The Immortal Memory

of

Robert Burns

By JOHN STIRLING

Proposed at the Annual Burns Celebration of Whitburn Ex-Servicemen, held in the Masonic Temple. Mr Hugh Clarkson, M.A., presided over a large attendance. An orchestra (under Mr Angelo Marsden, A.R.M.C.M.) rendered selections; while songs and recitations from the Poet's works were given with much acceptance during the course of the evening.

The Immortal Memory

Why is it that Burns, to Scotsmen, is what no other man of letters is? Why is it that not alone in this country, but everywhere throughout the civilised world, that his memory is kept green? It is because he has made for himself an imperishable place in the hearts of his countrymen, that he still lives amongst us. There is no man who has laid bare his life, his thoughts, his failings, his passions, moods and tempers, as he has done.

> Time but the impression stronger make
> As streams their channels deeper wear.

His early years were spent in extreme poverty in the wee clay biggin' near the Brig o' Doon, where he was born on the 25th January, 1759. In the farm of Mount Oliphant and the farm of Lochlea, near Tarbolton, his lot was one of constant toil.

But still, there were some bright spots in an otherwise hard lot. He was blest with a most excellent and Christian father—a

father who made companions of his boys. In many ways this must have been, despite the toil, the happiest time of the Poet's life.

At this time his writing was done in a wee garret up a ladder stair, with its solitary bed shared by his brother Gilbert. In the drawer of a plain table he kept his masterpieces, which were to astound the world.

As a poet, Burns stands in the first rank. His thoughts are new; his manner unborrowed; his language his own. All his topics are simple and natural. He was the first who taught his fellow-countrymen that in lowly subjects high poetry resided; and, touched by him, they were lifted at once into the realms of inspiration. He is one of the truest and most stirringly heart-reaching of poets. In ease, fire, and passion, he is second to none. The nature he infused into all he wrote deals with human emotions. His best poems deal with rural and pastoral life.

He displayed great powers of imagination, yet the subjects he wrote on are seldom imaginary. In the higher powers of imagination, instances may be found in the poem entitled "Death and Dr Hornbrook," and in almost every stanza of his "Address to the Deil"—one of the happiest of his productions.

His poems may be considered as the effusions of his sensibility, and the transcript of his musings as the real incidents of his

humble life. The Poet does not confine himself to the descriptive, the humorous, or the pathetic; he rises, as occasion offers, with ease into the terrible and the sublime. His descriptive powers, whether the objects on which they are employed be comic or serious, are of the highest order. His humour is irresistibly amusing.

At the age of 26 he had composed such literary gems as "The Cottar's Saturday Night," "The Two Dougs," "The Jolly Beggars," "Address to the Deil," etc.

When the Poet decided on his tour to Edinburgh, he rode on a horse borrowed from a friend; calling at various farms on the way, his approach was always signalled, the farmers and servants turning out to welcome him. He astonished the members of his own rank and station by his extraordinary powers in conversation.

On the night of the 28th November, 1786, he arrived at Baxter's Close, in the Lawnmarket of Edinburgh, there to share a humble room with his friend John Richmond. All that memorable winter it was his abode. He was received into the abodes, and was a welcome guest with all the most

notable, literary, and fashionable people of Edinburgh.

He was straight from the plough, never having earned more than £7 a year, dined on the simplest fare, associated with the humblest of subjects, and was suddenly projected into the most learned, most accomplished, and most fashionable people in Scotland. It would have turned the head of any man, but it had no effect upon our Bard.

All Edinburgh was agog at the Poet's arrival. The very children in the streets were anxious to get a look at him. Jeffrey tells us that one day, when a lad, on the streets of Edinburgh, a man passed him whose appearance attracted his attention; and while he was gazing at him a shopkeeper said—"Ah, laddie, ye may weel look at that man, for it is Rabbie Burns."

Sir Walter Scott met him—he was then a lad of 15—at the home of Professor Adam Ferguson. There were but two sentences exchanged between these two of Scotland's greatest literary sons. Burns was looking at a picture of a soldier lying dead on the snow, with explanatory lines underneath, and enquired who the author was. No one knew but young Scott, and he hesitatingly told the Poet the author's name. Burns shook him by the hand, and, looking at him, said—"This boy will be heard of yet." A prediction that most assuredly came true.

The great Wizard of the North was proud to tell in his old age that while yet a lad in his teens he had earned the approving smile of the Poet.

