the utter ridiculousness of the dogma of election as illustrated by an ordinary case. Burns had a keen eye for the unfitness and incongruity—that is, for the humour of a thing—and he at once discerned the obvious unfitness of the elect to be elected. There was "Holy Willie," as gross a creature as ever wallowed in the slime of sensuality, sure that he was one of the elect, while men who were as pure as he was foul were, according to his creed, among those doomed to damnation. The election did not take place by moral choice on God's part, but by arbitrary hap: it was not caused by the goodness of character shown in those elected, but simply by the motion of a will actuated by autocratic pleasure. It did not require or produce any special nobleness in the elect; it was of the very essence of it that human virtue was disregarded. Hence the elect might be the very worst of men, while the non elect were morally the very best: there was no saying how the lot fell.

But those who hold to the dogma have represented God as acting on their side so far at least as theological opinion is concerned. Orthodoxy has always claimed God as in its favour. The heretic according to it is certain of damnation. To the Catholic God is a Catholic, and to the Protestant He is a Protestant. Every sect claims Him as its own, and regards its opponents as the children of the devil. Heaven,

according to orthodoxy, is for the orthodox, and hell for the heterodox.

We make a great mistake when we think there is no such self-righteousness now as is satirised in “*Holy Willie's Prayer.*” We err if we think Calvinism is changed. In a text-book of Mr. Spurgeon's College it is said “Reprobation is the aspect which God's eternal decree presents in its relation to that portion of the human race which shall be finally condemned for their sins. It is negative, inasmuch as it consists in *passing over these and refusing to elect them* to life; and positive, inasmuch as they are condemned to eternal misery.” According to Mr. Spurgeon and all true Calvinists, no one but a Calvinist can be saved. The heretic by his heresy forfeits his chance of salvation. It is only among the orthodox that God exercises His elective power: the rest he passes by—refuses to elect *them*. What self-conceit there is in the notion! How can it be convicted and shamed except by satirical humour? Cast the eye back over Scottish history and see how this elective method would work. It would choose “*Holy Willie*” but not Robert Burns; any fanatical seceder, but not David Hume; Dr. Cumming, but not Thomas Carlyle; the very men who have shown what the Scottish mind is capable of, who have done most to make our literature what it is, and to free religion from sham, are they whom God has consigned to hell! Why, the idea is preposterous. Just to see how it works to-day look abroad at the men who are devoted to the pursuit of science—to the interpretation of the divine message of Nature. They are mostly heretics, men who stand outside of all Churches unable to believe their creeds. According to Calvinism, Charles Darwin, the man who more than any man of his generation has enabled men to comprehend the universe in which they live, has lately gone to hell. Huxley, Romanes, and Herbert Spencer will soon follow him thither, while Joseph Cook, the Duke of Argyle, and Charles Spurgeon will go to heaven. Does it not look ridiculous when put in that shape? Can any rational man believe that God elects in that way? All our truthful choosings go on moral principles. We choose that which is best in its

Do gods
necessarity?

character and power. And we see that all the forces of the universe are on the side of morality. The Power that works through all things works for righteousness. The Spirit that tries us searches for character. If we look beneath the surface of things we see that it is truth, righteousness, justice, goodness that survive. The thoughtful, the earnest, the thorough, the courageous are those whose influence survives. The very men condemned by orthodoxy—the heretics, infidels, and unbelievers, who made the narrow pathway of reason through the wilderness of thought, and won for the mind the position of freedom, these are the men who undoubtedly were selected by God to be the apostles of His truth. The healthy sympathy of our age is with the outcasts of the Church. Those whom orthodoxy consigns to hell have a heaven made for them in the heart of humanity.

And it comes to this : if we are to continue to speak of God as Father and to cherish religious feelings towards Him, we must give up the dogma of election altogether. To speak as Calvinists do of God refusing to elect certain of his children to blessedness is utter profanity. It is not the author of "*Holy Willie's Prayer*" who blasphemes, but those who say that God refuses to save His children. A rational man might well say, I would rather be condemned believing that God will save all than get a passport to heaven by believing that He will damn the best of mankind.

There is a line of human development along which the selective affinities of God operate : certain kinds of men are specially used to further that development, but God has no step-children, no outcasts, none whom he will not save.

There could be no grosser libel on the Fatherhood of God than that made by the dogma which represents God as sending "ane to heaven and ten to hell." That libel Calvinism still perpetuates. We may think the dogma is dead, but it is still extant in the standards of orthodoxy. Not long ago Mr. Spurgeon said—"There is a place where the only music is the mournful symphony of damned spirits ; where howling, groaning, moaning, wailing, and gnashing of teeth make up the horrid concert. There is a place where

demons fly swift as air, with whips of knotted burning wire, torturing poor souls ; where tongues on fire with agony burn the roof of mouths that shriek for drops of water—that water all denied. There is a place where soul and body endure as much of infinite wrath as the finite can bear ; where the inflictions of justice crush the soul ; where the continued flagellations of vengeance beat the flesh ; where the perpetual pourings out of eternal wrath scald the spirit ; and where the cuttings of the sword strike deep into the inner man."

The fact that these words are uttered to-day by the most popular preacher in the country is justification enough for the rehearsal of Burns' biting satire on the dogma of eternal torment. No words could be too strong, too full of blazing wrath or of ringing ridicule, to be uttered against such representations of God's doings.

It was said a few pages back that the proportion of ten to one given in the poem is much lower than orthodoxy places it. This is how the sum has been figured out by one who has studied the question—"If heaven is to be the possession of the orthodox alone, such a doctrine must consign to eternal woe 320,000,000 Buddhists, 120,000,000 Brahmins, 96,000,000 Mahometans, 18,000,000 Hindoos, 6,000,000 Jews and some 500,000,000 of other creeds, amounting in all to 1,060,000,000, even in the present generation, without including all those millions of millions of God's creatures who have slept the sleep of death, and who, according to the miscalled orthodox creed, are not asleep, but in agonies of hell even now, because they did not believe in the common Protestant dogmas of salvation ; and who, in fact, never had the overtures of salvation made to them on any such terms, but who were left, in the majority of instances, to find out as they best could their way from this world to the other."

The whole thing is an outrage of reason and affection. Stopford Brooke truly says—"The heart and the conscience alike refuse to believe in everlasting punishment. The reason denies its justice, but the retribution taught by the opposite doctrine, that God's punishment is remedial, not

final ; that it is exacted, but that it ends when it has done its work—is conceivable, is allowed by the heart, for its root is love ; is agreed to by the conscience, for it is felt to be just ; is accepted of the reason, for it is based on law.

"It is only when we deny eternal punishment that we can assert in a believable manner the doctrine of retribution.

"And, in our belief, the ground of retribution is this : that God cannot rest till He has wrought evil out of all spirits, and that this work of His is chiefly done by causing us to suffer the natural consequence of sin. That is, the very root of our belief in the non-eternity of punishment involves an awful idea of punishment. For, on this ground, God will not cease to be a consuming fire to a man till he has destroyed all his evil. Nor can He cease. The imperative in His nature binds Him to root out evil, and God does His duty by us. Is that to destroy and not rather to assent retribution ?"

But to punish for ever the ten who are sent to hell for the one sent to heaven—that is not retribution : it is lawless vengeance. If we should believe it, why were we made with a sense of justice and compassion which forbids us to credit it ? If it is right and good for an Infinite Father who is perfect to send every tenth child, aye, or even one in a million, to eternal torment, why should a finite father be loving to his children ? Our laws punish parents for cruelty to children, for their neglect to support and educate them : what warrant have we for that if God will be eternally cruel to some of His children, and will give them no opportunity of knowing and amending ? Could we regard *him* as a true father who said to some of his children—"I will love you," and to others, "I will hate you," or who declared to one of his children that he would care for him for a certain number of years only and then would cease to care, or who made it known to a child that so long as he remained in this country he would treat him in a fatherly way, but if he went away to another country the fatherly treatment would become unfatherly ? Is not *he* the true father who endeavours with impartial affection to love all his children equally, or if he concerns himself for one more than for another his anxiety

will go to the wayward and erring one ; who always cares for all his children, whatever their circumstances and conduct may be, yearning most deeply, as is natural, over the prodigal child ?

In spite of all the creeds, in spite of priestly denunciations of unbelief, in spite of the terrors of the Church, we should hold to the instincts of justice and love in the human heart to which Jesus and the most trustworthy religious teachers make appeal, and which are justified by the moral experience of the race, and believe that God's tender mercies are over all His works, not only here, but wherever there is life.

"Oh never murmur nor repine,
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine,
Preserve the dignity of man
With soul erect ;
And trust, the universal plan
Will all protect."





“Warlocks and Witches.”

“*Tam o’ Shanter.*”

“**T**AM o’ Shanter” may be regarded as the sequel to “The Holy Fair.” The evident motive of the latter is the condemnatory exposure of the desecration of the *precincts* of “the House of God,” and of the profanation of religious services by sensuality, hypocrisy, and revelry ; the inner motive of the former being an exposure of the baleful superstition regarding supernatural evil beings fostered by the Church in the name of religion. “Tam o’ Shanter” shows a desecration of the Kirk itself by the midnight dance therein of “warlocks and witches” to music of the devil. In “The Holy Fair” we are not taken into the kirk, nor does the devil appear on the scene, though “Black Russell” speaks loudly of the “vast, unbottomed, boundless pit, fill’d fou o’ lowan brumstane.” The carnival goes on outside the Kirk, though within touch of it. But in “Tam o’ Shanter” we are shown the *interior* of the Kirk, with “Auld Nick” piping in the “winnock-bunker in the east,” president of the witches’ orgie. One may easily imagine the orgie taking place in the kirk of Mauchline on the night of the Holy Fair. To have placed it there would only have been to extend the Fair, and have it taken up, as the

night wore on and the day revellers had gone, inside the Kirk, by creatures from the "boundless pit." The revel, so placed, would have been a fitting sequel to the profanity of the Fair, and some of "the godly," searching for another "jar," might have been represented as seeing it. But the scene was not so planned by Burns, and we take it as we find it, and see in it a parable of superstition of the most instructive kind.

The poem originated in a friendly bargain of the author with Captain Grose, the antiquary; Burns undertaking to supply a witch or ghost story relating to Kirk Alloway if the Captain would include the Kirk in his work on *Scottish Antiquities*. Burns set to work to fulfil his part of the compact on a bright autumn day in 1790. He was then at Ellisland, and went out with writing materials to "a broomy ridge by the river side" which was "a much-frequented haunt" of his, and wrote the poem in "one continuous fit of inspiration." It was a wondrous day's work! It is told as "an ascertained fact" that his wife (anxious, no doubt, to know what engrossing theme detained him so long) discovered him in "an agony of laughter, reciting aloud certain lines of the poem which he had just conceived, the tears in the meantime rolling down his cheeks, and that she withdrew from the neighbourhood for a moment, along with her children, that they might not interrupt his ecstasy."

Whatever rank we may give this poem relatively to the other poems of Burns, it must ever appear to us as a marvellous production; and whether we enter into the spirit of its humour, or hush our mirth at the thrilling touch of its passages of sublime pathos, we feel recreated and instructed on reading or listening to the reading of the poem.

The tale, as is well known, turns upon the tarrying of its hero by the change-house "ingle bleezing finely," enjoying "the reaming swats, that drank divinely." The "unco sight" of "warlocks and witches in a dance," the catastrophe to his mare, the narrow escape of Shanter himself from the witchy clutch, all arise out of the too-freely-quaffed "nappy," and the moral is obvious. But it has been charged against

Burns that his poems and songs encourage drinking, and that even where, as in this poem, he makes plain the dangers of drink, he throws such a glamour over the act of getting fou that it is attractive. It is true that he paints the drinking scene graphically. There is a cosiness, and cantiness, and jollity about it which is catching; but the feeling is plainly delusive. Tam "was glorious, o'er a' the ills o' life victorious"; but it was in sensuous stupidity. The soutar's "queerest stories," the landlady's "favours," "the landlord's laugh," were but "phantasmagoria and many-coloured spectra" that deluded as they delighted. With all their jollity, Tam and "his ancient, trusty, drouthy crony" are fools, and that is made evident enough. They sit between landlord and landlady as in a snare, and the wiles of the "nappy" are plied round about them till sense and cash are gone. Happy as they are, we are made to feel that they are so at the expense of everything truly manly; that the brain of the drinker is debased while it is dazzled. Though there is a true touch of humanity in their comradeship, their indulgence of sensuous appetite dehumanises; and we see that if they meet as men they part as sots. There is not a single word or suggestion in the poem that is drink-enticing. Even the invocation of "John Barleycorn" tells against his power. The scorn of dangers which he inspires is an illusion. To say nothing of the wife left in the neglect which begets wrath, or of the unco sight in the bleezing Kirk, or even the moral at the end of the poem, all of which tell against drinking, that piece of natural and exquisite pathos introduced as an anti-climax to Tam's gloriousness is enough to show the folly of such glory,—

"But pleasures are like poppies spread," &c.

In "Tam o' Shanter" (whatever may be the case in other pieces) the moral drift is reformatory. The poet honestly describes the drinking custom, credits it with all the sensuous enjoyment belonging to it, but confronts it with higher things, reveals its subterranean connections, and passes a judgment against it which is impressed with divine sanction.

But all the other scenes in the drama only lead up to the great scene in "Alloway's auld haunted kirk." It was the kirk which the poet had in his mind's eye all the while according to the bargain with Captain Grose. Most cunningly and profoundly is the scene laid therein, and with a deep religious purpose. The auld haunted kirk furnished him with a habitation wherein to place on view the objects which superstition, supported by religious authority, set up before the imagination. He knew well how orthodoxy made an ally of the devil and his imps, and held the people in terror through them. He was aware of the way in which the under-world had been peopled with all manner of evil spirits, and how even the air of common life had been filled with bodiless creatures of malignant influence. He knew how terrified most people were in the darkness, how they trembled at any strange sound, how completely they were the victims of their own ignorant fears. And he realised how much the Church was to blame for this, how it had prevented the investigation of natural phenomena, hindered the exercise of reason, and rooted its authority in superstition. He perceived how "preachers of the gospel" had used the fear of the devil as a "strong inducement to the outward observances of religion," and how they had enhanced their authority by "their supposed ability to counteract this fearful adversary." And so he felt that something effective needed to be done to deliver men from these superstitions.

In his "Address to the Deil" he plainly spoke a liberating word, and delivered the soul from "the hangman's whip." In "Tam o' Shanter" he pursues the same purpose, and boldly seats the devil in the Kirk, with all his hellish brood around him, to show religion the objects of its superstition.

The placing of the "towzie tyke" in the winnock bunker in the east of the Auld Kirk to superintend the dance of "warlocks and witches" was no mere fiction imagined to scare one in whose "noddle" the "swats reamed," but was a matter-of-fact gathering in the Kirk of the hellish beings of fearsome creation. There was no more fitting place for the humorous exposure of the progeny of

superstition than the Kirk itself. The evil brood were born and bred under Church influence, and the parentage had to be brought home to it so that it might put them to dissolution. With the very sublimity of daring, Burns gathered "the devil and his angels" in the Kirk, and with them all the terrors of death, and then bade men look in to see the sight. As if emerging from its own floor or oozing out of its own atmosphere, there appeared in the "haunted kirk," at the call of the wizard-poet, the ugly creatures of darkness, the hideous things of the grave, the denizens of hell, the seething spawn of superstition. The Kirk becomes Tophet, Hades, Gehenna, Hell. Many a time had the walls echoed with talk of such things, often had the preacher pictured such beings to terrified hearers, frequently had "the ill place" been opened in imagination to clench "the offer of salvation," but in the poem, as if the very walls had given back the words, and they had become flesh, the hellish beings themselves come into life in the Kirk, and hold their unholy revel on the sacred floor! That was an invasion for which the Church could hardly be prepared, but it was the just reaction of its own superstition, and it could not consistently refuse to look at the creatures with whom it had made its members familiar. And to look at them in the light of common sense was to be convicted of superstition. In that light they were seen to be creatures of fancy, begotten of ignorance and terror, and which had no existence in fact whatever. To disabuse the mind of the mischievous fancy was, no doubt, one of the objects that Burns had in writing this poem. He knew well that religion was corrupted by it; that the darkness, which was God's as well as the light, was made terrible to men through it; that knowledge of the causes of strange phenomena was hindered by it; and that the enslaving power of the clergy was maintained by it. And so he set his humour to work, and made men able to laugh at the gross images of their own creation.

To help us to understand the work that he had to do in dissolving the fancy of witchcraft and the general superstition existent regarding unknown forces in action around men, we must know something of the ideas then current

concerning "warlocks and witches." Looking back from the earliest case of real importance in the prosecution of witches, Walter Scott says—"For many years the Scottish nation had been remarkable for a credulous belief in witchcraft." The idea underlying the belief was the existence of the devil. He, it was thought, purchased the services of persons whose bodies and souls he bought for some payment or other. These were, at his command and by his power, the instruments of all mischief and everything termed evil.

