

**THE ACADEMY SERIES OF
ENGLISH CLASSICS.
SELECTIONS FROM THE
POETRY OF ROBERT BURNS**

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The Academy Series of English Classics. Selections from the Poetry of Robert Burns by Lois G. Hufford

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SELECTIONS

FROM THE POETRY OF

ROBERT BURNS

WITH

NOTES, INTRODUCTION, AND GLOSSARY

EDITED BY

LOIS G. HUFFORD

TEACHER OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE HIGH SCHOOL
AT INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

The simple Bard, unbroke by rules of art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
And if inspired, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Hers all the melting thrill, and hers the kindling fire.

Motto prefixed to the first edition of Burns's Poems.

Boston

ALLYN AND BACON

PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH especially intended for secondary schools, it is hoped that this volume of selections from the poetry of Burns may commend itself to a wider circle of students.

No attempt has been made to show all the phases of Burns's genius; the effort rather has been to show him at his best. It is through such of his poems as are included in this volume that his powerful influence in restoring to English poetry a higher standard and a purer taste than had prevailed in the earlier part of the eighteenth century is best seen.

The notes aim to give, as far as possible, the circumstances attending the composition of each poem. They are based chiefly upon authorized Edinburgh editions of the poet, and upon the interpretation of friendly critics. Such words as are not given in the glossary will be found in the notes.

L. G. H.

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA,
February, 1896.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION
OF
BURNS' POEMS.

PUBLISHED AT KILMARNOCK IN 1786.

THE following trifles are not the production of a Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idleness of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these and other celebrated names, their countrymen, are at least in their original language, *a fountain shut up and a book sealed*. Unacquainted with the necessary rules for commencing poetry by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality of friendship, wakened his vanity so far as to make him think anything of his worth showing; and none of the following works were composed with a view to the press.

To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind,—these were his motives for courting the muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, obscure, nameless bard, shrinks aghast at the

thought of being branded as an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world ; and, because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looking upon himself as a poet of no small consequence, forsooth !

It is an observation of that celebrated poet, Shenstone, whose divine elegies do honor to our language, our nation, and our species, that "*Humility* has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame !" If our critic catches at the word *genius*, the author tells him once for all that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manoeuvre below the worst character, which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares that even in his highest pulse of vanity he has not the most distant pretension. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces ; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation.

To his subscribers, the author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the Bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship, for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom — to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the learned and polite, who may honor him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life ; but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism he shall stand convicted of dulness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others — let him be condemned without mercy to contempt and oblivion.

DEDICATION.

(SECOND EDITION, EDINBURGH, 1787.)

TO THE NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CALEDONIAN HUNT.

My Lords and Gentlemen:—

A Scottish Bard, proud of name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service—where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land; those who bear the honors and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The Poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough; and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes, and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue; I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honored protection; I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favors; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile Author, looking for a continuation of these favors; I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated; and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the Great Fountain of Honor, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.