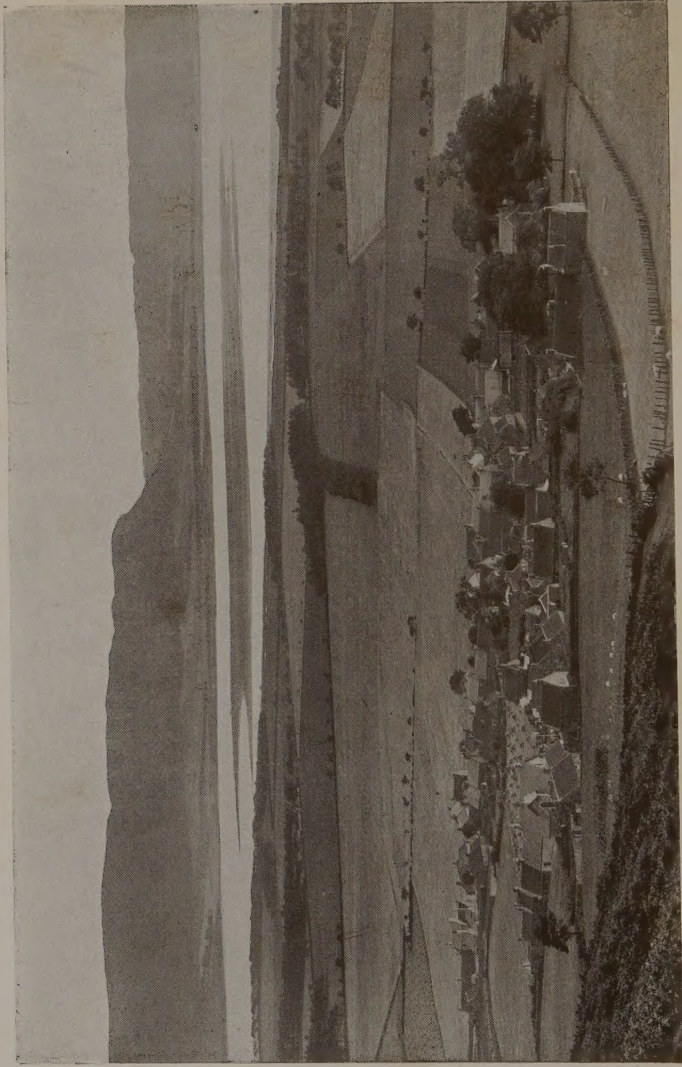


## ERRATA.

---

- Page x, line 11, for "Maston" read "Matson."  
" 6, " 11, for "oppressor" read "usurper."  
" 6, " 27, for "May" read "my."  
" 7, " 18, delete "Justice Clerk."  
" 8, " 24, for "ultimately" read "intimately."  
" 19, " 5, delete last three words.  
" 24, " 3, for "louder" read "louner."  
" 46, " 18, for "circumstances" read "circum-  
scribes."  
" 57, " 11, mark in " after mighty, and delete on  
line 16 after last word.  
" 107, " 1, for "Varro's" read "Brown's."  
" 111, " 16, for "in" read "per."  
" 120, " 23, for "Wester" read "Easter."  
" 121, " 6, for "1852" read "1837."  
" 123, " 21, after "is" delete four words.  
" 130, " 24, after "welcome" add "sing."  
" 133, " 5, delete last two words.  
" 143, " 21, for "David" read "Donald."  
" 156, " 9, for "Sharp" read "Shairp."  
" 193, " last line, delete.  
" 197, " 10, for "oppressor" read "usurper."  
" 197, " 27, for "eleven" read "fourteen."  
" 213, " 23, for "hollowed" read "hallowed."  
" 224, " 21, for "Loch Leven" read "Eclogue."  
" 236, " 1, for "Maston" read "Matson," and also  
in following lines.  
" 241, " 17, for "thousand" read "hundred."  
On Subscribers' List, after "Montgomery" read "Sir."



KINNESSWOOD, as seen from the hill, with part of Loch Leven, St. Serf's Isle, Benarty Hill,  
Blairadam and Cleish Hills on the right.

LIFE OF  
**MICHAEL BRUCE**

*POET OF LOCH LEVEN*

WITH VINDICATION OF HIS AUTHORSHIP OF THE  
"ODE TO THE CUCKOO" AND OTHER POEMS  
ALSO COPIES OF LETTERS WRITTEN BY

JOHN LOGAN

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED

BY

JAMES MACKENZIE

M.P.S., F.S.A.S., J.P., EDINBURGH

WITH PREFACE BY

OLIPHANT SMEATON



LONDON

**J. M. DENT & CO.**

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1905

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INSCRIBED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
REV. WILLIAM MACKELVIE, D.D.,  
BALGEDIE, KINROSS-SHIRE  
AS THE ONE FROM WHOM THE STORY REGARDING THE LIFE OF  
MICHAEL BRUCE  
THE STUDENT POET OF LOCH LEVEN  
WAS FIRST LEARNED BY THE WRITER,  
AND AS THE ORIGINAL VINDICATOR OF THE POET'S CLAIMS  
TO BE THE AUTHOR OF THE  
"ODE TO THE CUCKOO" AND OTHER POEMS :

AND ALSO  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
THE RIGHT HON. JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.  
AN ARDENT ADMIRER OF THE WORKS OF  
THIS POET  
WHOSE AFFECTING HISTORY GREATLY  
INTERESTED HIM.



## PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that I accede to my friend Mr Mackenzie's request to write a few lines of a prefatory character to his interesting volume on "Michael Bruce." But as "good wine needs no bush," neither does a good book need any commendatory or eulogistic statements to advance its sale. While I cannot say I wholly endorse all Mr Mackenzie says, and while some of his theories are to me a little startling, on the whole the book is a valuable contribution to the literature of the controversy as to whether Bruce or Logan wrote the "Ode to the Cuckoo." But that is not the only point Mr Mackenzie goes far to settle. He shows us that Logan owed a good deal more to Bruce's MSS. than we have been aware of, and although, as I say, Mr Mackenzie's theories are sometimes a little difficult to accept *in toto*, on the other hand he has done yeoman service in demonstrating as much as he has the difference in the moral character of the two men. If the question can be settled by an appeal to moral character, then assuredly Mr Mackenzie has gone the right way about the matter so as

to decide the debate once for all. The amount of new information he has collected is considerable, while the skill with which he has pieced together the story of the contrasted lives of Bruce and Logan is certainly worthy of praise. I do not go the length of saying he has settled the controversy of the "Ode to the Cuckoo" for all time. I fear that would be beyond the power of any writer, however deft his skill in critical synthesis, seeing that we cannot hope to produce a copy of the "Ode" in Bruce's handwriting. Mr Mackenzie, however, is able to do the next best thing; he adduces the testimony of no less a man than Principal Baird, who is asserted to have possessed a copy of the "Ode" in the handwriting of the poet. This statement goes a long way to prove the case.

I am requested to state by Mr Mackenzie that the volume was all ready for press, with the exception of the preface, before the lamented death of the late Rev. Dr Small occurred. The tone of the references would otherwise have been greatly modified.

The volume is published at such a price as to be within the reach of all who are interested in this curious problem which for considerably over a century has been one of the *quaestiones vexotal* of literary criticism.

O. S.

THE GRANGE, *May*, 1905.



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# Life of Michael Bruce

## INTRODUCTION

THE life history and writings of Michael Bruce, "The Poet of Loch Leven," form a subject interesting to every lover of Scottish literature, alike by the intrinsic merit which attaches to his writings and by the pathetic story of his short yet impressive life, as well as by the extraordinary circumstances attending the publication of a volume of poems under Bruce's name in 1770, by John Logan, afterwards one of the ministers of Leith. To the latter the poet's MS. volume of poems had been entrusted some years previous. The publication of Bruce's poems was followed by the issue of another volume of poems by Logan in 1781, wherein he claimed a portion of those formerly attributed to Bruce, with others known not to have been Logan's. In consequence of this an animated controversy has been carried on between those who condemn and those who justify Logan's conduct. This has been waged the more fiercely since the publication of the *Life and Works of Michael Bruce* by Rev. Dr Wm. Mackelvie of Balgedie in 1837. The whole circumstances

of the case have tended to weave round the poet a web of romantic interest which shows no sign of decay. The question of the authorship of many of the poems has been left in a most unsatisfactory state, and to endeavour to banish this uncertainty once for all is the object of this volume.

The real merit of Bruce's poems has been attested by many men of literary eminence. Coming before the public, as these writings did, at a time prior to those of Robert Fergusson or Robert Burns, they are worthy of attention, as the heralds of the later outburst of Scottish Song.

Those participating in the controversy of recent years have unfortunately been influenced by the opinions they entertained regarding the respective merits and claims of the supposed author. This is to be regretted. At the same time, through the lapse of years and the meagre evidence originally obtainable, difficulties increased, and at length were regarded as well-nigh insoluble. Papers, however, have recently been brought to light bearing most materially upon the real merits of the case "pro and con." These are what the writer desires to submit to the public in order that everyone interested in the subject of "Bruce and Logan" may be in a position to form an independent judgment. That it should have been necessary to submit a correspondence conducted by the Rev. John Logan and his friends is much to be regretted.

The persistent assertions by Logan's supporters made it imperative that this should be done, all the more that it has been put forth by way of challenge by the Rev. Dr King Hewison in his advocacy of Logan "that an ultimate settlement of the question was to be got by *a detailed examination of the lives of Bruce and Logan*;" while the Rev. Dr Robert Small, who has long been the champion of John Logan as against Michael Bruce, tries to settle the point by advancing the proposition "that the whole question, so far as Logan is concerned, involves *moral character* far more than literary rights," these clear and distinct statements have been accepted. The results are embodied in the following pages. The new but sad facts elicited regarding the character of Logan must necessarily affect the opinions hitherto entertained respecting him. But should the portions of Logan's letters here given, or that of his executor, Rev. Dr Donald Grant, not be enough to convince some of what Logan was capable of doing, they may find the originals in the Library of the Edinburgh University, as not a little in some of them is unfit for publication. On the other hand, ample evidence will be found in the following pages to reveal the kind of man Michael Bruce was. Alike in his own letters and in those written by his intimate friends, he appears the simple, pure-souled, highly honourable youth, so that by

the tests already laid down by the Doctors of Divinity aforesaid, his character appears in even a more honourable light than before.

The story of Bruce's life has been entirely re-written, including a notice of his worthy parents. In the search which has been made in order to secure everything that could possibly shed light upon the case it has been sad to discover that even in comparatively recent years so many original letters had fallen into the hands of those who did not know their value, even those MSS. of Bruce once possessed by Rev. Principal Baird not being an exception. At the same time there is cause for thankfulness that such as remain have now been secured against possible loss or destruction by the hands of the careless. There has also been added a notice of Bruce's native village, Kinnesswood, and its people, showing how much this locality was fitted to nourish a poet's fancy. The contemplations of its beauties in hill and dale, from the grassy and rugged sides of the Lomond Hills or fair Benarty, by classic Loch Leven, or by the healing spring at Scotland Well, embody such a variety of subjects as nursed him into a love of nature and into the ambition to be the poet of that locality. Even a passing acquaintance with his writings reveals this, and proves a valuable solution of difficulties of which the defenders of Logan do not seem to have taken account. For Bruce was above all else "a local poet."



How frequently yet how aptly he introduces his father and the family fireside, his native village, his early nurse, whose care and attention so strongly impressed him ; the hills under whose shade he had been born and brought up, the little rills descending from the hill, under summer and winter aspects ; “ the Wood,” wherein his fancy roved and his footsteps wandered ; the very trees, the various birds, the ancient castles, with the old-world stories concerning them ; the country funerals, his rustic friends, under the “ pen-names ” he gave them, his early loves and favourites ; even the old and new kirkyards—all seen from the eastern shoulder of the Lomond Hill, with the lovely prospects, south, west and east, are the poetic materials he found lying to his hand in his native district and introduced into his poems. His letters also exhibit how well he maintained a cheerful disposition under the trials of delicate health and a constant struggle with poverty, abiding strong in faith, though daily impressed with the speedy prospect of his dissolution, cheerfully submitting to the will of Heaven yet ever careful for the feelings of those near and dear to him. There is also to be found in his writings the martial spirit of his name and his love of freedom. In him was “ the poet’s strain inspired, the hero’s heavenly flame.”

Our national bard, Robert Burns, admired his writings, and caught from them inspiration, as

embodied in two of his grandest pieces, "The Cottar's Saturday Night," and Bruce's address to his army at Bannockburn, "Scots wha hae."

Bruce writes :—

"Thou guardian angel of Britannia's Isle."

Burns puts this as :—

"And stand a wall of fire around our much loved Isle."

Bruce writes :—

"Thy sons shall lay the proud ~~oppressor~~ low." *usurper*

Burns adopts this in his "Scots wha hae" :—

"Lay the proud oppressor low."

Bruce in his "Elegy to Spring," writes :—

"Taught them to sing the great Creator's praise."

Burns in his "Cottar's Saturday Night," has :—

"Together hymning their Creator's praise."

Bruce in his "Loch Leven," writes :—

"My one beloved, were the Scottish throne  
To me transmitted thro' a scepter'd line  
Of ancestors, thou shouldst be my queen,  
And Caledonia's diadem adorn  
A fairer head than ever wore a crown."

Burns reflects this in "Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast" :—

"Or were I monarch of the globe,  
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,  
The brightest jewel in my crown  
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen."

When Rev. Principal Baird was contemplating the publication of a third edition of Bruce's poems for the benefit of the poet's widowed mother, Burns was applied to for some portion of his poetry, as it was thought it would improve the sale of the book. He readily complied with the request, as his letter still testifies. Unfortunately what was sent was for "cogent reasons" thought to be hardly suitable, and was not included.

It is believed that had Bruce's manuscripts fallen into better hands, and justice been done to them at first, his writings would have taken a high place in the literature of our country. When we consider that some of those pieces which were untampered with have been pronounced "as among the sweetest and most moving compositions in the English language," and when men like Henry Mackenzie, Edmund Burke, Lord ~~Justice-Clerk~~ Craig and others have passed on them the highest eulogy, and been delighted to express the pleasure they derived from reading them, surely not mere sympathy for the young poet's untimely death could alone prompt such tributes. Amid much that is to be condemned in Logan's conduct towards his friend and fellow-student it is well that we can cite something that can be commended. In the preface to the volume of Bruce's poems, published under Logan's editorship in 1770, he writes:—

"It was during the summer vacations of the College that he

composed the following poems. If images of nature that are beautiful and new, if sentiments warm from the heart, interesting and pathetic, if a style chaste with ornament and elegant with simplicity, if these and many other beauties of nature and of art are allowed to constitute true poetic merit, the following poems will stand high in the judgment of men of taste."

The writer has to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Library Committee of the Edinburgh University for their permission to copy the letters of Rev. John Logan, and for the privilege of publishing them, as is now done for the first time.

It was the intention of the late Rev. Dr William Mackelvie to have published a second edition of the *Life and Works of Michael Bruce*, which he had in preparation, largely corrected, with further evidence in support of the claims of Bruce. But during his serious illness this volume was taken from his library by some unknown person and has not been heard of since.

The writer knew the late Dr Mackelvie and has listened to his interesting statements regarding Bruce ; and having been brought up within sight of *intimately* Kinnesswood, and ~~ultimately~~ associated with that locality, he has been enabled to apply his local knowledge to the present purpose out of regard for the claims and fame of the poet Michael Bruce ; also as a token of his esteem for the late Dr Mackelvie for the zeal and interest he displayed on the poet's behalf.







“THE COTTAGE,” KINNESSWOOD, where Michael Bruce was born 1746,  
and where he passed to the “Higher Life,” July 1767.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PARENTS AND HOME OF MICHAEL BRUCE

The poet's parents—Their home—Occupation—Religious observances—  
The young poet's surroundings—The description of Alexander Bruce  
—David Pearson's letter regarding him—The poet's sketch of his  
father—The father's poem on his son—The letter to David Pearson.

ALEXANDER and Ann Bruce were the names of the young poet's parents. Although the wife's name was the same as her husband's, they were not previously related. The house in which the poet was born stands in what is known as the "Loan to the Hill," and originally consisted of one storey. Like the other dwellings among which it stood, it was covered or thatched with reeds, while the door was entered from the street. Sometime afterwards an additional storey was built upon the former walls, reached by a small stair outside, so as to attain to the higher ground at the back of the cottage, from which the door of the new portion was made to enter.

Alexander Bruce was a weaver by trade, and has the credit of having turned out his work in a superior style, though some have asserted he was fonder of

reading than of weaving. His wife ably performed her share of the domestic duties, the frequent berr of her wheel as she filled the "pirns" to aid her husband revealing to the neighbours her ceaseless industry. She was known to be a woman of a superior mind, and like her husband was highly religious. In this particular they helped each other, and both were highly esteemed by their neighbours for their social and religious qualities.

The date 1748 is engraved on the "pate stone," but this was done when the additional storey to the house was erected. Before the door of this upper house was their little garden, stocked in the usual way with useful herbs and vegetables. Formerly there was a large tree growing there, under the shade of which the poet was wont to sit or recline, while the woodbine and roses were trained on the outer walls of the cottage, and the sweet thyme with lily-of-the-valley grew in abundance all around.

Before the labours of the day began, and when these were concluded, the whole family were wont to gather round the hearth, and family worship was reverently conducted. The home was indeed "a Bethel," and the heads of it may without exaggeration be termed as having been among "the princes of God's people." The whole surroundings were fitted to aid the development of a Christian poet born under such circumstances; while the situation of the village, nestling under the shade of the

Lomond Hills, furnished all that could be desired of Nature's varied beauty. Nor was this unobserved by Bruce as he grew up. He was proud of the place of his birth, and as his mind contemplated it he burst out with the thought of his heart :—

“Behold the village rise in rural pride.”

The faith of the young poet was “home made.” He had been taught at his mother's knee that the beginning of wisdom was the fear of God, and by the fireside he imbibed that love of knowledge which afterwards distinguished him. His father's house was also a resort of the more intelligent young men of the place, who delighted to drop in of an evening and hear Alexander Bruce, the father, discourse on all topics about which they had a mind to enquire.

In the search for all possible documentary evidence regarding the poet, an old paper was found which sheds an interesting light upon the home of this worthy man. It was written by a contemporary who knew all about the inner life of the place. It may be remarked that there was a society in Kinnesswood, consisting for the most part of young men. Of this Alexander Bruce was a member, and it met often in his house. Each member had a “nom de plume,” and the one by which Alexander Bruce was known was “Acastro.”

The following is a transcript of the document :—

“There lived a venerable old man in K——d, his

name was 'Acastro.' He was a lover of literature, and delighted in the conversation of the learned. Altho' he had not a liberal education, yet by the strength of his genius and assiduous application, he had acquired a very great stock of knowledge, and could converse upon almost any topic, especially divinity and history. He had likewise a very great taste for philosophy and delighted exceedingly in poetical compositions. His affability and complaisance drew many to visit him, and he made it his study to introduce to each other those of his friends who were similar in genius and disposition. Amongst his numerous acquaintances there were two whose names I will mention, viz., 'Philenor' (David Pearson), who was the intimate acquaintance and chief favourite of 'Acastro.' He had an elevated genius, a good taste, a solidity of judgment and a quickening of discernment equalled by few. His esteem for all friends, when fully formed, was steady, and his affections mild and heavenly. 'Acastro,' conscious of his friend's worth, was studious to commence a friendship between him and 'Varro' (John Birrell), who at this time happened to be at K——d on a visit to his friends (grandfather and uncles). As 'Acastro's' mind was so lofty, and his company so instructive, 'Philenor' could not resist the opportunity to avail himself of cultivating 'Acastro's' friendship, being extremely fond of forming connections with men of sense and letters. This disposition inclined him to frequent 'Acastro,' though no other motive had induced him save that he found 'Acastro's' home to be like the University where all the learned of that countryside made their appearance. 'Acastro' soon found an opportunity to introduce 'Philenor' and 'Varro' to each other. From this time they have been chief friends, as they both had a genius for poetry. They gave way to it in corresponding with each other. In their letters we find many poetical flights. We shall defer consideration of this till afterwards, and at present show how that society was formed, tracing it from its commencement through various turns till the close. It

was shortly after this, and the connection thus formed, that 'Varro' became intimate with 'Damon' (James Bruce, 'Acastro's' only remaining son)."