Everything mysterious of a baleful kind was regarded as witchery. When anything inexplicable happened to man or beast it was a witch who did it. If a field were blighted, or weeds came up in the crop, it was some spiteful warlock's doing. If a child fell sick or a woman miscarried it was the effect of some "evil eye." Whatever occurred by accident or misfortune was attributed to witchcraft. Witches could, by satanic skill, take the shape of frogs, cats, hares, crows, spectres of all kinds. They had, it was supposed, power over all the elements: they could ride on the winds, travel in the air, or run underground. And everything was at their mercy—crops, property, and life itself. By means of them the devil was able to be omnipresent, and to carry out his perpetual malignity against the Infinite Goodness.

The first case of witchcraft in Scotland, of which an account is preserved, is that of the case of the "Earl of Mar, brother of James III. of Scotland, who fell under the King's suspicion for consulting with witches and sorcerers how to shorten the King's days. On such a charge, very inexplicitly stated, the unhappy Mar was bled to death in his own lodgings without either trial or conviction; immediately after which catastrophe twelve women of obscure rank, and three or four wizards, or warlocks, as they were termed, were burnt at Edinburgh to give a colour to the Earl's guilt." After that, cases of witches prosecuted to death are recorded in great numbers. These, as Scott declares, present a "certain monotony." A curious case, typical of others, occurred in Dumfriesshire half-a-century or so before the birth of Burns. One Bessie Kennedy was tried by the Kirk-Session of Tinwald on a charge of having cursed the

horse of one John Carruthers on a certain Sabbath, and wished that it might *shoot to dead* ; and further with having, when the said John told her that his horse had fallen sick through her malignity, "wished that the *shoot of dead* might light on him and it both" (That is, that he and it might perish by some fatal internal laps, or "schute," of the system). The charge was not proved, and Bessie was dismissed, being warned, however, to exercise "greater watchfulness for the future." It was cases of that kind that suggested to Burns the line in "Tam o' Shanter"—"For mony a beast to dead she shot." Kate Steen or Stephen, who, it is thought, is the person represented under the character of "Cutty Sark," was "an inoffensive but peculiar woman ; of diminutive stature and sometimes of strange attire ; of vagrant but industrious habits ; who carried her 'rock and spindle' with her from house to house to spin ; and was kindly, or at least civilly, received everywhere, from fear, perhaps, of her reputed supernatural gifts as much as from affection."

Now, in the fact of Katie's "peculiarity," we come upon the secret of the fancy of witchcraft. If a woman were in any way "peculiar" in feature, dress, or habit she was thought to be a witch. And the curious thing is that, when the peculiarity consisted of an unusual heightening of some feature or faculty, such as unusually large and bright eyes, extraordinary fluency of speech, unusual skill of hand, or uncommon knowledge of any kind, it was set down to witchcraft.

Those who were regarded as witches mostly belonged to the lower classes, and, when we remember that it was in feudal times that the persecution of witches was most prevalent in this country, we may conclude that those charged with witchcraft were generally independent, far-seeing, courageous women who took the liberty to reprove the evil doings of those above them. They were the social protestants and insurgents of their day, impelled to speak and act against the powers that kept the people down. By analysing the reports of the trials of witches in Scotland we find that either some of the gentry, some laird or lady, or some

official magnate of the law in the interest of the aristocracy was the complainant, and the charge was generally that of shooting at a laird, of having bewitched the laird's affections, or of meddling in some way with the property of the well-to-do. Walter Scott says—"The gentry hated witches because the diseases and death of their relations and children were often imputed to them." We may infer, therefore, that those supposed to be witches were women of uncommon appearance and power, more talented than was usual with women of their station, women of extraordinary energy and insight, who, with startling boldness or with quiet but ominous speech, spoke against the wrongs they saw and felt.

The same thing applies to wizards or warlocks. It appears that they were not so numerous as witches, but they were generally men who had an extraordinary insight into nature—men of humble rank endowed with an extra amount of common sense, curiosity, and intelligence, who delighted in the investigation of natural things. They were, in fact, the scientists of their time. But they were dreaded. They were seen to take to do with stones, plants, and animals in a way that was not canny; to explore the rocks, the woods, and the pools, and to have their houses full of strange things. And they were not only social protestants but theological protestants, heretics, infidels, men who went not to Church, nor held the common religious ideas. Quite a large number of charges against warlocks consist of such things as these—"Circulating pretended prophecies to the unsettlement of the State, and the endangering of the King's title," enquiring into the date of the King's birth, anticipating his death, &c. We may judge by that that the warlocks were simply the radicals of their time; men who, when 'twas treason to think and speak freely, had gone beyond political and theological orthodoxy. We find among other charges the charge of "breaking and destroying crosses" brought against warlocks, and that shows us that the warlocks were religious reformers. There can be no doubt that the enmity shown by the ecclesiastical powers against "warlocks and witches" is to be accounted for by the fact that the persons

supposed to be in league with Satan were heterodox in thought and conduct.

It is the shame of Calvinism in this country that it was the cause of the burning of thousands of innocent and highly virtuous persons as witches. Under its favour witch hunting became a trade, and we read of one Hopkins, who, along with a male and a female assistant, went up and down the country discovering witches. His usual price was "twenty shillings a town," and for that sum he and his assistants undertook to hunt down all the witches in it. "His principal mode of discovery was to strip the accused persons naked, and thrust pins into various parts of their body, to discover the witch's mark." If this failed, he tied the great toes and thumbs of his victim together, wrapped her in a sheet, and dragged her through a pond or river. If she floated she was a witch, and was put to death. He also kept the persons put into his power waking till they were made mad, or he dragged them about till, by extreme weariness, and the pain of blistered feet, they were glad to confess having the power of witchery. We need not wonder that poor, infirm, sensitive women, stripped naked and tortured, declared that they were actually in league with Satan. Nor is it to be wondered at that others who had gifts for which they could not account admitted the possibility of their being inspired by the devil. Admissions of the kind were extorted over and over again from the hapless creatures who fell under the persecution of the Church.

But in order fully to comprehend what there is in the "warlocks and witches" as they are shown to us by Burns dancing in "Alloway's auld haunted kirk," it is necessary to know their natural history. They are, as they appear in theologic thought, the servants of Satan. To find the origin of the idea of the devil we require to go back to the region of mythology. The idea of him had its birth in the experience which primitive man had of a power with which he had to struggle for physical life and for spiritual rightness. That power which lived in the stubborn earth, and against which (as it seemed to him) he had to work in his tillage, primitive man imagined as an evil power, an enemy

of the sky or heaven power, the malignant cause of all human suffering. That power had its emissaries in all the forces with which man had to struggle, the subtle forces perpetually waging war against life in all forms and conditions. Invisible, but in continual activity, these hosts of evil operated throughout the world, making always for darkness, cold, and barrenness against the kindly hosts of light, heat, and fertility. They were the cause of the tempest and the blight ; winter was theirs, and the inclement season ; theirs also were disease, pain, and death. Such was the explanation which primitive man, in his ignorance, gave of the forces of Nature with which he had to struggle for food, shelter, and the conditions of happy life : they were evil beings, actuated by hate and malice. That explanation occurs in all the mythologies.

On being introduced into modern theology, witches took the place of demons in ancient theology. The devil was first introduced into theology in the Zoroastrian system. Thence the idea found its way into Hebrew literature. In the Apocryphal book of "Tobit" we find the earliest Hebraic representation of an Arch-demon, Asmodeus, who is put to flight by the smoke rising from the liver of a fish placed on burning coal. The "Book of Wisdom" has in it the idea that the devil, through envy, brought death into the world. In "The Book of Enoch" we have descriptions of demons in which there may be discerned the germs of later ideas of the angels of the devil, witches, &c. It represents them as the offspring of the sons of God, and the daughters of men. It gives their number as 200, and declares that they devour all which the labour of men produces, injure animals, and even kill and eat men. They taught sorcery and every species of iniquity, and for this Jehovah sent His holy angels to bind the chief demons hand and foot, and cast them into the lower depth of the fire, in torments and confinement to be shut up for ever.

In the Talmud, which represents a large body of oral tradition which grew up in the Jewish schools in Palestine, and was continued long after the time of Christ, we find a development of demonology. In the cabalistic portion of the Talmud it is said—"All the spaces of creation are filled

demons

with good and bad spirits, these being divided into distinct orders having chiefs over them. The number of evil spirits, it is declared, is incalculable. They swarm around every human being : a thousand on his right hand, ten thousand on his left. Their abode is a dark region under the moon. Their bodies are of water, fire, and air. They enjoy their meat and drink, and propagate their species after the manner of men."

In the writings of the earliest Fathers of the Church there is little said regarding the devil. Augustine believed in demons, and said they fed on human error. Irenæus declared that the devil was doomed to eternal damnation. Clement, Origen, and others denied that, on the ground that, being a reasonable being, the devil was at liberty to return to good. In the Clementine writings there is a description of Simon Magus which might stand for any wizard, or for the devil himself. "I am able to render myself invisible to those who wish to lay hold of me, and again to be visible where I am willing to be seen. If I wish to flee I can dig through mountains, and pass through rocks as if they were clay. I can change my countenance so that I cannot be recognised ; and I can show people that I have two faces. I shall change myself into a sheep or goat ; I shall ascend by flight into the air ; I shall exhibit abundance of gold, and shall make and unmake kings ; I shall be worshipped as God."

In the dark ages, Demonology became a pseudo science. The schoolmen arranged the numbers and ranks of the demons, and the districts apportioned to the demon chiefs. They reckoned that the armed force of Lucifer comprised nearly 2,400 legions, that is 14,400,000. All these were to them veritable imps of Satan, creatures of flesh and blood regularly trained for their hellish war. It is their ideas to which Milton gave shape in "*Paradise Lost*."

It was common, then, for the preachers to declare that they had seen processions of damned souls, mounted on horses of fire, which bore them along with the speed of the whirlwind, and without a moment's rest, to the gates of flame. All that was to terrify the people into submission to

the Church. The terror was carried into Protestantism. Martin Luther says in his "Table-Talk"—The devils are near us, and every moment ceaselessly plot against our life, health, and salvation. There are numerous devils in the woods, the waters, the deserts, in marshes and pools, lying in wait to injure human beings. Some there are in black and thick clouds occasioning thunder, lightning, hail, and storms ; they blight meadows, and poison the air."

John Wesley was of Luther's opinion. He said that the giving up of belief in witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible. Jonathan Edwards held the same sort of belief, and Richard Baxter, whose writings were in the day of Burns the usual Sabbath reading, and were so till very lately, taught the same thing. Baxter took an active interest in the witch trials of his day, and believed in the confessions which the tortured creatures made. "Turn or burn," Baxter said to those whom he addressed.

Such, then, is an outline of the natural and theological history of "warlocks and witches," and by which it will be seen how deeply the idea of those beings as allies of the devil had entered into religious thought.

To sanction the belief the theologian had but to quote the Levitical command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The reading of that barbarous command as an order given by God was the fatal cause of the witch-burning in this and other countries ; but the command cannot reasonably be held to have been given by God. The persons called "witches" in the Bible were soothsayers. Their power to foretell the future and summon the shades from the world below was not doubted. They were credited with all the powers of the Hebrew soothsayers ; but they were heathen, and might by their incantation seduce the worshippers of Jehovah ; and so the priests ordered them to be slain. The command is an illustration of Hebraic religious bigotry—a piece of priestly jealousy on the part of Hebrew priests. Walter Scott, though he took the orthodox view of the command concerning witches, admits that "there was no contract of subjection to a diabolic power, no infernal stamp or sign of such a fatal league, no revellings of Satan and his

hags, and no infliction of disease or misfortune upon good men" implied in the references to witches in Scripture. Indeed, it was not from the Bible that the idea of witches came which caused them to be regarded as servants of the devil and burnt as such, but from mediæval speculation, based on the old nature-myths of evil agencies.

Now, in working our way out of this question of "warlocks and witches" there are two things to be apprehended—first, that the idea of those persons as emissaries of Satan is a modern survival of the old idea of evil forces in Nature adverse to man. That superstition, taken up by orthodoxy, was formulated and presented in the creeds in the now familiar dogmas regarding the devil and hell. It was that superstition that Burns had in view when he lit up Alloway Kirk and showed the revel therein of the progeny of fanciful speculation.

Burns did not know what evolution has revealed to us. He did not know the facts that science has shown of the orderliness, lawfulness, and beneficence of the Power that works through nature. It is given to us to see that "evil is simply a temporary passing condition. . . . nothing more or less than mal-adjustment. The devil, and sin, and sorrow, and calamity, and sickness, and tears, and death, all resolve themselves into this one word." But though Burns could not see this, he felt deeply the moral inconsistency of the idea of evil forces in Nature with the idea of a good God, or the Over-ruler of Nature and the Father of Man. And he felt, too, how demoralising in its influence on conduct was the superstition about "warlocks and witches." While men believed that they were surrounded and even possessed by beings who were the almost almighty agents of the devil, it was natural for them to feel that there was little use in struggling against adverse powers, that there was no possibility of high character open to them, that the burden of devilry was one which, in their fallen condition, they must needs carry. The devil was a most convenient excuse for all sorts of immorality : who, indeed, was there to blame for evil but him ? If men were the children of the devil, ought they not to do justice to their parentage ? Burns saw that the

devil was a shelter to immorality that ought to be thrown down, and that it was necessary for the Church as a teacher of morality to lay the cause of evil where it ought to be laid, viz., on ignorance of natural law, and mal-adjustment with natural forces. The entire brood of superstition flies at the touch of knowledge of natural causes, and the devil himself is dissolved in the process of human adjustment with the Power that works through Nature, moulding man.

The other thing to be apprehended in clearing up this subject is that those who were regarded as "warlocks and witches" were the most advanced men and women of their station—seers, prophets, reformers in humble life; radicals, protestants, heretics in relation to the "chief priests and pharisees" of their day. Had Mary Somerville, who mastered all the sciences, Frances Power Cobbe, who, though deeply religious, cannot take the name Christian, Mrs. Besant, who, while a devout and zealous servant of man, scorns the orthodox notion of serving God, lived two hundred years ago they certainly would have been burnt as witches. And had Hugh Millar, of Cromarty, Thomas Edwards, of Banff, and Robert Dick, of Thurso, been seventeenth-century men they would have been put to death as warlocks. Above all, if Charles Darwin had been a contemporary of Richard Baxter, he would have been treated as the very captain of the devil's host. The "warlocks and witches" were simply the martyrs of their day. The persecuting spirit of the Church had become so degraded that it seized on anything on which it could lay hands. Learning in those days was just beginning to be universal; the democracy were commencing to think; and the witch-hunt was the sport to which the degenerate sleuth-hounds of despotic power betook themselves. The whole proceedings against witchcraft were the clergy's retaliation on the democratic murmurs, criticisms, and insubordinations threatening to become dangerous to the influence of the Church. They were the answer of the presbyter (who was but priest in another form) to the desire for freedom of thought and conduct desired by the mass of the people. When woman sought wisdom at the doors of the Church she was made a witch. When the workman sought justice

from the State he was treated as a warlock. They were made heretics and criminals for wanting to know, and for acting according to their highest reason. The struggling, strange, inquiring, thinking, and outspoken men and women who were treated as sorcerers were actually the fore-runners of the scientists of our day. They were students of Nature, persons of singular elevation of thought, of extraordinary common sense, and of unusual virtue, the leaders and redeemers of their class ; none the less the soothsayers of the democracy though they were unconscious of having any extraordinary gift or call.

The opposition which orthodoxy shows against science to-day is a survival of its treatment of witchcraft. It is, in fact, the old witch-burning in another form. The male or female heretic and reformer of to-day, who has to suffer clerical and social persecution is simply the warlock or witch of yesterday. All the monopolies, privileges, and caste powers, which society maintains to the defraudment and degradation of "the lower classes," are of the same bad sort as the old witch-burnings. Their action is as deadly in a moral way as were the witch-burnings in a physical way, for the men and women who now seek to lift themselves and their fellows out of the sloughs and slums into which social conventionality has thrown them, or to raise them to higher thought and life in religion have to undergo a persecution none the less real because more refined than that of the age of "warlocks and witches."

All praise, then, to the courageous poet who wrote for us the parable of "Tam o' Shanter," and in Alloway's auld "haunted kirk," showed us the forms of the ecclesiastical spectres and social ghosts which still haunt the thought and life of to-day, and taught us to rise above superstition and slavery into the joyous light of knowledge and the sweet air of manly freedom. Through the bold humour of the poem, all the more effective though not openly declared, there shines the deeper lesson of the piece, viz., that if men would have religion and morality made true and serviceable, the Church free from superstition, and the State free from tyranny, and every effort of the mass of the people to rise to higher

life find ready aid in the powers that be, they must soberly, rationally, and devoutly give themselves to the pursuit of knowledge ; demand that those appointed to teach shall teach what is really true, that the pulpit shall stand for the highest ideas and the surest facts, and that the minister of religion shall be one who can show men how to adjust themselves more harmoniously and vitally with the divine powers of life, so that mind, and heart, and soul, according well, may make one music of realized religion. And not only so, but they must demand of those who are set to rule that they rule righteously, not to favour any, but to serve all. So long as the people are sensual the Church will be warranted in her superstition and the State in its despotism, but when once the "Souter" and the "Farmer" become in earnest for a manly morality, both Church and State will be radically reformed.





