



# Early Critical Reviews on Robert Burns (Classic Reprint)

*John Dawson Ross*

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Excerpt from Early Critical Reviews on Robert Burns

This volume contains the best of the early critical Reviews on Robert Burns. Many of these reviews are difficult to obtain at this date, and I feel confident that the student, as well as the lover of Burns, will appreciate the bringing of them together in this handy and accessible form.

The first notice accorded to the poet is not included in the collection, as it contained little of a strictly critical character. It was printed in the Edinburgh Magazine for October, 1786, and opens with the query -

"Who are you, Mr. Burns? Will some surly critic say: at what university have you been educated? What languages do you understand? What authors have you particularly studied? Whether has Aristotle or Horace directed your taste? Who has praised your poems, and under whose patronage are they published? In short, what qualifications entitle you to instruct or entertain us?"

To the questions of such a catechism, perhaps, honest Robert Burns would make no satisfactory answer. "My good man," he might say, "I am a poor countryman. I was bred up at the school of Kilmarnock; I understand no language but my own. I have studied Allan Ramsay and Fergusson. My poems have been praised at many a fireside, and I ask no patronage for them if they deserve none. I have not looked at mankind through the spectacles of books. 'An ounce of mother wit,' you know, 'is worth a pound of clergy.'"

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