Unfortunately, here ends the MS., the remaining pages having been lost. It is satisfactory that we have what relates to Alexander Bruce, the poet's father, from the pen of one who had lived with and served him, viz., David Pearson, who also wrote an account of him which was published in the *Missionary Magazine* in 1797. Many were then alive who could testify to the truth of what he wrote, and no one ever contradicted it. It was as follows:—

“ A nobler pen might well be employed in giving the character of my worthy master, Alexander Bruce. As already noted, he was born at Kinnesswood on the 18th October 1710, and married Ann Bruce on 27th December 1737. From his early youth he was pious, and filled up his time with care and prudence, so as to know the duty for every hour. Daily he consulted the oracles of truth, and like Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures. Three years did I dwell with him, and can with truth and sincerity assert that he had an amiable and calm disposition, a most winning method with young persons, in introducing religion to their notice and recommending its practice by some pleasant narrative, for which he was never at a loss, as he had an extensive acquaintance with the best historians and divines, both ancient and



modern. This large stock of information, under the management of that pious disposition which he possessed, was very profitable to me and other youths, for he was excellent at his business and taught a number of apprentices, who revered him as a parent, teacher, master and friend. He ruled well his own family and was counted worthy to be chosen an elder in the Church. He had much contentment in his lot, though humble.\* There was a poor family in the town who had lost their father; the mother being sickly, the children had to beg. He took one of them, a girl of ten years old, into his family; she proved a great help to them and became nurse to his young son Michael for two years, and kind she was to him. He carefully taught the girl the principles of religion. After a time she was seized with fever and died. Her name was 'Mary Miller'; and she was buried beside his own family. After the death of his amiable son Michael, he only survived five years. He often spoke of the great

\* The portrait which Bruce paints with his pen of his much-loved father:—

“I knew an aged swain, whose hoary head  
 Was bent with years, the village chronicle,  
 Who much had seen, and from the former times  
 Much had received, he, hanging o'er the hearth  
 In winter ev'nings, to the gaping swains,  
 And children circling round the fire, would tell  
 Stories of old, in Britain's evil day,  
 When brothers against brothers drew the sword  
 Of civil rage and hostile hand of war.”

comfort he had that his son was pious. His sun seemed always to shine, and was brightest towards his end. He said, 'I am thankful that through grace I have been enabled to fear God all my days.' He often amused himself composing verses about his son Michael; the following is a specimen of these:—

'This pious youth early began,  
In morning of his day,  
To seek the Lord his God, that He  
Might teach to him His way.

He did like to young Timothy,  
The Holy Scriptures make  
His frequent study, and in them  
Great pleasure he did take.

For in his childhood he did read  
God's word with special care;  
And sought the meaning carefully  
Of places dark that were.

He did desire to serve the Lord  
By preaching of His word,  
That by the gospel trumpet he  
His fame might spread abroad,

And publish to the human race  
Glad tidings of good things,  
Which God, in gospel of His grace,  
To guilty sinners brings.'"

He died on the 19th July 1772, being esteemed

as a kind neighbour and regretted as a dear Christian friend.

Nor was Ann Bruce, the wife of this worthy man and mother of the poet, less conspicuous in every respect. Many are the kindly stories related concerning her. She survived her husband twenty-six years, and died peacefully in 1798. Her kindly Christian character, the regard and esteem felt for her gifted son, brought round her many interested friends, whose liberality contributed to her comfort in her closing years, and who visited her when occasion offered. Amongst these, we find Rev. Principal Baird of Edinburgh University, Mr John Birrell, who was as a son to her and, along with Mr John Hervey and Mr Telford of Stirling, took special interest in her welfare—

The following is a copy of the only letter known to exist, written by Alexander Bruce, the poet's father. It is addressed to David Pearson in Pathhead.

“KINNESSWOOD, 4th March 1765.

“DEAR FRIEND,—I received your letter some time ago ; it was very welcome to me. I desire to sympathise with you and to recommend you to the care of the Great Physician who only can heal all our diseases and pains. I would have you consider that affliction springeth not out of the dust ; all is ordered by Infinite wisdom, and all is designed for the real



KINNESSWOOD. View in the Main Street.



good and advantage of the people of God. There is a time coming, and that ere long, when the righteous shall be removed out of all their troubles, and all sorrow and sighing shall fly away. Strive to submit to the will of God, who knows what is best for you ; and though no chastising for the present seemeth joyous, yet it henceforth yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby, and ‘our light afflictions which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’ He chastens us for our profit, and therefore we ought not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor to be weary of His correction. Whom He loves He chastens, and if we be without this, then are we bastards and not sons. At present we see but the dark side of the cloud ; yet to the upright, light will arise ; though he be in darkness, yet joy cometh in the morning. Strive to have your heart weaned from the world, and count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is good news to the people of God that our Lord Jesus has overcome death, so that it is a vanquished enemy, and they need not fear to go down to the grave, for He will be with them, to sustain them for ever. May the God of all comfort strengthen and support you by His Spirit in Christ Jesus

“Is the wish and prayer of your constant friend,

“ALEXANDER BRUCE.”

The following is a copy of an Extract Minute of Session of Portmoak Parish Church, written by Mr Dun, teacher and session-clerk, dated 6th May 1770, though he did not attend the Parish Church, but was an elder in the Secession Congregation at Milnathort :—

“In absence of the Session, whose members live in different parts of the parish, Mr Mudie, minister, took along with him Alexander Bruce, weaver, and Andrew Small, shoemaker, both indwellers in Kinnesswood, and men of undoubted character, in order to witness what Helen Norman might say in answer to what she should be further interrogated upon, etc., etc.

“(Signed) JOHN MUDIE, *Minister.*  
ALEXANDER BRUCE.  
ANDREW SMALL.

“The above declaration emitted at Kinnesswood the 9th of May and testified by John Dun, Session-Clerk.”



## CHAPTER II

### KINNESSWOOD

The poet's description of Kinnesswood—The Bishopshire—The scattered villages—The pious memorials—The fairies—The Lomond Hills—Parchment making—Historic associations—Men of the Covenant—Glenvale—Sir David Lyndsay's poem on the district—Poem descriptive of Kinnesswood—"Amyntas"—"Varro"—"Damon."

"Fair from his hand behold the village rise  
In rural pride, 'mong intermingled trees ;  
Above whose aged tops the joyful swains  
At eventide descending from the hill,  
With eye enamour'd, mark the many wreaths  
Of pillar'd smoke high curling to the clouds,  
How fair a prospect rises to the eye,  
Where Beauty vies in all her vernal forms  
For ever pleasant and for ever new."

SUCH was the description the young poet Michael Bruce gave of his native village. It may be interesting to readers to know more of this little hamlet than is to be found in the ordinary gazetteer. It clusters beneath the southern slope of the Lomond Hill, and is noted as the birth-place of this young poet. It is the scene of most of his writings. Did space permit, much might be written concerning its

history, and that of its inhabitants. It is situated in what is termed the Bishopshire, in the parish of Portmoak, and county of Kinross. In former days, the Bishopshire had its principal place there, with lands in feu to the Archbishop of St Andrews.

The word "shire" in this instance is different from what is understood nowadays, and was formerly well-known in "Old Fife" as representing a "Barony." From the upper portion of the village, the view stretching towards Loch Leven is most picturesque. The historic islands of St Serf's and the Castle, with Benarty Hill and the Cleish Range in the background, would require a volume to exhaust their history. All around this locality is rich in historic lore of the deepest interest, while in native beauty and tradition no fitter home could be found for nursing the poetic fancy of a true poet, for over this district had passed Scotland's favourite kings and queens, courtly knights and heroes of renown. The romance of Fairyland invests the Lomond Hills, according to local legend, and the denizens of the spirit-world were supposed to hold high festival at certain times upon their slopes. In former days the hamlet of Kinnesswood and the adjoining "scattered villages," were much apart from the world at large. They seemed to form a little world of their own, within which their interests generally revolved. For all that, there was a highly religious life inspiring the inhabitants,

due to the earnest work of Mr Ebenezer Erskine, their devoted minister. At the same time, it was noticeable that a high degree of intelligence was pretty general, as is proved by the letters and other documents still existing. The various societies which existed in the parish did much to give the common life of the people a high tone. *The Pious Memorials of Portmoak*, a most interesting MS. history which had been written by men of the village, is such as any rural parish might be proud of. The people were industrious and happy, and when the day's work was done, when the clank of the looms and birr of the pirn-wheel had ceased, the young people gathered round the firesides, where the peat fires lent their bright gleams, to listen to the stories of "auld lang syne." These were in ample variety. Yet the "fairy-tales" had a charm which entranced the youngsters. They would sit quiet as mice, their eager faces telling how much they enjoyed them, as this relaxation was better suited to their youthful mind than the hard lines and verses of "the Carritch." Where hills exist there is generally some "weird" story connected with them. So here Kinnesswood was no exception, for—

"On Lomond's slopes the warlocks grim,  
And fairy brownies danced,  
Wae unca tales o' auld lang syne,  
Held younkers oft entranced."

All this fitted in with the young poet's fancy, and well he sketched it in his word-pictures of localities still distinguishable to those acquainted with the district. This sequestered village was the "headquarters" for the manufacture of vellum and parchment, continued from an early period till a few years ago. Many an important legal document has been written upon the material prepared in Kinnesswood. It may well be understood why the fireside of Alexander Bruce was so favourite a resort. There was in that home much that was attractive to all, varied to each set from age to childhood, so that whatever was under consideration on any occasion was made most interesting in itself. Poetry was a favourite study, while history afforded a wide field.

The locality, moreover, can be proved to have been the abode of the Druids, with all their mysterious and ghostly rites, their oaks and standing stones. The Culdees also had their home upon "the Inch" or St Serf's Isle, and planted mission churches all round Loch Leven. The Romish church in turn had its day, and its deadening influence was in due time superseded by the Reformation and Revolution, all these occurrences leaving their impress on the special characteristics of the countryside. Each castle had its romantic story of love and war, and a considerable variety of these edifices were within easy distance of the village. No doubt it was such recitals that gave the young poet

his love of antiquity and his fondness for drawing upon these pictures of "departed glory."

Here, too, had lived the "men of the Covenant," who suffered for our civil and religious liberty in days past. Thrilling stories are told of what they had to endure, and of the escapes they often made when attending the conventicles at "Glenvale," where "the preachings" were held in that remarkable spot with its pulpit in the rock. This was a favourite haunt of the young poet.

But it must not be supposed he was singular in his intense love for Kinnesswood. Others felt the same glamour of the place. After 1746, when the disturbance of the Rebellion had ceased, employment was scarce. A few of the young men of Kinnesswood emigrated to London and found work—some as bakers, joiners, and in other branches of trade. Letters of the period inform us that it was the custom of these young men to meet each Saturday night at a given place and relate any news that had arrived from the Bishopshire; thus they kept in touch with their homes. Kinnesswood has also sent her sons far abroad, so that nowadays it is no strange thing to see and hear of their descendants returning from distant lands of their adoption to visit the spot where they or their parents had begun life's journey. The following lines are descriptive of this district and of the *hollowed* hills of which Bruce also sang:—

“It sang sae sweet on green Lomond  
And the night wind louder blew,  
For it soopet along the Loch Leven  
And walkened the white sea mew.

It rang out so sweet through the green Lomond,  
So sweet, but, and so shrill,  
That the weasels lap out o’ their mouldy holes,  
And danced on the midnight hill.”

## CHAPTER III

### BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF MICHAEL BRUCE TO THE TIME OF HIS ENTERING AND LEAVING THE EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY TO ENTER THE DIVINITY HALL AT KINROSS

Birth and early life of the poet—Poor health—David Pearson, his companion—Bruce's disposition—Early teaching—Reading—Mr Dun, teacher—The books he read—At school—He goes as a herd—Health improves—His occupation and studies—"The Wood,"—The home fire-side—Early writing poetry—His favourite authors—Willie Arnot—The Laird of Portmoak—The choice of occupation—His friends—Leaves home for Edinburgh University—His impressions of the city.

MICHAEL BRUCE was born at Kinnesswood, in the Bishopshire of Portmoak and county of Kinross, on the 27th of March 1746, being the fifth child of his parents, Alexander and Ann Bruce. At that time registration was little attended to in country districts, the date of the baptism only being entered in the parish records. As, however, the poet himself and his mother referred to the 27th of March as the date of his birth, it may be accepted as correct. His early years were passed under somewhat saddening conditions. His health was poor, and in infancy he was regarded as a sickly child. As he grew up to boyhood, though his constitution became stronger, he was never absolutely well. David Pearson, his early companion and close friend in after years, tells



several incidents regarding the poet's youth and the severe trials which the delicate state of his health laid on him. All that love and solicitude could do for him was done. In addition to his mother, there was the orphan girl, "Mary Miller," whom his parents had adopted (see p. 14), who became his nurse, carrying him over the hillsides and from place to place.

At home his kindly and lovable disposition made him a general favourite, and from the first he appears to have showed great desire for learning and aptitude in its reception. Alexander Bruce, as we have seen, was, for his station, a well-educated man, ever pleased to gratify the boy's taste for letters. When but little over four years of age he was able to read the Bible. In the *Pious Memorials of the Parish of Portmoak* there is an account of Michael Bruce written by David Pearson, in which he says:—"In the year 1748, when hardly two years old, he had four sore fevers, and afterwards suffered from a delicate constitution." In May 1750 his father gratified the lad's desire to get to school, so he was led down the loan to the school-house, a humble building still existing on the opposite side of the loan to his father's house. The door has been built up, as the building was long ago assigned to a menial purpose, but otherwise it is unchanged. The date 1750 is carved on the stone on the place where the entrance formerly was. Mr Dun, the worthy and accomplished teacher, was surprised, when he came to

test the child, to find he was able to read the Bible he had brought with him. He was also able to read the poets, and the works of Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount was another of his favourite books. At the annual market held in the village, the child, in company with his father, went down to the main street to a bookstall to try and get a copy of Sir David's poems. The stallkeeper asked the boy what he wanted the book for, and was surprised to hear that he wanted to read it. Doubting whether this could be, and not having a copy of Lyndsay, he handed to Michael another book, *A Key to the Gates of Heaven*, saying, "If you read that, you shall have it." Michael seized the book and read a page of it with perfect ease to the bookseller, being delighted to get it on such easy terms. Amongst some old books lately found in Kinnesswood, where they had lain undisturbed for many years, was one entitled *The Anatomy of Infidelity*. On this is inscribed the name "Michael Bruce," with the date 1754 written in boyish style. His thirst for learning caused him to read every book upon which he could lay hands, or what the kindness of neighbours would lend him. His progress at school was therefore very rapid. The villagers took more than ordinary interest in him, for not only was he learned beyond his years but he was beloved for his winsome ways.

As he grew up, however, his health did not improve as rapidly as was hoped. He was very pale

and his frame lacked stamina. It was therefore considered advisable to send him out to the "herding" on the east shoulder of the Lomond Hills, where he would be much in the open air. Besides the benefit likely to accrue to his health, the little he earned would help to keep the household, for the slender means of his father were being sorely taxed to bring up his family, owing to dull times affecting the weaving industry.

In common with the usage of the village, Michael, on reaching his eleventh year, was engaged as a herd, an occupation he liked, because it was pursued during the summer months, when, with his books beside him, he was undisturbed, and in addition, the Book of Nature was ever open before him, a volume wherein he who hath the open and "the seeing eye" may look and learn whensoever he listeth.

His health was greatly improved by the open air treatment, while his studies were regularly prosecuted so as to enable him to resume his place in the class when he returned to school. Nor was his Bible forgotten. Day after day he pored over its sacred pages, repeating aloud long passages as he climbed the slopes of the Lomonds, and feeling that heavenly influence soothing and sustaining him, when Nature leading us up to Nature's God, steals into our souls like the benediction of eternal peace.\*

\* An interesting paper has lately been discovered and is in the possession of the writer, dated 26th August 1796, relative to

The solitude and silence of the everlasting hills begat in him a sense of Divine nearness and a delight in communion with the Unseen, which distinguished him to the close of life. There it was he first realised "the Mystery of Godliness." But with all this spiritual elevation he was none the less a first-class young shepherd. "God does not wish His worship to mar our work," his employer was wont to say. He was delighted with the manner in which the boy did his work, and he enjoyed nothing better than to walk up to the hill and have a "crack" with him.

On Bruce's return in the evening to his father's fireside, any difficulty which had arisen, either in his studies or in the reading of those books so freely lent to him by friends in the locality, was carefully gone over along with his father, and seldom was it that he was unable to solve the problem, for

some dispute between certain parties interested in "the Wood," where a number of old men were examined as witnesses in the case. Amongst these are "Thomas M'Laren," indweller in East Balgedie, aged about four-score years. He stated that he had herded in his youth for about four years on the hill, and knew "the Wood," the date of his examination 16th August 1796.

"Michael Michie," aged sixty-five years, said he had herded on the hill in 1745. "David Miller," aged sixty years, stated that when about eleven years old he began herding on the hill for four or five years, and knew "the Wood." "George Bickerton," aged seventy-five years had herded there when a lad, and knew the hill and "the Wood" from his youngest years. "David Pearson," in Easter Balgedie, aged fifty-two years, said he had herded at "the Wood" in 1754 or 1755 for two summers. Some of these must have been associated with Michael Bruce.

Alexander Bruce, as we have seen, was an altogether exceptional man.

So matters went on for several years, life passing onwards in its quiet channel, and Michael increasing "both in stature and wisdom as well as in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Gradually he became familiar with the natural features of the district, storing up in his mind all the traditions and legends whereof in years to come he was to make so notable a use in his poetry.

After receiving an excellent grounding in English, about his tenth year he began the study of Latin, and in his twelfth that of Greek. The parish schoolmaster, after instructing him in the rudiments, virtually allowed him to go on in his own way. On the lonely hillside this enthusiastic young student mastered the intricacies of Latin and Greek syntax, and of an evening he might have been heard repeating the rules aloud. Then, when his progress carried him a little further, nothing delighted him more than to recite the lines of Virgil or some verses from his Greek Testament. He was an earnest student, one who had the love of letters in him, and whose sole desire was to equip himself so as to be an efficient soldier of the Cross.

He was scarcely into his teens when he began to write poetry, being induced thereto by reading Milton and Shakespeare. In this, his teacher encouraged him, the first specimens submitted to him





“THE AULD KIRKYARD,” PORTMOAK, where “Daphnis” (Willie Arnot)  
was laid to rest. His grave is on the right of large table stone.



being so good as to warrant high expectations being entertained of Michael.