The gay Duchess of Gordon declared that Burns' conversation had completely carried her off her feet.

In a description of the meeting with Burns, Scott says—"His person was strong and robust, a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity which received part of its effect from ones knowledge of his extraordinary talents. I would have taken the Poet, had I not known what he was, for a sagacious farmer of the Old School. The eye alone delineated the poetic character: it was large, and of a cast which glowed with feeling. I never saw such another eye in a human head. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence without the slightest presumption. Among men who were the most learned he expressed himself with firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness."

Such was the man as depicted by the great Sir Walter.

While in Edinburgh he met the genial and witty Henry Erskine, the great lawyer, who spent his declining years in his country house at Almondell, and is buried in Uphall

Parish Church. Here is how Burns dashed him off—

> Collected, Harry stood a wee,
> Then opened out his arms, man,
> His Lordship sat wi' ruefu' e'e,
> And ey'd the gathering storm, man.
> Like wind-driv'n hail it did assail
> As torrents owre a linn, man;
> The bench sae wise lift up their eyes
> Half-waken'd wi' the din, man.

The Poet spent another winter in Edinburgh; this time he lived in the top storey of No. 2 St. James' Square. This was when he met the charming and fascinating Mrs M'Lehose (Clarinda) with whom he kept up a memorable correspondence.

It would be a long story to tell you of the tours he took to the Highlands and to the Lowlands of Scotland—a record of which the Poet kept. He visited Linlithgow Palace, Loch, and the Auld Kirk of St. Michael's. He was made an honorary member of the Ancient Brazen Lodge of Freemasons.

He crossed the Borders into England; and while walking with his old friend Ainslie, he turned round, uncovered his head, and recited the following lines from "The Cottar's Saturday Night"—

> O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
> For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent,
> Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
> Be blessed with health, and peace, and sweet content!

On his third tour through the Midlands of Scotland he was accompanied by Dr Adair, a relative of Mrs Dunlop. They called at Clackmannan Tower, where dwelt an old lady of 90, Mrs Bruce, a lineal descendant of King Robert the Bruce. She was in possession of the Bruce's two-handed sword, and which is now in the keeping of the Earl of Elgin.

After dinner, she stated that she had more right than some folks to bestow knighthoods. In due course she commanded Burns and Dr Adair to kneel before her, lightly touched each on the shoulder with the sword, and ordered them to rise as Knights. When about to take their departure, Burns, characteristic of his gallantry, lifted the old dame's hand to kiss it, when she exclaimed—"And what ails ye at my mou', Robin?"

For imaginary poems there is nothing in the language to compare with "Tam o' Shanter," his longest poem, in which he depicts the scenes of witches and warlocks with a spirit of abandonment. The tale runs with incredible speed and ease—from gay to grave, from lively to severe—and includes nearly every species of literary excellence: the humourous, the picturesque, the

grotesque, the sublime, the playful, the horrible and awful—all expressed in the most terse and felicitous language—every line a picture.

In "Tam o' Shanter" Burns felt that he had produced his masterpiece. I will only quote two passages. When passing auld Alloway Kirk, Tam looked in at the window and observed Auld Nick in the shape of a beast, and

> Coffins stood round like open presses
> That show's the dead in their last dresses,
> And by some devilish cantraip sleight,
> Each in his cauld hand held a light.

In the same poem we have these oft-quoted beautiful lines—

> But pleasures are like poppies spread,
> You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
> Or like the snowfall on the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever.

The production of "Tam o' Shanter" was the work of a single day.

"Death and Dr Hornbrook" is a satire which depicts the Poet in his severest mood. He had been attending a meeting of Lodge St. James Freemasons, Tarbolton, and com-

posed it on his way home from the meeting. He makes Death say—

> It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed,
> Sin' I began to nick the thread,
> An' choke the breath;
> Folk main dae something for their bread,
> And sae maun Death.

One might dwell for a considerable time on this class of poem. Let me quote to you from his "Address to the Deil," for whom, in his largeness of heart, he even had sympathy—

> Then fare-you-weel, auld Nickie-Ben!
> O wad ye tak' a thought an' men';
> Ye aiblins micht—I dinna ken—
> Still hae a stake;
> I'm wae tae think upon yon den,
> E'en for your sake.