“Let us worship God.”

“The Cotter’s Saturday Night.”



THIS memorial of the hour of family worship in his father’s cot was written by Burns in the beginning of the winter of 1785, when he was in his twenty-sixth year. It is the sincere tribute of a loving son to the religious influence of a revered father. Gilbert Burns has made it known that the pious aspect of his father, as with solemn voice he said, “Let us worship God,” touched the poet deeply, and suggested this poem to him. Burns was by nature susceptible to all sorts of impressions, and his muse never lacked a theme. But of all the things that touched his soul none seems to have gone so deeply into it as the scene at the “taking of the book” by his father at the close of the week. When the memory of the scene came inspiringly to Burns his father had passed from earth, and the thought of that gave to the emotion in which the poem was composed a deep and tender pathos. Burns himself tells that he wrote it with tears in his eyes, and we may well believe that the holiest founts of feeling in him were stirred as the affecting scene passed afresh before his mind.

Comparing “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” with the other poems amongst which it was given to the world in the

Kilmarnock edition, we find that it occupies a unique place in style as well as in character. "The Twa Dogs," "Address to the Deil," "The Vision," are imaginary in style, and are more or less broadly humorous in character; but "The Cotter's Saturday Night" is a photograph from life, and there is not a touch of humour in it. It is realistic like "The Holy Fair" and "Halloween," but its realism is solemn. The other poems are mirthful: it is serious. They cause the eye to sparkle with glee, the lips to thrill with laughter, and the heart to dance lightly: it causes the eye to shade itself in sedateness, the lips to close in devout meditation, and the heart to hush itself in worship. The Ettrick Shepherd called it "a dull, heavy, lifeless poem," but he missed the spirit of it. It is serious, but not dull; grave, but not heavy; quiet, but not lifeless. The theme of the poem, like that of "The Twa Dogs," is a social one; but it is lifted away from roadside, familiar gossip to the domestic sanctuary, where, under the influence of religious awe, no other than the most reverent treatment could be permitted.

Like "The Holy Fair," it deals with religious concerns; but "fun," "superstition," and "hypocrisy" are not at home in it. Into it, as into the "Address to the Deil," the supernatural enters, but it is as a thing of loving adoration and not of superstitious dread. It, as well as "Halloween," is a picture of homely life; but the scene it shows is the sacred reunion of a family and not a motley gathering of merry-makers. It is subdued in tone and tint, as befits its subject; but there is a feeling of warmth in its greyness. The doors are shut, the shutters are closed, the lamp is set where it will shine on "the book," and the spirit of worship hushes all to quietness; but there is joy in the peace. In that sacred hour the youngest knows that noisy mirth is disallowed, levity is intolerable, listlessness is a breach of love. It is the sacrament of domestic reunion religiously kept in mutual sympathy. And though there is spiritual restraint on the group there is no bondage; though every motion is douce there is no uneasiness; though the light is subdued there is no gloom. The whole poem is in perfect harmony with "the native feelings strong, the guileless

ways" of the cottars, and with the hallowed hour of family reunion and worship. As a sympathetic critic says, "'The Cotter's Saturday Night' is full of radiance and warmth as the sanctuary of God, where the tenderest sympathies of humanity may take refuge and the loftiest aspirations of the soul may rise, where the double vistas of time and eternity converge, and the Deity Himself, concerned in the welfare of His immortal creatures, seems to look in upon the humblest affairs through the screen of smoke and poverty." The lines of the poem are longer than is usual with Burns, being the indication of the feeling that the subject was great and needed a wide measured expression; their flow is deep and strong, and they swell majestically as they pour themselves into the infinite sea. It is a poem well worthy of the old home religion of Scotland, by which the lowliest cot was sanctified and made a Bethel, well worthy of the religious reverence of Scotia's hardy sons of rustic toil, which caused them in the hush of home to say, 'Let us worship God.' "

The cotter himself is, of course, the central figure of the poem. The instant he is introduced he gives dignity to the scene. We feel at once that he is a man of character, grave but kindly; a man commanding respect, in whose presence frivolity could not stand. Observing him as he

"Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,"

we know we are with an orderly and thoughtful man, and are drawn into sympathy with the restful anticipations that cheer him as he plods homeward o'er the moor. Toilworn as he is, and in bondage to the soil, we see in his eye the light of a keen and uplifting intelligence; there is something in his mien betokening spiritual uprightness; and we are prepared to worship with him.

We measure the man by his condition, and we find him morally far above it. He is a cotter, one who with the help of his family tills a few acres of tough and stony land, and from year to year has enough to do to keep his household in the necessities of life. He pays his heavy rent (gathered with much toil and sacrifice) to his landlord, because otherwise he would not have leave to toil; improves his land at

great cost (though he knows he must leave his improvements to the laird) since such is in the bond he is obliged to sign. He labours on, hardly housed so well as his kye, or so well fed, with rheumatism in his joints, and nothing before him in old age but what his almost-impossible saving will do for him ; toils slavishly for his landlord, who lives in luxury, and yet is content. If a thought of injustice crosses his mind, he represses it as rebellion against the decrees of Providence, and toils on. It is in his religion that he should submit ! And so we see him as a poor man, albeit it is by his laborious exertion that the soil is made productive ; a humble man, though by him aristocracy is supported ; a pious man, though a serf.

We watch him approach his cot, and receive with hearty greeting "his stacherin' wee things," who, with "flichterin' noise and glee," toddle out to meet him, and we see him enter in the light of "his thrifty wife's smile," and sit down by "his wee bit ingle, blinkan bonilie," and with "the lisping infant, prattling on his knee," behold him lifted above all his toil and care into the Paradise of Home.

He is the hero of the poem : the revered father, lovingly photographed by the son and poet. Everything in the poem takes its significance from him, and the grouping of the rest around him reflects credit at once on Burns as son and poet. How touchingly the poet represents the father following with affectionate eye the persons who enter and move about in the happy cot, mixing all that is said "with admonition due !" How artistically he works up to the climax of the night when,

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
 They round the ingle form a circle wide ;
 The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
 The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride ;
 His bonnet reverently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare :
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care ;
 And ' Let us worship God ' he says, with solemn air."

"The Saint, the Father, and the Husband" are before us in the very noblest attitude of manhood, the type of the men

from whom the moral greatness of a nation springs. With that noble figure before us we recognise the kind of man that Burns had in view when he sang of the "honest man" who was aboon the micht of a prince to mak'. It is such men that help us to realise what there is in Humanity and to image an Infinite Goodness. In giving us his picture of the sublime Cotter, Burns not only enriched our literature, but added greatly to the substance of our Humanity.

But while the Cotter is the central figure on whom all the loving skill of the poet is bestowed, the other figures in the poem are graphically drawn. "The expectant wee things," "the elder bairns," "their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown," the "neebor lad," "the well-pleased mother," needle in hand, all stand before us livingly. The very implements of toil, carefully set by, and the snugly-housed "Hawkie" are kindly placed with sympathy characteristic of the poet. The picture might be called "The Cotter's Paradise!"

But leaving the pictorial aspect of the piece, we may consider its religious and social significance. It is important to note the difference there is between the Bible-reading in the poem and that in "The Ordination." In "The Ordination" the Bible is in the hands of sanctimonious sacerdotalists, and the reading of it is not edifying. In "The Cotter's Saturday Night" it is in the hands of an intelligent and wise father who "wales a portion with judicious care," and its words are instructive and inspiring. There is in the father's act as he "wales a portion" a volume of teaching for those who insist on the Bible being read from beginning to end in church and school. There are parts of the Bible unfit for public reading, and which ought not to be regarded as the words of civilised men, far less as "the Word of God." Burns knew this, and was sensible of the mischief that the reading of such words even in private had done among passionate men, and, therefore, he made his exemplary Bible reader wale judiciously. There can be no objection to any portion of the Bible when the use of it is judicious.

We note in passing that the Christianity of the poem is not Calvinistic, but Arian in form and spirit. The father

does not frighten the children into virtue by the fear of the devil or the flames of eternal torment : the dogma of election does not cast its shadow o'er the hope of being a family in heaven ; love is made the motive of duty, and trust in God warrants the anticipations of eternal life. And in the prayer of the parents, breathed when the elders are gone out, and the youngsters are in bed, scholastic theology is set aside, and Nature's own familiar spirit inspires the desire

" That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide ;
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside."

The religion of the poem is simple, human, natural religion, which, where it comes in contact with orthodox dogmas, accepts them on their most rational side. It is not a bigotedly Biblical religion, though it finds good nourishment in the Bible ; it is not Trinitarian, though it highly honours Jesus ; it is not dogmatic, though it is assured and powerful.

But withal there appears to be something amiss with it. Taking William Burness, the devout Cotter, as a specimen of the sort of man it is fitted to make, it seems needful to find certain faults with it. So far as the passive virtues of "resignation, submission, abnegation, and patience" are concerned he is perfect, but he appears deficient in the active virtues of aspiration, strenuous self-respect, and heroic endeavour after better conditions of life. His religion makes him content with his poverty, but ought it to do so ? If it be true that God's providence provides bountifully for all, is submission to poverty—especially to that most unjust form of it termed "honest poverty"—religious ? Does true religion sanction the existence of rich monopolists of the soil and poor tillers of it ? Ought not his religion to impel the Cotter to challenge the rightness of the social conditions that keep him poor rather than submit to them ?

Perhaps there has not been in all Scotland a more devout reader of the Bible than the Cotter. But he seems

to have missed the lesson of its agrarian conditions and conflicts. If he had read between the lines of the writings of the prophets he would have perceived that it was landlordial oppression that was the root of the trouble of Israel, and that ultimately made the people homeless, and led them to bitter bondage. The oppression came to a head in Isaiah's time. Then "land has passed into private property. The free and sturdy yeomanry of ancient Israel had been dispossessed from their homesteads, which had been run together into big estates, or turned into sheep walks. They had come to be tenants under landlords instead of being independent peasant proprietors. They had gradually deposited, at the bottom of Society, the sediments of their class, a stratum of lawless, helpless, shiftless people, a veritable proletariat. Powerful barons had arisen, lording it in a high-handed manner on their big estates; while great traders had amassed in the cities huge fortunes, of which the mass of the people got the crumbs which fell from their tables."

It was that condition of things against which the prophets arose. The most democratic of them—Micah—"depicts the sufferings of the peasantry at the hands of their lords," as one who, from his intimate connection with the labouring classes, knows exactly what these sufferings were. He declares that, "to the peasantry, the nobles seem to have no object but plunder. The poorer agriculturists are daily stripped of their houses and holdings by violence and false judgment." He plainly says that every man has his price, and that the poor could do nothing against the tyrants who stripped the skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones. He expresses the conviction that there is no other help but the destruction of the government and the nobles, and he utters the stern prophecy that the race of the unjust aristocrats shall be rooted out of the land; the proud and guilty capital shall be ploughed as a field; and the Judge or King of Israel shall suffer the last indignities at the hand of the enemy.

That is an example of the way in which the Hebrew prophets viewed the agrarian situation; and the Scottish

Cotter, on reading the Bible, might have seen, if his eyes had been opened, his own case in that of the cotter of Israel.

And he might have perceived that it is *his* religious duty, as it was that of the peasantry of Israel, to resist oppression. The whole strain of Hebraic prophecy is democratic and resistant. Indeed, everywhere throughout the Bible democratic aspirations and efforts are blessed. The deepest and holiest currents of political and social life in it tend towards democracy. Literature may be searched in vain for more indignant and morally powerful impeachments of aristocratic iniquity, or for more scathing rebukes of plutocratic injustice than it contains. A text book of democracy could include no more stirring utterances than are to be found in Isaiah and Micah in the Old Testament, and in Matthew and James in the New Testament. But the Cotter, like the rest of Bible readers, has been blind to these.

One of the proofs of a misread or unheeded Bible is the existence and dominance in Christendom of aristocratic and plutocratic power. A people who acknowledge the Bible as the standard of their life should neither have king nor priest, or any semblance of imperial or sacerdotal authority. A community of brethren, the greatest of whom shall be the servant of all, is the highest Biblical ideal of political and social organization.

Perhaps the citizen as well as the Cotter will see in the Bible what they never saw before when they read it in the light of existent industrial and agrarian trouble. At the bidding of their religious teachers, the Scotch Cotter and workman have contented themselves for generations with a lot of laborious toil and severe suffering. They have believed it to be God's will that they should be the serfs of the laird and the capitalist, and have perpetuated for themselves and their children a slavish and degraded existence. The more submissively they yielded to the powers above them the more godly they were held to be. Now, after an age of submission, what are they?

Surely submission of that sort is irreligious. No man has a right to claim the soil as his, and to make another till

it as his serf. Religion requires the acknowledgment that the earth is God's, and its productive powers are intended for the benefit of all. Religion stamps poverty as an injustice by its affirmation of a bountiful Providence, and makes submission to impoverishing conditions a moral wrong. The Cotter, therefore, needs a new spirit—a spirit of active and determined resistance to the system that makes him poor and slavish. Poverty, in a world divinely furnished with plenty for all, is unnatural, and ought not to be submitted to. The landlord is an usurper, and ought not to be tolerated. Religion entitles each man who labours to claim for himself sufficient for his physical and spiritual needs as a man; and if the Cotter, who is the most laborious of men, were to make that claim for himself the day of the "clay biggin'," which is the scene of the "Cotter's Saturday Night," would soon be over. The Church has required its preachers to preach for the sake of the rich: it is now time that it should carry out its Master's purpose, and preach the gospel to the poor—the abolition of poverty, which is the only "good news" for the poor. And when it does that it will make a new man of the Cotter, and set him to the soil in just conditions.

We need new land laws for the sake of the Cotter, but we need something more and deeper than that. We need a fresh current of vital religion which will regenerate, not the Cotter only, but all men. No one would have the Cotter become irreligious, nor would anyone seek to make the Cotter's Saturday Night, as described by Burns, a thing of the past. "From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs." But we have to face the fact that his religion has not ameliorated the Cotter's condition in the slightest. It has actually kept him in serfdom. The natural tendency of it is to do so. The theology of it is autocratic, and the effect of his worship is naturally enslaving. As a matter of fact, he is a slave, and, if his religion has actually been the most powerful element in making him what he is, it must be regarded as the cause of his slavery. Consider it. The orthodox theology, "in its main features, was evolved during the most calamitous period which the human race has lived through in historic times. . . . The concep-

tion of God, of His relation to, and His dealings with, the world, was evolved in a society which groaned under unexampled oppression, misery, and affliction. Needless to say, it was an age of great and almost morbid cruelty, . . . one of lawless rapine on the part of the strong, and cowering anguish on the part of the weak. . . . With such visible rulers of the world before them, it is no wonder that men formed very dark and cruel notions of the Invisible Ruler who disposed of all things. Cruelty, injustice, arbitrary power were too familiar to be shocking, too constant to be supposed accidental or transitory. . . . God was an Almighty Emperor, a transcendental Diocletian or Constantine, doing as He list with his own. His edicts ran through all space and time, His punishments were eternal, and whatever He did, His justice must not be questioned." Such was the Being set up by the Church before the Cotter to be worshipped. The worship inevitably made the the worshipper a slave. How could he help believing that the Almighty had placed him in the low position in which he was, with the landlord and other masters above him? Under the influence of such a theology, he dared not think rationally or dream of acting freely. It was his duty to toil, thole, and be silent.

But other theological conceptions have come, and, with them, changed religious feelings. The conception of God as the Infinite Father, which has the word of Jesus Christ with it, has arisen, and is recommending itself to the conscience of the worshipping man. That conception takes everything autocratic, arbitrary, and unjust out of theology, and sets God before the worshipper in a lovable form. It makes all men God's children, the world a sphere of impartial fatherhood, providence the perpetual forgiveness of the All-loving Parent. And it makes religion a sympathetic endeavour to realize brotherhood. It causes the lowliest man to rise erect and claim his place as a brother-man. It makes Cotter and landlord equal in God's sight. It makes class distinctions and the monopolies of the privileged classes wrong. It gives the tiller of the soil more right to its products than the landlord, who is an idler. It entitles the Cotter to cast off

the submission laid upon him in the name of religion, and to declare that the Infinite Father cannot require passive acquiescence in conditions that prevent the development of manhood, that religion must always be opposed to slavery.