He was known in his immediate circle as a writer of verse, and this is attested by his friend David Pearson, who was also his most intimate friend and bed-fellow. Another class-fellow and dear friend was “Willie Arnot,” the son of the laird and farmer of Portmoak, to whose hospitable house, by the east side of Loch Leven (as it *then* was), he was ever a welcome visitor, remaining there for days when opportunity offered. His intercourse with Mr Arnot was intimate and tender, while with his son Willie it was as “Damon and Pythias,” and many a sunny summer afternoon they would wander by the lochside or sit on the grey tablestones in the old kirkyard of Portmoak, reading the mouldering inscriptions on these tombstones, or speculating as to “that something after death” which makes cowards of us all, unless we have that assured hope in the finished work of Him who has overcome the terrors of the grave. Alas! how abruptly was this sweet fellowship terminated by that King of Terrors, regarding whom they were wont to speculate, for Willie Arnot sickened and died and was laid to rest in that very “God’s-acre,” close by the farm-steading, in which they had held sweet intercourse. The loss of his friend only drew Bruce closer to his Lord and Master. He lived more for the day, accounting no moment his own, save as lent

to him for the purpose of improving it as much as possible. Every instant he could spare was given to study and to the improvement of his mind.

Branch after branch of learning was methodically mastered, until in his sixteenth year he began to look forward to the University as his cherished hope.

Not, however, for mere literary distinction did he desire to proceed to college, but that he might fit himself to become a minister of the Gospel.

This was his supreme aim, the one goal to which all his aspirations pointed. "I account all other things but as dust, in comparison with the possibility of one day being permitted to preach to my fellows the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ," he writes in one of his letters. At this period of his life there was much to cast his hopes into the shade. His way towards this grand desire seemed blocked, yet his faith in God was ever bright and strong. His friend Mr Arnot now saw more of him, and that did much to increase his love and interest in him, both from the fact of his friendship with his son Willie and from his high appreciation of Michael's character and abilities. After finishing all his classes at the Parish School, naturally the next step was the College: but how was this to be reached? His parents, being only able to meet the demands of their family, had no money to spare for this purpose. At this time the hand of Providence interposed, when Michael Bruce, a mason at Pittendreich, an

elder brother or relative of his mother's, after whom her son had been named, died, and left her a small sum of money in his will. This was at once set aside to assist Michael, when Mr Arnot of Portmoak, Mr White the Laird of Pittendreich, and Mr Birrell, parchment maker, Kinnesswood, came to their help, and the means required to send Michael to the University at Edinburgh were provided. From 1762, until he had finished his studies, this provision was continued.

The legacy, as we have already said, was at once assigned for the purpose of enabling Michael to proceed to Edinburgh. This, along with contributions from the friends interested in his welfare, was found to be sufficient, though, of course, strict economy had to be exercised. As might be expected, no small excitement prevailed in the family and amongst his many friends over this important step; one and all expressed heartfelt wishes for his success. His late teacher knew something of his powers, and was satisfied that he would hold his own at the University. In those days an essential part of every student's outfit was "a box," into which was put as much as the means of the parents would allow, in clothing, books and provisions suitable for the student's use in his new quarters. This package was duly consigned to the Edinburgh carrier from the district, who deposited it at his quarters in the Grassmarket, Edinburgh. The box was returned regularly with

his washing, so that during the session a constant supply from home was furnished. After many a blessing had been invoked on Michael's behalf, he bade a fond farewell to all at home. He then passed down the old familiar loan to the main street, and took his way eastward, leaving the hill on his left, which had been the scene of his daily walks and shepherd life, with "the Wood" also where he had often mused, listening to "the cuckoo" and "the cushets." His heart was light and full of youth's high hopes for the future. In those days coaches, owing to the expensive rates of the fares, were the luxury of the well-to-do. Students, for the most part, walked to the nearest port, or occasionally "got a lift" from the carrier on his cart. Reaching Kinghorn harbour, a pinnace conveyed him over the Forth to Leith, and the first impression of the metropolis was obtained after traversing Leith Walk. It was a red-letter day to this lad when he entered his name in the University Matriculation Album for 1762. Everything was new to him—the city with its teeming population and busy academic life—yet he was delighted with both, and strangely enough, scarcely was he settled down to his work when his poetic faculty began to reveal its riches and its strength. The remembrance of the scenes he had left came back to him, hallowed by the sentiments of family affection and of friendship's flame. He longed to achieve something in letters, were it but

to embalm in verse the beauties of Loch Leven side, or the green and flowery slopes of the Lomond Hills dotted with their fleecy wanderers. One fact noticeable is that the higher development of Michael Bruce's poetic talent was contemporaneous with his entrance into Edinburgh University.

## CHAPTER IV

### MICHAEL BRUCE'S CAREER AT THE UNIVERSITY

Bruce enters the University—Enters his name in the Album—The Principal and professors—His studies—Recollections of home and locality—City contrast—Early impressions—His Bible—Class-fellows—Bruce's studies and success—His associates—His friends at home—His love of books—Return home—The society of young men—Gairney Bridge School—John Brown—Letter to Mr Flockhart—David Pearson—The path to "the Wood"—Ralph Erskine—Dr Mackelvie's Life of Bruce—Magdalen Grieve—Peggy and James Campbell.

WHEN Bruce entered Edinburgh University in the autumn of 1762 he had reason to feel proud of becoming an *alumnus* of such a seat of learning. At the head of it was Principal William Robertson, D.D., a historian of outstanding merit, whose *History of Scotland*, published four years before, had taken the reading world by storm. The Chairs were nearly all held by distinguished men. George Stuart was Professor of Humanity, Robert Hunter of Greek, Matthew Stewart of Mathematics, John Stevenson of Logic and Metaphysics, and James Balfour of Moral Philosophy, soon to be succeeded by Professor Adam Ferguson; while, in the very autumn in which Bruce entered the University, Dr Hugh Blair was appointed Professor of Belles Lettres. The Medical Faculty was then graced by Alexander Munro, *secundus*, the

second of that remarkable trio—grandfather, father and son—who for 126 years occupied the Chair of Anatomy. Professor Cullen was then in the chair of Chemistry, but ere long was to be transferred to that of Institutes of Medicine, and finally to that of Practice of Physic. Other celebrated men held the remaining Chairs in a Faculty which has always been the sheet anchor of Edinburgh University.

Bruce's heart, as we learn from his correspondence, swelled with true pride on the day when he could write himself down "Student of Edinburgh College," and his one desire was so to acquit himself in his studies that he would do credit to the University, and to the place of his birth in the Bishopshire, for it is the custom of the University to enter after a man's name the place of his birth, and whenever he gains any distinction, this fact is recorded also, that he was born "in such and such a parish."

No sooner was Bruce fairly located in Edinburgh, and the novelty of his surroundings had slightly worn off, than the charm of Loch Leven, Glenvale and the slopes of the Lomonds, upon whose sides he had loved to watch the shadows of the clouds slumbering at noontide, and of the flowery banks and meads, the mountains, moors and streams in all their varied loveliness about which he was wont to wander, came back to him with all the force of romantic associations. Not that he was home-sick. He was too diligent a student to have time to experience



such a feeling, and he was too glad to have the opportunity of learning laid to his hand ever to repine at separation from his wonted scenes.

In those days Edinburgh was a cramped, confined, odorous, yet happy little city. The population had outgrown the limits of the old walls, yet each man stuck to the "old town" rather than migrate to the "new town," then just commencing to be built on the other side of the Nor' Loch. To Bruce the change was unspeakable, from the free, open-air life of Kinnesswood to the confinement of his lodgings in the West Port. It was this which first told upon him, as witness his statement to his friend David Pearson when he came to pay Bruce a visit and learn directly how he was. These adverse circumstances, and the recollection of his own romantic home and the Bishopshire, stirred within him the desire to make these scenes pleasant to others in verse, that they, too, might enjoy the rapture that was dominating his own spirit. Thus it was, we repeat, that almost from the outset of his residence in Edinburgh, Bruce plunged into poetry as a solace and abiding source of satisfaction. Those scenes of Nature's loveliness he had left behind him were, like rapturous moments, often before his mind's eye. The hills, the loch and the castle on its island, with all that had transpired there in the great drama of history, where kings and queens had lived in regal state, or had suffered the melancholy durance of a prison, where Scottish history

itself had taken its beginnings in St Serf's Isle, in which Andrew Wyntoun, Prior of the Monastery of St Serf, had penned his "Orygynal Cronykel." Hither also at an earlier epoch the lamp of Christianity had been brought from Iona, and from this isle had spread its cheering rays far and wide over the eastern Lowlands of Scotland. The "Beltane Fire" had last burnt on Benarty's height, and here Wallace, the brave Liberator of Scotland, had achieved one of his famous exploits and freed the district from Southern domination. "The Bruce," too, had stood on Lomond's lofty peak on that eventful June immediately before the battle of Bannockburn, where Scotland's freedom was decisively vindicated. Westward rise the Cleish Hills where the Romans fortified "Drumglow," and was not the brave Squire Meldrum as sung by Sir David Lyndsay, established in his stronghold upon the shoulder of the Cleish Hills?

From the Lomond Hill a prospect is obtained unrivalled in Scotland, embracing both the Firths of Forth and Tay, the distant Pentlands, and even the Cheviots on a clear day are seen far in the south, while northward the frowning Grampians are ever in view. Reared under such conditions, need we wonder that the young poet took with him a mind stored with material for thought and subject-matter for future embodiment in his writings. Nor was the solitude he had spent on the Lomond Hills ever regretted. It had given him time for contemplation,

and was suited to a quiet, thinking nature like his. He returned from it to his humble home filled with admiration at the wonders of the Great Creator, alike in the "measurelessly great" as in the "infinitely small" feeling as if he had been in communion with God Himself. All these influences, together with that profoundly spiritual tone which prevailed around his father's fireside, besides being to him a pleasure and a delightful solace, were an education in themselves. He seemed to live in the presence of the "Great I Am." Consequently his was a consecrated life, his actions being directed by that heavenly influence which is drawn from communion with the Saviour. Even when absent from such scenes, his mind dwelt upon them, as his letters and poems testify.

The *Vade Mecum* of his life was his Bible. So familiar was he with it, that he could refer at will to the experience of Biblical characters, and therefrom draw comfort and courage. His thirst for knowledge was often gratified by kind friends lending him their books. He made many friends, for his disposition was gentle and affectionate, displaying mildness of temper with a courtesy of manner scarcely to be expected from his station. His little pleasantries amongst his associates have been handed down in the locality, by the descendants of those who knew him intimately. This, then, is a rough portrait of that lad of sixteen years who set out from

his father's humble home to begin in Edinburgh University the preparation for the battle of life.

Bruce had not been long in attendance at College before he became observed by his class-fellows, not alone for his gentlemanly demeanour and quiet dignity, but for the admirable answers he was able to give on those occasions when the professors were examining the students upon the subject-matter of their lectures. The custom then prevailed of devoting the Friday of each week to such examinations, and in them Bruce shone conspicuously. The classes he took at Edinburgh University were Latin, Greek, Logic, Metaphysics, Mathematics and Belles Lettres. It is believed that he also attended the lectures of Professor Adam Ferguson on Moral Philosophy as a private student, though his name does not appear on the class registers. Into all his subjects he threw himself with an eager delight, and knowledge brought its own reward. For Mathematics and Natural Philosophy he had a great love, and he would gladly have devoted himself to these branches as a special study had he received any encouragement. But his own desire, and the desire of his friends, was that he should prepare as rapidly as possible for the work of the ministry. Besides, these departments of study require both expensive books and special instruments which he had not the money to purchase. Accordingly he was obliged to

put aside the idea as an alluring but, alas ! unattainable dream.

During the time Bruce remained in Edinburgh, it is believed that he continued in the same lodgings with a native of Portmoak, in the West Port, close by the Grassmarket, or near the Vennel. Here, then, assembled his student friends, attracted by his lovable nature and also by the evidence of unusual ability, which was already manifesting itself. Amongst these were young men who in after years attained eminence in the Church. With the sons of those who were, like his own father, "Seceders," he was on terms of peculiar intimacy. The Seceders in those days clung to each other with a sort of unexpressed brotherhood, which enabled many a lonely lad to be surrounded with kind friends and acquaintances from the outset of his career. In Michael Bruce's case this was so, for at the University he formed a close friendship with such men as Mr George Lawson, who afterwards became a professor in the Secession Church and one of the leading theologians in Scotland. So highly esteemed was he, that the University of Aberdeen created him "Doctor of Divinity," in recognition of his high attainments. Here, too, he became intimate with the son of a Kinross-shire laird, Mr Greig, who afterwards became minister at Lochgelly, and Mr Dryburgh from Dysart, who so much resembled Bruce. Close was their friendship, and much he felt the death of this friend,



THE COTTAGE where the Secession Fathers met at Gairney Bridge in December 1733, and in one exactly the same, next to it, Michael Bruce taught in 1765.





which occurred while he was teaching at "Forest Mill," as is mentioned in his letters. One of this select company of Seceder students was from Haddington, whose father was a member of the congregation presided over by the famous "John Brown," also a professor in the Secession Church. This was John Logan, whose first sign of declension was his absence from the prayer-meeting of these his fellow-students. Ultimately he left them altogether.

To prepare for the Christian ministry and to render himself completely equipped for it was Bruce's one desire. He therefore threw himself with enthusiasm into all the subjects of his curriculum. Despite the strictest economy, however, his great difficulty was how to procure books and yet subsist on the small means at his disposal. Still he managed to secure some, though his mother suspected that at times money went for cherished volumes which should have been expended on food. Kind friends at Kinnesswood were ever mindful of him, and in the most delicate way were his wants supplied. From letters recently discovered it has been found that these generous friends consisted of Mr Arnot, the Laird of Portmoak ; Mr White, the Laird of Pittendreich ; Mr White, the Laird of Balgedie ; and Mr John Birrell, parchment maker in Kinnesswood, who was the grandfather of the last Mr John Birrell, who was so engaged there and who was so kind in acting a son's part to the poet's aged

mother. No doubt others may have assisted the parents while their son was at the College, though their names are not particularly mentioned.

His first session at Edinburgh University was completed with credit to himself and satisfaction to his professors and friends. On returning home in March 1763 he received a warm welcome from one and all, for he was treated as a son of his native town rather than one of a particular family. In those days there was no summer session, so he was free to devote himself to his studies, his poetry and his friends till the classes resumed in October following. While he diligently prosecuted his own studies, he did not forget to assist those who were struggling along the road of learning with him. Yet he valued time as a gift given to him by his Almighty Father, to be employed and economised in the most scrupulously faithful manner.

Refreshed by his rest and holiday, as well as cheered by the hospitality of his friends and the expression of good will for his future, he returned to his work at Edinburgh University in October. As in the first year, Junior Latin and Greek, also Mathematics, formed the subjects to which he devoted himself, so in the second year Senior Latin and Greek, Logic and Metaphysics were the classes which he attended. His signature can still be seen in the class album as in attendance on Professor Stevenson's Prelections on Philosophy.



PORTMOAK FARMHOUSE, the house of Mr Arnot, the laird, who assisted Bruce,  
and where he often visited.



Several pages of manuscript in Bruce's handwriting, in relation to the subjects of this class, with the professor's signature, still exist. Possibly he also attended the class of Senior Mathematics, for a name "M. Bruce" occurs in that class, but the handwriting seems different to Bruce's usual signature, and, though not taking conjectures as probabilities, it is possible he attended that class. He appears to have distinguished himself as before by assiduity in study, and again won golden opinions from professors and fellow-students alike. Having obtained a little money—perhaps sent to him by his dear friend, the Laird of Portmoak, or earned by private tuition, we find him attending the auction sale of books and haunting the book-stalls. He had a weakness for nice editions of the classics and the poets, as we shall see in the year following.

In April 1764, when the College rose, young Bruce returns to Kinnesswood and again devotes himself to personal improvement and in establishing a society for this purpose among the young men of the district, as well as assisting those who specially desired help, who were less favoured than himself. No one applied to him for literary aid in vain. He delighted to give of his store, and to distribute its benefits. There is also abundant proof that he was cultivating assiduously the poetic gifts wherewith he had been endowed by his Heavenly Father.

Poetry to him was not a mere amusement, nor the occupation of a vacant hour, but a great "talent" which his Lord and Master had lent him for a season in order that he might use it to the best account. Bruce read and studied Milton, Pope, Young and other of the earlier writers of our literature, and reproduced with success imitations of their work. Dr Grosart writes of this period and shows the poet longing after books. We catch a vanishing glimpse of his bookish tastes in another fragment of a letter to his friend, Mr Arnot, from Edinburgh, dated November 27th, 1764:—"I daily meet with proof that money is a necessary evil. When in an auction I often say to myself, 'How happy should I be if I had money to purchase such a book.' How well should my library be furnished. *Nisi obstat res angusta domi.*"

"My lot forbids, nor circumstances alone,  
My growing virtues, but my crimes confine."

Thus did Bruce pass his time, always eager for mental improvement, the only drawback being his extreme poverty.

In October 1764 Bruce returned to Edinburgh to begin his final session at College. The classes he would in all likelihood take were Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy and Belles Lettres. The fact that his name does not appear on the album of the class means nothing—the album not being the class register,

the latter belonging exclusively to the professor, while the former was retained by the University. Tradition, as it reached Dr Anderson towards the close of the eighteenth century, when he was preparing his edition of the British Poets, 1792-1807, and when Principal Baird was collecting materials for his *Life of Bruce*, recorded the fact that Bruce at the University "applied himself to the several branches of Literature and Philosophy with remarkable assiduity and success; of the Latin and Greek languages he acquired a masterly knowledge, and he made eminent progress in Metaphysics, Mathematics and Moral and Natural Philosophy. But the Belles Lettres was his favourite pursuit, and poetry his darling study." The same success attended his work during the session 1764-65, and he maintained the high position he had formerly acquired. During this session also he seems to have been able by teaching to make a little money, which was instantly expended on books. On this point Dr Grosart says:—

"Michael Bruce exhibits this (the bibliophile's) weakness, as evidenced by the singularly beautiful copies of the classics and other books which he secured, and specially from his committing to the furtive care of Mr Arnot of Portmoak his copies of Shakespeare and of Pope which he wished him to see, and also as his worthy father may think that what was already available to him might have answered his purpose when the session closed in April 1765."



Bruce was now free for a time. This was the era before degrees became an object of desire to students, therefore he did not go forward to graduate, simply because a widespread conviction prevailed that "the stake was really not worth the labour." But when he was free from the pressure of academic study he had no sooner returned to Kinnesswood than he began to consider a suggestion regarding a school at Gairney Bridge. The young men of the University circle in which Bruce moved were in the habit, during the session, of holding every week a literary club at which essays were read and discussions on topics of interest took place. In this society Bruce shone to advantage, more than one of his friends being wont to say that he had never surpassed some of the papers he had read in that literary association. They were for the most part in verse, one of them, "The Last Day," being afterwards published. Just about the time when Bruce was leaving Kinnesswood to take his last session at College, the Antiburgher Synod had opened a class in Alloa, where their Divinity Hall was then stationed for the training of their students in Moral Philosophy, as they considered that the beliefs of Professor Adam Ferguson at Edinburgh and of Professor Hutcheson at Glasgow were open to serious objection. The Synod required their students' attendance upon this class for two sessions of eight weeks (not *months* as inadvertently

stated by Dr Mackelvie). The latter then goes on to say:—"No fee was demanded, the Synod paying the professor's salary." This circumstance induced Bruce to make application to be allowed to attend it. At the time of his doing so, he was in the habit of accompanying his father to Milnathort, and attending the ministry of Mr Thomas Mair, who had been ejected from the Synod for preaching what was *considered* unsound doctrine, according to the narrow ideas of "Adam Gib." As yet, Bruce was in communion with no church. The Antiburghers required that candidates for admission to their philosophical class should be either members or regular hearers in their body, and Bruce supposed himself belonging to the latter class. But the presbytery to which he applied thought otherwise, and therefore decided that his application be not then received, but that he be encouraged to renew it at some future period. They probably thought that Bruce would withdraw from the ministry of Mr Mair, and connect himself with some of the congregations under the inspection of their Synod. This was a severe disappointment to Bruce, who had hoped to keep a school in Alloa, and thus saw his way opened up to complete his studies for the ministry. But his friend Mr Arnot (adds Dr Mackelvie) recommended him to study Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University and furnished him with means to prosecute this design. As

already noted, his name does not appear on the class roll for that year, but it is reported that Professor Ferguson gave him a complimentary ticket as a private student. Bruce thus completed all that was necessary before entering the Divinity Hall. He had an ardent desire to free his friends either wholly or partially from the burden of his maintenance.

