

“Bobby” Burns’ Birthday Will Again Summon Scottish Clans

Choice Bits of Verse by Scotland’s Famous Bard

“Hear the woodlark charm the forest,
Telling o’er his little joys,
Hapless bird, a prey the surest
To each pirate of the skies.
Dearly bought the hidden treasure,
Finer feeling can bestow,
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.”

“It’s no in titles nor in rank,
It’s no in wealth like Lon’on bank,
To purchase peace and rest,
It’s no in makin’ muckle mair,
It’s no in books, it’s no in lear
To make us truly blest.
If happiness hae not her seat
And center in the breast
We may be wise or rich or great,
“But never can be blest.”

“They gie the wit o’ age to youth,
They let us ken oursel,
They make us see the naked truth,
The real good and ill,
Tho’ losses and crosses
Be lesson right severe,
There’s wit there ye’ll get there,
Ye’ll find nae other where.”

Selected by Beriah F. Cochran.



TURBULENT, tender-hearted, thoroughly-human Bobbie Burns.
Would Omaha descendants of “Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled” ever let his birthday pass without commemorating it with the songs and dances of dear old Scotland?
Na, na, non, o’ course they would na.
It will be 157 years ago next Tuesday since Bobbie was born in fair Ayrshire, and the event will be celebrated in Omaha by Clan Gordon, No. 63, Order of Scottish Clans, with a concert and ball.
There’ll be the bagpipes piped by no less a person than G. W. McDougall, piper to the clan.
There will be Glenarry bonnets and Balmoral bonnets and tunics and plaids and tartan hose and kilts and brogues and sporrans and dirks and skeandhus and horns.
Oh, it’ll be thoroughly Scotch, aye, entirely Scotch. And there’ll be fair lasses in the Highland costume. If Bobbie himself were to drop in he might find there the counterpart of his dear “Highland Mary.” Poor Bobbie, dead at 37!
This country boy, son of a poor nursery gardener, great lyric poet of Scotland, grew into a man of average height and of heavy build. It is one of the mysteries of genius that it appears in the most unexpected places. It seldom shines out in the offspring of the great and intellectual, but establishes its temple in the children of the lowly.
So it did with Burns. It shone from his eyes. “I never saw such another eye,” says Scott, “in

any human head. His face became singularly animated and expressive in conversation.”
And his poetry! Where is another man that has matched his many-sided muse,—the tenderness of “Highland Mary,” “Ae Fond Kiss” and “To Mary in Heaven;” the martial swing of “Bannockburn;” the fun and action of “Tam O’Shanter;” and the humble devoutness of “Grace Before Meat” and “The Cotter’s Saturday Night.” Love for his native land inspires not only his countrymen but those of other lands as he sings:
From scenes like this old Scotia’s grandeur springs,
That make her lov’d at home, rever’d abroad.
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
An honest man’s the noblest work of God.
And
It’s good to be merry and wise,
It’s good to be honest and true,
It’s good to support Caledonia’s cause
And bide by the buff and the blue.”
In a farmer boy one would hardly look for the shrewd philosophy found in these oft-quoted lines:
O, wad some power the giffle gie us
To see ourselves as others see us.
It wad frae monie a blonder free us,
And foolish notion.
Burns’ pre-eminent humanness makes him loved as well as his tender heart, tender to the “wee cowerin’ mouse” whose nest had been laid bare by his plow share; and tender to his sweet hearts, to Nellie Kilpatrick, to Ellison Begbie, to Jean Armour, to Mary Campbell.
Yes, Bobbie knew life’s passions, the heights

of bliss, the depths of despair and despondency and remorse. Genius and passion burned hot within him, burned out his mortal frame in thirty-seven years.
The charm of Burns’ poems lies in the justness and commonness of the feelings expressed and in the truthfulness and freshness that they derive direct from life. He felt all the things he wrote. He wrote on the spur of the moment, and he wrote things that come spontaneously, direct from a full heart.
So the clans are coming together in Omaha,—the MacIntoshes and the MacDonalds and the MacPhersons and the Stuarts and the Camerons and the MacGregors and the MacAlpines and the MacNicolis and the Grahams and the Bruces and the Wallaces and the MacKinnons and the MacKinleys and the MacKenzies and the Campbells and the Sutherlands and the Murrays and the MacLeans and the MacLeods and the MacFarlanes and the Kennedys and the Menzies and the Buchanans and the MacKaskills and the MacGillivrays and the MacPhalls and the MacCullochs and the Frasers and the Lindseys and the Malcombs, and all the other sons and daughters of Scotland.
This sturdy race is well represented here in Omaha. Three of them are on the bench in the court house. One of them is going to run on the republican ticket for the United States senate. In business, the professions and politics you find them, too numerous to mention.
And the MacDonalds and Camerons no longer pull out their dirks and skeandhus when the

Campbells come along, as they did in the days of Bonnie Prince Charlie. As Burns said,
For a’ that an’ a’ that,
It’s coming yet for a’ that,
That man to man the world o’er
Shall brithers be for a’ that.
Hoot, mon, when Camerons can be friendly
with Campbells it would seem the time is near at hand.
Kenneth S. Finlayson is chief of Clan Gordon and will be in charge of the celebration. Finlayson is of the Scotch Scotchy. He fairly out-Scotches the Scotch. He has a burr on his tongue that almost puts Harry Lauder to shame.
He talks the Gaelic language with perfect fluency. In fact he was quite a broth of a boy before he could talk anything but Gaelic. He was born on a sheep farm near Portree in the Isle of Skye, Scotch highlands. This farm was seven miles square and was chiefly hills, where the sheep and long-horned, shaggy cattle fed.
His father was born on the same farm. So was his grandfather. So was his great grandfather. So was his great-great-grandfather. Back ten generations he has the names and dates of birth of his ancestors on the same farm. And it is likely that the family lived and died there for ten generations before that, or maybe twenty.
William Rennie is tannist of the clan. In the old days the tannist was always the chief’s eldest

son, but that custom isn’t insisted upon now for obvious reasons.
William R. Gunn is senior henchman, and Robert Galt is junior henchman; Robert Watson, recording secretary; W. J. Hislop, treasurer; John Trench, chaplain; Harold Fernandez, financial secretary; Andrew V. Hislop, soneschal; John Markham, warden; John Chapman, sentinel; George MacDougall, piper, and William Hampton, standard bearer.
Celebrated in the arts of bonnie Scotland is George MacDougall, piper to the clan. He can pipe “The Campbells Are Coming” with a marital vigor and vim and orotundity that just makes real members of the other clans give their kilts a whisk and reach for their skeandhus. It’s a reversion, an instinct, a stirring of the blood of generations in their veins when George puffs out his cheeks, puts a few cubic yards of breath into the bagpipes and then starts tickling them with his skilled fingers.
And not a wee bit less celebrated are the Hislop sisters, Misses Jean and Irene. Ah, ‘tis a bonnie sight when they get their highland costumes on and begin to dance the “Highland Fling” or the “Sword Dance” or the “Sheantrews” or the “Reel o’ Tulloch” or the “Strathspeys.”
They’ll be at the celebration in force, these descendants from folks of “that knuckle end of England, that land of Calvin, oat-cakes and sulphur,” as Sidney Smith called it.
They’ll be there from the land of the thistle, the thistle aye green.
They’ll be there for the memory of Bonnie Burns and auld lang syne.