Thus the new theological conceptions tend to give the Cotter's religion a new spirit and aim. They convert the old spirit of slavish and superstitious submission into a spirit of free and intelligent aspiration, and make it the aim of the Cotter to try to put an end to the conditions which keep him a slave. In the name of religion he has to demand justice, that the relationships of men shall be adjusted to the idea of an All-embracing and impartial Fatherhood, and that society shall be transformed into a real brotherhood.

And while taking up that moral attitude, he need not cease to be pious, need not put away his Bible, need not give up prayer. But his piety will have new light and power in it. He will realize that piety consists in recognising and honouring the terms of life that are set forth in the nature of things. He will apprehend that his relation to God is formed by natural conditions, that God is not a Being away in a distant world, but one with whom he has to do in all natural elements, forces, and opportunities. He will perceive that it is practical piety to deal with the soil in accordance with the Power that gives it to men, and keeps it productive for their sake. Set in just conditions as a tiller of the soil, with no one to defraud him of the results of his labour, he will feel that he is a fellow-labourer with God in providing for the needs of humanity; and his tillage will become a sacrament instead of a slavery.

And, when he opens his Bible to "wale a portion with judicious care," he will not overlook these words:—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein;" "The land shall not be sold for ever; for the land is mine;" "Moreover the profit of the earth is for all;" "Woe unto them that join house to house, and that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth;" "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. . . . Behold the hire of the labourers

who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth ; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth ;" "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat . . . they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. . . . Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith ; these ought ye to have done, and not have left the other undone ;" "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come and follow me ;" "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

And, when the Cotter prays in the new spirit, it will not be so much for submission, self-renunciation, and patience, as for aspiration, self-respect, and strenuousness of power to work for righteousness of life. Then he will be in the way of being a free man in Christ, and his slavery on the soil will come to an end.

The religion of brotherhood cannot longer sanction the Cotter's submission. It cannot regard his position as just, nor look upon his cot with approval. It has to declare that he is placed in unjust circumstances, and that his cot, though it may be enhalloved by domestic feeling, is a wretched hovel. It has to affirm that the system which makes the Cotter what he is is utterly immoral ; that the sentiment which consecrates the hovel called the Cotter's home is unhealthy ; that the halo placed over "honest poverty" is a moral mirage.

One of the greatest of our modern prophets sounded the new note of moral sympathy, to which the heart of the age is thrilling more and more deeply, when he said—"Life was never a May-game for men ; in all times the lot of the dumb millions born to toil was defaced with manifold sufferings, injustices, heavy burdens, avoidable and unavoidable ; not play at all, but hard work that make the sinews sore, and the

heart sore. As bond slaves, *villani*, *bordarii*, *sochemanni* . . . men were oftentimes made weary of their life, and had to say, in the sweat of their brow and of their soul, behold, it is not sport, it is grim earnest, and our back can bear no more ! Who knows not what massacrings and harryings there have been, grinding, long-continuing, unbearable injustices, till the heart had to rise in madness. . . .

"And yet I will venture to believe that in no time, since the beginning of Society, was the lot of those same dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is even in the days now passing over us. It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched ; many men have died ; all men must die, the last exit of us all is in a Fire Chariot of Pain. But it is to live miserable, we know not why, to work sore, and yet gain nothing, to be heart-worn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt in with a cold universal *Laissez-faire*, it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead, Infinite Injustice, as in the accursed belly of a Phalaris' Bull !"

Though but dimly conscious of it, and devoutly dumb regarding it, even when conscious of it, such is the condition in which the Scotch Cotter has existed for many generations. It has been his pious business to endure it, though the thoughtful Cotter has found it difficult to reconcile himself to it, on the ground usually set forth to account for it—of Adam's fall, a cursed earth, the bondage of Satan, and other theological excuses, which have kept out of sight the actual economic causes.

Burns had said that "bairdly chiels and clever hizzies are bred in sic a way as this is," and shown that the cot may be a sanctuary. But we have to face facts. "We call these millions men ; but they are not men. Half engaged in the soil, pawing to get free, man needs all the music that can be brought to disengage him." The condition of the Cotter is a disgrace to our civilization. Granted that he has made his cot respectable by his virtue, that he has made it admirable even by his piety, the fact is, it never was a fit place for him to live in. He has been healthy and virtuous in spite of it, though not easily so. His rude strength

gained out of doors, was the protection indoors from the cold and comfortlessness of his dwelling. And his virtue at the best is of a negative sort—a bare severity of character neither lovely in itself, nor of much joy to its possessor. His circle of life being small, and his toil monotonous and wearisome, his morality is narrow, and his intellect unimaginative, and his temptations are, therefore, few, and of the sensuous order. Before these temptations he has never stood purely: whisky and the "lasses" have generally been too much for him. Still it must be granted that the Cotter has a rough integrity which ennobles him. He has always been honest, truthful, and trusty. If he makes a bargain he will starve himself to fulfil it. He will go through fire and water to keep his word. He is as trusty as a law of Nature. But his intelligence is small, his ideas few, his thinking difficult. Apart from the traditional lore of his class and from the Bible he knows little or nothing. Never much of a reader he has no taste for books, and no time to read if he had. He is simply an animal that ploughs, sows, reaps, pays rent, and fears God. A wonderful animal, indeed, and not to be despised, but one that poetry even cannot make much of.

Burns has done his best for him, and he had an extraordinary good specimen to idealise. The Cotter whom he immortalised was morally a long way above his condition, and was certainly far above the orthodoxy of his time. We are obliged to admit that with his cot in view, Burns spoke the truth when he said—"Certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road the cottage leaves the palace far behind," but withal the cottage is a poor, bare place. And though, with regard to "luxury's contagion, weak and vile," we may echo the poet's prayer that Scotia's "hardy sons of rustic toil" may "be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content," with reference to their slavish poverty, we may well wish them a healthy discontent. In fact, the time has come when sentiment and cant should be put away, and justice should demand the redemption of the Cotter. Piety itself requires that he should no longer thole as he has done. Religion demands that he shall rebel against the conditions that

enslave and impoverish him. Submission to injustice is a crime. Poverty enforced on the honest is an evil which should not be endured. A *poor* labourer ought to be regarded as a social anomaly which cannot be allowed to exist. A poor *idler* is a normal phenomenon, but a poor *worker* is a thing altogether unnatural.

While, then, we join with the poet in desiring that "a virtuous populace" may "stand a wall of fire around our much loved isle," we may hope that it will not be in present social conditions. Let the "hardy sons of rustic toil" be virtuous, but let their conditions be entirely transformed. The feudal age ought to be brought to an end, and the age of brotherhood begun. The tiller of the soil we needs must have, but we must not longer have him as a serf. His bondage and his poverty must at once be brought to an end. He, and all other toilers, must no longer live to support an idle aristocracy, but must arise to an understanding of their rights and duties, and show the virtues of aspiring men. Let the old cot, built of clay, with its earthen floors, its open rafters, and straw-covered roof, fall with the age of feudality to which it belongs, and let a worthier home rise for the rustic toiler—a home of health and comfort, of plenty and joy, wherein, when his easier toil is over, he can read and enjoy an intellectual and truly human life.

To that new home we may hopefully bid the redeemed Cotter bear his religious emotions, to let them enter on a noble life. Not, however, without pathetic leaving-taking can the old cot be left; for therein, as "The Cotter's Saturday Night" shows us, the Cotter's soul found a place of communion with God, and the home-feeling bound the inmates together in loving sympathy. But, in the new home, with a higher range of experience than was possible in the old, it will be realized more deeply that fatherhood and motherhood gain their holiness, their light, their power, their beauty by religious reverence; that the soul of childhood has its awe most helpfully directed by being touched by aspiration; that human fellowship finds the spirit of its truest unity in the influence of piety; and that life is sublimated and glorified in the atmosphere and radiance of religion.

Looking forward to the redemption of the Cotter and the regeneration of society, we may heartily join in the fervent prayer of the poet :—

" O Thou ! who poured the patriotic tide,
That streamed this great, unhappy Wallace' heart ;
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part
(The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward ?)
O never, never Scotia's realm desert ;
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard."





“ I’m wae to think upo’ non
Den.”

“Address to the Deil.”

IN a letter written at Mauchline in June, 1787, to William Nicol, Master of the High School, Edinburgh, Burns says—“ I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship in that great personage, Satan.” The “pocket Milton” was probably newly bought then, but it is evident by a foot-note appended to the “Address to the Deil” by Burns himself, in explanation of the reference to “Michael” in the 19th stanza of the poem, that he had read Milton’s “Paradise Lost” before he wrote his own poem. And it is interesting to note that while he admired the Satan of Milton as a poetic creation, he took a different view of the devil. The blind poet represented Satan as of heavenly origin—an angel who became a rebel against God, and was cast forth from the upper spheres. To the great Puritan “the lord of hell” was a real personage—at least the poet represented him to the imagination so realistically that he became thenceforth an

object of theological verisimilitude, a veritable character in the drama of life, an actual supernatural being as real as God Himself, the opposite or double of God. It was Milton who gave orthodoxy its Satan. "Paradise Lost" shaped the popular conception of the devil and his angels. But it appears that to Burns Satan was an entirely mythical personage, the creature of superstitious fancy. While he deals with the legends, traditions, and popular beliefs regarding him he manages to let it be seen that he does not regard the existence of the devil as a matter of fact. Indeed, he so deals with the stories of Satan as to make them appear altogether fictitious and ridiculous.

Still, as one kicking against authority commonly held sacred, Burns must have admired the great angel pictured chafing against the bars of heaven like a caged eagle, and choosing to reign in hell rather than serve in heaven. He would as soon have impeached the truthfulness of the conception of Prometheus in the Greek legend, or of the King Lear of Shakespeare as Milton's conception of Satan. But it was not the atheist of heaven, sublimely impatient of soulless servility, that Burns had before him in composing his immortal poem, but the vulgar black deil of Scottish superstition. His poem had to be an antidote to that of Milton's. He composed it at Mossgiel in the winter of 1785, shortly after the "Cotter's Saturday Night" was written. Regarding the poem his brother says—"The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage." No doubt the humorous side of these accounts would touch Burns strongly, and set his own humour creatively to work; but through his poem there runs a very serious purpose. It may well be considered as a sequel to the "Cotter's Saturday Night," deliberately intended to make the worship of God less fearful and more rational to the common people. Meditating "ben i' the spence," after a day's threshing, perhaps, on some useful plan that he could make for *puir auld Scotia's* sake, he would see how the common superstition about the devil darkened religion and made trustful and loving worship

of God impossible. How could men worship the Being who, as they believed, had made a devil into whose hellish power they themselves might pass by Divine decree? And, not to speak of the worship of God, how could there be any true self-respect, any healthy and reverent culture of human faculties, any real manly character while men believed that they were the children of the devil, corrupt by nature, and totally averse to all good? How could there be any proper enjoyment of God's world, any inquiry into its hidden things, any appreciation of its beauty so long as men imagined that the devil lurked everywhere, and was the cause of everything strange and luckless?

As one of the people, Burns knew how universal and oppressive the fear of the devil was. When anything mysterious was experienced, the devil was believed to be in it. When the churn or loom went out of order, it was owing to the devil's malicious interference; when the wind blew with sudden ominous gust, making the whole house quake, it was the devil flying past in furious rage; when the evening breeze went sighing o'er the dyke or rustling through the hedge, it was the devil "bumman"; when the belated traveller saw in the moonlight some shadowy shape, and heard an "eldritch croon," it was the devil; everything dark, inexplicable, terrible was the work of Satan. In every shadow, unfamiliar sound, pain, mishap, and death, there was something of "the evil one." A wild night was one in which "a child might understand the deil had business on his hand." Hardly a man would go out at night in an unknown place without crossing himself, or saying some protective spell. The dark side of things was the devil's kingdom, and in presence of it the Scottish people stood in abject fear. The dread paralysed mind and limb. Superstition prevented science; freethought was sacrilege; to doubt the existence of Satan was blasphemy. Men had to drink to make themselves brave in the darkness, and the fear of the devil actually fostered drunkenness.

And there was no power in existence capable of delivering the people from Satanic bondage. Instead of dissolving the superstition the clergy fostered it. Every ser-

mon let the devil loose upon the people, and brought the flames of hell roaring around them. The fear of hell was the whip held over the people by the Church. No minister would have been regarded as faithful to his office who did not in words similar to those used by Jonathan Edwards tell the people—"The God, who holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked." The ordinary after-service Sunday-reading of the people would bring them to some such passage as this—"The godly husband will say amen to the damnation of her who lay in his bosom; and the godly wife shall applaud the justice of the judge in the condemnation of her ungodly husband! The godly parents say Hallelujah! at the passing of the sentence against their ungodly child; and the godly child shall from his heart approve the damnation of his wicked parents—the father who begat him and the mother who bare him."

It was in these circumstances that Burns was inspired to write his "Address to the Deil." His soul was full of religious patriotism, and he must needs do something to deliver his brethren from the yoke of Satan. He saw that the fear of the devil must be dissolved, and the devil himself abolished, ere religion and morality could be elevating and healthy. He elected, therefore, to confront the dread phantom of superstition, and to try to overcome it for his brethren's sake. Not with the "Dutch courage" of an impious inebriate, nor with the flippant audacity of "an infidel," but with the sobriety of a rational man and the moral earnestness of a reformer did he face "the evil one." With true poetic instinct he saw that the attack must be made with solemnity and humour combined, that indignation and compassion, ridicule and reasoning, laughter and tears were his fitting weapons for the encounter. He knew that the fear of the devil in the mind of his brethren was a mixture of ignorance of Nature, reverence of dogmatic authority, and self-distrust; and that, in order to be thoroughly effective, his poem would require to show the utter superstitiousness and ridiculousness of the fear, and

make them laugh at their own stupidity and folly. With reverence and yet with freedom, with true moral feeling, but with brimming humour, the thing must be done. Girding himself for his high task, he courageously summoned the prince of darkness to his presence, commandingly and pityingly set him on a cutty stool before him, and poured into the ear of the astonished culprit such a stream of remonstrance, ridicule, defiance, jocularly, anger, and compassion as convicted, scorched, terrified, amused, humbled, shamed, and actually converted the deil !

No such thing had ever been done before. St. Aquinas had prayed for the devil, and Luther had flung his ink-bottle at him (the stains of which may be seen to this day !) ; but to summon the devil to his own abolition and shame him out of existence by a personal address was reserved for Burns in the ben end of the farmhouse of Mossiel.

Gray has pictured a poet, "with haggard eyes, loose beard, and hoary hair streaming like a meteor to the troubled air," standing on a rock, weaving the "winding sheet of Edward's race ;" but who shall picture Burns as on that notable winter's day he sat lonely by the ingle cheek, his eye "turned on empty space," and wove the wondrous shroud of the deil ? Never were such dissolving words woven together before. By the very first syllable the supernatural culprit must have known that his end was come. As he heard himself identified by one name after another—"Auld Horrie," "Satan," "Nick," or "Clootie,"

"Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Closed under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,
To scaud poor wretches,"

he could hardly prevent the red shame from being seen on his dusky countenance.

And, as he listened to the details of his doings among the peasantry, witchin' the kirns and the kye, hauntin' "auld ruined castles, gray," "bumman yont the dyke," flying on the strong-winged tempest, "tirlin' the kirks," or lurking in the human bosom unseen, we may fancy him fuming and laughing by turns, spell-bound by the daring

genius of the poet. But, as the poet-judge took him back to "Eden's bonnie yard," and reminded him how he, the "auld sneck-drawin' dog, went to Paradise incog, and played on man a cursed brogue," and how "wi' reekit duds and reestit gizz" he sklentend on the man of Uzz "his spitefu' joke," the poor cowering deil must have felt the cup of his iniquity to be full, and we can almost visibly see him sinking into the ground for very shame. He must have been confounded, humiliated, and struck dumb and powerless.

But the worst was yet to come. He could endure scorn, bear blows, and suffer the torture of an enemy, but compassion, tears, love he could not stand; and when the poet turned from ridicule to pathos and meltingly expressed sympathy with him in "yonder den," and appealed to him with touching tenderness to "tak' a thocht and men'," the heart-stricken deil could hold no longer to his fiendishness, but gave up the ghost of Satanism.

"Some say the deil's dead and buried in Kirkcaldy," but this "Address" is his grave. Though his name still appears in the "Confession of Faith" and the "Shorter Catechism," and though he is still mentioned by orthodox preachers, the devil is really extinct. He could not survive the touch of the pen of Burns. By it, as by the touch of a new spirit of religion, "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire," wherein burn the cast off rags and rubbish of superstition.