"Hallowe'en" is a happy mixture of the dramatic and the descriptive, and bears the impress of the customs and superstitions of the people. The whole poem hovers between the serious and the ludicrous. The scene is laid in the last night of harvest, at a husbandman's fireside, whose corn is gathered into the stackyard and barn, and the hands which assisted in the labour are met

> To burn their nits an pu' their stocks,
> And haud their Hallowe'en.

The drama "The Jolly Beggars," is considered the most varied and characteristic of the Poet's works. The moment the curtain is drawn up and shows the actors, the spirit of Burns appears, kindling and animating. The scene is laid in Mauchline, and the actors are strolling vagrants, who assemble in Poosie Nancy's to "toom their pocks and pawn their duds," and enjoy themselves over the gill stoup

> Wi' quaffing and laughing,
> They ranted and they sang;
> Wi' jumping and thumping,
> The vera girdle rang.

The characters are numerous — the maimed soldier, who bore scars for Scotland, and his doxy, who lay between his arms wi' "usquebaugh and blankets warm," and who

> Aye gaed the toozie drab
> The tither skelpin' kiss,
> While she held up her greedy gab,
> Just like an aumous dish.

The merry Andrew, who would venture his neck for liquor; the Highland dame, who had lightened many a purse; the sturdy tinker, who had travelled round all Christian ground in his occupation; and last of all, the wight of Homer's craft—

> He was a care-defying blade,
> As ever Bacchus listed,—

who could allure crowds round him when he sang of love and country. All these—and more—shout, sing, and act in character, and unite in giving effect to the chorus of a song which claims exemption from cares and worries, and a happiness which banished all care. The curtain drops as they shout and sing—

> A fig for those by law protected!
> Liberty's a glorious feast!
> Courts for cowards were erected,
> Churches built to please to priest.

"The Cottar's Saturday Night" is tender and moral, solemn and devotional, and rises into a strain of grandeur and sublimity which has not been surpassed. It has no equal in the language. The description of the labourer returning from the field, the young children running to meet him, and clamouring on his knee, the elder dutifully depositing their gains with their parents, and receiving their father's blessing, the incidents of the courtship of Jenny, the eldest daughter—and all uniting in the worship of God — are all most happily delineated.

> From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
> That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad.

"A Winter Night" begins with a description of a dreadful storm: the Poet imagines himself lying in bed and listening to its howling, his thoughts turning to the

ourie cattle and silly sheep exposed to the violence of the tempest—the wee birds touching the tenderest chords of the Poet's heart; after lamenting their fate, he proceeds—

Ilk happing bird—wee helpless thing!
That in the merry months o' Spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e!

The "Address to a Mouse" is one of the happiest and most finished of his productions. The descriptive part is admirable, and the moral reflections beautiful—

Wee sleekit cowrin', tim'rous beastie,
O what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou needna start awa' sae hasty,
Wi' brickerin' brattle;
I wad be laith tae rin and chase thee,
Wi' murderin' prattle.

In that exquisite gem "To a Mountain Daisy" he addresses himself thus—

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou'st met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush among the stoure,
Thy slender stem;
To save thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

The Poet buried the opening bloom with the plough, and regrets that he cannot save a thing so lovely.

The verses "To the Mouse" and "To the Daisy" were composed while the Poet was holding the plough.

Among the Poet's many other numerous works are—"The Holy Fair," "Holy Willie's Prayer," "Address to the Unco Guid," "The Two Dougs," "The Wounded Hare," "The Vision," "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," and "Man was Made to Mourn."

See yonder poor, o'er labour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Wha begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil.

If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law design'd—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind!

I've seen yon weary winter sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs,
That man was made to mourn.

AS A SONG WRITER.

As a Song writer, Burns excels any other. His songs were of three classes—war songs, domestic, and bacchanalian. They have sung their way into the life of the people, and have become part of our great national inheritance. There is a natural grace and fascination about them: all are earnest, and from the heart. Of all lyric poets, he is the most prolific and varied; and his songs are a solace to Scottish hearts at home and far across the seas.

Of War Odes, the finest in the language of any nation in the world is "Scots Wha Hae." It was composed while the Poet was riding through a moss on a stormy night—

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

By Oppression's woes and pains!
By your Sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins!
But—they shall be free!

Lay the proud Usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us Do—or Die!

In the words of Carlyle, "So long as there is

warm blood in the heart of Scotsmen, it will move in fierce thrills under this war ode."