Writing in March 1765 from Edinburgh, to his friend Mr Arnot, he says :—“I am in great concern just now for a school. When I was over last, there was a proposal made by some people of these parts to keep one at Gairney Bridge. How it may turn out I cannot tell.” The school referred to above had been commenced by Mr John Brown, student of the Secession Church, who was afterwards settled as minister at Haddington, but it had gone down after his departure. It was however re-established, and Bruce entered upon his duties there and on the whole made an admirable teacher. He had patience, enthusiasm, a love of learning, and above all, he was not one who merely “coached” the clever boys to bring them on and left the slower ones to lag behind as they pleased. To him all pupils were alike, and he was responsible for the progress of each. The school was held in a humble thatched cottage at Gairney Bridge, close by the side of the Great North Road. The building contained two apartments. A few deals fixed on blocks of wood

sufficed for forms, while an old table served as a writing-desk. This last-named was so rotten and frail that it collapsed before the first month had expired, which gave Bruce an opportunity of writing his humorous poem, "The Fall of the Table," to Mr Flockhart, the worthy Laird of Annacroich, who was patron of the school. Bruce never succeeded in gathering a large school there, the numbers not exceeding twenty-eight. Dr Mackelvie thinks he was too gentle to maintain a salutary discipline; at all events he never used the "tawse," then regarded to be as absolutely indispensable to a teacher as the "hornbook." One thing can be said of him, he was greatly beloved by his pupils, and in years long after it was considered an honour to be able to say, "I was at Michael Bruce's school."

We are convinced, however, that he gained much to help him in his vocation as a teacher by his residence in Edinburgh. There he had been a keen observer of the lives and manners of men and had come in contact with the many-sided life of the great city. It was therefore as a man versed to some extent at least in the ways and wiles of the world that he began his work. Such knowledge, however, did not spoil him; he was through all the same simple, kindly, pious youth of his earlier years.

The venture of this school at Gairney Bridge, therefore, was not very successful, so far as a return for his time and trouble was concerned, yet he

made many friends while there, and left a name which has endeared his memory in that locality to the present day. During the years of his residence in Edinburgh, his pen had not been by any means idle, for he kept up an extensive correspondence with his relatives and friends, and in particular with David Pearson, who had been an apprentice with his father. The two lads were like David and Jonathan in confidence; they had lived together and had the same decided religious impressions. The Bible was their constant subject for study, and their leisure was spent in the study of Nature in all its aspects. This love of Nature, and their knowledge of all its enchanting forms, lent an intense pleasure to their out-of-doors wanderings.

While Bruce was herding, he was wont to proceed to his work by a path along the foot of the east Lomond Hill, entered at the top of the loan above his father's house and terminated at "the Wood." That favourite standpoint, commanding an extensive prospect, is the spot from which so many of his poems were, so to speak, inspired. In his student days this lonely walk possessed a charm ever new. There he saw the little rills and waterfalls, dripping from the hillside by the pathway, where grew the varied wild flowers and all the natural objects he has woven into his poems, proving that he had the "seeing eye" of the poet. Those small touches and details, thus worked into his

poems, have been in part the means of enabling us to distinguish them as the production of Michael Bruce and not of John Logan.

It was while resting under the shade of "the Wood," possibly by the dyke side, that he listened to the song or cry of the various birds that abounded in this locality. Hence he writes :—

"Sing Nature's scenes with Nature's beauties fir'd,  
Where poets dream'd, where prophets lay inspired."

It is reported that it was here also that Ralph Erskine began his poetic work. If he had occasion to climb the hill in search after brighter scenes, then the gorgeous and unsurpassed landscape in all its classic loveliness would burst upon his view. His soul would be fired with unspeakable delight as he passed onwards and upwards, and his heart would thus be uplifted from Nature's beauties up to "Nature's God." This view brought within the range of vision the entire surface of Loch Leven, its castle and islands, Arnot Tower, one of Bruce's favourite haunts, with all its history and romance, besides much more he has noticed in his subsequent writings.

Thus he sings again in his "Elegy to Spring":—

"There let me wander at the shut of eve,  
When sleep sits dewy on the labourers' eyes,  
The world and all its busy follies leave,  
And talk with wisdom where my Daphnis lies."



In Dr Mackelvie's *Life of Michael Bruce*, published in 1837, reference is made to the story of a love episode which had occurred while he was at Gairney Bridge. The fair one was said to be the daughter of Mr Grieve, farmer at Classlochie, who had kindly invited him to leave the lodgings he occupied there and come to reside with him. Whoever communicated this story to the Doctor must have had little acquaintance with the facts of the case, for a careful investigation of the statements in question completely disproves the allegation, as the circumstances cited will not accord with the known facts regarding it. The young woman's name is given as Magdalene, and the addendum is also supplied that she afterwards became the wife of David Low, proprietor of Cleish Mill and Wester Cleish. Evidence is also supposed to be furnished by one of Bruce's poems, as follows :—

“In the flower of her youth, in the bloom of eighteen,” etc.

Also in the poem “Loch Leven no More,” it is stated :—

“Farewell to Loch Leven and Gairney's fair shore,  
How sweet on its banks of my Peggy to dream,” etc.

But what do we find? There is a headstone in Cleish Churchyard, on which the following is recorded :—“Sacred to the memory of *Alexander Low*, late of Dowhill Mill, who died 29th December



1809, aged 69 years. Also his spouse, 'Margery Grieve,' who died 17th February 1817, aged 65 years." This shows that in 1765 she was *not* in the bloom of eighteen but was completing her 12th year. Rather young for a love romance! To the mind of so gentle and kindly a nature as Bruce, only friendship would have a place there. But the true facts are as follows—that the husband of Magdalene Grieve was named Alexander, not David; that he was not of Cleish Mill, but of "Dowhill Mill"; that he was not proprietor, but simply tenant of this mill. Nor was it likely that the poet would sit on the banks of the Gairney dreaming of a maiden possessing the name of Peggy, and eighteen years of age, if he was actually residing in the house of the same, who was one of his pupils. A search in the old register books of Portmoak, shows that there was a portioner named White who resided in Portmoak. He had a daughter named Margaret, who would be exactly in her eighteenth year when the poet wrote the above, while the common term for Margaret is Peggy. What could have been more natural than that while absent, and with Loch Leven water between them, he viewed with romantic interest the home of this girl and the braes where they had often played together in former days? Here we believe is a true solution of the love story. Other poems of Bruce also confirm this theory, as in his "Pastoral Song," etc. :—

“ Young Jessie is fair as the spring’s early flower,  
And Mary sings sweet as the birds in the bower,  
But *Peggy* is fairer and sweeter than they,  
With looks like the morning and smiles like the day.

Fair to the shepherd, the new springing flow’rs,  
When May and when morning lead in the gay hours,  
But *Peggy* is brighter and fairer than they,  
She’s fair as the morning and lovely as May.”

Another mistake has been widely current as to the reason why Bruce did not return to take up the school at Gairney Bridge at the close of the following session, but went to Forest Mill. It was said that during Bruce’s absence at college he had got a young man named James Campbell to carry on the school, that the latter had misbehaved, and that accordingly Bruce would not go back. Letters have been lately discovered giving a full account of the whole case, which was that years after Bruce’s death a person of that name had taught there, who had formerly been a pupil of Bruce’s, and had got into trouble at a place a considerable distance from Gairney Bridge, but the two things had no connection. Campbell, with deep contrition, mourned his misconduct, as his letters show, and was reinstated in the confidence and respect of the Bruce and Birrell families, as also in that of David Pearson.

It is recorded by one who knew Bruce in 1765, that in July 1809, when passing from Kinross to Edinburgh, “I stopped at Gairney Bridge to indulge in a

transient look on the house in which the gentle Bruce had resided. I had not seen it for several years. I begged of some persons I saw to show it to me. 'Ah, sir,' said a man of sensibility, 'it is now taken down, but I will show you the place where it stood.' We went in silence. 'There,' said he, pointing to the spot, 'there stood the house, he slept in a ceiled room, and I was his bed-fellow. It was indeed heaven upon earth to be beside him,' and his swelling heart melted while he spake. Such a tribute is dearer to the soul than the grandest mausoleum of the mighty. This refers to the house where Bruce first lodged before he removed to Mr Grieve's house at Classloch. It stood on the west side of the road north of the Gairney, and formed part of an orchard wall below the present road. The schoolroom was as noticed on the south side of the water, and almost opposite the Secession monument erected there."

## CHAPTER V

### MICHAEL BRUCE FROM ENTERING THE DIVINITY HALL TO HIS DEATH

Bruce desires to enter the Divinity Hall.—The Secession Church.—The branches of this Church.—The Moral Philosophy class at Alloa.—Professor Swanston, Kinross.—Bruce joins his congregation.—The Laird of Turfhill, "Lilius"—The Theological Hall.—The Oath of Allegiance.—Forest Mill.—The school there.—Bruce's health.—His letters and poems written there.—The death of Dryburgh.—Bruce leaves Forest Mill.—Rests at home.—Revises his poems for publication.—The Bishopshire.—The Covenanters.—Bruce's last ode.—The Last Day.—Visits from fellow-students.—Bruce's serious condition.—His death.—David Pearson's testimony.

WE now reach another stage in the brief life of our poet. He had completed his University course, and naturally looked forward to proceeding to the Divinity Hall of the Associate Synod or Burghers. It may be proper to explain here what is meant by Burgher and Antiburgher, as readers not versed in Scottish Church history may be a little puzzled. As is well known, the Secession Church was founded in 1733 at Gairney Bridge by Ebenezer Erskine and three other ministers, but in 1747 the Church was divided on the question of the "Burghers' Oath," one party affirming that the oath could not be taken by any consistent Seceders, the other side with

equal persistency maintained that they could do so. The Church, however, was rent in twain over the matter, the one forming the "General Associate Synod of Antiburghers," the other the "Associate or Burgher Synod." They remained divided for many years, but each of these were again subdivided over the province of the Civil Magistrate, one taking the name of the "*Constitutional Associate Synod* or *Old Light Antiburghers*, 1806. The other, that of the *Original Burgher Presbytery* or *Old Light Burghers*." In 1820 the New Light sections were re-united. The *Old Lights* united with the Free Church, save a small minority, who still worthily maintain their old traditions.

Properly speaking, Bruce should have attended the Antiburgher Hall at Alloa, but the treatment meted out to him in the matter of the "Moral Philosophy" class determined him to apply to the Burgher Synod for admission to their hall. The professor at that time was the Rev. John Swanston of Kinross, one of the most learned and gifted Scottish theologians of his time, who, if he would have left the Secession Church, would have been placed in one of the divinity chairs of a university. To this scholar and saintly man Michael Bruce applied first for advice, and then, at his suggestion, for admission to the membership of his Church. Bruce accordingly went to Kinross to commence his divinity studies. From the first, Professor Swan-

ston conceived a deep affection for the young poet. That Bruce was highly gifted and had written poems of great promise were facts already known to him, therefore he showed him in many ways a consideration which endeared him to the poet. The arrangement made for the students, says Dr Grosart, if a primitive one, was an exceedingly agreeable one for them. In the congregation of the professor at Kinross there was a number of proprietors of lesser or larger farms, and otherwise well-to-do. These received the young men into their several houses in the character of friends, without any remuneration further than the satisfaction of thereby rendering service to the future ministers of their beloved Church. The son of the proprietor of Turf-hills, as already stated, Mr George Henderson, had been his fellow-student at Edinburgh University, so Bruce was invited to stay at Turf-hills and share his friend's rooms, and to be there as one of the family. In Bruce's larger poem on Loch Leven, Mr Henderson the student is referred to by Bruce as "Lilius." In memory of these past days he writes :—

“ Nor shall the muse forget thy friendly heart,  
Oh Lilius, partner of my youthful hours.  
How often, rising from the bed of peace,  
He would walk forth to meet the summer morn,  
Inhaling health and harmony of mind.”

The session at the hall was most enjoyable to

Bruce, though he had to battle with ill-health all through the period of attendance. Still, he highly distinguished himself in his studies, and won the commendation of his professor and the love of his fellow-students.

The Theological Hall session at Kinross for 1766 having closed, and the delightful time the students had spent at their studies with their professor, and in each other's company, amid the pleasant walks by Loch Leven shore, along the Kirk-gate and other places, having come to an end, this left each free to return to his own home to find time for further study or for that employment which in some cases was a necessity. The Seceder students were not so likely to obtain private tuition, on the recommendation of the University professors, hence a venture-school was the chief occupation open to them. Even this was not always free, in consequence of the Oath of Allegiance which the authorities sometimes attempted to compel them to accept, the refusal to take this being often followed by imprisonment. An opening was, however, suggested to Bruce for a school at Forest Mill, situated on the road between Kinross and Alloa, and within four miles of the latter town. At that period the locality was wild and neglected, and ill-suited for a constitution so delicate, consisting mostly of a desolate moor with scattered pine trees, and close by a dense wood frequented by wandering gipsies.



The schoolroom was small and contracted, with an earthen floor, and as the autumn and winter drew on, the damp atmosphere and mists which hung over the locality made it about the worst possible for the young poet. He felt the hardships all the more because, as we have said, during the time he had attended "the Hall" at Kinross he had shared the comforts in the hospitable home of the Laird of Turfhill and the companionship of his fellow-student "George Henderson," the son of this laird.

A recent visit to Forest Mill enabled the writer to inspect what was shown as part of the old schoolroom where Bruce taught, still in use, but greatly enlarged. He also had the spot pointed out where the house stood on the low ground by the water-side, in which he resided with the family named "Mill," who were so thoughtful and kind to him. It was refreshing to find how much the name of Michael Bruce was still cherished there by the older inhabitants of the district.

Bruce was unfortunate from the beginning of his residence there. When crossing the South Devon Water on a pony, it slipped, and he was thrown into the water, though not hurt. He was thoroughly wet, and in this condition had to continue his journey. On arrival he got the best of treatment. Next day he was at his work. Disease, deep-seated and deadly, however, soon made it evident that, despite his determined spirits, he was before long

bound to give in. Yet the poet manfully struggled on. His sojourn there was associated with some of his finest productions. Home and its surroundings were continually before his mind, so he was able to produce his "Loch Leven," and some of those poems, the authorship of which he has till now been denied. These will be more fully dealt with in a succeeding chapter. As regards "Loch Leven," he laboured under the great disadvantage of absence from the scene, and he had therefore to depend entirely on memory. What he has written shows in how vivid a form all the surroundings of that classic loch were present with him. From letters to his dear friend David Pearson, we discover the trying circumstances which beset him, particularly the state of his health, which greatly hindered his work. Yet with a stout heart he bravely struggled on, and wrote the poems to which we have already referred.

We can also discover from one of his letters to Pearson that a poem written there was one of those withheld by Logan, and actually published as his own in 1781, the first twenty lines of which refer to the *past* and the moral this presents to him, dull and disconsolate.

" Oh ! sacred scenes of youthful loves,  
Whose image lives behind ;  
While sad I ponder on the past,  
The joys that must no longer last,

The wild flower strown on summer's bier,  
The dying music of the grove,  
And the last elegies of love  
Dissolve the soul, and draw the tender tear."

Then he dashes into the description of these joys of home life—and he puts it thus:—

"Companions of the youthful scene,  
Endear'd from earliest days,  
With whom I sported on the green,  
Or roved the woodland maze."

From Forest Mill came some of his most beautiful letters, written to his kind friend Mr Arnot of Portmoak, the father of his companion "Willie Arnot," to whose memory Bruce, while teaching the previous year at Gairney Bridge, had written the monody "Daphnis." To David Pearson, his bosom friend, letters and poems had also been duly forwarded. These letters will be found under the chapter reserved for them, and show the state of his thoughts and feelings on hearing of the death of his fellow-student, Mr W. Dryburgh, at Dysart. The heart of Bruce is seen in this letter, the fulness of his faith, and his dependence upon God. How beautifully he puts the great question before his dear friend "Davie." Towards the close of his residence here he has fully realised the frail state of his own health, and his melancholy deepens almost into despondency. Truly it took a brave

spirit to withstand what he now realised his condition to be. His loving heart longed for his father's home, and the enjoyment of his mother's fond care and nursing. So he writes his friend again :—"The next letter you receive from me, *if ever you receive another*, will be dated 1767. I lead a melancholy kind of life in this place. I am not fond of company [such as was to be had there]. 'But it is not good that man be still alone.' If I had not a lively imagination, I believe I would fall into a state of stupidity and delirium. Yet I have some lucid intervals, in the time of which I can study pretty well."\* The year 1767 had not gone far when he decided to leave Forest Mill and proceed home. We have no particulars how he accomplished the long journey, but he rested at Turfhill, where he had a warm welcome we may be sure, reaching his home in Kinnesswood soon after.

Whether the "Elegy in Spring" was written at Forest Mill or after his return home cannot now be decided. A reason has been given for accepting the

\* Bruce concludes his poem on Loch Leven with these lines, so descriptive of himself and his surroundings at Forest Mill : —

" Thus sung the youth, amid unfertile wilds,  
And nameless deserts, unpoetic ground,  
Far from his friends he stray'd, recording thus  
The dear remembrance of his native fields  
To cheer the tedious night, while slow disease  
Prey'd on his pining vitals, and the blasts  
Of dark December shook his humble cot."

former place, that David Pearson, to whom he sends a verse of this poem, was mentioned in the letter. But Pearson was not resident at or near Kinnesswood at that time, being at Pathhead, by Kirkcaldy, where he was following his occupation of a weaver, so that the probability is that it was on Bruce's return to Kinnesswood that the letter in question and the elegy were written. Bruce returned to his father's home in Kinnesswood, round which so many loved memories clustered, where were fond hearts to bid him welcome, and to do all that was in their power for his recovery. For a time he seemed to improve, and he devoted his attention to his writings, revising, correcting and arranging these for the press. That he might publish what he had written had long been the desire of his friends, and existing letters show how anxious some of these were to possess his works in book form. This purpose accomplished, he gradually grew weaker and rested much, making his Bible his constant companion.

His "Loch Leven," a poem that has received commendation from many high competent critics, is referred to by Campbell in *Specimens of the English Poets*, by Drake in his *Literary Hours*, Chambers in his *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, and by Forsyth in his *Beauties of Scotland*. Dr Anderson also refers to it in his *British Poets*:—"Bruce's 'Loch Leven' is the longest and most elaborate of his poetical compositions. It is a

descriptive poem written in blank verse, the structure of which he seems to have particularly studied, as it exhibits a specimen of considerable strength and harmony in that measure. Though the nature of the subject approaches nearly to that of Thomson, of whom he was a great admirer, his style is very different, being wholly free from unnatural swell and pomp of words.”