Of course, the marvellous discourse was really addressed by Burns to his brethren. It was in their superstitious imagination that the devil existed; the hell in which he had his being was in their terrified mind, and to clear out the grizzly phantom thence was the purpose of Burns. He sought to get them to look at the devil face to face courageously and critically, to keep their senses in the darkness, to investigate the unknown, and examine the terrific, and thus get quit of their subjection to Satan. His braver outlook convinced him that the spectres flitting 'mong ruins in the moonlight were the shadows of clouds; that the "bumman" "yont the dyke," which startled Grannie at her prayers, was the moan of the wind through some crevice in

the wall ; that the fiend seen squatting " 'mang the springs " in the sklentan light was a waterfowl ; that the horrid apparition which stood up amang the brackens on the brae between the earth and the moon was only an " oulter quey ; " that the mishaps of the churn and loom were traceable to natural causes ; that the experiences of the late and drunken wight were caused by distilled, not hellish spirits ; and that all the fearsome phenomena of Nature were terrorless to the intelligent. He gave the people power to laugh at their own fancies, and to have the courage of their reason. He turned their debasing dread into elevating wonder, made Nature interesting and instructive, cleared religion of fear, and gave worship a lovable object.

As has been well said—"No more wonderful, or effective, or beneficial treatment of an idea that has engrossed and terrified the world for ages has ever been vouchsafed, nor any sermon on such a subject preached, that has so lightened the gloom of centuries. It is the purest Christian philosophy in the quaintest and grandest fable, attractive, rich, and wholesome. . . . However much the sense of decorum in some of us may be alarmed, such poetry for the popular ear is the most efficient agency in that God-like work of destruction (of the works of the devil), a thousand times more efficient than the loftiest conceptions of a mind like Milton's, indicating, in fact, a greater mind, by the very ease and daring with which it is delivered. It sounds like eternal teaching, and will go on to purify and liberate the priest-ridden human conscience for generations and centuries to come."

But, for daring to address the devil in this fashion, Burns has been called profane, a blasphemer, an infidel, &c. Are not the profanity, blasphemy, and infidelity rather in the idea that God made and let loose upon mankind a tempter and torturer like the devil of orthodoxy ? Is it not the very height of profanity to assert that the All-Father constructed and maintains a place of eternal torment for some of his children ? It is the belief in the devil that is profane. It is the dogma of hell that is blasphemous. Burns respected the Fatherhood of God when he ridiculed

the current notion of Satan, and he served the cause of true religion when he dissolved the fear of hell.

What Burns let loose his consuming humour on was a hideous mental figment created by ignorant fear, an unreality, a thing that had no existence save in fancy. "What ! is not the devil, and hell also, in the Bible ?" There are many passages in the Bible from which the revisers have been obliged, in justice to the original, to drop out the devil and hell. The Satan of the Bible is part of the "mythologic scenery" of the Hebraic religion, and has no more reality than the "Ahriman" of the Zoroastrians, or the "Typhon" of the Egyptians. "Was not Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil ?" Let the Apostle answer—"God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

To show how the case stands in the Bible, the following facts are given—The word *Shaitan* which is rendered Satan occurs in the Old Testament thirty-three times. It is used twenty-seven times in the singular, and six times in the plural, number. It is rendered *Sitnah* once, six times *adversary*, six times *adversaries*, once *withstand thee*, and once *accusation*. It is applied as follows—to a *well*, to an *angel* of the Lord, to *David*, to the *sons* of Zeruiah, to the *enemies* of Solomon, or Israel, to *Hadad* the Edomite, to *Rexon* the son of Eliadah, the *person* or *persons* who counselled David to number Israel, or to the evil *passion* or *desire* of David's own mind, to a piece of *writing*, to the *enemies* of David, and to the *adversary* or *enemy* of Joshua. In the scripture usage of the word, it signifies an enemy, an opposer, an adversary, and it is not once used to signify a personal being called the devil, or Satan—*i.e.*, such a being as is commonly believed in.

DEVILS.—This word occurs both in the Old and in the New Testament four times, and is used to signify heathen divinities.

SATAN.—This word occurs both in the Old and in the New Testament. In the Old it occurs eighteen times, and simply signifies an enemy, an opposer, an adversary. It occurs in the New Testament thirty-seven times, and is

used in precisely the same sense. It is applied to Peter the *disciple*, to Beelzebub, to Judas, to unbelieving Jews, to false teachers, to heathen opponents of the gospel, and to the persecutors of the followers of Christ. It is also applied to the evil passions and desires of men.

DIABOLOS.—This word is found in the Greek Testament thirty-six times. It is translated in the Common Version thirty-three times *devil* (the words devil and Satan are used in the New Testament as synonymous terms), twice *false accusers*, and once *slanderers*. Had it been invariably rendered by words which properly define it, no one would ever have dreamed that it was used to signify a fallen angel.

The Bible declares that by one *man*, not by one *devil*, nor by one *fallen angel*, but by one *man*, sin entered into the world. It also declares that *every man* is tempted, not by the devil, not by a fallen angel, but when he is drawn away of his *own lust* and enticed. The orthodox doctrine of the devil is without Biblical support. The Bible gives no account of a rebellion in heaven, or of a fall of angels.

It should also be observed that a marked distinction is kept up between the *devil* and demons throughout the Bible. The Jews are accused of sacrificing unto demons. but never of sacrificing to Satan or Diabolos. *Demons* are said to have been cast out of persons, but never is it said that *Satan*, or *Diabolos* was cast out of man. *Demons* were supposed to be the souls or spirits of dead men.

Some believe that Satan is a being as real as God, and that an eternal hell is a fact as certain as an eternal heaven. But the one necessarily excludes the other. If we say "God," and mean an eternal, omnipresent, almighty, *all-loving* Being, we contradict ourselves when we say "Devil," and mean an eternal, omnipresent, almighty, *all-hating* Being. Ere we can logically and actually find existence and place for the Devil we require to limit God, or else fall back on the Hebraic idea that Satan is employed by God. There is no other alternative. Either God is the sole Spirit sustaining all things, having everything under His control for His fatherly purpose, or He is not. If He is, then the Devil cannot exist as one apart from God, having a separate and

opposite domain of his own : his existence is a contradiction in terms and an impossibility in fact. But on the other alternative, if the Devil exists as an employee of God, his employment must have ultimate good in view. If he is employed to try and to punish, the trial and the punishment must be beneficial. If hell is an institution of God, its inmates must be dealt with for their good, and it cannot be a condition of eternal torment.

There was method and the deepest wisdom in the writing by Burns of the "Address to the Deil" after "The Cotter's Saturday Night." It is like the succession of a rational Sunday to a reverent Saturday ; the exorcising of an usurping spirit from the Kirk after the sanctification of home. Belief in the Devil is the intellectual irreligion from which Burns sought to save his brethern ; and had it not been for this very "Address," with its freedom to look, its leave to doubt, and its infection of laughter, there would have been much Atheism in Scotland. Scotchmen are logical in their thinking, and those who leapt or knocked over the bar of "mystery" set up between them and the investigation of such questions soon saw that in order to believe in God they must disbelieve in the Devil. God, or Satan : logic forbids belief in both. As God and Satan appear together in orthodox theology Satan is the more admirable of the two. God stands therein for an absolute despotism under which there is nothing permitted but unquestioning submission. Satan stands for a free rationalism that seeks to understand and know the grounds of obedience. God says, "You must obey my will because it is my will whether you think it be right or wrong. It is not yours to investigate and reason, but only to obey." Satan says "I will not obey until I know a good reason for obeying ; I will not submit to mere force ; I must act intelligently." Having the faculty of reason, Satan sought liberty to use it, but the liberty was denied, and he was cast out of heaven. He was the protestant, the freethinker, the heretic, the martyr of heaven. "The devil is not so black as he is painted." Even according to orthodoxy he merely sought the reasonable liberty proper to a rational being. But theologians have

maligned their own invention, and Burns was right in seeking to redeem him from them.

"Paradise Lost," read between the lines, is the tale of a heresy case of infinite proportions. "Spirits," says William Blake, "are organised men." The spirit called "Satan" in Milton's poem is an organised rationalist and revolutionist—the kind of a being hated and martyred by ecclesiastical and monarchical power ever since these powers were. Blake tells us that he has on hand poems of the highest antiquity in which "the Ugly Man represents human reason." In putting "the Ugly Man" on to canvas he pictures him as one approaching to the beast in feature and form, his forehead small, his jaws, joints, and extremities large, his eyes with scarce any whites, narrow, and cunning, &c. That is the representation which Church artists and poets have always made of the man who revolts from dogmatic and despotic authority. Such is the representation Milton gives of Satan. Reading his poem between the lines one might well think that the names of the two chief characters are misplaced. The revolutionist of the heaven of despotism in which to search was a sin and to know a crime, is by no means an evil character. John Wesley once said to some Calvinist "Your God is my Devil," and one may be pardoned for preferring a rebel to a despot. It is not to be wondered at that Burns admired the Satan of Milton. What is called pride in the rationalist of Paradise is really fidelity of intellect, what is termed disobedience is obedience to the inner authority, what is treated as revolt is actually reverence of rational responsibility.

And in judging between the God and the Satan of orthodoxy, we must not forget that according to that theological system God made Satan—made him what he was, or with the power of becoming what he was. Why then did he cast him out of heaven? Is the father who begets a child with a certain tendency justified in making him an outcast for that tendency? If a father beget a child having the power to fall, and plan that he shall fall, and then punish him for falling, the father, and not the child, is the real culprit. We may truly say the names of the chief characters in

"Paradise Lost" are misplaced. God should be called Satan, and Satan God. And not only so: the name God should be replaced by the name Satan in the standards of orthodoxy. Suppose you heard these words read without a nominative, which do you think it ought to be, God, or Satan? "As for those men, from them he not only withholdeth grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin, and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of evil, &c." No unsophisticated reader could ever imagine that it is God who is meant, yet the words occur in the Fifth chapter of the "Confession of Faith," headed "On Providence," words which every Presbyterian minister has to sign ere he be licensed to preach. Who, then, is profane? Who blasphemes? Not the author of the "Address to the Deil," but those who say such things of God.

And so it comes to this: the true man, the man who is rationally religious, must declare himself against the theology which sets up Satan in place of God, and must take side with the devil (so called) in opposing that evil one. If heaven means eternal submission to despotic power, there is no choice for a rational man but perpetual revolt. "Why does not God kill the devil?" was a poser that "Friday" put to "Robinson Crusoe." If God is the despot he is represented in orthodox theology to be, his killing of the devil would be a great calamity. When despotism rules, the hope of redemption lies in those who revolt from it. If Calvin's idea of God be true, Burns should not have pitied the devil. The revolter against a despot should be praised. Sterne's Dr. Slop said, "The devil is the father of curses and lies, and is cursed and damned already." "I am sorry for it," quoth my Uncle Toby! But if God is the father of curses, as orthodoxy makes him to be, he is the one for whom we should be sorry. Condemnation should fall on the despot, not on the opponent of despotism.

St. Aquinas prayed for the devil, it is said, in this wise—

"O God, he said, it cannot be
Thy Morning Star with endless moan
Should lift his fading orb to Thee,
And Thou be happy on Thy throne.
It were not kind ; nay, Father, nay,
It were not just, O God, I say ;
O pray for Satan, Jesus ! pray."

The compassion of the saint is admirable, but what was the use of praying to the Being who cast Satan out of heaven, and doomed him to an eternal hell ? Rather should the prayer be raised that that Being should be converted, and a place for reason be made in heaven. Then Satan would be restored and hell abolished. And, if Calvinistic theology be true, the "Address to the Deil" is wrongly directed. God, as the maker of the Deil, the proposer and disposer of his fall, the author of his banishment is the Being who should be addressed. He is ultimately responsible for the whole matter. Unless God be what Jesus described Him, a "Father infinitely fatherly," who loved all His creatures into life, we may not pity the devil. If God's acts have always been right, His feelings always perfectly fatherly, His laws always just, revolt against His authority is impious, and the devil as a revolter is wicked. But if God is the Perfect Father, the Miltonic history of the devil is a myth. God, being a true Father, could never have made a creature for a fall, never could have cursed a creature though it had fallen, and never could have planned eternal torment. In this matter we must appeal from Calvin to Christ. It is only in Calvinian theology that the chain holds by which the devil descended from heaven to hell : in the theology of Christ there is no socket for such a chain. If God be God, we must take the radical and rational position of denying that the devil of orthodoxy ever did or could exist. It does not meet the case to say "the devil will be forgiven, and hell will be dissolved : " what we need is the assurance that no one could ever have been by God's hand or leave cast out of heaven. To say that "God so loved the world as to send his Son to

redeem it from eternal torment" is not satisfactory; we must be sure that God never so hated the world as to damn it and open an endless hell for his children, else we cannot worship Him.

Science comes to the rescue of the thinker, and assures him that the Power of the Universe makes for the extinction of all "evil." "See," says science, "with what matchless ease the organic laws preserve the unbroken order of the world in the heavens above, the earth beneath, the waters under the earth! How enchanting the rhythm of their movement! What firm and exquisite grace as they urge the successive and infinite changes as from the chaos to the cosmos! With the sweetest dignity and the most unerring judgment they handle comets, planets, constellations, tossing the golden balls from centre to circumference, and making the empyrean sparkle from bound to bound with the lively play of the flashing suns! Working thus in the material world, will the same immanent force work nothing in the spiritual? May we confine our conception of law to the recognised system of the material universe? Must we not suspect at least the perturbed will, the eccentric desires, the wandering wishes that whirl and flame along the moral empyrean, may also be held in its fine leashes? Can the pitying world-spirit drape ruins with ivy, and cover stones with moss, and cannot the quick spirit in man grow over a wasted life, or adorn with loveliness a hard nature? Can the decomposing forces pulverize Alpine peaks, and yet fail in the attempt to convert a mass of iniquity into vapour that shall vanish away? Can the light touch of the solar ray cause the whole race of flowers to open their eyes to the sun, and glitter with the hues of the diamond as they gaze, and will not the inner light in the breast induce men to seek the All Good? Can the sunbeam call the whole animal world into being, and create the very civilizations of men, and shall the Sun of Righteousness be powerless to recreate the moral world, and call into being the kingdom of God within us? Can the plastic powers of Nature arrange the leaves with mathematical precision on the stem of a plant, change leaf into

flower, and flower into fruit, and is there no plastic power in the very constitution of man that can arrange the elements in human development, and, from the raw material of passion and impulse, create the perfect results of goodness? A singular inconsistency were it true!

Science will yet show man how to co-operate with the Universal Power so as to rid his world of all evil and overcome the "devil."

It was to make true worship of God possible in Scotland that Burns wrote his "Address to the Deil." He believed in God the Perfect Father, full of the goodness that delights to forgive, who cannot leave anyone in evil, and whose child the most sunken one—even a devil—must be; and in that faith he wrote the marvellous poem, the justice and sympathy of which are fitted to convict and convert the worst devil.

But while we admire with him the Satan of Milton, and are "wae" with him, to think on "yon den," even for the devil's sake: and while we affirm that there can be no proper knowledge and conviction without freedom to inquire thoroughly, and to accept the judgment of reason; that not even Divine dictation can be obeyed without the sense of its rightness; that liberty of conscience must be the watchword of belief in heaven as well as on earth; that respect for itself is the soul's ground for all other respect,—we must remember that the free soul ought to keep itself open to, and eager for, the true, should be devoted to truth, and live as a faithful witness to it, letting no prejudice, selfishness, or base passion influence its thought or feeling. If ever it uses its freedom to ignore or rebel against the authority of truth, it must experience the consequences of evil.

But in dismissing the devil of orthodoxy as a "dream of the night and darkness of the past," and in relegating the dogmas in which his name occurs to "the museum of theological curiosities, mummies, and skeletons that the coming ages will study to find out the worldly thoughts that have passed away," it will be well for us to recognise the real devil in the maladjustment of human powers. We have to remember that "unkept laws are still capable of

doing the works of destruction and sorrow and ruin that have been credited to the devil. If physical, intellectual, and moral calamities come, it will be small comfort to know that our own ignorance or carelessness is the devil that brings them." The way to "destroy the works of the devil" that meets us in our unintelligent and immoral action is to seek for knowledge, clearer moral insight, and a more intense concern for rightness of life. "Formerly, was one afflicted with remorse of conscience, he stopped all the passages of self-recovery, sealed every fountain of joy, and set himself to brooding with all his might on hell and the judgment: he made it his business to muse on his sin, to vilify his nature, to anticipate his ruin, to drape his Deity in black. Now, if one has a sin, he does his best to forget it, to outgrow it, to cover it up with new and better life: he adopts a wholesome moral diet, and keeps his conscience in robust condition. The tacit assumption is that men forgive themselves, and are by men and God forgiven, when they rally to do better. So they put *heaven* before them in place of *hell*, and use their fault as a *spur*, not as a clog." The real devil is the low thought, the gross affection, the base deed; and the actual hell is the undisciplined mind, the impure heart, the undevout soul.

"The fear o' Hell's a hangman's whip,
To haud the wretch in order;
But where ye feel your honor grip,
Let that ay be your border;
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
Debar a' side pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences."



“Godly Laces.”

“Address to the Unco Guid.”

