

MAJOR-GEN. DONALD CRAIG McCALLUM.

He drew his light from that he was amidst
As doth a lamp from air which hath itself
Matter of light, altho' it show it not.

DONALD CRAIG McCALLUM was a native of Johnstone, in Renfrewshire, and was born in 1815. His parents originally came from Campbellton in Argyleshire, and his father followed the occupation of a tailor. In 1832 the entire family emigrated to America and took up their residence at Rochester, N. Y. Our author first mastered the tailoring trade, and then, for some reason, becoming dissatisfied with it, crossed over to Canada and went to work to learn the trade of a carpenter with a firm at Lundy's Lane. During the term of his apprenticeship we learn that "he attended night school and made great progress in geometry and mathematical studies generally. He gave much of his leisure time also to the study of architecture, and soon became a capable and skilful designer." Having completed his apprenticeship and studies he returned to Rochester, where he successfully conducted a business on his own account for a number of years. In 1851 he invented what is known as the "inflexible arch truss bridge," and was afterwards engaged in superintending the construction of various bridges and railroads. During the war he was made director and general manager of military railroads with the rank of Colonel, United States Army, and history will always shed a lustre on his name on account of the valuable services which he rendered to the nation at that period. We quote the following from Mr. John Laird Wilson's excellent biography of him :—"It had become evident to all that a great struggle was about to take place at Chattanooga. Stanton was anxious that there should be no failure, and that Grant should deal Bragg a final and crushing blow. To make matters more secure it was deemed advisable to reinforce Grant. The great question, however, was how to get the troops transferred from the Rapidan

to Stevenson, Ala., in time to be of service. It was a distance of twelve hundred miles. It was the opinion of General Halleck that the task was next to impossible—that the transfer of so many men with all the appurtenances of war could, certainly, not be accomplished in less than six weeks. McCallum was sent for and appealed to. The transfer, he thought, might be accomplished in seven days. Halleck pronounced it impossible. It could not be done! McCallum made his conditions. He must have absolute control of the railroads and be permitted to seize engines and cars wherever he could find them. The conditions were granted. The trains were set in motion, and within the time specified the task was accomplished. As a feat of military railroading that transfer of the Eleventh and Twelfth corps of the Army of the Potomac stands unparalleled in history. McCallum's services on this occasion were rewarded with the rank of major-general. His services were equally conspicuous and equally valuable during the Sherman campaigns, and it is not too much to say that but for McCallum and his department the march to the sea might have proved a failure." One is scarcely prepared to believe after reading the above that General McCallum was a poet of no mean order of merit. Indeed, many of his poems are of a very high order of merit, and entitle him to an honorable niche among the more prominent of the minor Scottish bards. There is something manly and real and thoughtful in all that he has written, and his muse never alighted on anything which she did not beautify and make more valuable. In 1870 he issued a small volume of his poems, and this has long since been out of print. The volume opens with the following quotation from one of Mr. James Russell Lowell's beautiful poems:

It may be glorious to write
Thoughts that shall glad the two or three
High souls like those far stars that come in sight
Once in a century.

But better far it is to speak
One simple word which now and then
Shall waken their free nature in the weak
And friendless sons of men.

To write some earnest verse or line,
Which seeking not the praise of art,
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood shine
In the untutored heart.

Following these lines are many very fine poems, not a few of which have already acquired considerable popularity. "The Water Mill," for instance, is known in all English-speaking countries, and is no doubt the poem on which the author's reputation as a poet will last. The General was very proud of this production, and was frequently pained by seeing weak and frivolous imitations of it, bearing the same title, and going the rounds of the press. We quote herewith the poem from the author's copy :

THE WATER MILL.

Oh, listen to the water mill, through all the live-long day,
As the clicking of the wheel wears hour by hour away.
How languidly the autumn wind doth stir the withered leaves,
As on the field the reapers sing while binding up the sheaves.
A solemn proverb strikes my mind, and, as a spell, is cast,
"The mill will never grind again with water that is past."