It represents an extensive and beautiful prospect in an animated and pleasing manner. The description is alike appropriate and picturesque, while the introduction of poetical fiction and historical allusions are nicely blended. Some may consider that there are defects in it, but then we must remember it was written while the poet was residing at Forest Mill, where the absence of that spirit-inspiring element, the veritable “presence,” no doubt accounted for much in what is lacking. The episode of Lomond and Levina is introduced with pleasing simplicity and pleasantly rendered, while the leading features of the noble landscape are vividly described.

Though it is stated that it was on the banks of the Gairney he first tuned his “Doric reed,” this must not be taken to mean that his first poetic writings were there composed, as it was well known he had shown his powers in verse long before, both in his native village and during his residence in Edinburgh. Indeed, it was before this time that he first



composed his "Ode to the Cuckoo." He does not forget his friend Mr Arnot, whose lands bordered the eastern portion of the loch. He introduces him as "Agricola," :—

"Attend, Agricola ! who to the noise  
Of public life preferr'st the calmer scenes  
Of solitude and sweet domestic bliss,  
Joys all thine own attend thy poet's strain,  
Who triumphs in thy friendship, while he paints  
The pastoral mountains, the poetic streams,  
Where raptured contemplation leads thy walk,  
While silent evening on the plain descends."

The composition (like other of his poems) is entirely local. Bruce, no doubt, was proud of the name he bore, and introduces it with kings and heroes associated with the old castle thus :—

"Of high Loch Leven Castle famous once,  
The abode of heroes of the Bruce's line."

It is remarkable that Bruce makes no mention of Queen Mary of Scots, who was so much associated with Loch Leven and its castle. To those best acquainted with the surroundings, this is not to be wondered at, but to others the question is naturally suggested—Why was she left out? It must be kept in mind that Bruce was reared in an intensely Christian and Protestant atmosphere.

The Bishopshire had its Reformation heroes, and its Covenanters also, men who had suffered and bled in the cause of freedom, and whose names were household words there. "Mary" was a *Stewart*, and



that meant much to honest Scotchmen. The Lomond Hills had witnessed persecutions at the instance of the "Stewarts," the Covenanters here had been denied those liberties they justly considered their own, and were only secured after fearful contendings. Bruce well knew that sacred spot in Glenvale by the steep hillside, denoted "the Pulpit," where godly men had preached "the Word" to the hungry thousands who flocked to listen to the Gospel in that solitude at the risk of their lives.

The sufferings inflicted upon loyal and noble Christian Scotchmen of all ranks during the reign of that perjured and infamous monster of guilt, cruelty and untruth, Charles the Second, were well known to all who resided in the district. "Charles" was the great-grandson of Queen Mary, and numerous were the tales of war and woe that were poured into the ears of the young people around the local fire-sides of the Bishopshire. Even Mary herself had left behind her in this locality no very good name. All this was familiar to the young poet, and while it is very possible that Bruce would have been inclined to justify the Queen to a great extent, he felt he could not do so in the measure likely to please her admirers. In view of his desire to become a minister of the Secession Church, he had also to consider the feelings of his more immediate friends. His introduction of her name might have been misunderstood. His wisdom, therefore, is seen in

leaving out all reference to Queen Mary. Some of Logan's admirers have *imagined* that Logan deserves the credit of having written part of this poem. To this he has not the shadow of a claim till the original MS. of Michael Bruce is produced. One thing is, however, clear, that Logan's letters testify his regard for Mary, and if this idea had been correct, a reference to her would have been included. After the revised MS. copy of Bruce's writings was complete, he made one final effort and composed that much-admired "Ode to Spring," which he sent as a parting gift to his friend, Mr George Henderson, already mentioned. Writing also to his other great friend, David Pearson, he sends but one stanza of it. This revealed to these friends how serious was the view he had personally taken of his case. The state of the poet's mind and feelings are beautifully expressed in this ode. In thought he is standing upon that inspiring spot, the eastern shoulder of the Lomond Hill, over that part termed "the Wood." The church and churchyard, where he was afterwards buried, were immediately below, while the older burying ground, where his early companion, "Willie Arnot" was laid to rest, lay in the distance beyond. The first verse of this ode is as follows :—

" Now spring returns, but not to me returns  
The vernal joy my better years have known ;  
Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns,  
And all the joys of life, with health, are flown."

In the beautiful letter Bruce sent to his friend David Pearson while he was residing at Pathhead, and the last he was able to send to him, he begins:—

“Oft morning-dreams presage approaching fate,  
 And morning-dreams, as poets tell, are true,  
 Led by pale ghosts, I enter Death’s dark gate,  
 And bid the realms of light and life adieu.”

The concluding portion of this letter forms a strange contrast to the last of John Logan, and to the closing hours of his life. We append a copy from Dr Mackelvie’s book:—

“The poem which Bruce wrote for the University Society and entitled ‘The Last Day’—Bruce corrected and finished and added it to his MSS. book for intended publication—was amongst his last acts. Would that we had it as he completed it. For it is sad to think this too was entrusted to Logan for publication, and was by him basely withheld and ultimately destroyed. Had not Mr John Birrell discovered a first copy, which was flung aside, after Bruce’s death, we should have been denied the knowledge of this portion of his writings.” The purpose Logan had in withholding this poem may yet be discovered.

Well did Bruce feel the force of those words:—

“The hour of my departure’s come,  
 I hear the voice that calls me home.”

Realising now that he was a dying man, with the

calm courage of the true Christian he set himself to prepare for "his departure." All reading was laid aside now, save his Bible. It was his sole study, and dearly he valued its aid. Constantly was it beside him as he lay in bed close by the little window, on the left side of the door on entering the house. At that time his former student friends did not forget him, for he was visited by Mr George Henderson and Mr George Lawson, afterwards minister at Selkirk. The visit of Mr Lawson gave great pleasure to the poet. He spoke with as much freedom as if he had been in the best of health; Mr Lawson remarked "that he was glad to see him so cheerful."

"Why," replied Bruce, "should I not be so, when I am on the verge of heaven?"

"But," replied his friend, "you look so pale. I fear you cannot be with us long."

Bruce's reply was characteristic. "You remind me of the Irishman who was told his hovel was about to fall. I answer with him, 'Let it fall, it is not mine.'"

Much interest was taken in the young poet by the neighbours. In old letters existing mention is made in one of these that "Mr Bruce the student was seemingly a-dying," and in another letter his death is duly noted. He maintained great cheerfulness and even joy in the prospect of death, until one morning in June 1767. The sad intelli-

gence was conveyed to him by his mother, that his beloved friend, pastor and professor, the Rev. John Swanston of Kinross, had died unexpectedly in Perth. Professor Swanston had been assisting at the celebration of the Lord's Supper in that city on Sabbath, 7th June, and was seized immediately after divine service in the evening. He was so ill that he could not be removed to Kinross, but died on the Friday following. Bruce was appalled at the news. He had loved his minister as he had done no one else. Bruce was never seen to smile again. He lingered on till the 6th July, concluding his last Sabbath on earth, and by the dawn of Monday morning his gentle spirit had silently departed, having seemingly passed peacefully away in sleep. His Bible was found on his pillow beside him, with a leaf turned down to Jer. xxii. 10—"Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him"; while on the blank leaf he had written those well-known lines:—

"'Tis very vain for me to boast  
How small a price my Bible cost ;  
The day of judgment will make clear  
'Twas very cheap—or very dear."

He was only in his twenty-second year.

The news of his death plunged the little town of Kinnesswood into mourning. Many were the sad hearts in the Bishopshire that day. They mourned deeply because no more would they see

one so deeply beloved pass out and in among them. His gentle life and blameless conduct had so impressed themselves upon old and young that it seemed as if he had lived long years among them and been related to each one of them. When the day of his funeral came, "the loan" was thronged with mourners. The solemn tread of those marching in step and bearing a hand of the spokes, on which the covered coffin containing his remains lay as it passed down to the main street on its way to the churchyard of Portmoak, sounded like a knell to those left behind. At the grave many pressed forward to take a last fond look at his coffin, yet their thoughts were "in the lift aboon," very possibly with the application of the words:—

" His better being never ends,  
Why then dejected weep." \*

After a time Rev. Principal Baird caused a simple obelisk to be placed at his grave, which afterwards gave place to the more ornate monument erected under the care of Rev. Dr Mackelvie, on which the following inscription has been placed:—

TO THE  
MEMORY OF  
MICHAEL BRUCE  
WHO WAS BORN AT KINNESSWOOD IN 1746  
AND DIED WHILE A STUDENT  
IN CONNECTION WITH THE SECESSION CHURCH  
IN THE 22ND YEAR OF HIS AGE.

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\* See facing page.



“THE LOAN TO THE HILL,” KINNESSWOOD, Bruce's Cottage in the distance,  
the Schoolroom he attended on the right.





“Meek and gentle in spirit, sincere and unpretending in his Christian deportment, refined in intellect, and elevated in character, he was greatly beloved by his friends, and won the esteem of all, while his genius, whose fire neither poverty nor sickness could quench, produced those odes unrivalled for simplicity and pathos which have shed an undying lustre on his name.”

“Early, bright, transient, chaste as morning dew,  
He sparkled and exhaled, and went to heaven.”

In an old letter, written by Mr Ebenezer Birrell, and sent home by a relative of his in Canada, he states that his father, Mr John Birrell, already mentioned as “Varro,” had informed him that he knew Michael Bruce, and remembered him well. He was not at Mr Dun’s school with him, though both attended there at different times. At that time young John Birrell was residing with his grandfather, after whom he was named. Mr Birrell described the young poet as tall and slender, and of a fair complexion. The description given of him, as the result of inquiries made from several who had known him, forms the only portrait we have of him, viz., “He was tall, slenderly made, with a long neck, narrow chest, his skin white and shining, his cheeks tinged with red rather than ruddy, his hair yellowish and inclined to curl.”

During the Sabbath before he died he expressed

his hopes of happiness in words to this effect, "I shall go, supported by God, through fire and water to the wealthy place." Bruce had all along been noted for his steady and correct life and his constancy in friendship, for he loved his friends with an intense depth of affection. To his early friends he gave a chief place in his writings under the special *nom de plume* which he had assigned to each. He had also the rare faculty of securing a reciprocity in friendship. To their latest day the friends of his youth spoke of him with feelings of veneration and respect. In him dwelt unbounded love of truth, with a profound contempt for all forms of affectation. He ever dreaded that what he had said or written should be taken for this. To be the fine gentleman was beneath his notice. He possessed a keen sense of the sublime and beautiful, and he liked to see things about him of a kind superior to what some in his circumstances would have been supposed to care for.

Another prominent characteristic was his piety. It has been well said, "Religion was obviously with him a matter of experience." His conduct and conversation alike bespoke a regard for its sanction, and a firm trust in its promises. His life and death were confirmation of this statement, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee." \*

\* This refers to the Paraphrases No. 2, 8, 9, 11, 18, 31, 38, 43, 53, 58 and Hymn 5, which were either wholly written or greatly improved by him.

This enabled him to exhibit such a contentment under great privations as has been subject for wonder to all who were acquainted with his history. But it sprang from a complete acquiescence in the will of God. David Pearson writes:—"I, who knew him well, and now, after twenty-seven years, mourn his loss, say he was a most affectionate, upright and useful friend to me at all times, and most loving when I was most afflicted." He concludes his remarks with these emphatic words, "Michael Bruce was the man, the scholar and the saint." What a volume of condensed meaning is contained in these three words. Of how few of those who live for only twenty-one complete years can this be so fully or so honestly said? It were worth the efforts of the longest life to earn such a certificate of worth. In his day he was loved by his friends, who held him and his writings in high esteem, yet the great outer world knew little of him, or that the sacred songs alone of this gifted son in humble life would one day become so much admired, and prove a solace and a comfort when sung by countless thousands in many lands.

What Michael Bruce might have accomplished had longer life been granted him it is vain to conjecture. Of the sons of genius cut off by early death there have been few whose fate excites more tender regret than his. Perhaps his fame as a poet has been injured by the sympathy which his pre-

mature death excited, and by the benevolent purpose which recommended the edition of his works edited by Principal Baird and offered for public patronage. It has been remarked, "Pity and benevolence are strong emotions, and the mind is commonly content with one strong emotion at a time. He who purchased a book that he might procure the comfort of the author's mother procured for himself in the mere payment of the price a pleasure more substantial than could be derived from the contemplation of agreeable ideas." But these poems, nevertheless, display talents of a high order. The flattering eulogy which has been recorded of them by those capable of forming an opinion has not been exaggerated. Perhaps the most remarkable points in these compositions, considering the extreme youth of this poet, are the artistic grace of his metrical style, the rhythmic melody of his verse, and the apt manner in which sense is wedded to sound. Flashes of brilliant thought we may look for in opening genius, but we rarely meet with such a sustained polish. The reader who glances even casually into his poems will be surprised to find how many of those familiar phrases, recommended to universal use by their beauty of thought and felicitous diction—those, in a word, which everyone quotes, while few know whence they are taken—we owe to Michael Bruce.

## CHAPTER VI

### OPINIONS ON MICHAEL BRUCE

Dr Anderson—British poets—Extracts—Lord Craig's paper—Rev. Principal Baird—Mr Arnot, Laird of Portmoak—D. Pearson's testimony—Special poems by Bruce—Old kirkyard—First edition of Bruce's poems—Poem on Loch Leven—Character of Bruce's writings—Logan's publication of 1781—Logan's suppression of Bruce's MSS.—Dr Baird's edition of Bruce.

IN an important contribution to the poetic literature of our country, published by Dr R. Anderson in 1795, a notice of Michael Bruce and his writings reveals the opinion that had been formed of him and of the merits of his works as follows :—"The few melancholy particulars which form the slender history of the life of Bruce were first given to the world by Logan, the editor of his works, and have since received every recommendation and embellishment from the elegant pen of Lord Craig, one of the Judges of the Court of Session, in the thirty-sixth number of the *Mirror*. A short life passed in obscurity and in the silent acquisition of knowledge cannot be expected to abound in vicissitudes or occurrences interesting to curiosity, but particular circumstances may exist to render the life of a young man of genius, depressed by his situation and aspiring to literature and to poetry under the

pressure of indigence, peculiarly interesting to benevolence and to learning."

The affecting and well-written paper in the *Mirror* by Lord Craig has been singled out by the leading literary men of our nation for particular marks of commendation. Lord Craig says:—"The facts stated in the present account are partly taken from the brief narrative of Logan, and partly from information furnished by his relatives and collected from the perishing remains of his epistolary correspondence communicated to the present writer by the kindness of the Rev. Dr George Baird, Principal of the University of Edinburgh." The intelligence which he has obtained is general and scanty, but he has the gratification from producing it that it gives him at once an opportunity of reflecting on the liberal and friendly assistance of Dr Baird, and of recording his esteem and veneration for the talents and virtues of the unfortunate poet, and his humane and benevolent exertions to lessen the wants and alleviate the afflictions of his aged mother, which deserve a more ample encomium than this brief memorial can bestow. After giving the date of the poet's birth, etc., he relates:—"The first years of his life did not pass without distinction. He very early discovered a genius superior to the common, which his parents had penetration to discern, and the merits to improve by giving him a polite and liberal education." Before he left school he gave evident



signs of a propensity to the study of poetry, in which he was greatly encouraged from an acquaintance which he had contracted when very young with Mr D. Arnot, the Laird of Portmoak, the patron and director of his youthful studies. Mr Arnot cultivated a small farm on the banks of Loch Leven, which he inherited. He was a man of excellent sense and piety, and had a cultivated taste and an acquaintance with classical learning, moral philosophy, poetry and criticism, much superior to his opportunities of improvement and his rank in life. He it was who gave his young friend the first perception of good poetry by putting into his hands the works of Milton, Thomson's "Seasons," the poems of Pope and the writings of Shakespeare.

Besides the advantages of so intelligent an adviser as Mr Arnot, he had formed an acquaintance with Mr David Pearson from an early period, who was a man of strong parts and of a serious, contemplative and inquiring turn, who had improved his mind by a diligent and solitary perusal of such books as came within his reach, and having a peculiar predilection for that branch of study which soon became the favourite object of his pursuit, contributed not a little to lead him to the love of reading and the study of poetry. This worthy and respectable man was then residing at Easter Balgedie, a small village adjoining Kinnesswood.

In the company of Mr Arnot and Mr Pearson,

Bruce passed much of his spare time in the country, and to them from time to time he imparted the occasional offspring of his genius, receiving from them such advice as tended greatly to ripen his judgment and improve his natural taste for metrical compositions.

In a letter by Bruce to Mr Arnot mention is made of his having entered the Hebrew and Natural Philosophy classes. Though he did not care much for the Hebrew, of the study of Natural Philosophy he speaks more favourably.

Dr R. Anderson thus refers to Logan's conduct:—"It is remarkable that no account is given in the preface" (to the volume of poems published in 1770) "of the state in which those came into his possession, nor of any process which he observed in preparing them for publication. As the practice of making one writer speak by the sense of another has a tendency to confound the claims of individual merit, it is to be regretted that Logan withheld from the public an account of the share which he had in the publication.

"The propriety of writing the poems of Bruce and those of different authors in the same publication may be reasonably doubted, especially as they have no apparent resemblance or poetical relation, but undoubtedly the pieces belonging to Bruce ought to have been distinguished by some particular mark, for the internal evidence, as the present writer

has experienced in several instances, is a fallacious and uncertain distinction." Bruce's character may be easily collected from the foregoing account of his life. It was truly amiable and respectable. In his manners he was modest, gentle and mild in his disposition. He was friendly, affectionate and ingenuous, uniting an ardent and enlightened sense of religion with a lively imagination and a feeling heart. Tenderness in every sense of the word, and piety equally remote from enthusiasm and superstition, were his peculiar *characteristics*. As a poet he is characterised by elegance, simplicity and tenderness, more than sublimity, invention or enthusiasm. He has more judgment and feeling than genius or imagination. He is elegant and pleasing, though not a very animated or original writer. His compositions are the production of tender fancy, a cultivated taste and a benevolent mind, and are distinguished by an amiable delicacy and simplicity of sentiment, with a graceful plainness of expression, free from the affectation of an inflated diction and a profusion of imagery so common in juvenile productions. His thoughts are often striking, sometimes new, and always just, and his versification, though not exquisitely polished, is commonly easy and harmonious."

Dr R. Anderson includes "John Logan" in his list of British poets, and makes the best of the materials at his disposal, regarding his life and

reputation, his retirement from South Leith Parish Church, his settlement in London, but clearly without the knowledge of his real character. In the letter written by Dr Grant to Dr Carlyle of Inveresk, there is introduced what has proved an insuperable difficulty in the case, "It is of importance for the reputation of Bruce to subjoin the following account of his share in the volume of poems published under his name, given by his friend Mr David Pearson in a letter to the present writer, dated 29th August 1795.