THE “Address to the Unco Guid” has been truly described as “one of the most perfect of the moral writings of Burns for humour, charity, and truth combined. A more beautiful blending of humour, with the purest charity and wisdom, is perhaps not to be found in any similar composition in any language.” Written, as seems likely, after “The Holy Fair,” it was meant for others than those described in that poem as “an elect swatch,” “the real judges,” “the godly.” It was evidently intended for the very cream of the Pharisees, the highest caste among the pious, the Brahmins of the orthodox. It is actually an address to the “unco guid”—that is, to those who held very high notions about religious propriety, who were nice, and finical, and very precise in their piety, and who sincerely regarded themselves as exemplars of a refined religion. They were high-bred people whose sentiments, speech, and manners were all of a superior character. Stately, soulless, artificial, they had become so used to appear in the mask of gentility that it had become part of them. They would not have attended the “Holy Fair” because it was so vulgar ;

and on Sacrament Sunday they would go in their carriage to the "first table" and then drive off again. Dainty and haughty, they came and went with the air of those who felt that they were a class by themselves, for whom all the grace and wealth of providence had been specially reserved, in order that there might be a real gentry, a veritable "chosen people."

It appears that in writing the poem Burns, had chiefly in his mind "unco guid" ladies. However, he specially addresses "high, exalted, virtuous dames, ty'd up in godly laces," and hints that such are by no means attractive. If, in the line in which he speaks of their "better art of hiding," he means, not the blank expression into which gentility schools its features, but an actual hypocritical art, then we may suppose these "high" dames to be identical with the ladies pictured in "The Twa Dogs," as

"Owre the wee bit cup and platie,
They sip the scandal-potion pretty,
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbed leuks
Pore ower the devil's pictured books ;
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like ony unhang'd blackguard."

But we are not warranted in supposing that the high and exalted dames before whom in imagination Burns made himself counsel for "poor mortals" were hypocrites, or any other than the virtuous persons they professed to be. We know how the democratic ire of Burns flashed out against aristocratic pride, but it is not that which engages his corrective humour now. What he had in his mind was a certain conventional affectation of supreme rectitude, an artificial feeling of superior virtue bred by selfish piety, a puritanism of sentiment and conduct produced in the hyperborean regions of orthodoxy. Those with whom such puritanism had become a habit sincerely enough imagined that they were persons of uncommon virtue. There was no heresy of thought with *them*. A dame of the sort referred to by the poet could not say as "Clarinda" said to him, "I am a strict Calvinist, *one or two* dark tenets excepted, which I never meddle with." Her Calvinism would specially have included these tenets

on the ground that the darker they were they should be accepted with the more faith.

If we could imagine Mrs. Dunlop or Mrs. Riddell (two of the best women that Burns ever had as friends) as having become rigid, unsympathetic, and self-righteous, we would have before us the sort of dames referred to by Burns in this poem.

Strait-laced, prim, and gaunt in character, they tied their godly laces tight on principle. Scrupulous, formal, and finical in their deportment, religion to them was the careful observance of customs hallowed by conventional sentiment and usage.

They paid their tithe of "mint, anise, and cummin" with the nicest regularity. Their subscriptions for the Conversion of the Jews and for Hottentot Missions were always promptly forthcoming. Their visits in collecting the Sustentation Fund were timed with the most minute regularity. The sewing-meeting was never neglected by them. The poor whom they looked after were sure of their dole, and their lecture on thrift and cleanliness, when the day of charity came round. Their regularity of movement was maintained with the conscientiousness of a methodistic piety.

And they were the censors, the exemplars, the chosen ones of their neighbourhood, whose mission it was, as they believed, to be patterns of piety. They went to church quite as much to show an example as to worship God. The virtue of their circle was in their hands, and if they did not appear visibly spotless someone might be ruined. They were strict with themselves lest a general laxity might set in. Their method was repression. To everything that seemed about to rise up and burst the bonds of propriety they said "Don't." Round each warmly palpitating affection they tied their "godly laces" tighter. They ordered everybody indoors to be quiet. Boisterous mirth was to them an unholy thing. Amusement of every sort was to be shunned by the godly. They would have their whole neighbourhood made pure by suppression of everything improper. They were the pronounced opponents of every innovation, of all strange views, of freedom of thought and speech, of every-

thing new. They avowed themselves content with the old, and would not, if they could help it, let anyone have anything else.

Particularly rigorous were they with offenders. They had no sympathy with the tempted, no compassion with the unstable, no forgiveness for the erring. Whoever broke the bonds of propriety had to be punished severely. No excuse could be accepted, no remission of penalty could be made. It was not for them, in view of an eternal hell for the wicked, to pronounce forgiveness over the sinner. And so, even with their "godly laces," they bound offenders hand and foot and cast them out to outer darkness.

It is to that sincerely strait-laced and conscientiously severe class of religionists that Burns addressed his remonstrance in which humour and pathos, respect and frankness, tenderness, and strength are so finely blended. And if it were possible for such in their "high, exalted" condition of feeling to be touched by sympathy with those below them—for those "sae pious and sae holy" to be moved to compassion with "poor Frailty," surely that "address" should move them. It is a free address which in some of its lines becomes very familiar and makes insinuations that are hardly for ears polite, but still no just offence can be taken at the humorous candour of it. If any sense of rudeness is felt at the freer passages it is dissolved in the melting and regenerating words with which the poem concludes—

"Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin' wrang,
To step aside is human;
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.
Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord its various tone,
Each spring its various bias;
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted."

There is moral philosophy and feeling enough in these lines to convert a whole generation of "high, exalted, virtuous dames"—enough, indeed, to redeem humanity.

But in order to perceive the full meaning of the "Address to the Unco Guid" we require to enlarge the reference to "high, exalted, virtuous dames" and apply it to orthodoxy generally. It is of the very nature of orthodoxy to be exclusive, rigid, and self-righteous. It assumes that its Bible is the only "Word of God," that its interpretation of that Word is alone true, that its dogmas are the only ones which are genuine, that its way of salvation is the only safe one, &c. On these assumptions it pronounces all that differs from it heresy, declares war against the unholy thing, and dooms the heretic to eternal torment. Believing that it is commissioned by God to spread the truth held by it alone, it sends missionaries over all the world to preach its dogmas, and declare that there is no salvation in heathendom. Tied up in the "godly laces" of its faith, orthodoxy regards its soul as saved. It is the elect religion, the one chosen system approved and blest of God. Believing it, a man is safe for ever; believing something else, he is lost.

We will not import into the "Address" what was not intended if we suppose that Burns had in his mind when he wrote it the self-opinionativeness and conceit of orthodoxy. He knew that the various sects, like "exalted" dames, claimed each to have the saving truth. Doubtless he had read in the "Confession of Faith" the assertion—"Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess. And, to assert and maintain, that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested."

It is such an assumption of exclusive Divine favour that underlies the self-righteousness protested against by Burns. The personal pharisaism of the "virtuous dames"

was born of the pharisaism of their sect, and in dealing with the latter we touch the essence of the former. Looking at pharisaism in a racial sense we find the fundamental thing in it to be the consciousness on the part of a tribe, nation, or race of its own particular character or individuality. Finding itself in a given territory, having its own features and faculties, with its own history, ideas, and property, it naturally was prejudiced in its own favour. The duties of self-regard, self-culture, and self-protection tend, in certain directions, to self-righteousness, so that egotism in a race is a warped self-respect. The history of mankind shows that every clan, tribe, and people has claimed the special favour of the Infinite. Each one has thought itself better than another. The spirit of egotism has visited every race, and one after another has declared itself the chosen race. There has not been a tribe on earth but has declared itself to be, in its opinion, more than a match for any other in everything, and which has not fought with some other in order to prove its superiority. Thomas Carlyle says, "All war is misunderstanding," but more radically we might say, "All war is egotism," for at bottom all war is an assertion of pharisaic superiority.

In their religion, because in it their life had its most upward and intense form, men have taken the most bitterly exclusive positions. Each race has claimed to have a true theology in contradistinction to other theologies, to have the special favour and protection of the true God, and to be favoured with special communications from Him. Each one has regarded its Bible as the only true Word of God and its sacred customs as constituting the one true religion.

Now, when we look abroad on the various races that exist in the world to-day, each with its own personality, its own distinguishing features and faculties, and its own natural right to be, what can we say of their rival claims to be "chosen?" We can only say there is truth in each claim, while there is also error in each. Each race is of God's making, and derives its natural characteristics from Him. Each one has its portion in God, and its mission to fulfil.

Of the three well marked racial divisions of the old world—the Negro, the Mongol, and the Caucasian no one can be held as undivine. Living in different zones, one could not look over to the other, and say—"I am God's child, but you are not." The Negro, with his flat foot, woolly head, and black skin, can claim the Fatherhood of God as well as the Mongol with his flat face, oblique little eyes, and yellow skin ; and though the Caucasian may well be proud of the intellectual majesty of his countenance, his high arched instep, and white skin, these do not warrant an exclusive claim on the favour of God. Amongst the various tribes and nations in the seething life of the Old World there was not one that did not contribute something to the human energy and wisdom which the New World inherited, and, therefore, each has to be counted when the instruments of Providence are reckoned.

Nor can any one of the peoples of our own time, with any show of reason, claim the exclusive favour of God. Each has its own endowment and its own particular work to do, but all are members of humanity. The great fact which the study of mankind makes plain is "the fundamental and essential oneness of humanity ;" and the knowledge of it ought entirely to dissolve racial and national enmities and jealousies, and establish universal brotherhood.

And, when we look at the various lettered religions of mankind we see that all are essentially one. The ideas of the Infinite Being, of man's relation to Him, of the means of knowing and communing with Him, of duty, of life, of sin, of death, and of what lies beyond are the same in kind in every sacred book. We do not depreciate the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures when we admit that there is nothing in them of an original nature, unique, and altogether unlike anything to be found in other holy books. The fundamental ideas are the same in all, and the Saviours of whom they speak are essentially alike in character. One Bible may be of a higher intellectual and moral degree, and more suitable for a civilized race than any of the other sacred books, but the others are not, therefore, to be declared uninspired, and sent to the limbo of falsehood. Max Müller has well said—

"There never was a false God, nor was there ever really a false religion, unless you call a child a false man. All religions, so far as I know them, had the same purpose, and all were links in a chain which connects heaven and earth, and which is held, and always was held, by one and the same hand. All here on earth tends toward right, and truth, and perfection; nothing here on earth can ever be quite right, quite true, quite perfect, not even Christianity—or what is now called Christianity—so long as it excludes all other religions, instead of loving and embracing what is good in each. Nothing, to my mind, can be sadder than reading the sacred books of mankind, and yet nothing more encouraging. They are full of rubbish; but among that rubbish there are old stones which the builders of the true Temple of Humanity will not reject, must not reject, if their Temple is to hold all who worship God in spirit, in truth, and in life."

Looked at in that philosophic and sympathetic way, the religions of the races are no more to be regarded as undivine than are their features. Each form of religion has a fitness for those who hold it, and each has its "little day" in the course of the development of the human soul. The excommunication of one race, one nation, or one sect by another from the regard of God is without any warrant. As well might the vine excommunicate the bramble, or the granite the sandstone, from the impartial energy of Nature which vivifies all things.

In whatever form exclusiveness is found it is an immorality, an offence against human brotherhood; but it was specially offensive in the pious form in which Burns found it in the orthodoxy of his day. The "high, exalted, and virtuous" character claimed by itself for orthodoxy was really an imposition. Orthodoxy had not then, nor has it now, any great virtue to show in proof of its arrogated superiority. For three hundred years orthodoxy has had its own way in Scotland. Its creed has been dominant, its theological manuals have been taught in the school, and its dogmas have been preached in the Church—with what effect? Have Calvinists been models of virtue? Has

orthodoxy made this country a pattern of high morality? Is Scotland, which has certainly been the most orthodox, the purest country in the world? Our country has been held up before the world as a "Bible-loving" country; it is well known that our sons and daughters generally were, under the influence of Calvinism, the most strictly brought up of all the children in the world; and it is also well known that, so far at least as the outward signs of religion are concerned, Scotchmen are, of all men, most religious. By no other men is the Sabbath so strictly kept, or is a greater profession of piety made. Are they, then, paragons of virtue? Have the "godly laces" bound round them so tightly availed to suppress vicious tendencies? We need not uncover our national sins, or expose the vices that cling to us as a people in order to feel bound to declare, in the face of the pharisaism of orthodoxy, that, in many respects, we compare most unfavourably in matters of morality with other nations. If we are to be judged by our drunkenness and the illegitimacy in our population we will have to go very far down in the line of nations. And these things are not confined to one section of the people, and that the lowest, but are found in all sections—in the highest to as great a degree as in the lowest. In fact, there is no high virtue in the Scotch character which is attributable to the "godly laces" in which it has been tied.

The essential virtue in the character of the Scottish man has come by natural generation from the Celtic, Scandinavian, and other strains of blood mingled in his descent, by the influences of Nature, by the exercise of faculty called forth in the exigencies of life, by culture, and the hundred things of every-day activity which constantly go to the making of character. The Scottish man has been virtuous in spite of his orthodoxy. He has developed virtues of mind and heart in proportion as he has thrown off the influence of orthodoxy. His most inveterate vices are the direct effect of his orthodoxy. It never was in orthodoxy to be a maker of character. Its emphasis, both religious and moral, was laid on something else—viz., "sound believing."

The point in its teaching most forcibly indoctrinated into the mind was that good character had no merit in the sight of God; that all natural human virtue was an abomination to Him. The direct effect of orthodoxy was the discouragement of the culture of character. "Not your own righteousness, but Christ's," was the reiterated instruction of orthodoxy. The practical aim of Calvinism, undoubtedly, was the suppression of the natural tendencies and energies of the mind. It had a direct and disastrous effect upon the intellectual faculties by its rigid suppression of reason, and it had an equally injurious effect upon the heart by forcing it to stamp out its natural affection. Perhaps the most mischievous thing in orthodoxy was, and still is, the taking away of men's thoughts from the present life, and fixing them on the life to come. That has the effect of making daily worldly duty a secular affair quite apart from religion, and of making religion an other-world thing. To be right for the hereafter is the aim Calvinism sets forth—to escape a future hell, and be sure of heaven. To realise his election to eternal bliss, to secure his "blood-washed robe," is the one thing on which the Calvinist sets his mind. When he has done that he need give himself no trouble about culturing his character. The vicarious atonement saves him from requiring to care about character. He has all his sins forgiven by a simple act of belief. He needs only to put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, and he is an accepted man. He needs no education, no culture, no human attainment whatever; these are useless wordly baubles to the converted man.

Now, with all respect for the "godly laces" of orthodoxy, we have to say that they have strangled the Scottish soul instead of saving it. As a power to develop human character, orthodoxy has been in Scotland a signal failure. It has utterly failed to uplift the masses and to touch the classes with the motive of righteousness. Men are painfully obliged to admit that, whenever they experience any intellectual difficulty, or any moral strain, they find orthodoxy unserviceable. It cannot bear the strain of reason, nor does it supply an adequate working power in practical

living. In order to have mental satisfaction, men have to give it up, and, in acting according to their holiest moral feelings, they have to act contrary to it. It is of the very essence of orthodoxy to be speculative, abstract, and remote, and a man may be learned in all that it can teach him, and yet be in utter ignorance what to do in the practical affairs of life. According to its method of tying its "godly laces," children are taught about the Jews and not about themselves, and, if they can say a psalm or repeat the answers of the "Shorter Catechism" correctly, they are regarded as being religiously educated. It is an utter delusion. What has the length of time that a King reigned in Judea to do with the duty that a boy has to fulfil in the living world to-day? When the voices of Nature speak for God anew every day, why should not the child's ear be attuned to them instead of his being taught to parrot the words of an ancient book? Why should children be required to commit to memory the dogmas which science has dissolved? These are not real "godly laces," and there never can be any true virtue got by them.

The proper "laces" for the human mind are reverence of its own natural constitution, respect for its faculties as endowments divinely given for a sacred purpose, for its capacity of development, and for every exercise of its power which lies properly within its function; reverence of human nature in all its parts, of its sensations, affections, and aspirations, of its experiences, intuitions, and ideals, of all the sides of its healthy life, whether of thought, feeling, or action; reverence for every human relationship, whether it be of blood or association, for every duty, whether it be of the hand, the heart, or the mind, for the claims of home, citizenship, patriotism, and humanity at large; reverence for outward Nature, for the wondrous phenomena of universal life, for the facts of Nature, and for the order of the Universe; reverence for human relationship to the Infinite Power manifested in Nature, for the purpose of human life as shown in the natural history of man, for the call that comes to each man to co-work with the Infinite Power for the "far-off divine event to

which the whole creation moves ;" reverence for all truth of whatsoever sort and wherever found, for inquiry ever endeavouring to make knowledge more, and for the new light that comes to each new age : these are the "godly laces" with which, instead of the repressive thongs of orthodoxy, the mind should be tied.