Soft summer winds revive no more leaves strewn o'er earth and main;
The sickle never more will reap the yellow-garnered grain.
The rippling stream flows ever on, aye, tranquil, deep and still,
But never glideth back again to busy water mill.
The solemn proverb speaks to all with meaning deep and vast,
"The mill will never grind again with water that is past."

Oh! clasp the proverb to thy soul, dear loving heart and true,
For golden years are fleeting by and youth is passing too.
Ah! learn to make the most of life, nor lose one happy day;
For time will ne'er return sweet joys, neglected—thrown away;
Nor leave one tender word unsaid—thy kindness sow broadcast,
"The mill will never grind again with water that is past."

Oh! the wasted hours of life that have swiftly drifted by;
Alas! the good we might have done, all gone without a sigh,
Love that we might once have saved by a single kindly word—
Thoughts conceived but ne'er expressed, perishing unpenned, unheard,
Oh! take the lesson to thy soul, forever clasp it fast,
"The mill will never grind again with water that is past."

Work on while yet the sun doth shine, thou man of strength and will,
The streamlet ne'er doth useless glide by clicking water mill;
Nor wait until to-morrow's light beams brightly on thy way,
For all that thou can'st call thine own lies in the phrase "to-day."
Possessions, power and blooming health must all be lost at last,
"The mill will never grind again with water that is past."

Oh! love thy God and fellow-man—this comprehendeth all,
 High Heaven's universal plan, here let us prostrate fall;
 The wise, the ignorant may read this simple lesson taught,
 All mystery or abstruse creed compared therewith are naught.
 On! brothers on! in deeds of love, for life is fleeting fast.
 "The mill will never grind again with water that is past."

Embodied in the General's compositions are many very fine descriptive passages which prove him to have been a keen observer and an intense admirer of the beauties of external nature. Here and there in his poems we come upon many notable word pictures which photograph themselves upon our minds and make us wish that he had devoted a few more of his leisure hours to this particular style of composition. In his poem entitled "The Warning Voice," for instance, we find the following lines wedged in between a mass of theological and philosophical facts and reasonings :

"'Twas early autumn:
 The rustling leaves arose and fell upon
 The gentle winds, resplendent in decay,
 More beautiful in death than life were they;
 O'er rugged rocks the streamlet wildly dashed,
 Anon, in rippings o'er its pebbly bed,
 Sighed to the sombrous woods its plaintive song."

From what is perhaps the most peculiar of all our author's pieces, "The Madman's Reverie," we quote the following as a specimen of his command of language and force of expression :

Ha! ha! prate not to me of hope,
 While damnéd souls in darkness grope!
 Who ne'er hath seen blest happy hour,
 That fate did not o'ertake, devour!
 Yea! followed on as demon would
 A soul condemned, bereft of good!
 Relentless as his brother Death
 To claim his own! List what he saith:

"When born, thy fate was in me bound,
 I've followed thee the world around,
 I've shown thee pleasure, but to dash
 It from thee with swift thrilling crash!
 Ha! curses on thy lips I hail
 As glorious triumphs! Do not fail
 To gorge thy soul in gloom and hate,
 This is thy doom—thy curséd fate!"

Quite a large number of the General's compositions display a high moral tone of thought, and as religious poems are excellent creations. They contain suggestions which appeal to our better feelings, and no one who reads them can for a moment doubt that he was a man who honored his Maker in sincerity and truth at all times. Many of these poems are in manuscript only, but from among those printed in the volume referred to we select the following as a specimen of the whole :

BE KIND TO THE ERRING.

Be kind to the erring, the humble, the meek,
'Tis coward alone who would trample the weak,
Ye know not how deeply the past they deplore,
In charity cover their sins evermore.

Be kind to the erring, the lowly, the sad,
Oft circumstance ruleth, whose chain driveth mad;
Ah! boast not thy virtue, but con thy heart o'er,
Communion with self crusheth pride evermore.