"I need not inform you concerning the bad treatment that his [Bruce's] poems met with from Mr Logan, when he received from his father the whole of his manuscripts, and published only his own pleasure, keeping back those poems that his friends would most gladly have embraced, and since published many of them in his own name." In a letter by Mr John Birrell, dated 31st August 1795, he writes :—"Some time before the poet's father died he delivered the book containing the first draft of some of Michael's poems, his sermons, and other papers into my hand, desiring I would keep them, saying, 'I know of none to whom I would rather give them than you, for you mind me more of my Michael than anybody,' a compliment which I never deserved, and which in modesty I should conceal. Some years after, I entered upon terms with Mr Morison of Perth to sell this MS. for the benefit of

the poet's mother, who was in destitute circumstances. In the meantime, Rev. Dr Baird wrote for them, with a view to republish Michael's poems, with any others that could be procured of his. I sent them to him gladly, hoping soon to see the whole in print, and the old woman provided for. The finished book of Michael's poems was given to Mr Logan, who never returned it. Many a time, with tears trickling down his cheeks, has old Alexander Bruce told me how much he was disappointed with Mr Logan, who came unexpectedly and got (nearly) all the papers, letters and the books away, without giving him time to take a note of the titles, or getting a receipt for them, etc. It must not be concealed that an authorised report is floating about in the literary circles of Edinburgh which ascribes the first sketch of the 'Ode to the Cuckoo' to Bruce. If the testimony of Dr Robertson and others went the length of establishing the existence of the 'Ode to the Cuckoo' in Logan's handwriting during Bruce's lifetime, or before his MSS. came into Logan's possession, they might be considered decisive of all controversy. But the suppression of Bruce's MSS. by Logan, it must be owned, is a circumstance unfavourable to his pretensions." It was on the authority of Rev. Dr Baird that Dr R. Anderson assigned Logan the place and credit he did among British poets. Yet, Dr Baird saw reason to change his opinion, as has already been

noted. To be obliged to refer to so much that militates against Logan's character is unquestionably unpleasant and distasteful, but the blame of it all must rest with those advocates of Logan, whose persistent allegations must be met and refuted as far as facts are capable of doing so; while evidence must be established on behalf of one whose merits, character and conduct always shine the brighter the more they are inquired into.

## CHAPTER VII

### LETTERS BY MICHAEL BRUCE

Letters from Michael Bruce to Mr Arnot of Portmoak regarding a school; to George Henderson, to David Pearson, in which he gives a vivid description of a vision.

It is to be regretted that out of the vast number of letters written by Michael Bruce to his father and mother, Mr Arnot of Portmoak, Mr John Dun, David Pearson, James Campbell and others, between the years 1762 and 1767, so few remain to this day. Had these been obtainable they would have exhibited the strongest possible evidence in support of all that was necessary to settle the question so long debated. It is quite evident that circumstances were much against the retaining of old letters in the ordinary arrangements of small houses in the country. While those that John Logan secured during his unexpected visit to the village of Kinnesswood almost completed the total destruction of Bruce's letters, still we have a few left us which clearly show the kind of person Michael Bruce was, for in them we read the young poet's inner feelings, his mild humour, and Heaven-inspired truthfulness towards all who knew him. Besides, they express his faith in God, and humble resignation to His will. When these letters are contrasted



with those of John Logan, it will easily be seen on which side the *moral character* rests, so that were there nothing more on which to rely, in these alone the Rev. Dr R. Small's *test* is met, and the contention is at an end.

“EDINBURGH, 27th November 1764.

“DEAR SIR,—I daily meet with proofs that money is a necessary evil. When in an auction I often say to myself, ‘How happy should I be if I had money to purchase such a book.’ How well should my library be furnished. *Nisi obstat res angusta domi.*

“‘My lot forbids, nor circumscribes alone,  
My growing virtues, but my crimes confine.’

“Whether any virtues would have accompanied me in a more elevated station is uncertain, but that a number of vices, of which my sphere is incapable, would have its attendants, is unquestionable. The Supreme Wisdom has seen this meet, and the Supreme Wisdom cannot err.—Yours ever,

“MICHAEL BRUCE.”

“EDINBURGH, 27th March, *dies natalis*, 1765.

“DEAR SIR,—I am in great concern just now for a school. When I was over last there was a proposal made by some people of these parts to keep one at Gairney Bridge. What it may turn out I cannot tell.”

The following letter was sent to another friend :—

“Last week I made a visit to Portmoak, the

parish where I was born, and being accidentally at a funeral of an aged rustic I was invited to partake of the usual entertainment before the interment. We were conducted into a large barn, and placed almost in a square.

“ When lo ! a mortal, bulky, grave and dull,  
 The mighty master of the sevenfold skull,  
 Arose like Ajax. In the midst he stands—  
 A well-filled bicker loads his trembling hands.  
 To one he comes, assumes a visage new,  
 “ Come, ask a blessing, John ” ; with half a face,  
 Famed for the length of beard and length of grace,  
 Thus have I seen, beneath a hollow rock,  
 A shepherd hunt his dogs among his flock.  
 “ Run Collie, Battie, Venture.” Not one hears,  
 Then rising, runs himself, and running swears.’

“ In short, sir, as I have not time to poetise, the grace is said, the drink goes round, the tobacco pipes are lighted, and, from a cloud of smoke, a hoary-headed rustic addressed the company thus :—‘ Weel, John ’ (*i.e.* the deceased), ‘ noo when he’s gane, was a good sensible man, stout and healthy and hale, and had the best hand for cutting peats in this countryside. Aweel, sirs, we maun a’ dee. Here’s to ye.’ I was struck with the speech of this honest man, especially with his heroic application of the glass in dispelling the gloomy thoughts of death.”

The following are copies of letters written by Michael Bruce from Edinburgh. The first is dated 12th April 1765, and is addressed to “ Mr David Arnot of Portmoak ” :—

“DEAR SIR,—You may remember you were inquiring the last time I had the pleasure of your company what the Hutchinsonians are? Perhaps you know. I then did not, but have since learned something of them. Mr Hutchinson, from whom they take their name, was an English gentleman, skilled in the Hebrew, and denied that the vowels or points belonged to the language. His reason for this was thought to be a disposition to criticise the sacred writings, in which he has been followed by some in our own nation. When once they have discarded the vowel points they may give very different readings, and consequently significations to many words. But what he was most famous for was that he published a work in two volumes called, I think, *Principia Mosæ*, a kind of commentary on the Old Testament, but particularly the Pentateuch and Psalms. The most part of the Old Testament, but especially those aforesaid, he holds [to be] symbolical, and in every sentence finds meanings which none but himself and some of his followers can see. Every part of the Psalms, he says, refers to the Messiah, or to use the words of an honest enthusiast of him, ‘He finds the Saviour in every word.’ The whole work is a confused piece of absurdity (they say who have read it), filled with trifling allegories and far-fetched conceits. To give one instance: The flaming sword placed at the gate of Paradise (according to him) was appointed to show the way to the tree

of life, not to guard the way. It is said there are few passages of Scripture in which either in the translation he has not found some concealed meaning, or altered the translation for the sake of an allegory. You will let me know if this agrees with any hints you have met with of these people.

“There is a manuscript of Longinus lately found in the library of the Benedictine Monks at Rome containing a comparison of some passages of Holy Writ, with some [of] the heathen poets. I lately saw some extracts from it. Homer (says this judicious critic) makes the forest tremble at the approach of the Deity, but the Jewish poet says, ‘The earth did melt like wax at Thy presence,’ and indeed in every respect their Jehovah is superior to our Jupiter. And so he goes on in a great number of passages, always giving the preference to the Book of God.

“I saw Mrs Wallace this day, and received a letter to you. She has not yet got the escritoire or glass, but is to use diligence. I design to make one last effort on R. Hill before I give up my commission to resume it no more. I have not got Shep. Par ; it was sold before I came over, not over a shilling. I ask your pardon for not sending your seeds before now. They were bought two weeks ago, but neglected to be sent by a forgetfulness in your affectionate  
MICHAEL BRUCE.

“EDINBURGH, 10th April 1765.

“P.S.—I remember one, who shall be nameless

here, in a letter to a young man, has these words, 'Si mihi, nil novi publici, etc., rescribis : nil boni vel jucundi, etc., comunicas : vel tui fastidii vel ignaviæ. Si non ægritudinis argumentum habebo : et tui a me nil amplius audiendi voluntas.' Pray could such an one fail in the same article? You may believe I am not a little chagrined on being so cruelly disappointed. I have sent the seeds and Mrs W.'s letter.—11 o'clock night."

"DEAR SIR,—Walking lately by the churchyard off your town (farm) which inspires with a kind of veneration for our ancestors, I was struck with these beautiful lines of Mr Gray in his 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard' :—

"Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire,"

and immediately I called to mind your son whose memory will ever be dear unto me, and, with respect to that place (Heaven), put the supposition out of doubt. I wrote the most part of this poem the same day, which I should be very sorry if you look upon as a piece of flattery ; I know you are above flattery ; and if I know anything of my own mind I am so too. It is the language of the heart. I think a lie in verse and prose the same. The versification is irregular, in imitation of Milton's 'Lycidas.'"

After the poem he adds, "I have sent a line

from Mr Henderson to Mr Dryburgh. You may [en]close mine in it as this seems to be largest, and deliver them with as much ease as one.—Excuse this trouble from yours sincerely,

“MICHAEL BRUCE.

“GAIRNEY BRIDGE, *May 29, 1765.*

“*P.S.*—This will give you an idea of George’s way of writing.”

*Note.*—The P.S. refers to the enclosed letter Bruce is sending to Mr Arnot from “Mr Henderson” whose name was George (from Turfhill). The original poem is now before me, and there are to be found in it some differences compared with the previously printed texts by Logan, which are not considered to be improvements, showing that Logan had no other source from where he could have obtained this poem *than from the large MSS. book lent him by the poet’s father*, for Mr Arnot did not give him the original MS. still preserved.

It is headed “Daphnis: A Monody to the Memory of William Arnot.”

*Note.*—The letter which Bruce wrote and sent with the poem “Daphnis” is to some extent explanatory. Yet it may be stated Portmoak farmhouse or “your town” stands close by the old kirkyard of Portmoak. The kirk was removed to its present position by the roadside, and a new

burying-ground formed there. It was here that Bruce was buried. But "the auld kirkyard" remains where the kirk once stood, and also the Priory of Portmoak. It was on leaving this farmhouse and having to pass round the old burying place where his companion and he had played amongst the grave stones, and now, alas! was buried, these thoughts filled his mind on his homeward walk across the moss to Kinnesswood.

This old parish kirk was in use up to a period between 1640 and 1650.

"DEAR SIR,—It is an observation of some of your philosophers that it is much better for man to be ignorant of, than to know the future incidents of his life; for, says one, if some men were beforehand acquainted with the terrible miseries that await them, they would be as miserable in fearing (and I believe more so), than in suffering. Again, when we are in expectation of any good we paint all the agreeable to ourselves and dwell in the fancy of it; nor can we be convinced but by experience that everything here is of a mixed nature. When this so long-expected convenience arrives we can scarce believe it [is] what we hoped for, and, in truth, it is very different. Many a disappointment of this kind have I met with. What I enjoyed of anything was always in the hope of it. I expected to be happy here, but I am not; and my sanguine



hopes are the reason of my disappointment. The easiest part of my life is past, and I was never happy. I sometimes compared my condition with that of others, and imagine if I was in theirs I should be well. But is not everybody thus? Perhaps he whom I envy thinks he would be glad to change with me, and yet neither would be the better for the change. Since it is so, let us, my friend, moderate our hopes and fears, resign ourselves to the will of Him who 'doeth all things well,' and who hath assured us that He careth for us; and rejoice in hope of the glory that is to be revealed, and which will infinitely surpass our greatest expectations.

“ . . . Hoc res est una

Solaque qui facere et servare beatum.’

“ Things are not very well in this world, but they are pretty well. They might have been worse; and, as they are, may please us who have but a few days to use them. This scene of affairs, tho’ a very perplexed, is a very short one, and in a little all will be cleared up. Let us endeavour to please God, our fellow-creatures, and ourselves. In such a course of life we shall be as happy as we can be in such a world as this. Thus, you who cultivate your farm with your own hands, and I who teach a dozen blockheads for bread, may be happier than he who, having more than he can use, tortures his brains to invent new methods of killing himself with the superfluitie. But whither do I

ramble? I forget that I am telling you what you know better than I do. But I must say something. I hope to hear from you an account of your journey to Edinburgh, etc.

“I have wrote a few lines of a descriptive poem. *Cui titulus est* ‘Loch Leven.’ You may remember (as Mr M——r says) you hinted such a thing to me; so I have set about it, and you may expect a dedication. I hope it will soon be finished, as I every week add two lines, blot out six and alter eight. You shall hear the plan when I know it myself. My compliments to the family. Farewell.  
—I am yours, etc., MICHAEL BRUCE.

“FOREST MILL, 28th July 1766.”

There is a single leaf of another letter from Forest Mill of which Dr Grosart remarks:—“The reference in the opening sentences is probably to the famous or infamous treatise of De Mandeville, ‘The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits.’ This letter forms the concluding one of the Portmoak Collection now in my possession.

“. . . I think it a most dry, unentertaining oddity, wanting that which makes a number of bad books too agreeable, I mean beauty of language. Many have erred in their pictures of human nature on the favourable side, but he on the opposite. I look on it as an attempt to prove that even God Himself, who rules in the kingdoms of the earth,

cannot promote the wealth and strength of a nation but by the means of luxury and profusion in all their most detestable branches. In his representations of men he differs very little from the *Candide* of Voltaire and the too witty Dr Swift's *Hughnims*. But surely the contempt of the world is not a greater virtue than the contempt of our fellow-creatures is a vice. Dr Young has said it, and it is truth. Make my compliments to your family, and believe me yours, etc.,

MICHAEL BRUCE.

“FOREST MILL, 10th Dec. 1766.

“P.S.—I design to be at Kinross Sabbath next, from whence I will send this. I will probably fetch Rollin to Gair[ney] Br[idge] and engage J. Campbell to carry him to you. By him you will write to me.”

Dr Mackelvie states that he had been unable to trace anything of Bruce's exercises while at College save a small book containing part of Watt's Logic rendered into question and answer. I am glad, however, to state that I have secured ten pages of his careful writing, small quarto size, entitled “A System of Logic taken from the Lectures of Professor Stevenson, 1763-4.”

Bruce having a persuasion that his end was approaching turned his thoughts to his friends, Henderson and Pearson, the former in verse and the latter in prose. The following is a copy which has been preserved of his letter to David Pearson :—

“A few mornings ago, as I was taking a walk on an eminence which commands a view of the Forth with the vessels sailing along, I sat down and, taking out my Latin Bible, opened by accident at a place in the Book of Job ix. 23—‘Now my days are passing away as the swift ships.’ Shutting the book, I fell a musing on this affecting comparison. Whether the following happened to me in a dream or waking reverie I cannot tell, but I fancied myself on the bank of a river or sea, the opposite side of which was hid from view, being involved in clouds of mist. On the shore stood a multitude, which no man could number, waiting for passage. I saw a great many ships taking in passengers, and several persons going about in the garb of pilots offering their services. Being ignorant and curious to know what all these things meant, I applied to a grave old man who stood by giving instructions to the departing passengers. His name, I remember, was the *Genius of Human Life*. ‘My son,’ said he, ‘you stand on the banks of the stream of Time. All these people are bound for *Eternity*, that “undiscovered country from whence no traveller ever returns.” The country is very large, and divided into two parts. The one is called the Land of Glory, the other the Kingdom of Darkness. The names of these in the garb of pilots are *Religion, Virtue, Pleasure*. They who are so wise as to choose Religion for their guide have a safe though fre-

quently a rough passage ; they are at last landed in the happy climes where sighing and sorrow for ever flee away. They have likewise a secondary director, *Virtue*, but there is a spurious *Virtue* who pretends to govern by himself ; but the wretches who trust to him as well as those who have *Pleasure* for their pilot, are either shipwrecked or are cast away on the Kingdom of Darkness. *But the vessel in which you must embark approaches, you must be gone.* Remember what depends upon your conduct.' No sooner had he left me than I found myself surrounded by those pilots I mentioned before. Immediately I forgot all that the old man said to me, and seduced by the fair promises of *Pleasure*, chose him for my director. We weighed anchor with a fair gale, the sky serene, the sea calm. Innumerable little isles lifted their green heads around us, covered with trees in full blossom. Dissolved in stupid mirth we were carried on, regardless of the past, of the future unmindful. On a sudden the sky was darkened, the winds roared, the seas raged ; red rose the sand from the bottom of the troubled deep. The angel of the waters lifted up his voice. At that instant a strong ship passed by ; I saw *Religion* at the helm. 'Come out from among these,' he cried. I and a few others threw ourselves out into his ship. The wretches we left were now tossed on the swelling deep. The waters on every side poured through the riven vessel. They cursed the Lord ; when

lo! a fiend rose from the deep, and, in a voice like distant thunder, thus spoke, 'I am Abaddon, the first born of Death; ye are my prey. Open thou abyss to receive them.' As he thus spoke, they sunk and the waves closed over their heads. The storm was turned into a calm, and we heard a voice saying, 'Fear not, I am with you. When you pass through the waters they shall not overflow you.' Our hearts were filled with joy. I was engaged in discourse with one of my new companions, when one from the top of the mast cried out, 'Courage, my friends, I see the fair haven, the land that is yet afar off.' Looking up I found it was a certain friend who had mounted up for the benefit of contemplating the country before him. Upon seeing *you* I was so affected that I started and awaked. Farewell, my friend, farewell."

"FOREST MILL, 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1766.

"DEAR FRIEND,—I received yours of the 17<sup>th</sup> current, and it is more than probable the next you receive from me (if ever you receive another) will bear date 1767. I can remember, Davie, I could write (or at least scratch) my name with the year 1752 below it. In that year I learned the elements of pencraft, and now, let me see, 'tis 1767 — 1752 = fourteen years since. A good term for one to be a scholar all that time. And what have I learnt? Much that I need to unlearn. And I have need that one teach me this, that I know nothing.







“On the day before St Luke’s fair in Kinross I made a voyage to the Inch of Loch Leven, that being the time at which, you know, they bring the cattle out of it. The middle and highest part of it is covered with ruins. The foundations are visible enough, and it seems to have been a very large building. The whole is divided into a great many little squares from which it appears not an unprobable conjecture that not only a church, as they tell us, but a monastery had stood on it. To the westward of this, and in the lower ground, a deep dyke in the form of a trench is cut in the north and east side of a plain piece of ground not unlike a bowling green. I can give no guess for the use of this, though it evidently appears to be a work of art. I sought among the ruins and the stones of the little house which stands on it for some marks of inscriptions, but to no purpose. I could find nothing further to assist my conjectures. I would have examined [word wanting in MS.] had not the fishers been in such a hurry to be gone.

“They who consider it in no other view than as capable of feeding a dozen or fourteen cattle, when their work was over would not stay a minute longer had it been to discover the great toe of St Moak who is buried there. My description of it in the poem ‘Loch Leven’ which by the way is now finished, runs thus :—

“‘Fronting where Gairney pours his silent urn,’ etc.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### LETTERS

Copies of portions of Letters which passed between the young men as evidence relating to Michael Bruce and what he helped to develop in the Society founded by him, given in their order of date, as written by Messrs David Pearson, James Campbell, John Birrell, Thomas Brown, Ralph Birrell, including reference to Rev. Principal Baird, Mr John Hervey of Stirling, and Mr Telford, banker there.

17th January 1767.—James Campbell writes from “Haranhill” near Blair (now Benarty House), 17th January 1767 (while Bruce was still at Forest Mill). This is addressed to David Pearson, enclosing a specimen of *his* poetry, and indicating the great friendship subsisting between Bruce, Pearson and himself. This letter refers to a paper written by someone known to them, and Campbell desires to see a copy of the answer to it by “*Mr Bruce.*” It concludes with his compliments to Alexander Bruce and all his family. There seems to have been a considerable amount of correspondence between these two, but unfortunately the letters in reply by Pearson are lost.

7th August 1767.—Campbell writes to Pearson about a month after the poet's death desiring him to go to "Alexander Bruce" and buy the poet's copy of "Cornelius Nepos."

19th October 1769.—Campbell's next letter is two years after the previous one, and is dated from "Haranhill," near East Blair (now Benarty). In this he refers to a poem he had heard read, written by Bruce, adding:—

“ But we may now with tears our care deplore,  
And mourn our loss, *Amyntas* is no more.”