As a specimen of his Bacchanalian Songs, I think "Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut," would be difficult to beat. William Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh, was spending the autumn vacation at Moffat. Honest Allan Masterson and the Poet went to pay Nicol a visit. They had such a joyous and happy meeting that Burns composed the song to celebrate the occasion—

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope tae be!

We are na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our e'e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That's blinkin' in the lift sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,
But, by my sooth, she'll wait a wee!

What first shall rise tae gang awa',
a cuckold, coward loon is he!
Wha last beside his chair shall fa'
He is the King amang us three.

"The Lass o' Ballochmyle" was a compliment to Miss Alexander, a young lady of great beauty. Burns sent the fine lyric to her, accompanied by a letter, in which he stated that he had observed her wandering

on the Banks of Ayr. The lady paid no attention to his effusions, which wounded the Poet. However, the heroine lived to think that the honours of the Muse were the highest that could be conferred on her. She had the song elegantly framed and hung in her chamber, and it was carried with her whenever she travelled—

With careless step I onward stray'd,
My heart rejoic'd in Nature's joy;
When, musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanc'd to spy;
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like Nature's vernal smile;
Perfection whisper'd, passing by,
Behold the Lass o' Ballochmyle!

O had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Tho' shelter'd in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plain!
Thro' weary winter's wind and rain,
With joy, with rapture, I would toil,
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonnie lass o' Ballochmyle.

The Poet always gives us the finished image of female loveliness, with the accompaniment of blooming flowers, running streams, and the melody of singing birds.

"To Mary in Heaven" was written near the close of September, 1789. Mary Campbell, the heroine of this and some of his finest

songs, was a beautiful girl, and good as she was beautiful. Burns had busied himself all day with the shearers in the field and was in capital spirits, but when the gloamin' came he grew sad. He wandered up and down the waterside and into the barn yard. Jean requested him to go into the house as he was ill with a cold. He was deeply dejected, and sat down and wrote—

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget?
Can I forget the hallow'd grove,
Where, by the winding Ayr, we met,
To live one day of parting love?
Eternity can not efface
Those records dear of transports past,
Thy image at our last embrace,
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

The world-renowned production "A Man's a Man for a' That," was composed in January 1795—

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin gray, an' a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

A prince can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!

"Sic a Wife as Willie had" was the wife of a farmer who lived near Burns at Ellisland. She was a very singular woman. "Tea," said she, "would be the ruin of the nation, and sugar was a sore evil." The words of the song resemble chaunts of the old rustic ballad-makers: the unsonsie dame is not painted in kindly colours—

She has an e'e, she has but ane,
The cat has two the very colour;
Five rusty teeth, forbye a stump,
A clapper tongue was deave a miller;
A whiskin' beard about her mou',
Her nose and chin they threaten ither;
Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wadna gie a button for her.

She's bow-houg'd, she's hen-shin'd,
Ae limpin' leg a hand-breed shorter;
She's twisted right, she's twisted left,
To balance fair in ilka quarter;
She has a hump upon her breast,
The twin o' that upon her shouther;
Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wadna gie a button for her.

"Duncan Gray" went a-wooing in a pleasant time — on guid yule night — when all were joyous, but

Maggie coost her head fu' heigh,
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abiegh.

He was not, however, to be daunted: he knew woman better—

> Duncan fleech'd and Duncan pray'd,
> Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig;
> Duncan sigh'd bath oot and in,
> Grat his e'en baith blear't an' blin',
> Spak' o' lowpin' owre a linn—
> Ha, ha, the wooin' o't.

The song finishes by Maggie relenting, and "now they're crouse and canty baith."

The immortal lyric, "Ae Fond Kiss," was addressed to Clarinda—his farewell to her—

> Ae fond kiss, and then we sever—
> Ae farewell, and then, for ever,
> Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee!
> Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!
> Had we never lov'd sae kindly—
> Had we never lov'd sae blindly—
> Never met—or never parted—
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Sir Walter Scott said these four lines contained the essence of a thousand love tales.

Then we have the sprightly and cheerful "Corn Riggs," when he held awa' to Annie, amidst the moon's unfaded light—

I lock'd her in my fond embrace,
her heart was beating rarely;
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the Rigs o' Barley!
I ken't her heart was a' my sin,
I lov'd her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again,
Amang the Rigs o' Barley.

There has been some doubt expressed as to who was the lovely "Mary Morrison" of the Poet's youthful days. His brother Gilbert was of the opinion that Peggie Allison, Mary Morrison, and Ellison Begbie were one and the same person—

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see
That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blythely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure—
The lovely Mary Morrison.

