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CARNEGIE

**ADDRESS
AT THE UNVEILING
OF A STATUE
TO
BURNS**

1912

Address by Andrew Carnegie
at the unveiling of a Statue to

BURNS,

Erected by the Citizens of
Montrose.

1912.

DUNFERMLINE :
A. ROMANES & SON, "PRESS" OFFICE.
1912.

PROVOST AND FELLOW CITIZENS
OF MONTROSE,

We are met to-day to testify that the immortal Bard still lives in our memory, that his fame increases with time—that his place in the world as in our hearts strengthens with the years—and that the debt we owe him is indeed unpayable. No man who ever lived has so many memorial statues in so many lands, and yet we meet to-day in Montrose to dedicate still another.

It was not his genius, his insight, his vision, his wit or spirit of manly independence, nor all of these combined, which captured the hearts of men. It was his spontaneous, tender, all-pervading sympathy with every form of misfortune, pain or grief; not only in man but in every created form of being. He loved all living things, both great and small. Repeated are the proofs of this overflowing tenderness. The nest of the mouse destroyed by the plough which had “cost many a weary nibble,” appeals to his heart and the lesson is enforced :

“But mousie thou art no thy lane
In proving foresight may be vain,
The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men
Gang aft a-gley
An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain
For promised joy.”

Burns seems to have divined what science to-day proclaims, that all life is kin—listen to this outburst of emotion :

“I’m truly sorry man’s dominion
Has broken Nature’s social union
An’ justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle,
*At me, thy poor earth-born companion
And fellow mortal.*”

We murmur to ourselves, “beyond this it is impossible for mortal to go, this must be the utmost limit,” but wait a moment, we are told that talent does what it can but genius what it must, and Burns, sweeping upward and onward under this Law startled the world by his next leap, clear out of all bounds, at which it still keeps wondering, for no mortal before or since has ever dared to entertain the idea of reformation and pardon for the Evil One.

“But fare-you-weel, auld ‘Nickle-ben,’
O wad ye tak a thought an’ men’.
Ye aiblins nicht—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake :
I’m wae to think upo’ yon den,
Ev’n for your sake.”

The Poet was ever the reformer, and true to his mission he ventures to intimate that his Infernal Majesty might vary one of his recreations with advantage :

“I’m sure sma’ pleasure it can gie,
E’en to a deil,
To skelp and scaud poor dogs like me
An’ hear us squeal.”

In such familiar terms Burns addresses the Arch

Fiend, enemy of God and man—whom Milton thus describes :

“ Incensed with indignation, Saton stood
 Unterrified, and like a comet burned
 In the artic sky, and from his horrid hair
 Shakes pestilence and war.”

Fortunately the stern doctrines literally interpreted in the Poet's day remain with us in our day only as helpful allegories in man's progress to higher conceptions. Not till another poet reaches this towering height upon which to-day one sits alone in solitude can the ascendancy of Burns ever be questioned as the genius of the overflowing, sympathetic heart, ever alive to the sorrows of man, beast, mouse or devil.

There are two stanzas which give Burns high place as a truly religious teacher of men.

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

In the “ Cottar's Saturday Night ” we have the finest picture of humble life ever painted, inculcating the most truly religious lesson.

“ Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
 In all the pomp of method, and of art ;
 When men display to congregations wide
 Devotion's every grace, except the heart !
 The Pow'r, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
 The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;
 But haply, in some cottage far apart,
 May hear, well-pleas'd, the language of the soul ;
 And in his Book of Life the inmates poor enrol.”

I venture to submit that one line of Burns has not received due attention as constituting a rule of life—a pure gem :—

“Thine own reproach alone do fear.”

Having from our own conscience—the Judge within—received a verdict of approval, we have little to fear from any other tribunal. The “Judge within” sits in the supreme Court.

The prophets in days past were stoned as Burns was, but the assailants of Burns in his day were wrong. He saw the great light before they did, as the prophets and leaders of mankind invariably do and must do, else they were not prophets. The day has now arrived when he, the proclaimer of the royalty of man, stands revealed to us as the true Poet-Prophet of his age. What he proclaimed has proved to be the needed gospel for the advancement of man, especially for us of the English speaking race. I have ventured to hail him as the Poet-Prophet of his age. That he was a Poet will pass unquestioned, but was he not also a Prophet; did he not see in advance of his fellows the certain growth of the rights of man through the spread of democracy, and was he not awake to the crude and repulsive theology of his day, and at the same time saw the coming of the better day in which we now live, when the God of wrath who condemned man to everlasting torment has become displaced by the Heavenly Father, who can be trusted to deal mercifully even with the sinner? In these changes we recognise the work of Burns, it was he who laid the axe to the root of the

tree of ignorance and superstition, and in doing so made mankind his debtor. Our Republic was founded upon the Rights of man—his political gospel—which permeated both Britain and America—and in more recent times has won sway over all your self-governing colonies, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, so that to-day Burns' political gospel rules our English speaking race, which is marching steadily, though more slowly than we could wish, to the full fruition of the ideal of our Poet-Prophet.

