

1498-61

Presenting thus a narrow novelty, of the kind, though not of the nature of that which Futurismo, or some such movement, presents today, it is natural that Burns should have been celebrated in his times and, ~~in the~~ by reflex of that great celebrity, in the one or two generations following them. But, in the nature of such fame, he should have lost his position in literature in succeeding generations, and no rational student of fame would have expected him to be cited today on precisely the same level he was cited then. For this maintenance of renown there must be some reason. It is this reason that we shall strive to determine.

It is obvious, in the first place, that Burns owes his celebrity to being considered by the Scots as a "national poet". But why particularly Burns? Other Scots poets, of a genius far greater than Burns could be claimed for Burns on any estimate more generous than ours, could represent Scotland just as well.

One important fact is that great part of his poems are written in the vernacular.

The other fact is that he interprets, with admirable accuracy, the lower qualities of the Scots character. The insufferable banality of mind of the ordinary Scot is fully mirrored in his own insupportable triteness and inintelligence. That characteristic, so flagrant in every typical Scot, of uttering the commonest and least with an oracular air and tone,

That lewdness and alcoholism which are also typical of the Scots

This explains the "national" fame of Burns, and, indeed, has already been put, with fair justice in a book not wholly just, by the late T.W.H. Crosland. But it does not explain the infliction of Burns' fame on England, and, therefrom, on other nations. England has too many great poets to need to add a worthless Scot to its roll of bards. Other nations, where the suggestion is followed, have no incitement of any sort to receive that suggestion. They derive it, of course, from England. But why is England so hypnotized?



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