Commune with thyself, think how reckless thou art,
Enriching thy coffers to wither thy heart,
Take warning by thousands on yonder dark shore,
Remember thy soul must exist evermore.

Love good for good only, nor measure thy gain,
Such motives are sordidly selfish and vain,
Strewing blessings all round thee, with heart gushing o'er
Flowing on to the ocean of love evermore.

Religion is nothing, pretensions are vain,
If works are still wanting, ah! where is thy gain?
As bark cast away on some desolate shore—
As wreck on the deep thou art gone evermore.

Thy days fleet away as a meteor's gleam,
Flashing bright for a moment they fade as a dream;
Yea! dream though it be, yet on far distant shore
Shall in thunders re-echo the past evermore.

As flowers dost thou blossom, mere thing of a day,
As breath of the flower thou wilt vanish away;
Let love be thy motto this gloomy life o'er,
Then in sunshine of love wilt thou bask evermore.

Mr. Wilson, who has carefully read over General McCallum's unpublished writings, places a very high estimate on his powers as a poet.

"His works," he says, "are not mere jingles of meaningless rhymes. On the contrary, they are the outpourings of a soul in which poetry and philosophy are strangely and wonderfully combined—a soul deeply in love with all that is true and beautiful and good, in harmony with all that is noblest, purest, sweetest in the universe of God. Mc-Callum wrote poetry for the same reason that the lark sings—he could not help it. He wrote poetry not because he wished to be a poet, but because he was obedient to the spirit that was in him." Among the finest of his published poems not already referred to are "The Creed of Life," "A Dream," "Soldiers Song of Freedom," "An O'er True Tale," "Solemn Thoughts," and "The Rainy Day." These are elevating, pure and poetic in every sense. As a specimen of his lyrical powers we quote one of the numerous songs which he composed in his mother tongue :

SONG—BESSIE DEAR.

O Bessie dear, I ne'er can tell
 The love I have for thee;
 O meet me in yon fairy dell,
 Down by the hawthorne tree.
 Down by the hawthorne tree, my dear,
 The warbling burnie rins;
 O come, my dearie—dinna fear—
 The bravest heart aye wins,
 The bravest heart aye wins, my dear, etc.

Thy rosy lips, thy gowden hair,
 Doth haunt me all the while;
 Thou drivest me to keen despair
 By thy sweet angel smile.
 The lily in yon flow'ry dale,
 Nae purer is than thee;
 The sparkling gem doth surely pale
 Beneath thy bonnie e'e.
 Beneath thy bonnie e'e, my dear, etc.

As magnet to the pole, my dear,
 Sac true's my love for thee—
 Where'er I roam, be't far or near—
 On land or raging sea.
 Then come my dearie—dinna wait—
 Thou'rt world and a' to me;
 O meet me at the trysting gate
 Down by the hawthorne tree,
 Down by the hawthorne tree, my dear, etc.

“General McCallum had a commanding presence,” writes Mr. Wilson. “In his younger years, with his long black hair falling in curls on his shoulders and his magnificent beard resting in wavy folds on his manly breast, over six feet in height, erect of stature, light and graceful in all his movements, he must have been a handsome and attractive man. Even in these later years he was a conspicuous figure in any company; and he was in the habit of receiving the respect which his presence commanded. Now that he is gone those who knew him best will miss him most. His memory will long be green in many a chosen circle ; but we shall not soon see his like again.”

A day or two before the General passed away (December 27, 1878) Mr. Wilson called at his residence and was admitted into the sick chamber. The dying man knew that his end was fast approaching, and, taking hold of his friend's hand, he said : “ John, after I am gone will you see that my memory is taken care of ? ” “ I will, General,” answered Mr. Wilson, softly, and shortly afterwards withdrew. Nor was the promise forgotten ; and one of the most beautiful and tasteful of the many articles which Mr. Wilson continued to contribute to the *New York Scotsman*, even after he had retired from the editorship of that paper, was the one on the life and work of his late friend, Major-General Donald Craig McCallum.