“I have a favour to ask. ‘There is a dialogue between a Quaker and our friend (Mr Bruce) you got when he was at Forest Mill. I beg you to give me a double of it.’ Give my compliments to Alexander Bruce and all his family.”

20th December 1769.—Reference is here made by Campbell that he has had a formal invitation from Alexander Bruce and Anna Bruce, his wife, to come and see them on "Handsel Monday" when he leaves Easter Gillot, near Dunfermline.

A few letters pass from the above date which are of no importance.

14th May 1770.—Early this month Logan has published what is entitled "Bruce's Poems," with the preface to which special reference is made, hence Campbell writes:—

“Send me word in your next letter which are the poems not Mr Bruce’s? I have a notion of some of them, but you were better acquaint with him than me.”

24th April 1771.—This letter is to his fellow-members of the Society. He refers to it as “The Hon. Privy Parliament,” mentioning each by his *nom de plume*, viz., Varro (J. Birrell), Philenor (D. Pearson), Damon (James Bruce), Lycades (John Pearson), etc. A question has been submitted to each at this time.

“What are the principal things to be observed in poetical compositions?”

7th June 1771.—A visit has been paid him by “Varro.” He has seen his library. He mentions his fine taste in the books he possesses as they include “Manner, method, or style, and that he is a youth of great abilities.” David Pearson, to whom he writes, has now returned from Pathhead and is settled at Wester Balgedie.

10th March 1770.—The letters of *Varro* (John Birrell) are as follows (the first also addressed to Philenor (David Pearson), c/o Alexr. Bruce):—“This comes to certify to Philenor that I am his friend. I hope to come to Kinnesswood,” and see some of the pieces of our dear deceased friend (Bruce) at our common friend’s, A. B. (Alexander Bruce) the poet’s father.

15th February 1771.—This letter covers two large pages, wherein a statement “of what poetry consists” is fully given.

20th March 1771.—Letter to Damon (the poet's brother James) while Varro was residing with his father (David Birrell) at Ayr. Refers to a letter received with great joy. “‘Religion,’ says a fine writer ‘lives, smiles, and even flourishes in company.’ How agreeable it is to *saunter* slowly by the doors of Kinnesswood about nine at night on a pleasant evening and hear nothing but the name of the Most High praised, His Word read or His mercy invoked. On Sabbath, how well clad is the road (to the church), and they speak of religion. I don't say that every company has this for their subject, for I heard several old matrons here disputing whether the warp of Bessie Mack's gown was green.”

With this is one of Varro's poems on the praise of society.

The kindly and loving interest which was continued in the memory of their former friend, “Michael Bruce,” is well brought out in a letter from Thomas Brown, an intimate friend of David Pearson, and addressed to him at “Little Balgedie.” This is dated 10th September 1791.

A few verses from this poem will give an indication of what it was :—

## VARRO'S POEM

“ As fairest flowers soon feel decay,  
 The sport of every cruel blast,  
 Even so ‘Amyntas’\* pined away  
 Long e’er the bloom of youth was past.

Methinks of woe, the dismal sound  
 From yonder cottage, yet I hear,  
 Which saddened all the village round,  
 And drew from every eye a tear.

Behold array’d in sable hue,  
 Attendant friends conduct the bier,  
 While eloquent on every brow  
 Unfeigned sorrow doth appear.

No cheerful sound made glad that day,  
 No voice was heard of joy or love,  
 The birds sat mute on every spray,  
 And silence sadden’d all the grove.

Each rev’rend hoary-headed sire,  
 Old in experience as in days,  
 With others emulous aspire,  
 Proud to recount ‘Amyntas’' praise.

He lives, in’s influence he lives,  
 Forgive the enthusiastic thought  
 As, mark what aid his merits gives,  
 What kind assistance it has brought.

Here, stop my muse, a friendly tear  
 Is sacred to his royal name,  
 While in a register more fair  
 Recorded lives his honest fame.”

The following is from the letters of Ralph  
 Birrell to his brother David then residing at Ayr,

\* Michael Bruce.

who was the father of John Birrell (Varro). Ralph remarks :—“ My father is about his tender ordinary. All friends and acquaintances send their compliments to you, particularly Alexander Bruce and ‘ Michael the student.’ No more remarkable, but remains your brother, etc.”

5<sup>th</sup> July 1767.—Another letter follows this from the above to Ayr, in which he states :—“ Michael Bruce is no better, but is seemingly a-dying very fast.”

12<sup>th</sup> August 1767.—Then follows a letter from John Birrell (the father of Ralph and David). He writes :—“ Mr Bruce, Alexander Bruce his son, died the week after Jean (his daughter) came home. She landed on a Wednesday and he died on Monday ” [he was found early on the Monday morning to have passed away in the night.]

The following is from the pen of David Pearson. “ During the year that Rev. Principal Baird was engaged with the edition of Bruce which was ultimately published in 1796, a letter was sent from Mr John Birrell to Dr Anderson, who was engaged with his *British Poets*. He writes :—‘ It cannot but surprise me that the friends of Mr Logan claim [for him] so many of ‘ Michael’s poems.’ There are only seventeen in the whole collection ” [published in 1770 edition]. “ *They may as well ascribe to him the framing of the universe.* I am the man still alive



who can attest the truth of all this. I cannot declare the operation of the poet's mind in composing them, but to see some verses formed before others were added, and both altered and new modelled, and to hear or read them when completed, gave me sufficient evidence. I sought no further [than] that Michael was the undoubted author, high and respectable as the learned gentlemen may be who hold the contrary opinion. It does not shake my faith, or rather my sense and ocular demonstration. They may as well say that Logan wove so many of my old master's webs as to say he composed 'The Pastoral,' 'Damon,' etc., 'Musiad' and 'The Cuckoo.' No poet could describe the pastoral life better than Michael, who was a shepherd himself. I remember perfectly well when he was composing that 'Eclogue,' 'Damon,' etc. His father and I had various inquiries about the meaning of the names, which he explained. We both thought the two lines showed a good disposition, worthy of imitation :—

““ What time I shear my flocks I send a fleece  
To aged Mopsa and her orphan niece.”

These lines form part of the 7th verse.

“When he composed the 'Eclogue' in the manner of Ossian, I remember well that he told us who this Ossian was, that his poems were much esteemed and rehearsed by the Highlanders, and

had some strokes superlatively grand and worthy of imitation. Perhaps these may not be reputed proofs, but they were so, and ever will be so to me. I slept by his bosom all the night and hung upon his lips all the day, and if I was not there in a dream I cannot be mistaken now. *When I came to visit his father a few days after Michael's death he went and brought forth his 'poem book' and read the 'Ode to the Cuckoo' and the 'Musiad,' at which the old man was so overcome with a mixture of joy and grief that the glasses fell off his nose. There were many excellent poems in the book and a number of hymns at the end, a part of which furnishes Logan's Collection.*

“These, as they stand in Logan's Collection of 1781, are slightly altered, so is the ‘Ode to the Cuckoo’ and everything the ‘poem book’ contained, Logan got away that same summer in which Michael died, 1767. It was about three years before any of them were published. Logan's friends might in that space of time see copies of the ‘Ode to the Cuckoo’ in his handwriting, *but not sooner*, unless Bruce had sent him a copy of it. They indeed corresponded, and it was from knowing him to be a friend of Michael's that I delivered up several things to him, specially a poem to Dr Miller. What you have seen [in print] is only a preamble to it.” This is the writing of David Pearson, which cannot be gainsaid.

The following letter is a most important one, as it testifies to several points on which Logan's friends have had their statements or argument thoroughly upset:—

“No testimony can be stronger than David Pearson's as to important facts relating to Michael Bruce and his writings. He was a man of sound Christian character, attested by all who knew him. His statements are all from personal knowledge. He died on the 25th February 1810, in his cottage, the end of which is to the road, and the front of it faces the west at Little Balgedie. He was laid to rest in Portmoak Churchyard, where his dearest friend, the poet, was also buried many years before.”

Copy of letter written by Mr John Birrell, Kinnesswood, and addressed to Messrs Telford and Hervey, Stirling, in favour of James Stedman, Esquire, of Whinfield, Sheriff of Kinross-shire, dated Kinnesswood, 7th September 1790:—

“GENTLEMEN,—Your letter to Mr Henderson of Turfhill I have perused with the greatest pleasure. Your unexpected generosity to the mother of Michael Bruce has cheered the heart, and as it were renewed the youth of the good old woman. While I told her the contents of your kind letter, joy and grief alternately swelled her heart, the gratitude of her soul burst forth in these devout exclamations,

‘God bless them ! God bless them ! What a kindness this is,’ and indeed your charity, for so I may justly style it, must appear a wonderful sum to a poor woman of four score who for ten years has not had above half-a-crown in her house at once. Her son Michael Bruce, whose genius was so great and his poems so admired was born March 16th, 1746,\* and died July 6th, 1767.† At his death he left several small volumes, chiefly poetry, in his father’s possession. These Mr Logan of Leith received, with a variety of ingenious letters which Michael had written to David Arnot of Portmoak and David Pearson in Balgedie, all which, according to agreement, should have been, but were never, returned. When Alexander Bruce (the father) called at Mr Logan’s lodgings for the manuscripts, he was told they were not ready, but was desired to call again, which he did. When Mr Logan told him he was surprised that he had not got them as he had left them for him with the servants, who he was afraid had destroyed them by singeing fowles, for they could not be found. There is a small volume preserved which I had the good fortune to pick up. It contains, ‘Loch Leven,’ ‘The Last Day,’ an ‘Elegy

\* This reckoned from the old style, if eleven days are added then the date is the 27th, or new style, as stated elsewhere.

† This is the second confirmation which has appeared in the Birrell letters that the 6th July 1767 was the date of the poet’s death.

on Philocles,' an Epigram, a tale of the eastern manners, and some fragments. This volume was delivered about two years ago to the Rev. Mr Baird of Dunkeld, who had expressed great veneration for the poet and much desire to have the poems reprinted for the benefit of the old woman [Mrs Bruce], and was to procure Dr Blair to write a preface to the book stating her case, but he has done nothing that we have heard of. I have written him again and again, and at the old woman's desire I wrote him yesterday to return the manuscripts to her, which she intends to send to you. These, with whatever more can be collected, shall be sent for your perusal. Your unexpected and very seasonable gratuity is indeed more than all she has received for her son's sake. Her husband, being alive when the poems were first published, got half a dozen of copies sent him by Mr Logan, and one guinea from Mr Bruce of Arnot, which was all that accrued to the family from the first edition.

“We have heard that a second edition has been published about your place, but never could be certain whether or not. Michael has a brother living in this place who has a talent for poetry, and his compositions are chiefly in the Scots dialect and far from being contemptible. He intends to write you. In the meantime, gentlemen, accept of this as a hearty acknowledgment for your kindness to the old woman, from her and from me, and indeed from

every humane heart to whom she has told the cheering tale and who rejoice in your benevolence. We are much obliged to the worthy gentleman who bears this, who has engaged to forward it to you. You will excuse the abruptness of my direction as I am a stranger to your address.—I remain with the highest esteem, gentlemen, your most obedient humble servant,  
J. BIRRELL.”

“REV'D. SIR,—Within these few days I have obtained again the possession of Michael Bruce's letters which I mentioned to you in a former letter. For a long time they were in Stirling, and in Mrs Keir's hands. I have sent them to A. Pearson, Esq, Secretary of Excise, who was desirous of seeing them, especially those written to his friend Mr Arnot of Portmoak, the Agricola of 'Loch Leven,' Michael's great friend. You will find them there. After satisfying yourself with them you will be so kind as allow Mr Pearson to see them again if he has not perused them fully.

“Being much interested in the old woman's welfare and in the success of the intended publication, as well as for the satisfaction of several friends, permit me to say regarding the admission of Mr Burns's pieces, the dissimilarity between Mr Burns's poems and the innocent simplicity and moral tendency of Mr Bruce's poetry is very striking. The virtuous mind that admires the last cannot but be sensibly pained with the gross and repeated indelicacies of the





The sangs sent by 'the Lad o' Kyle,'  
Tho' some would gar a dervish smile,  
'Mong Michael's nane sid rank and file  
But what are snod.

Wherefore I hope ye'll wale them weil,  
Thou man of God."

This letter is addressed, Revd. Mr G. Baird,  
Dunkeld.

## CHAPTER IX

THE EVIDENCES OF CREDIBLE WITNESSES IN FAVOUR OF MICHAEL BRUCE'S RIGHT TO THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE "ODE TO THE CUCKOO," AND OTHER PIECES, ALSO, THAT HE HAD PREPARED FOR THE PUBLICATION OF HIS WORKS

The poet's early circumstances—David Pearson's knowledge and testimony—John Logan's visits to Kinnesswood—Bruce's intention to publish—His preparedness for this—His death—Visit from fellow-students—Logan succeeds in securing Bruce's finished MSS. book in 1767—Pearson's testimony as to Bruce's early production of "Ode to the Cuckoo"—The hymns—Old letters—Bruce's poems published 1770—The last stanza of "Ode to the Cuckoo"—Mr Young's hymn claimed—Preface to 1770 edition—Logan refuses to give up Bruce's MSS.—Daphnis's opinions of Bruce's poems—Dr Davidson's evidence—David Bickerton—Dr R. Anderson—Dr Baird's MSS. burned—The old copies of letters lately discovered—Logan's volume of 1781—Rev. Dr Robertson of Dalmeny—Logan's statements—"The Braes of Yarrow"—Rev. Dr Grant's letters—Rev. Dr Carlyle—The paraphrases—Isaac Disraeli.

THE full consideration of the early circumstances and upbringing of Michael Bruce will be found in the chapters devoted to his life. We now turn to his works. The chief concern will be to keep before the reader the facts that David Pearson and others testify that Bruce wrote poetry before he left his native village, and amongst these pieces was the "Ode to the Cuckoo." So far as Logan is concerned there

has not been a vestige of evidence produced in favour of his having written or "handed about" any MS. copies of this ode till *after September 1767*, when he had visited the poet's father and obtained from him Michael Bruce's MSS. *on loan* for publication. Then it must be kept in mind that Bruce had often been urged by his intimate friends to publish his poems, and, as the custom then was, to secure in the first place the requisite number of subscribers. For this purpose he devoted the time after his return from Forest Mill to put his writings in proper form in a book ready for publication, doubtless in the fond hope that thereby he might be the means of helping his parents in their straits. David Pearson clearly testifies he had seen this finished "poem book," as did James Bruce the poet's brother; while, as a matter of course, Mrs Bruce, his mother, was well aware of it. There is also the letter by Mr John Dun, his former schoolfellow, who was born and resided in the same "loan" in Kinnesswood, whose knowledge is evident from the manner in which he writes, he being resident in Edinburgh as a student at the time. The letter is dated 25th January 1766, the writer seemingly knowing in what state Bruce's writings were, for in urging publication he remarks, "*do not fail to do it soon.*" There is also another letter from a dear and intimate fellow-student, Mr George Lawson, afterwards known as Professor Lawson of Selkirk. In February 1766

he writes to Bruce from Boghall. In one of Bruce's letters, written at Forest Mill to David Pearson, he enclosed the first draft of the ballad, "Sir James the Ross," round which also hangs a curious history noticed elsewhere. See also letter from James Campbell to David Pearson, dated 17th January 1767 (in Bruce's lifetime). These all form the ground work of evidence that Bruce had in view the completion of his writings in order to publish a volume of his poems, and we may reasonably infer from the letters mentioned that had already formed the subject of conversation between the Bruces and these intimate friends. Add to this the clear, distinct and reliable testimony of David Pearson in answer to inquiries addressed to him by Dr Anderson. He states:— "When I came to visit his father [Alexander Bruce] a few days after Michael's death, he went and brought forth his poem book [the MSS. vol.] and read the 'Ode to the Cuckoo,' etc." His letter, dated 29th August 1795, testifies strongly what *he* thought of Logan's conduct, *after* he had got *the loan* of Bruce's MSS., adding, "The 'Cuckoo' and hymns at the end of the book are assuredly Bruce's production." This was in reference to the volume Logan published at London in 1781. There was no other person outside of Bruce's family who knew the poet and his writings more intimately than Pearson, nor can his statements be denied. Yet it may easily be understood that while he could well re-

collect the "Ode to the Cuckoo," he might not know *every one* of the poems or hymns, or be able to say which was wholly Bruce's composition or only an improved version of some already published by other authors. We must also recollect that hymns were in no way used in the public worship of the Secession congregations to which they all belonged. These and other remarks were statements made frequently by David Pearson to his friends and neighbours, whose children and children's children were perfectly familiar with them to a period long within the memory of the writer, to whom they have been often expressed, and it was in the houses of these inhabitants of Kinnesswood that a large collection of old family letters and some of Bruce's books were discovered, and that information bearing on this subject has within recent years been obtained. It is matter for much regret that a large collection of documents fitted to support these statements and much more were lately burnt, from a belief that they were of no further use. Nor can we forget that when Logan visited the poet's father and got his MSS. book, he also paid a visit to David Pearson at Wester Balgedie, from whom he got a collection of highly-valued poems and letters, so that we can easily suppose that Logan having in his possession the poet's book, Pearson's reluctance would be overcome, and thus Logan became the holder of these also. Had Pearson been subjected to cross-examination as to

these important details much better, or more direct information would have resulted.

It is also satisfactory to have recently obtained from another friend in Kinnesswood a collection of letters which formed the correspondences between Mr John Birrell, who died in 1852, and Messrs John Hervy and Telford, banker in Stirling, written previous to the publication of the editions of Bruce's poems by the Rev. Principal Baird. These all tended to verify the former statements as furnished to Dr Baird. In these Bruce is affirmed to be the author of the “*Ode to the Cuckoo*,” and it is noticeable that he printed this ode in that volume of 1796 in the same form in which it was written by Bruce and published by Logan in 1770, when only seven of the eight stanzas appeared. Logan afterwards altered some of the words and published the piece as his own in 1781. But the changes have been his undoing.

The absence of that stanza betrays Logan. At the time he was in London, and the cause for his being there, being what it was, he was not the man to have included these four lines; and if he did not publish this ode in 1770 with them included, they were too conscience-appealing for him to own in 1781. On the other hand, these lines, at the time when Bruce added them to his finished volume, were only too truly applicable to his own sad state, for what could have expressed his own feelings better than these words:—

“Alas, sweet bird; not so my fate,  
Dark scowling skies I see,  
Fast gathering round, and fraught with woe  
And wintry years to me.”

Not but that such words would have fitted Logan's condition in 1781, for truly he saw dark scowling skies too near to publish this, as a perusal of his own letters will prove. David Pearson's words always were, "*I knew this ode to be Michael's long before it was published, and no one doubted this till they saw it in Logan's book in 1781,*" and Pearson was a man who meant more by his statements than his words conveyed. They saw now the true reason why Logan had dishonoured his promises and refused to give up Bruce's chief writings and letters, which would have been evidence entirely against him, so that, even at this point, he stands convicted of a foul literary theft. There is always a difficulty in dealing with a theft of this kind, as may be instanced by the case of the late Mr Young, teacher in Edinburgh, who was the author of that well-known hymn, "There is a happy land," etc. He was wont to relate that in consequence of its being originally published without the author's name it was claimed by a person who actually attempted to dispute the subject with him, so that, if there is a difficulty in dealing with a literary thief in the lifetime of the real author, how much is this increased after the lapse of so many years? The



same difficulty occurred with Henry Mackenzie's well-known work, *The Man of Feeling*, and with George Eliot's *Adam Bede*. So anxious was the poet's father, “Alexander Bruce,” to regain possession of his son's writings, that with great difficulty he walked all the way to Kinghorn, crossed the Forth to Leith in an open boat, sought for Logan and found him, but only to be crushed by bitter disappointment in being told his son's writings could not be found, and were possibly burnt by his servant, a most unlikely story, unless done by his express orders. A few loose papers were only given him, but not the finished volume so much desired.