This is one of the sweetest of love songs, trembling with tenderness, radiant with sentiment, and full of love.

There is also some doubt as to who was the heroine of the fine song "Afton Water." Currie and Cunningham both say that the

song was written in honour of Mrs Dunlop, of Afton House: but Gilbert, who was not likely to err, affirms that he has heard his brother say that it was a tribute to his dear Highland Mary.

The story of their parting is most tragic. The true-hearted girl stood on one side of a small brook, and the Poet on the other, holding a Bible between them, and they vowed eternal fidelity to each other. It was their final parting, for she died shortly after of a malignant fever. "Sweet Afton" is a lyric of incomparible beauty, and deepest, truest sorrow—

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove, whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den;
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear,—
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where, wild in the woodlands, the primroses blow;
There oft, as wild ev'ning weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

There is a sweet tenderness in "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast," composed in honour of Jessie Lewars, who attended the Poet during his last illness. The beautiful air to which the song is sung was composed by

Felix Mendelssohn, the eminent composer and conductor—

O wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee;
Or did Misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a Paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there;
Or were I Monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown,
Wad be my Queen, wad be my Queen.

As Miss Lewars was moving with a light foot about the house, lest she should disturb him, the Poet took up a crystal goblet which contained wine and water for moistening his lips, and wrote on it with a diamond—

Fill me with the rosy wine:
Call a toast—a toast divine—
Give the Poet's darling flame,
Lovely Jessie be her name;
Then thou mayest freely boast
Thou has given a peerless toast.

That other dying song "Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear" was also composed in her honour.

The plaintive "My Nannie's Awa'," soon commanded attention by its beauty. It is generally considered to be one if the Clarinda effusions. The air ro which it is sung is the production of Alexander Hume, the composer of the air to "Afton Water"—

Now in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes,
And birds warble welcome in ilka green shaw,
But to me it's delightless—my Nannie's awa'.

The snawdrap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn;
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nannie—and Nannie's awa'.

Thou lav'rock that springs frae the dews of the lawn
The shepherd to warn o' the gray-breaking dawn,
And thou mellow mavis that hails the night-fa',
Give over for pity—my Nannie's away'.

Come Autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and gray,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' Nature's decay;
The dark, dreary Winter, and wild-driving snaw
Alane can delight me—now Nannie's awa'.

Tibbie Steven was the daughter of a proprietor of three acres in Kyle, and thought herself rich enough to treat the ploughman Bard with contempt. Burns, in an independent spirit, addresses her thus—

Yestreen, I met ye on the moor,
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stoure;
Ye geck at me, because I'm poor,
But fient a hair care I!

This was composed when the Poet was 17 years of age.

The heroine of "My Nannie O" was Agnes Fleming, a servant lass of Lochlea. This fine old song is not often sung as it should be. In the words of the Bard—"Compared with these, Italian trills are tame."

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa' to Nannie, O.

My Nannie's charming, sweet an' young,
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O;
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nannie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O;
The op'ning gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

The beautiful and melting strains of "Of a' the Airts the wind can blaw" was composed out of compliment to the Poet's Bonnie Jean. It was the fruit of one of his horse-back meditations, when riding from Mossgiel to Ellisland, with the charms of Jean Armour's company in his mind. He made it by the way, and sung it to his

wife when he got home. They are most beautiful—

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly lo'e the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e the best;
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between:
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair;
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air;
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw or green;
There's not a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me o' my Jean.

There are other two excellent stanzas, composed by John Hamilton, music seller, Edinburgh; they are frequently taken for a portion of Burns' song.

In the song "John Anderson, my Jo," where, I ask, will you find such stanzas outside of Burns' songs. The old couple have lived their youthful days in loving wedlock, now grown so old that John's pow is frosty and his locks like snaw, yet each as fond of the other as when they first entered matrimony. Think of the way the old wife reminds John of the changes which have

passed over his appearance since the day when they were first acquainted, of the loving way in which she declares to go hand in hand with him till the end, and sleep with him at the foot of the hill, when life's over. Could you wish a song bearing a finer domestic sentiment ?—

John Anderson, my jo, John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' yin anither;
Now we maun trotter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo.

The national Hymn, "Auld Lang Syne," is sung at the close of all social functions, not only in Scotland, but throughout the civilized world. The Poet spoke of it as a song that had often thrilled through his soul.

