

**THE CENTENNIAL BIRTH-DAY OF
ROBERT BURNS: 1759-1859
AS CELEBRATED BY THE BURNS
CLUB OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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The Centennial Birth-Day of Robert Burns: 1759-1859 as Celebrated by the Burns Club of the City of New York by J. Cunningham

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J. CUNNINGHAM

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BURNS' BIRTH-PLACE.

Robert Burns.

HAIL, Caledonia! land of song and story,—
Land of the fair, the virtuous and the brave!
The brightest star that sheds on thee its glory
Rose from the darkness of thy Burns's grave:
That star shall be a light among the nations
When prouder orbs have faded and grown dim,
And hailed with pride by coming generations,
For man yet knows not all he owes to him.

His strains have nerved the feeble 'gainst oppression,—
Aroused in true men's hearts a scorn of wrong,—
Pointed the hopeless to man's sure progression,
And taught the weak to suffer and be strong.
Lessons like these the soul of man shall cherish
While through his heart the ardent life-blood springs:
One burning thought, at least, can never perish—
An honest man's above the might of kings.

While noble souls shall glow with warm emotion,—
While Woman loves and Genius pants for fame,—
While Truth and Freedom claim man's deep devotion,
True hearts shall throb responsive to his name.
Then weep not, Scotland, though thy minstrel slumbers;
Still lives the spirit of his song sublime,—
Still shall the music of his deathless numbers
Thrill in all hearts and vibrate through all time.

J. C.

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PREFACE.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH OF JANUARY, 1859, was a day worthy to be kept in perennial remembrance. On that day, in every part of the civilized globe, there was accorded to the memory of a man of genius, and to the manly sentiments which he had expressed, a tribute of homage more sincere, spontaneous, and universal, than the world had ever before witnessed. In every land, the lofty and the lowly, the humble and the proud,—men of mighty intellect, and plain unlettered men,—met to honor the memory of one whose simple songs and honest, manly utterances had furnished a “touch of nature which made the whole world kin,”—and to render the simultaneous verdict that “the man of independent mind is king of men.” Eloquence poured forth its loftiest strains, and rough, uncultured men felt their noblest instincts stir within them, and were elevated and refined by the inspiration of the hour.

And when, on that day,—in the lordly hall or the humble cot,—the strong proud man, the tender woman, or the lisping

child, with mingled admiration, love and pity, syllabled the name of ROBERT BURNS, no doubt could linger that his name had become a Power in the earth never more to be forgotten, contemned, or ignored. The musical words of the poor peasant, glowing with the nobleness of his own soul, had borne their eternal truths to the heart of Humanity, there to be enshrined, to operate in the history and modify the destiny of his race forever.

Among the many brilliant demonstrations on that day, in Great Britain and America, it will not be questioned that the celebration by the Burns Club of New York should be classed among those entitled to the highest consideration. The oration delivered on the evening preceding the Anniversary, by one of the most eminent and popular orators of the day, was of itself a distinguishing feature. At the Anniversary Festival at the Astor House, one of the most illustrious poets, as well as one of the most respected citizens, of America, lent his fame and his presence to the occasion, as the honorary presiding officer; while at his side another, whose fame is identified with the name of Burns, added lustre to the gathering. The Pulpit, the Press, and the Bar furnished some of their ablest representatives; and men eminent in every honorable position presented an assembly distinguished for intellectual excellence and high character, probably never surpassed in the city of New York on any similar occasion. And in all the world on that day, the pervading sentiment of the occasion found no

more eloquent expression than that which fell upon the ears of those within the Astor House. This attempt, therefore, to furnish some account of a commemoration so rare and so remarkable, will not be regarded with surprise.

The proceedings which are reported in the following pages, and the tributes of intellect and genius which are annexed, have been collected in this volume with the design of furnishing in a proper form a record worthy of preservation, to those who participated on the occasion, and to others who may desire to have combined in an appropriate setting the gems of eloquence which added brilliance to the commemoration.

It is designed, also, to place copies of this memorial in the public libraries of the city; and when the first Centennial Birth-day of Burns has receded far in the past, they may be found of occasional value for reference, by the curious or the interested. Time will increase rather than diminish the value of such a record. Whatever social or political revolutions may occur in the progress of events, it seems now not unreasonable to hope and believe that the sentiments which have given to Burns such influence in the hearts of his fellow-men, may in the future meet even a more willing and universal acceptance than they do to-day. And probably a hundred years hence his memory will be honored as ardently as now. And should some two or three of these little books survive the chance and change of a century of years, the men of that time, when they meet to celebrate the Second Centennial