The repressive system has gone on too long, and it is high time that we adopted a system of development. We are now required to make a fresh start in religion and morality, and it must be from a different point than that at which orthodoxy starts. It begins with a "totally depraved" man, living in a "lost and ruined world : " we must begin with a totally divine man living in a world firmly held and beneficently controlled by eternal law. It is the proper work of religion to get men to enhallow, not to depreciate their natural faculties, to set them to work to develop their nature, and not to repudiate it, to show them that salvation consists in the proportionment and attunement of their human endowments. Men have to be taught to believe in their own divinity, to perceive the essential goodness of every element in their mental constitution, and to have the courage of their human powers. They have to be convinced that each faculty of their nature is good in its place, and that it is for them to subdue each to its own proper work, and make their character a unity. It has to be brought home to them that their religious responsibility is constituted by the fact of their humanity, and not by their possession of a Bible, that their relation to God is an original one, as direct and immediate as that of "holy men of old," and that inspiration and speech with God is as certainly possible to them to-day as ever it was in the past. The man of to-day, in order to be truly religious, has to be really the man of to-day, to face the light of to-day, to assimilate the truth of to-day, and to do the work of to-day.

There is another aspect of the pharisaism of orthodoxy which it is of importance to note. As might have been expected, the idea of an elect class, a chosen people, a privileged number has passed from the Church into society. There are those who claim a divine right to wealth, position,

and power. They regard themselves as chosen to be the capitalists, rulers, and princes of the world. They view the poor as an inferior class made to work for them. They hold the workers as their subjects, who ought to be grateful for being employed by them, and thankful for the wages they choose to pay them. These "upper classes," under the shelter of orthodox religion and economics, have established themselves in their "high and exalted" position, and look down with contempt on those whose toil supports them where they are. They have tied the "godly laces" of conventional morality round their "property," and now hold a monopoly of the means of life. Thus the State is the counterpart of the Church; the exclusiveness in the creeds has taken shape in deeds; the Pharisee in religion has become the monopolist in Society. The theological dogma of "election" supports the belief in and the existence of privileged classes. Orthodox theology and orthodox economics are the same at heart: selfishness is at the core of both. We may well ask, Has the existence of a "high, exalted" privileged class in society been productive of social good? Have the "godly laces" with which our social relations are tied up been the means of securing social virtue?

It is not too much to say that pharisaism in morality has been equally as bad in its effects as pharisaism in religion. No man looking deeply into existing social relations and conditions can help being appalled at the injustice and misery belonging to them. A great gulf separates the "high, exalted" idlers from the low, degraded workers. Those who toil most are the poorest and most debased, and those who work none are the wealthiest and most honoured. It is a fact, as Patrick Dove pointed out long ago, that "the aristocracy of England, the most numerous and wealthy in the world, are entirely supported out of the profits of the labourers." By a curious moral perversity we call the real paupers "peers," and let them sit in the "Upper House," and keep the poorhouse for those who produce our wealth! These paupers claim ownership of the soil, and keep it for "sport," while thousands who might be employed in tilling it are thrown into helpless idleness. And while the real paupers

live in luxury in fine mansions, those who made the wealth which they enjoy are forced to exist in poverty in unhealthy slums. There is hardly one redeeming point in social life as it at present exists : it is wholly corrupt, and is doomed to destruction. And what is plainly obvious is that the "upper classes" who have profited by it are actually the most corrupt. It was so in the day of Jesus, and it is so again. He saw that the worst sinners, those who were most blameworthy with regard to existing iniquity, were the "upper classes." His indignant denunciations were directed against them, and his most withering rebukes were aimed at their "high, exalted" attitude, and their "godly laces." They took the chief seats when they should have taken the lowest. They gloried in their affluence when they ought to have been ashamed of it. They were utterly immoral in their conduct, and the very "publicans and harlots" entered the kingdom of heaven before them. The same is the case to-day.

Is it not needful, therefore, that the "Address to the Unco Guid" should be re-read to the Pharisees of the Church and Society? The special and pressing need of our time is the regeneration of moral sympathy, the bringing of the "high, exalted" classes into compassionate touch with the toiling and suffering masses, the quickening of social life by a just and holy spirit. In addressing the "venerable core, as counsel for poor mortals," Burns had directly in mind the "failings and mischances" of the latter. But we are at liberty to enlarge the scope of his vision, and to apply the lesson of his poem to the religious and moral conditions of our time. There is a severe necessity causing us to ask the "high, exalted" ones to look at the social gulf that divides rich from poor; and with pointed application, the words of Burns might be repeated to them :—

"Ye see your state wi' their's compar'd,
And shudder at the niffer;
But cast a moment's fair regard,
What mak's the mighty differ."

The religious conscience of our time has to be set to the work of adjusting conduct to fundamental principles of

justice. If there is any truth in the idea of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, religious men ought to set themselves to make the idea a reality in society. And, in order to make it so, they must fling away as falsities the dogmas which assert that some are elected to bliss by God, and others are "passed by," and which maintain a wrong spirit of conduct and an unjust state of society. True morality cannot possibly exist so long as the idea of a privileged class is countenanced by religion. All that is worthy in human life to-day, all that reform has done and progress achieved has been won by those who struggled against the Calvinian notion of a chosen few to whom the earth belonged here, and whose was heaven hereafter. The best virtues in our nature are the bequest of those who resisted privilege in Kirk and State, and we will be untrue to our sturdy forefathers if we do not continue the struggle in the form in which it comes to us. Religion itself has always been reformed and regenerated by opposition to the pharisaic claims of those who sought to shape it despotically, and morality has ever been developed by those who earnestly believed in democracy, and strongly strove for justice for the whole people. The rule of the Pharisee has proved to be an unjust and unbearable one; now we need a rule founded on fraternity. The "laces" of life which were thought to be "godly," but which have proved to be ungodly because they have created immoral conditions, made man the enemy of man, and kept the masses in misery, have to be rejected, and ties have to be adopted which will honour the principle of human brotherhood, and link men together by the sympathies divinely placed in the soul by Him who "knows each cord its various tone, each spring its various bias," and in whose sight all men are one—the children of His impartial love.

Bound together with the real "godly laces" of sympathy and service, men will "gently scan" the "brother man," "still gentler sister woman:" instead of pharisaically marking the "fauls and folly" of "poor mortals," will compassionately help the "thoughtless" and "careless" to overcome their "mistakes" and "failings;" and while

knowing that "to step aside is human," will strenuously labour to develop the moral power of humanity, and make human will less wayward, and to enable men to step forward in the way of right, firmly and surely.





“ Poor Tenant Bodies.”

“ *The Twa Dogs.*”



THE parable of “The Twa Dogs” was written in the summer of 1786, while Burns the husbandman waited for the “latter rain” and the genial sun to crown his sowing. He was moved to write it by the death of a favourite dog, and it grew on his hands till it became a revelation of social conditions. He immortalised his “gash and faithfu’ tyke ;” but, with a comprehensive compassion, he thought also of the condition of “poor tenant bodies,” and discussed it in his poem with sagacious sympathy. The dialogue taken up in turn by Cæsar and Luath touches the imagination at once in the interesting form given to it by the art of the poet, and absorbs attention to the end.

The dogs are typical animals, each noble after his kind. Cæsar, the foreigner, kept for “his Honour’s pleasure” is “the gentleman and scholar,” but is not proud. Indeed, though evidently “nane o’ Scotland’s dogs,” he has a sympathetic eye for the poor folk of Coil, has reflected much upon their condition, and feels for them in his kindly heart. Luath, the native, “a ploughman’s collie,” commends himself at once by “his honest, sonsie, baws’nt face.” These two, set in life-like form on the knowe before us, begin their talk “about the lords o’ the creation.”

We are taken with the happy idea of their "digression," and are eager to know what they have to say regarding human beings. The foreign dog is an unprejudiced observer, and speaks with the authority of a judge. Luath is on his native soil, and gives utterance to the impressions and sentiments of the place. As we follow their talk we find that through them the poet lets the gentry and the tenant bodies see themselves as ithers see them. The dogs, while living with human beings, stood outside the human sphere, and could view what went on therein with unsuspected attention and instinctive judgment. And, in confidence with each other, they could say many things about men that men themselves could not or might not say. So, through these confidential creatures, we have an inner view of the mansion and of the cot, and a critical review of their inhabitants.

Cæsar takes an accusative and Luath a defensive attitude. In setting them thus, Burns displayed the power of a true artist. Cæsar, as a foreigner, enters the scene of the colloquy without any prepossession, looks dispassionately, and judges as an unbiassed spectator. What he sees makes him side with the poor. Though he is a laird's dog he is democratic in his feelings—a radical in spite of his place. He opens the dialogue with a frankly-declared sympathy with "poor dogs" and "poor bodies," and carries it on in honest pity for them. Luath respectfully listens and acquiesces, but is apologetic and excusatory. He cannot deny the truth of what Cæsar affirms, but he has more of "the milk of human kindness" in him, and makes large allowances. But Cæsar's indignant exposures carry the issue. That reveals a master hand. The outcome of the dialogue, the impression, and verdict of it would not have been so weighty if Luath had begun it with a whining complaint of the wretchedness of poverty. The poor dog does not hang his head for "honest poverty," but sits with upright and thoughtful air while the gentlemanly dog expresses his wonder how poor bodies live. Though he agrees with Cæsar as to the injustice of their sufferings, and cannot help showing his satisfaction with his friend's wrathful censures of "the gentry's life," he defends the poor from imputed wretched-

ness, and with honourable fidelity dwells on the brighter side of their lot. Too patient to complain, he is too independent to admit the actual misery alleged by Cæsar. With modest dignity he stands up for the poor, and conceals whatever pangs of poverty he has (and he is not without them) with cheerful art. But, withal, the impression made by the poem is that Cæsar's honest indignation has the truth in it, and that the tale is really an indictment of landlordism.

That "ism" had flagrantly enough made itself felt in Burns' day: it, in fact, constituted the pressing problem with the Cotters of Coil. It was fitting, yea, it was imperative, that the poet of the soil should strike his very first note in sympathy with his suffering fellows.

The compassion and courage of Burns are strongly shown in this fable. Clearly, also, does the poem show the subtlety of his art. What was in the heart and soul of "poor tenant bodies," but which they dare not utter, he made dogs declare. Out of the mouth of the laird's own dog he accused the laird. It was an exquisite device. He divined that the art of the poem would be its passport, and, while it charmed with its piquant truthfulness, it would carry its moral lesson home to the conscience. Even "the gentry" could not resent the revelation, for the picture of their doings was taken on the very spot, as it were, by one of themselves. Landlordism stood condemned by its own confession. How "the cot folk" must have enjoyed the powerful poem! It expressed to the world with a surpassing skill what they could only privately mutter, and it gave them courage and hope. If the poem was intended by Burns, as it seems to have been, to be an impeachment of landlordism and an appeal for justice to tenants, the skill shown in its construction is beyond all praise. It makes landlordism unbare itself, wounds it without seeming to touch it, and sends it away to age-lasting correction.

There were three masters who, in the day of Burns, held the soul of his countrymen in bondage—viz., the Laird, the Church, and the Devil. He set himself to dissolve that triple alliance. The three were curiously allied. The laird was the patron of the priest, and both together called in the

devil to help them to keep their power. Burns instinctively felt that war must be declared against these three together, and as the laird was nearest to hand, he began his moral warfare with him in his first poem.

How he introduces the laird in his accusing parable need not be rehearsed at length, for the picture of "his Honour" rising "when he likes himsel'," ca'ing his coach, or his horse, and getting his "racked rents" is familiar to every Scotchman. Well known, also, is the description of life in his Honour's house "frae morn to e'en," with its "thrashtrie and wastrie," the evidence of which is given in the fact that the "whipper-in, wee blastit wonner, poor worthless elf, it eats a dinner better than ony tenant man his Honor has in a' the land." Equally familiar is the scathing account of "his Honor's" doings abroad, in which every line is as a lightning flash, revealing destructive dissipation. All know how Cæsar continues his tale of gentry's doings, and in graphic whispers tells how "the ladies"

"Owre the wee bit cup and platie,
Sip the scandal-potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit looks,
Pore ower the devil's pictured beuks;
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like ony unhang'd blackguard,"

The iniquitous tale of "the gentry's life in common" is told so circumstantially, vividly, and convictingly that there is no refuge for it. It stands out in its own red shame without excuse or possible covering. Luath, in his simple innocence, tries to tone it down a little, but only succeeds in evoking fresh indignation. He protests that the gentry are not ill-hearted, and thinks that if they would "stay back frae courts and please themsels wi' countra sports" all would be right. But Cæsar has seen too much of them to admit *that*, and declares them to be "curst wi' ev'n down want o' wark."

Burns had evidently pondered deeply over the agrarian problem, and discerned its radical evils. He saw, as one who was a century before his time, that the root of the evil

lay in the possession of land by a caste that had no sympathy with the people, and cared nothing "for delvers, ditchers, and sic cattle," though they were their own tenants. And, adding to the evil, the lairds, while prodigally living abroad, left the management of their estates to factors who had less regard still for those from whom the racked rent had to be screwed.

It has to be noted that, although absenteeism was an obvious immorality, Burns seemingly did not think that the cure of it would put an end to the inherent evil of landlordism. He saw deeper, and perceived that, while the land was owned by an idle class who

" loiter, lounging, lank, and lazy,
Their days linsiped, dull, and tasteless,
Their nights unquiet, lang, and restless,"

the farmer's stackyard would still be staked on a chance, and the farmer himself would be "riven out baith root and branch, some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench."

The dialogue breaks off without a settlement of the question, but the poet plainly enough indicates his conviction that the laird could not be converted, and should be displaced. He makes it very plain that "the gentry" are worse than useless, being the cause of downright oppression and degradation, menials in Parliament and miserable in themselves. He does not say "abolish the Lords," but he leaves it to be inferred that such was his ultimatum. In the name "Cæsar," which he gives to the outspoken and compassionate dog, he appears to suggest that the matter is one for the State to deal with. However, he clearly shows that the relation of landlord and tenant should be fulfilled in moral sympathy, and that the power, whatever it might be, that held the land, should not exact racked rents, or deal in any unjust way with those who till it.

There are many evidences in the poem that Burns held very advanced views on landlordism, and the adroitness with which these are suggested rather than expressed marks his art in shaping the poem. Even as he fashioned it, it was a daring effort. He was obliged to pass off his radicalism as a

dog's domestic politics, but seeing men could look through the fable's guise to the prophetic thought within. If anyone asserts that there is much more in the poem than appears on the face of it, we need not accuse him of reading something into it. Its direct cause may have been the death of a favourite dog; it may have been dashed off during an evening's walk or ride from Kilmarnock to Mossiel, but there are remarkable thoughts in it, which came from depths of the poet's mind. It was a prophetic utterance addressed to lairds and tenants—a Cotter's manifesto drawn up with consummate art declaring the want of a new social covenant.

Never was the case of an oppressed class more finely stated. The advocate, "a gentleman and scholar," though foreign, speaks for the poor Cotters of Scotland with sincerest sympathy. He cannot conceal his indignation at their oppressions, but seeks to arouse compassion rather than to provoke anger. He looks at their case from an aristocratic point of view, but is a fresh and kindly observer. With heaving breast he says :—

" I've noticed, on our laird's court day,
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash ;
He'll stamp and threaten, curse and swear,
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear ;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear and tremble !"

The simple description of the scene is enough. Elaboration would have weakened the moral point of it, and it is left in its sad truthfulness with the conscience of humanity. By that one line :—

" Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,"

Burns brings vividly before the imagination the struggling generations of "Cot folk," bound to the soil in perpetual penury; toil-worn, oppressed, patient, "decent, honest, fawsont folk," from year to year at the mercy of the weather and the lairds; and who, because they could not on demand pay the "racked rents," have tremblingly to "thole the

factor's snash"—a long line of haggard, heavy-laden, earth-bound men, the martyrs of feudalism. "A creditable stock," indeed, albeit too dumbly and submissively tholing their oppression. Luath, by the light of the evening fire, shows their "dearest comfort" and their "social mirth," in which, while "Love blinks, and wit slaps," they forget "there's care upo' the earth." But the very softness introduced into the picture by the pardonable partiality of the ploughman's collie, heightens the harshness of "the factor's snash" and "pridefu' greed." The native worth of the "honest folk," their intelligence, their happiness extracted from so little, adds to the guilt of the oppression which they suffer, and so, when faithfu' Luath, in his defensive dignity, tries to screen the wretchedness of their poverty, he really displays the injustice of the system which so defrauds and degrades such creditable delvers and ditchers.