Let us rejoice that we live in this age when the march of man upward is so pronounced. In one department the Motherland is in advance of the Republic and her Colonies. She has established a law first proclaimed by another famous Scot, foremost of all in his branch of study. Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" marked an era in the world's history, and no statement made by him has proved so important for man's advance to true democracy as this :

"The subjects of every state ought to contribute towards the support of the government, as nearly as possible in proportion to their respective abilities; that is, in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the State. In the observation or neglect of this maxim consists, what is called the equality or inequality of taxation."

This doctrine was such a shock to the statesmen of the day that even his editor, Professor Thorold Rogers, absorbed a full page in small type to point out how his author had stumbled. In the view of to-day the injustice lies in not taxing according to value. This just taxation the Millionaires of the

Republic and Colonies have so far escaped, but their day is coming; and properly so. Let us rejoice that the old home is here in the lead, an example for her children to follow.

In the "Gospel of Wealth," published here twenty odd years ago, the graduated tax is advocated, and it is held that the modern Millionaires should receive part of the treatment proposed for Shylock, under which, according to the laws of Venice, one-half of his goods would "come to the privy coffer of the state." So should it be with the hoards of the Millionaires of our day, and this, not as a punishment but for their own good, because it is just, and justice alone insures general contentment.

On the other hand, while the Motherland leads in just graduated taxation, she is to-day following the younger branches of her race in widening her Franchise and establishing equal electoral districts, and, above all, giving each man only one vote, thus making all citizens equal. So the beneficent exchange goes on between Motherland and Childlands—the parts of the vast empire of our race ever drawing closer together, each contributing of its best to the others in fair exchange, keeping our race ever in advance in establishing the rights of man and marching steadily to perfection when one citizen's privilege in the State becomes every citizens' right as is the law in all the younger lands. Our race is thus rapidly becoming a veritable brotherhood which may finally be again united. The Bible in its marvellous translation, along with Shakespeare

and Burns form the chief cementing bonds next to our common language and common law.

The latest and most telling tribute paid Burns is that of your late Member of Parliament, Lord Morley—and proud was he to be the successor of Joseph Hume, and Member for what, in his opinion, was the most intelligent constituency in the land. He told the Assembled Editors of the Empire, in effect, that a few lines from Burns had done more to form and maintain the present improved political and social conditions of the people than all the millions of editorials ever written. I asked him to name the lines he referred to, but he replied there was no need to name these to me. Since I promised to be with you to-day, however, I have tried to imagine what lines he had in mind. Here is probably the list as I should guess:

First. “While we sing God Save the King
We’ll ne’er forget the people.”

Second. “The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.”

Third. “Man’s true, genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of his fate,
Is not, art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Wert thou cottager or king,
Peer or peasant? no such thing.”

Fourth. “Ye see yon birkie ca’d a lord,
Wha struts and stares and a’ that,
Tho’ hundreds worship at his word
He’s but a coof for a’ that.
For a’ that and a’ that,
His riband, star, and a’ that.
The man o’ independent mind
He looks and laughs at a’ that.”

Fifth. "A prince can mak a belted knight,
A Marquis, Duke and a' that,
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that."

Sixth. "Columbia's offspring, brave and free,
Still flaming far in danger's van,
Ye know and dare proclaim *the royalty*
of man."

These few lines from Burns are ample, and constitute the best platform ever formed to guard the wise and peaceful march of progress. No violence, no physical force, all peacefully and in order. Ballots, not bullets; argument, not riot; all classes hand in hand co-operating as members of one family for the general weal of all law-abiding classes ensures the happiness of every proper class.

And now may I be permitted to transport myself from my native to my adopted land for a few minutes. You well know that no part of the world has Burns more completely captured than the Republic, now the home of the great majority of English speaking people. It is not less conscious of all it owes to Burns than the Motherland itself. But what can one say of the Immortal Bard which has not been better said already by his fellow poets and our literary masters? I shall select a few of their gems and let these tell their story. It was said of Lincoln's Republicanism that it was "of the same spirit as the Gospel of his favourite Burns." As a lad at school he fortunately had a Scotch school master who adored Burns. The boy was carried away by the Bard, and it is recorded that when still a youth wagers were made that no one could call upon him

for a recitation from Burns which he could not give from memory. In his mature years he lectured on his favourite poet, and as usual drew the masses of the people. Unfortunately, no trace of this lecture can now be found. We have searched for it in vain. What would one not give for a copy? Imagine Lincoln and Burns together, both "men who held their patents of nobility direct from the hand of Almighty God." We have however a tribute to Burns from Lincoln's bosom companion and fellow orator, who divided the crowds with Lincoln in the Anti-Slavery Campaign — Colonel Ingersoll — the most powerful, popular orator I have ever heard. Like Lincoln, he worshipped Burns, and kept upon his library table two beautifully bound volumes, one Shakespeare and the other Burns, which he called his Bible and his Hymn Book. He made a pilgrimage to the birth place of Burns and wrote the following lines in the famous cottage:

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

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

President Garfield realised "That rising above the trammels of birth and poverty Burns spoke to the great nameless class of labouring men throughout the world while Kings and Nations listened in amazement. In the highest class of Lyric Poetry three names stand, their fame covers eighteen centuries— one of these is Burns."

