



Ivan Franko





One of the innovators of all genres of literature was Ivan Franko. He raised the post-Shevchenko Ukrainian poetry of the late 19th and early 20th century to new heights. He did the same in prose. We always remember the volume of poetry «Heights and Depths», the novel «Boryslav is laughing», the drama «Stolen Happiness», etc. He devoted much attention to translations from foreign languages. His merits as a thinker and scholar were great in many fields: the history and theory of literature, folklore, political economy, history, ethnography.



Ivan Yakovych Franko was a Ukrainian poet, writer, social and literary critic, journalist, interpreter, economist, political activist, doctor of philosophy, ethnographer, the author of the first detective novels and modern poetry in the Ukrainian language.

These two sonnets were written while Franko was still a schoolboy, seventeen years of age. In the first one, the poet has in mind one of the many grave mounds or funeral barrows on the steppe beneath which lie the bones of those who fell in battle against the Tatars or other invaders. To him the ancient and anonymous folk songs represent the soul of his people with its perennial resurgence from the disasters of the past. The second one came as the result of his acquaintance with Kotlyarevsky's burlesque of Virgil's *Aeneid* which appeared in 1798. Its importance lies in the fact that Kotlyarevsky was the first writer in modern times to use the speech of the Ukrainian people as a literary medium and hence he is regarded as the father of modern Ukrainian literature.

FOLK SONG

Behold the spring which gushes from that
grave
And gurgles o'er the steppe in tear-like stream!
On its clear surface doth the moonlight gleam,
The beaming sun plays on its crystal wave.
From out earth's bosom pulse those waters
clear.
The living movement sleeps not, knows no
bound.
The quickening waters spread new life around
To thousands of Spring's children growing
there.
That spring with its unceasing magic flow
Is like my people's soul—though wrapped in
grief,
It still sings to the heart of long ago.
As that spring's source lies in earth's hidden
parts,
So from mysterious depths do folk songs rise
With their pure fervour to inflame our hearts.

KOTLYAREVSKY

A mighty eagle on a snowy height
Sat gazing all around with his keen eye,
When lo, he started upwards towards the
sky
And on his splendid pinions took his
flight.
His sweeping wing brushed off a clod of
snow;
It fell and started other clods downhill;
They gathered force and strength and
size until
An avalanche went roaring down below.
So Kotlyarevsky happily once spoke,
Began to sing in our Ukrainian tongue—
Though what he sang then seemed to be
a joke,
Yet in it lay an earnest great and strong.
That spark did not die out amongst our
folk,
But blazed and warmed us all ere long.