Scottish hearts in far lands respond to the following lines—

We twa ran about the braes,
And pou'd the gowans fine;
But we've wandered mony a weary fit,
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,
Frae mornin' sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd,
Sin' auld lang syne.

Wherever Scotsmen have planted their feet, the songs of Burns have been sung, and have made the merry welkin ring. They have cheered the hearts of his countrymen, in every clime under the sun, and have proved one of the strongest links that bind them to their native land.

While rolling years shall onward speed,
Scotsmen in every clime
Shall worship at the shrine of Burns
Until the end of time;
His songs—inspiring, tender, true—
With fervour shall be sung,
Until auld Scotland's sons and maids
Forget their mother tongue.

THE EVENING OF HIS LIFE.

Jessie Lewars, a devoted daughter of one if Burns' Dumfries friends, attended the Poet in 1796, at the Brow, during his last illness. The sun shining in at the window of the bed chamber, Jessie was in the act of drawing the window blind to screen the sun from the Poet's eyes, when he said—"Let the sun shine in upon us: he has not long to shine for me."

I take the following verses from a poem written a few days before the Poet's death. They came into my hands through Thomas Anderson, a great Burns' enthusiast—who, along with auld Starkie, celebrated the Poet's natal day annually in the wee auld farrant thatch hoose in the High Street. I do not vouch for the authenticity of them; they do not appear in any published edition of Burns' works.

O, let the curtains bide, Jessie,
And raise my head a wee,
And let the bonnie, setting sun
Glint in on you and me.
The world looks fair and bright, Jessie,
Near loving hearts like you;
But puirtith's blast sifts summer love,
And makes leal friendships few.

O, Jessie, in the dreary nights,
I clasp my burning hands
Upon those throbbing, sleepless lids,
O'er eyes like glowing brands,
And wonder in my weary brain,
If haply, when I'm dead,
My old boon friends, for love of me,
Will give my children bread.

O, wilt thou gang o' nights, Jessie,
To my forsaken hearth,
And be as thou hast been to me—
The truest friend on earth ?
Sae sweetly in your linnet voice,
You'll sing my weans to rest,
While Jeanie leans her weary head
Upon thy loving breast.

I know of nothing more pathetic, more sad, than the evening of the Poet's life. On 18th July, 1796, the pony trap of James Gracie, banker in Dumfries, stopped at the foot of the Millhole Brae, and Robert Burns alighted from it, and walked, toilfully and with assistance, up the short but steep ascent to his own house—for the last time.

Before setting out for the Brow, in the vain quest for health, he said to his wife with confidence—"Don't be afraid, Jean. I'll be more thought of a hundred years after I am dead."

It was on the 4th July that he went to the Brow, hoping almost against hope, that sea bathing and the drinking of its medicinal waters would enable him to conquer the

illness which had prostrated him since the beginning of the year.

Some touching incidents of that visit to the Brow have been preserved.

One was the meeting with Mrs Riddell, of Woodley Park, like himself an invalid at the time, between whom there had been an estrangement. On her entering the room, Burns said—"Madam, have you any commands for the other wirld?" and spoke of his death as an event likely to happen soon. He showed anxiety about the care of his literary fame, expressing a fear that letters and verses written with unguarded freedom would be revived to the injury of his reputation.

In the latter days of his life, he was observed walking along the shady side of the street—an impressive and, in some respects, a pathetic figure. On the opposite side of the street a gay throng were preparing for the hunt ball. He was accosted by a friend, who requested him to join the party, but the Bard remarked that his days of popularity with such gay people were at an end.

There was no lack of appreciation, however, on the part of the people of Dumfries when it became known that the days of the great figure amongst them was nearing his end. Groups gathered in the street, and discussed, with hushed voices, the latest news about the Poet.

He breathed his last on Thursday, 21st July, 1796, in the little side street known as Burns Street. It is now turned into a museum, and contains a number of Burns relics, some of them presented by Sir James Barrie, the gifted Scottish author.

His body lies in St. Michael's Churchyard in a beautiful mausoleum, with the graceful figure of Coila throwing her mantle over the Poet at the Plough.

Gentlemen, in the words of Alexander Smith—"If we admire the Emperor who found Rome brick, and left it marble, what shall we say of the Poet who found the songs of his country indelicate, and left them pure?"

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that.

Gentlemen, I ask you to rise and drink with me, in solemn silence, to "The Immortal Memory of Scotland's Greatest Poet, Robert Burns."