Secretary of State Blaine says "Genius is not confined to lands or latitudes, Burns belonged to the world."

Emerson declared that "Neither Latimer nor Luther struck such telling blows against false Theology as did this brave singer. The Declaration of Independence and the Marseillaise are not weightier documents in the history of freedom than the songs of Burns."

Whittier tells us that "Burns lived on with a vitality which gathers strength from time. His fame broadens and deepens every year. The world has never known a truer singer."

Bryant tells us the truth when he declares "Burns was great because God breathed into him in greater measure than any other man the spirit of that love which constitutes his own essence and made him more than other man a living soul. Burns was great by the greatness of his sympathies."

Hawthorne, at Burns' birthplace, declares "in this humble nook of all places in the world, Providence was pleased to deposit the germ of the richest human life which mankind had then within its circumference."

Wendell Holmes says—"Burns should have passed years of his life in America, for these words of his, "A man's a man for a' that," show that the true American feeling belonged to him as much as if he had been born on Bunker Hill." Quite true, but born near Bannockburn is quite as effective.

Longfellow sings—

"But still the music of his song
Rises o'er all elate and strong,
Its Master chords
Manhood, Freedom, Brotherhood."

Speaker of Congress Henderson, a born Scot, declares—"Robert Burns was also a preacher to humanity, and if this old earth of ours had more such preachers in its pulpits it would be a better world."

Senator Hoar tells us that "Burns brought to the world the best message ever brought since Bethlehem, and humanity the world over walks more erect for what he said and sung. Genius sings through the soul of Burns like the wind through an Æolian harp."

Governor Knott declares—"Burns possessed as no other man ever did, the universal alchemy of genius which enabled him to bring to light the pure virgin gold in everything he touched."

Margaret Fuller writes:—

"Burns is full of the noble genuine democracy which seeks not to destroy royalty, but to make all men kings as he was himself in nature."

Bayard Taylor avers that—

"The stranger in foreign land comes to love Scotland and her people because Burns loved them."

Beecher declares that—

“Burns has taught men the thoughts of God in nature more than a great many pulpits have.”

But why continue further in this strain?

While the Poet-Prophet's prophesy, the grandest of all, that man to man the world o'er shall brothers be and a' that is not yet fulfilled, I do not hesitate to proclaim my unshaken faith that it is coming yet “for a' that.”

Meanwhile, let us rejoice that within the wide boundaries of our English speaking race peace is at last accomplished. The vast majority in every land, “if Shakespeare's tongue be spoken there and songs of Burns be in the air,” would rise in mutiny and compel their rulers to submit any difference between them to peaceful arbitration. So much for the reign of peace and the prophecy of Burns, to the fulfilment of which we are steadily marching.

Lord Morley tells us in his recent Manchester address that a few books in political literature rank as Acts not Books, because they compelled the adoption of the ideas advanced, and that two of these were found in the Declaration of American Independence and another in Paine's Common Sense, which he declares “the most influential political piece ever composed.”

Burns has given the world several of these precious jewels which have already fulfilled their mission within our entire race.

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

is one, and here is another, the grandest of all his prophecies :—

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

As far as our race is concerned, war between its parts is to-day unthinkable. In its world-wide scope it still remains a prophecy, but never can these lines fail to thrill and incite to action the hearts of men, until their mission is fully accomplished and they learn war no more—they are immortal and can die only in triumph.

It is the general opinion of the world's wisest and best that Burns stands alone. All eulogies are concentrated in two which I have kept for the close—one from the American poet, Walt Whitman ; the other from Horace Greely, the Republic's greatest journalist, and son of a Scotch Mother.

Whitman's verdict is—

“ He was the most flesh and blood chiel ever cast up upon the sands of time.”

Greely declares “ Of all the men who ever lived Burns nestles closest to the bosom of humanity.” Of no other man can this be said, here he has no rival.

I now proceed to unveil the statue which Montrose has erected in memory of the Immortal Bard, tenderly wrapping him as it were in the folds of this last unrivalled tribute, which passes to-day unchallenged, for it is indeed true that “ Burns of all men that ever

lived nestles to-day closest to the bosom of humanity.
Citizens of Montrose, you honour yourselves in
honouring the man who has proved himself the Poet
Prophet of his age.