"The Twa Dogs" is certainly one of the greatest of the several great poems of Burns. As a discussion of the agrarian question it is consummately skilful. There is deep and electric indignation in it, but its lightning is made to carry a serviceable sympathy rather than to strike destructively; there is powerful pathos in it, but it does not exaggerate sufferings to extort pity; and there is a fine moral motive in it which shows itself through its exquisite art. A loving critic says of it—"There is wisdom and sagacity in it deeper than most philosophies of life, charity and religion broader than any creed, artistic simplicity and power like the finest painting." There can be little doubt that it was intended by Burns to be a strain of compassion and deliverance for his oppressed Cotter brethern, and we may well wonder how, after hearing it, they still remained in slavery.

Perhaps the strain has yet to be truly heard. To-day, however, the case of the Cotter is worse than it was then. The "pridefu' greed" of the landlord has not abated nor the "factor's snash" ceased. Nowhere at present in this country can the soil produce the rent claimed for it, and everywhere there is distress. That parable of the "Twa Dogs" is as true now as when it was written. By it Burns

might speak livingly to the country if there were "ears to hear." With added force his poem comes down the confirming years to show us that the cup of landlordial iniquity is full, and can no longer be carried by the tenant folk. Tholing has ceased to be a virtue, and the hour has come for strenuous efforts for complete deliverance. An appeal must be made to Cæsar, and it is required of the State that it shall show sympathy with the oppressed, and be willing to fulfil all righteousness.

But, not in the country only, and amongst farmers, crofters, and cotters, is there a tenant's question: the question has pressingly arisen in the city, and amongst the masses of artizans and labourers. The graphic passage in the poem in which the "poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash" are spoken of so compassionately applies accurately now to the great mass of city tenants. Their deliverance, also, lies in the abolition of landlordism, and in the placing of house-building and owning in the hands of the community. May we not work for this, and trust that the time is not far distant when, in juster and happier conditions, the words of our poet may be used to describe scenes in cities in which the masses are united in common recreation, and,

"Love blinks, wit slaps, an' social mirth
Forgets there's care up' the earth."





“The Man’s the Gowd.”

“*A Man’s a Man for a’ that.*”

Twas in the deepening gloaming of his brief life, when there was but a step between him and death, that Robert Burns, at Dumfries, on or about New Year’s Day, 1795, wrote “A man’s a man for a’ that,” the marching song of Scottish democracy. The blood was rapidly oozing out of his broken heart: his dearest vein had premonition of its last faint gurgle; but, in one of the yearning heart-throbs which favoured his wish to sing the domestic sentiments of his brethren, he sang the thrilling lyric of manhood.

It is said that the Scriptures of the Hindus were written from a drop of blood out of the heart of Vishnu. We may say that this poem, which has in it the essence of the most vital feelings of Burns, was written with *his* heart’s blood. It is almost his last word: his dying testament to his deeply indebted brethren. It was his habit to be unusually thoughtful on New Year’s Day. One of his best letters—that in which he speaks of being accustomed to set aside times for special devotion—was written to Mrs. Dunlop on New Year’s Day, 1789. On a New Year’s Day, too, it may be presumed, he wrote his “Salutation” to his Auld Mare Maggie.

On the day on which “A man’s a man for a’ that” was written he had cause to be serious. The clouds of night were

gathering fast and thick around him. He had left his unfortunate farm and his native shire for ever, to enter upon his excise duties at Dumfries. A prey to distracting aims and passions, saddened by bitter memories, and weighted with parental cares, he was in no humour to play with his muse. Shelley says “Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought,” and his declaration finds an illustration in “A man’s a man for a’ that.” A few days before he composed the poem, Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop telling her of the illness of his youngest child. He said “I cannot describe the anxious, sleepless hours my domestic ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little folks, me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a little thread does the life of a man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate, even in all the vigour of manhood as I am—gracious God! what would become of my little flock.”

But, in his anxiety, and while the shadow of death drew closer, the muse visited him. The song-charter of manhood was not yet written. The prophetic, animating, assuring, marching chant of democracy had to be produced for Scotchmen. In the solemnity and hopefulness of the first day of the year it was composed, and despatched to Thomson, with these remarks about it—“A great critic in song says that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme. I do not give you the song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*.” Burns did not realise the worth of his own production. It is one of the three songs which have gone deepest into the Scottish soul, and made the Scottish man what he is. “Scots Wha Hae” has vitalised the sentiment of national freedom; “Auld Lang Syne” has kept the electric thrill coursing round the circle of friendship; and “A man’s a man for a’ that” has sustained the hope of universal brotherhood. The prophecy of world-wide brotherhood is worthy of the later inspiration of Burns.

In his letter to Thomson, undertaking to contribute to the collection of songs contemplated, we may see

the foreshadowing of this song. He wrote—"As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price ; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright prostitution of soul." The pen that could write these words was just the one from which, at any moment, there might flow "*A man's a man for a' that.*" Hints, or foregleams of the song may be discerned in his earlier pieces. What may be called the text of it is contained in the incorporated line in "*The Cotter's Saturday Night*"—"An honest man's the noblest work of God." The divine inspiration which, in the fulness of time, brought it forth appears in "*The Vision*" :—

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan ;
Preserve the dignity of man
With soul erect ;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect."

In the "*Epistle to Davie*" we may discern the nebulous gathering of the poem, and in "*Man was made to Mourn*" we can trace the up-welling of the scorn of lordly dominance, which found full expression in the evening song, sung for the sake of the coming dawn.

These preliminaries show how the mind of Burns was working up to his lyric of manliness. The song came at last, as the expression of his fuller and finer feeling, to be the warrant of manhood to his brethren, a refuge for self-respect, an enhallowment of personality. It contains the pith of his philosophy, the marrow of his morality, the essence of his religion. The richest flavour of his human sympathy is in it : his most intense earnestness for human unity and weal finds noble expression in it : his most prophetic heart-throb beats in it.

"The dignity of man" was the ideal which his father gave him to realise, and it was to it that he sought through all hindrances to rise. By the stoop in his own being he knew that an erect soul was the one thing which outweighed all wealth, rank, and fame, and gave satisfaction to life. It

had not been his with saintly power to sanctify himself and be the man he should ; but all the more did he need, ere he went from men, to emphasise the "gowd" of manhood. As the poet-prophet of a poor country, it behoved him to throw the protection of moral respect around the lot of lowly toil, to teach the poor how to dignify themselves, and to stand between the down-trodden and their oppressors. He knew how poverty tended to demoralise, how it worried and took the heart out of a man, how it sapped his self-respect, and made him reckless of his character. He saw the degradation of servitude to which his class was subject, how the Cotter had to suffer the "factor's snash," how the peer scorned the ploughman, and how even the preacher passed by the poor ; and, if he could not abolish poortith, he might, at least, try to abolish the shame of "honest poverty."

To make the honest man honourable in his poverty, the serf stand upright in presence of his lord, the man have the courage of his manhood, whatever his estate, Burns wrote this song. The strain was urgently needed, and that, most of all, perhaps, to protect the people from the debasing influence of the dogma of total depravity. They were taught in Church to regard themselves as worthless in God's sight, and fit only for hell. It was dinned into their ears continually that, if they would be saved, they must repudiate all that was natural in them, distrust their reason, tear out their human affections, and cast away their best deeds as filthy rags. As the redeemer of his people by the power of song, it was the work of Burns to lift them out of abject servility, and make them cease to cringe before peer and parson, and help them to carry to kirk and market a noble manliness. The song of their redemption was "A man's a man for a' that." It was the making of the Scottish man, the ideal of being set before him to realise. As a song it is perfect. It catches the ear at once by its arresting and rebuking question :—

" Is there for honest poverty
That hangs his head, and a' that ! "

and carries sympathy warmly with it up to the high and holy place of faith and prayer, and leaves it there with

clasped hands and entranced eyes, waiting for the coming of world-wide brotherhood.

By this song the "hamely fare" and "hodden grey" of the obscure toiler are enhalloved; the independence of mind that looks and laughs at the ribbands and stars of strutting lordlihood is honoured; "the pith o' sense and pride o' worth" are glorified above all prince-made rank, in the most touching and enthusiastic fashion. Written to the air, "Up and waur them a' Willy," it sounds as if it were a "Rogues March" played to chase forth fools and knaves, or like a charge up-hill to drive out the entrenched despotic dignitaries. When the banner of democracy is planted on the hill-top, and the routed and shamed hordes of unreal men rush to oblivion, scattering their silks and stars as they fly, honesty drops on its knees, and, in the assurance of faith, prophesies the coming of the republic of man!

Mazzini, with true insight, said—"The great secret, the great power of poetry lies in the very act of placing the soul in presence of its own infinite field—by giving it wings to soar thither." That is what Burns has done in this song: he has given the soul wings to soar to an ineffable manhood. The singing of the song with any worthy feeling is an education in manhood: one cannot read it without being stirred to manlier life.

But what avails the poem? Are we really nearer the era of brotherhood, of justice, of manliness foreseen by Burns? Have we got rid of castes, monopolies, inequalities in our social life? Alas! we have not. A counterfeit manhood circulates instead of the "gowd." There is a worse slavery of toil. The social inequalities of men are greater than ever they were. Instead of making for brotherhood, we have been making for belligerence. Life, instead of becoming a co-operation, is more and more tending to a competition. Every year increases the difficulty for the mass of the people to obtain the necessities of life, and adds to the poverty and degradation of the workers. How can social brotherhood come without a revolution, so long as there is established, as the product of what is regarded as a Divine system, a class of workers at the bottom and a class of idlers at the top;

while there are millions doomed to poverty, and thousands revelling in luxury, and want and wealth are separated by a great gulf fixed? We may applaud the singing of "A man's a man for a that," but these things prevent man from being properly man. Manhood cannot live in such conditions. Is that stunted, pale-faced creature a man, who, at five in the morning, is dragged from his pallet of straw in an attic in a slum to go to work for a miserable pittance in a poisonous factory? Is that a free man who is obliged to give two strokes of his hammer for his master ere he can give one stroke for himself? Is that a brotherhood in which the land is monopolised by those who, by their monopoly, tax the whole industry of the country to keep them in their idleness? Is that a fair, healthy, and happy social system in which the 222,500 families of the upper classes possess more than two-thirds of the wealth of the country, while the 1,834,400 of the middle classes possess one-fourth of it, and the 4,629,100 families of those who are the actual producers of wealth possess only one-twentieth of it? Why, we ought to hide our faces in shame when "A man's a man for a' that" is sung! It is a condemnation, by the genius of our country, of our social degradation and slavery. We are, as a people, in bondage to the "knaves" and "coofs" who have established themselves by the might of money over us; we beck and bow to them, give them our votes, and then sit down and sing "A man's a man for a' that," and expect the Millennium! We hug our very chains.

The political reforms of our age aggravate our social deformities, while they divert attention from them. An extension of the franchise covers industrial iniquity. A political checking of lordly power makes the people feel as if they were rising. A development of the machinery of Government looks like a regeneration of the men who govern. But it is not so. The suffrage may be extended till we have what is called "manhood suffrage;" but that will not produce true manliness in the voters. The Lords may be abolished as a hereditary legislative body, the monarchy may be turned into a republic, and still the social condition of the poor may not be one whit better. So long as monopoly

of the soil and of the means of production is allowed, so long as commerce is competitive in its method and mercenary in its spirit, so long as industry is dominated by a desire for individual profit, and not by an aim of brotherly service, social wrong and misery will exist.

In the day of Burns the people had to complain of political injustice, but the present forms of social wrong were not then in existence. In his day more than half of the population lived in rural conditions, and industry was but to a small extent mechanical. Now, more than three-fifths of our people live in towns, and industry is almost wholly mechanical. The wage slavery of our day has risen up since Burns wrote "*A man's a man for a' that.*" Our slums have grown up since then. A new kind of master, called a capitalist, has come into being. The complexion and character of society are altered. "New occasions teach new duties." Now the lowly toiler does not need to organise to get his part in the government of the country, but to get his share of the wealth which he produces. He does not require to fight for a vote, but necessity is laid upon him to struggle for the means of life. He has to say—"I will no longer tolerate dishonest possession of the soil; I will not be driven off the land which is for me in common with my brethren; I will not have my labour taxed by idlers; I demand of society what I require as a man; I refuse to live in a slum, to work for a bare subsistence, to be a drudge; I want to live the life of a man, to have the intelligence of a man, the character of a man, and the satisfaction of a man."

It is manhood that is still at stake—honest, full, real manhood. What though the material wealth of the country goes on increasing, if manhood does not become nobler? What though trade is developed, if honesty is not developed with it? Our wealth is worthless without morality, our trade is toil misspent if it does not occupy worthy human faculties. If we do not live together for the sake of manhood, to co-operate with each other for the development of human nature, to make our world more and more a home of human beings, we live evilly and hinder the Divine purpose.

Here, then, in this prophecy forthtold by our brother nearly a hundred years ago : are we going to rise to fulfil it ? Little use is there in singing "it's coming yet," if we do not work to bring it. We have kept "A man's a man for a' that " too long as a pot-house sentiment : we must make it the motto of our soberest and most earnest hours. We have hitherto made the motto a thing of cant : we must make it the watchword of cross-bearers, the rallying call of men determined to end the conditions that degrade humanity.

He who says—"I will eat and drink and take my pleasure, and will leave that fight to fools " is no man : he is an arrant coward. He who says—"I must mind my interest, my pocket, my class ; who, while convinced that the few are right, associates and votes with the many ; who says with his patrons and not with his principles, is a knave, and makes his place the burrow of a beast, and not the high tower of a man. Let us choose as ours the interest of manhood, make our watchwords those of the spiritual and not of the material order—wisdom, righteousness, and piety rather than wealth, rank, and pleasure, and our object the transformation of life from a brutal competition to a brotherly co-operation, and then we may truly pray

that come it may . . .
That man to man, the world o'er
Shall brothers be, for a' that."



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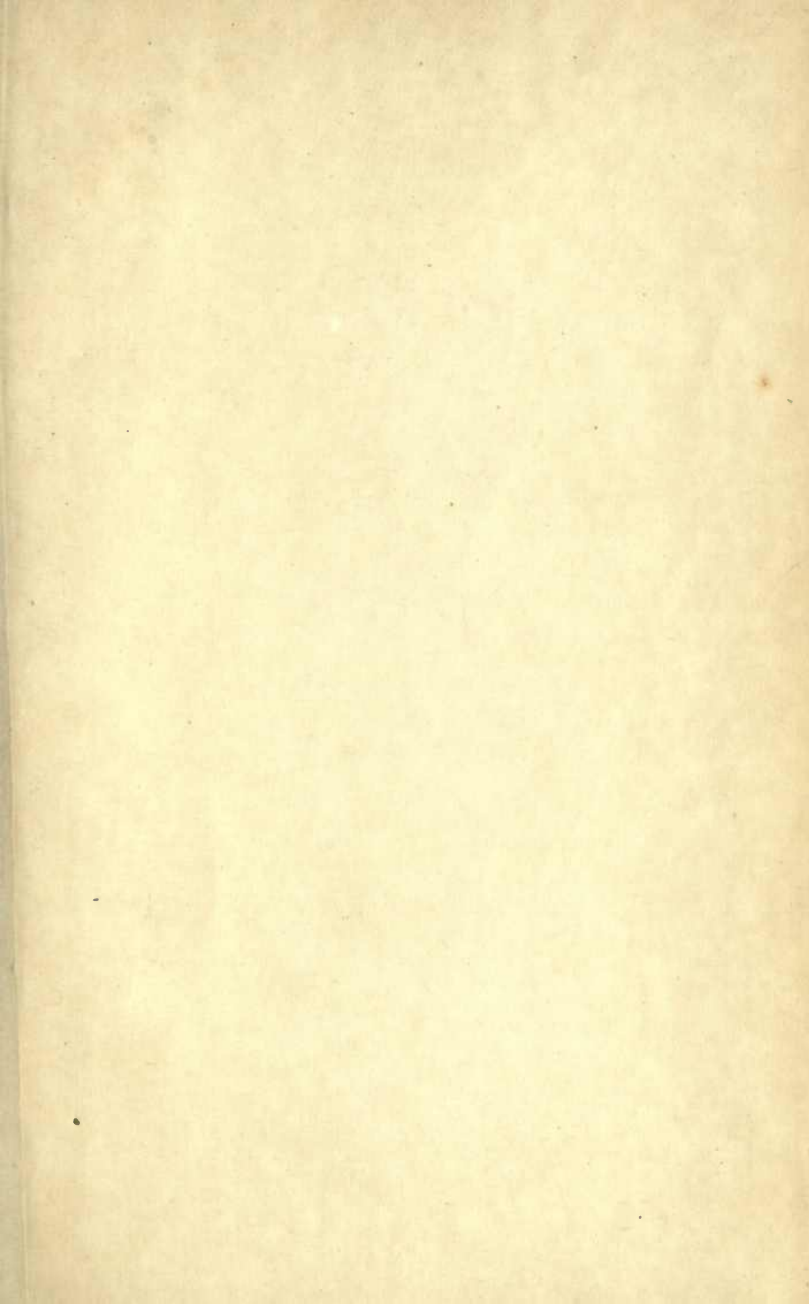
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