

# **LIFE OF ROBERT BURNS**

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Life of Robert Burns by J. C. Higgins

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**J. C. HIGGINS**

**LIFE OF  
ROBERT BURNS**





Robert Burns

LIFE  
OF  
ROBERT BURNS.

BY  
REV. J. C. HIGGINS, A.M., B.D.,  
MINISTER OF TARBOLTON.

*WITH PORTRAIT.*

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1893.

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*J. H. Hall fund*

Is there a man, whose judgment clear  
Can others teach the course to steer,  
Yet runs himself life's mad career,  
    Wild as the wave ;  
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,  
    Survey this grave.

*A Bard's Epitaph.*

## PREFACE.

MOST people are aware that the Life of Burns has already been dealt with by not a few eminent writers. It was, therefore, with reluctance and misgivings that I—altogether without experience of this kind of work—undertook to pen a sketch of the Poet's career, with a view to the completion of the Third Volume of *The Book of Robert Burns*, which was projected and so far carried through by the late Dr. Charles Rogers, under the auspices of the Grampian Club.

When the third volume of the above-named work appeared, my narrative met with many unexpectedly favourable press notices, in some of which the opinion was expressed that this Life of Burns should be recast for publication in separate form, and at a cost easily accessible to those of the general public who might care to have it. The Biography is now issued in accordance with this opinion.

It is nowadays next to impossible to lay any large or just claim to originality in dealing with the Life of Burns. This volume only claims to be a faithful and sympathetic effort to put together a record of facts, as full as moderate space would hold, and in language as simple and concise as the writer could employ. A biographer's first and constant aim should be to keep himself in the background,



and to set forth in the fullest and clearest possible light, the life which he has undertaken to portray. To this end large use is here made of the Poet's words, both verse and prose, that Burns may be, so to speak, in large measure his own biographer. And further, the writings of others—more particularly the notes and letters of Burns's contemporaries—have been freely and of set purpose employed wherever these were found to cast vivid light upon, or lend graphic interest to, the story.

Now if, with regard to human life in general, all narrow, harsh, or finical judgment should be avoided, in an especial sense it should be so with regard to the career of Robert Burns. Accordingly, in view of the strange, fitful circumstances amid which, with his uniquely impulsive, social, self-forgetting, passion-driven temperament, he was destined to struggle along life's thorny, snare-strewn road, we anxiously plead that the character and conduct of this humbly-born yet transcendent genius be studied and estimated in the spirit of his own great lines—

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,  
We know not what's *resisted*—

in the spirit of which lines the following pages have been written.

J. C. H.

THE MANSE, TARBOLTON,  
January 1893.

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*Fa*similes of Masonic Minutes written by Burns, his brother Gilbert,  
and "Dr. Hornbook."