Not a little interest hangs round the volume Logan edited and published in 1770, presumably for the benefit of the poet's parents, and though there would have been but a few pounds realised by its sale at 2s. 6d. per volume, this would at that time have been a great benefit to them. Instead of this, only a few copies of the book were sent them.

The following is the actual size of the title page and a copy of all that is printed upon it :—

# P O E M S

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS

BY

MICHAEL BRUCE

“Sine me, liber, ibis in urbem.”—*Ovid.*

EDINBURGH

PRINTED BY J. ROBERTSON

---

MDCC,LXX.

The preface may also interest readers, and is as follows :—

### “PREFACE

“Michael Bruce, the author of the following poems, lives now no more but in the remembrance of his friends. He was born in a remote village in Kinross-shire, and descended from parents remarkable for nothing but the innocence and simplicity of their lives. They, however, had the penetration to discover in their young son a genius superior to the common, and had the merit to give him a polite and liberal education. From his earliest years he had manifested the most sanguine love of letters, and afterwards made eminent progress in many branches of literature. But poetry was his darling study ; the poets were his perpetual companions. He read their works with avidity, and with a congenial enthusiasm ; he caught their spirit as well as their manner ; and though he sometimes imitated their style, he was a poet from inspiration. No less amiable as a man than valuable as a writer ; endued with good nature and good sense, humane, friendly, benevolent ; he loved his friends, and was beloved by them with a degree of ardour that is only experienced in the era of youth and innocence.”

Logan writes :—“It was during the summer vacations of the College that *he composed the following*

*poems.* If images of nature that are beautiful and new ; if sentiments warm from the heart, interesting and pathetic ; if a style chaste with ornament, and elegant with simplicity ; if these, and many other beauties of nature and art, are allowed to constitute true poetic merit, the following poems will stand high in the judgment of men of taste."

"After the author had finished his course of Philosophy at Edinburgh, he was seized with a consumption, of which he died in the twenty-first year of his age.

"During that disease, and in the immediate view of death, he wrote the elegy which concludes this collection, the latter part of which is wrought up into the most passionate strains of the true pathetic, and is not perhaps inferior to any poetry in any language. To make up a miscellany some poems wrote by different authors are inserted, all of them original, and none of them destitute of merit. The reader of taste will easily distinguish them from those of Mr Bruce, without their being particularised by any mark.

"Several of these pieces have been approved by persons of the first taste in the kingdom. And the Editor publishes them to that small circle for whom they are intended, not with solicitude and anxiety, but with the pleasurable reflection that he is furnishing out a classical entertainment to every reader of refined taste."

The reader may thus be enabled to judge the truth of the preface, *till the concluding two paragraphs are reached*. The personal influence of the young poet had so impressed Logan, after a careful perusal of his manuscripts, that he is compelled to write what *was true*. He has reached the grand climax in simple language, and it would almost seem as if he had originally intended to close his description of the poet and his writings when he refers to "the Elegy" as containing what "is wrought up into the most passionate strains of true pathetic, and is not perhaps inferior to any poetry in any language."

Alas! that the evil spirit then enters Logan, and self, subtle and far-reaching, fabricates the concluding sentences, which become the keynote to his subsequent life, with its double-dealing and diabolic conduct, on to its sad and melancholy close.

The reader is asked to refer to the emphatic statements of David Pearson (page 110), who must be admitted as a witness, and whose testimony is worthy of the fullest credit. He it was who wrote a very interesting life of Michael Bruce for Dr Robert Anderson, when engaged on his famous work, *The British Poets*, most of which is contained in *The Pious Memorials of Portmoak*, still in MSS. This was taken to Canada many years ago by the Birrell family, but returned to the writer, as evidence for the present work, by Miss M. Birrell. The statement is as follows :—

“Michael Bruce while at Gairney Bridge [in 1765] wrote many letters to his friends, particularly to Mr Arnot of Portmoak, Messrs W. Dryburgh, G. Henderson, G. Lawson, J. Logan (his fellow-students) and myself. Alas, for the excess of my veneration! I carried them about with me until they were much wasted, *besides what I lost by giving them (on loan) to Mr Logan, who never returned them, nor yet the finished copy of Bruce's poems, which he received at the same time from Mr Bruce the poet's father,*” adding, “*But if you had seen his finished book which Logan received it would have highly chagrined you, as it does me, to see an account recently published of his [Logan's] life, and some of Bruce's poems ascribed to Logan, particularly the 'Ode to the Cuckoo,' a poem which I am perfectly sure was Michael Bruce's production.*” Pearson's indignation rises with the above statement, and he further writes:—“*Logan might as well have claimed the framing of the universe as the authorship of that ode.*” Mr John Birrell also testifies what *he knew* and had learned from the poet's mother, his brother James Bruce, and others. His words regarding the “Ode to the Cuckoo” are, “I am disposed to think that any person of taste, who has read both poets, will not hesitate to ascribe it to Michael Bruce. It was *ever* reckoned his by his friends and correspondents. His brother James and David Pearson maintain it. David cannot be

more positive about anything than that *this ode* was Mr Bruce's, *having heard it long before his friend's death.*”

Here are statements plain and matter-of-fact from those who really knew, so that it is beyond the power of any modern defender of Logan's to raise objections worthy of a moment's consideration. The testimony of James Bruce has most unjustly been called in question by those who should have known better. Fortunately the writer knew a most intelligent woman who was alive in 1901, who some years before stated, “she most distinctly recollected James Bruce; that he was reckoned a real decent good kind o' man and that he died in 1814.” *The Pious Memorials*, already mentioned, give a full and particular account of him, in which he is mentioned as a man worthy of the highest character, while in the Secession Church documents in the writer's possession relating to Portmoak, the people among whom he lived, and who knew him well, did him such honour as puts to silence the uncharitable carping of modern times.

It might interest the reader to learn the circumstances which influenced Bruce to write the “Ode to the Cuckoo,” or, as the old folks were wont to term this bird, “the Gowk.” As noticed elsewhere, there was a plantation on the eastern slope of the Lomond Hill, which was locally known as “the Wood.” It is situated on the north side of the high



road, above "Killmagad" farmhouse and the parish church. In Bruce's days it consisted of a number of matured hard wood trees, where the song-birds congregated, and where the cuckoo generally made his first announcement by his well-known notes in this parish. The young folks were wont to watch for this. Bruce had to pass this plantation on his way to the scene of his work while herding, and would naturally hear these welcome notes. Besides, this hill-path led from the farmhouse of Fail, etc., along which boys on their way to Mr Dun's school in Kinnesswood, coming in the opposite direction, or passing near where Bruce was, would hear and see these boys imitating the cuckoo, and wandering in the woods, etc. Thus these facts are incorporated in the ode. This pathway is also described in others of Bruce's pieces, where he depicts the lovely wild flowers still seen growing there in summer time, nourished by the trickling waters from the hill. This particular locality was a favourite one of the poet from his youngest years.

Those lines in the first stanza of this ode—

" Now heav'n repairs thy rural seat  
And woods thy welcome, *sing,*"

clearly refer to the renewed foliage and shelter so amply provided there, and that for the melody of the songsters the woods gave them welcome. Can the same facts be cited in Logan's favour as regards



"THE WOOD."

To which so many references are made in Bruce's writings.



Haddingtonshire? Further, in Bruce's pocket copy of Milton's *Paradise Regained*, fifth edition, “With poems on several occasions,” 1713, there is notice of “The Cuckoo,” in one of the sonnets which might also assist in suggesting his writing the ode.

Dr Reynolds, in his article on Michael Bruce which appeared in the *British Quarterly Review* for 1875, states, “The ‘Ode to the Cuckoo’ we feel is just such as should have been written by such a poet. There is a simplicity and purity about it, a note breaking on the ear so artless and bird-like sweet, that it seems a final utterance, a sweet carol floated ere the death, rather than a prelude to more promiscuous efforts.” The lines in the sixth stanza show that he seemed to have some foreboding of his own delicate health, and in contrast to this bird, always amongst branches green and a clear sky, he adds these words:—

“Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,  
No winter in thy year.”

Coming now to the evidence of Dr Davidson of Kinross, who, practising as a physician in Kinnesswood, while attending Mr Henderson, the worthy Laird of Turfhill, also some of his relatives and his many friends in Kinross, heard much about the young poet. After Bruce's death, when many in the district were talking about him, the doctor, when at Kinnesswood,

inquired about him and desired to see some of his poems. Mr Birrell, at whose house he was attending, knowing that a well-to-do native of the town possessed a copy of Bruce's "Ode to the Cuckoo," took the doctor to call upon Mr David Bickerton. If any doubt had existed as to whether this was a genuine MS. of the poet, no one was a better judge of such than Mr Birrell, for he was in possession of several of Bruce's writings given to him by the poet's father. Thus we may readily accept the statement as correct, for so clear was the impression of what he had seen and has testified as correct that the doctor states, "There were some lines written below the poem, viz., 'You will think I might have been better employed than writing about a gowk.'" This addition is so like Bruce, as in the original MS. of his poem "Daphnis," written at Gairney Bridge and sent to Mr Arnot of Portmoak, now in the writer's possession, he has added some lines at the foot of the page about his friend Mr G. Henderson. From what can be learned of Mr David Bickerton, there was no man more likely to possess a MS. of Bruce, as it is not unlikely that he also assisted along with Messrs Arnot, White and Birrell in sending the poet to the College, though very little was said about this. At all events he was a lover of poetry and song. His name is on the lists of subscribers for the poems published by Alexander Douglas of

Strathmiglo, in 1806, while he also appears on the list for the edition of Bruce's poems published by Principal Baird in 1796. In his later years he was wont to get some of the young folks in the village to come to him and sing a Scottish song to him, when the big tears would be seen rolling down his face. It is quite beside the case whether or not he was as thoroughly orthodox as to come up to the standard of some of the good folks of that day. The facts remain, he was a lover of poetry and he possessed a MS. copy of Bruce's "Ode to the Cuckoo." It is because so much depends upon a clear issue being established as to the authorship of this ode that round this the contention has hitherto been waged, for this poem has repeatedly been pronounced by competent judges "as certainly one of the finest in the English language," in which vividness of scene and touching pathos are fused in a perfect way, so that it is well worth some labour to try and definitely settle the question of its authorship.

It is however necessary to refer to Mr John Birrell again as the custodian of much valuable evidence on this subject, gathered at first hand from his long intercourse with the Bruce family and others who were in a position to know the record of his visits to Edinburgh. His interviews with the Rev. Principal Baird and Dr R. Anderson previous to the issue of their respective publications concerning Michael Bruce cannot be overlooked. The Rev.

Dr Mackelvie gives the following particulars:—  
 “In consequence of this reference, a correspondence commenced between these gentlemen and Mr Birrell and also David Pearson relating to Michael Bruce. A copy of Dr R. Anderson’s letter is subjoined:—

“HERIOT GREEN, EDINBURGH, 24th Dec. 1795.

“Mr D. Pearson.

“SIR,—I duly received the favour of yours, written so long ago that I am ashamed to think how long it is. Be assured that it was not for want of respect that I delayed. Many thanks for it. I have since seen your account of Bruce, which, so far as it goes, is pleasing and interesting. In my narration I took Dr Baird’s authority in ascribing the ‘Ode to the Cuckoo’ to Logan, who had indeed himself claimed it, *and till I saw Mr Birrell* I had no doubt of his being the indisputable author. In my life of Logan, which Mr Birrell will show you, I fairly stated your claim for Bruce.”

Dr Mackelvie also points out that *the year after* Dr Baird had given Dr R. Anderson his authority for assigning this ode to Logan, he published in 1796 the third edition of Bruce’s poems in the original Bruce version, and not in Logan’s as in 1781, as noticed. This is further explained in a letter by Mr John Hervey, merchant, Stirling, to Mr J. Birrell, wherein he states that Dr Baird, whom he had lately seen when in Edinburgh, had found the “Ode to the Cuckoo” to be Bruce’s, and not Logan’s, and that he has the original in Bruce’s handwriting. Efforts have been made to trace this



MS. of the “Ode to the Cuckoo” and what had become of the papers, as well as other MSS. of Bruce he had collected regarding the volume of Bruce’s he had published. Professor Bayley Balfour of the Edinburgh University, who knew about them through his relation to Rev. Dr Baird, informed the writer, that after the doctor’s death a near relative of his had secured his large collection of MSS. relating to this subject with many others, and having a great dislike to any private letters falling into other hands had destroyed the whole before those documents connected with this interesting subject had been withdrawn from the bundle. Their destruction, therefore, puts an end to any hope of these being now produced. However, as the case stands, there is evidence that Dr Baird had secured a MS. copy of the “Ode to the Cuckoo” in Bruce’s writing. It is highly probable that the copy mentioned had something to do with those rough copies of letters lately discovered, which had passed into the possession of the late Rev. Professor Smeaton as part of a large collection of material which had been gathered by another for the purpose of publishing a life of Professor Adam Ferguson. About the time Professor Smeaton got these given him, Dr John Small issued a volume of Professor A. Ferguson’s life, so that no further action was taken. As Bruce had attended the professor’s lectures on Moral Philosophy, and at a time when students were fewer than now,

it was likely he would take a special interest in Bruce, and if not from himself, from some of his class-fellows, learn of his poetry, and secure a copy of the "Ode to the Cuckoo" to which reference is made in the subsequent letters, or such portions of them as bear upon the case.

## No. 1

"EDINBURGH, 9th November 1765.

"DEAR SIR,—I am favoured with yours. The facts named are very sad. Poor young man. The 'Ode to the Gowk' is an admirable piece of work for so young a man. I will see the Principal about the other.—I am, dear sir, your most obedient servant,

HUGH BLAIR.

"P.S.—I received the 'Ode to the Gowk' in a separate packet quite safely."

This letter is addressed on the back to Professor Ferguson, the College, Edinburgh.

## No. 2

"EDINBURGH, 16th June 1766.

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter I read to our friend the Principal [Dr Robertson], who said that the point you named had never been suggested to him before. The young man, Michael Bruce, of whom you speak, is a youth of great talent and undoubted piety. Your speedy return will please us all, but none more so than your faithful servant,

"ADAM FERGUSON.

"Mr W. Martin, Dalkeith.

## No. 3

"EDINBURGH, 5th September 1766.

"DEAR SIR,—I have received your note about Mr Michael Bruce. I will see you to-morrow with regard to

some steps about assisting him to get his poems published. From what you say he seems a very deserving youth.—I am, sir, your respectful and humble servant,

“JOHN ARNOT.

“Professor Adam Ferguson, College, Edinburgh.”

No. 4

“COVENANT CLOSE, 12th December 1766.\*

“DEAR SIR,—I am sorry I was not at home when you came to see me last night, our club meeting took me out, but if agreeable to you I will call on Friday night. Please tell the caddie that takes this if you will be at home. I am interested in the young poet who wrote ‘The Gowk.’ It is a fine piece, and he will doubtless do better still. I would gladly help him since you say he needs it.—I am, your most obedient servant,

JOHN ANDERSON.

“Professor Ferguson, The College.”

It should be kept in mind that during Bruce's lifetime no question of authorship was raised. Yet to have his works published was the one desire of his friends, as already noticed. Even Logan's volume of 1781, repeated a year or two afterwards in second and third editions, did not evoke any complaint save amongst Bruce's immediate friends. True, D. Pearson and J. Birrell and others spoke freely among themselves against it, yet the great outer world of literature did not enter its

\* The almanac for 1766 shows that the 12th December was a Friday, so either the writer or transcriber has mistaken the day of the month, or the Friday represents a week later. Almanacs then were rare; the number of the day of the month was given, but not the day, so that it was an easy thing to make a mistake of the number and the day it applied to.

protest. It was not till Rev. Dr Mackelvie published his *Life of Michael Bruce* that a stir was made. Consequently nothing had occurred to call for such letters as given above, with their early dates. The desire for publication seems to have been but a part of that which was expressed by professors and students alike. As for the purpose aimed at, the death of the poet put an end to its further consideration. When these letters were first discovered, the question arose—Are these original letters? Very little examination proved they were not. Accordingly, Professor Smeaton noted this. Then, when they were lately come upon, and search made, this note was also found, and again it was easily seen the letters could not possibly be originals. At the same time very little reflection showed that where they were and what they were amongst did not make original letters in the very least necessary. It was the facts only that were of use, hence a rough copy had been sought and got as quite sufficient for the purpose in hand. Doubtless the owner of the originals would be disinclined to give them up, more particularly when the copies answered all the purpose desired.

It is rather remarkable that at the time these letters were last under consideration, the writer met an old lady named Arnot, and in course of conversation she said her family originally came from Portmoak parish and settled in Edinburgh many years ago. Her father had told her that it was her

grandfather, who was a native of that quarter, who was a teacher or tutor assisting students at the College, and lived in the High Street. The old lady was not very well at the time, and when the letter signed "John Arnot" was read, an effort was made to discover further information from her, but she had been living in lodgings, and the party with whom she lived had removed and could not be found. She, however, was the last of the family. As Professor Ferguson had applied to this Mr Arnot on Bruce's behalf, it is very likely he had some good reason for this, more particularly if he was a native of Portmoak.

We come now to deal with the evidence brought forward on behalf of Logan through Rev. Dr Robertson of Dalmeny. He had, while a student, known Bruce and been on friendly terms with him then. As a member of the Presbytery of Edinburgh he had befriended Logan when in deep water and trouble at Leith. His statement is that Bruce had shown him his poetry in these early days; that Logan had also come to him, and they had gone over all the MSS. (which had been got at Kinnesswood), "and selected those which are published, the rest we judged were not in a state to be seen by the public, and I believe they were all destroyed." The answer to this is, Bruce and Robertson parted at the close of the session in 1765, before the former had gone to Gairney Bridge or Forest Mill, where so many of his

best and later pieces were written. It may be observed here that Dr Robertson makes no mention of having had submitted to him "Bruce's finished book," of which Pearson mentions with so much feeling, so that it must have only been certain scraps which Logan put before him; therefore his remarks are not to be wondered at. Yet of the destruction even of these he could not be aware. Logan had received them on loan.

Now what is it we have to rely on in order to sustain Dr Robertson's evidence on behalf of Logan? Absolutely nothing but Logan's word—and the worth of that will be found before very long. Dr Robertson was the writer of a letter to Rev. Principal Baird, dated 22nd February 1791, in which he states, that in regard to the authorship of certain pieces he knew nothing but what Logan had told him. When Logan was pressed to tell who those gentlemen were to whom he refers in the preface to the volume of Bruce's poems he edited and published in 1770, the whole length he would go was to say, that "it was *another gentleman and himself.*" Yet as long as he lived he would not give the name of this party. Strange it was that Sir James Foulis of Colinton died on 3rd January 1791; then Dr Robertson writes to say that this gentleman was the author of the "Vernal Ode." Unfortunately for twenty-one years since the publication of this poem in 1770, Sir James had lived and died in



complete ignorance of his own posthumously credited poetic powers, while little observation is required to show that from the great similarity of this to the “Ode to the Cuckoo” that they may be reckoned as the work of the same author, save that “a swallow” replaces the “Cuckoo” in the “Vernal Ode.” We must always keep the facts before us that Logan did not dare to claim the “Cuckoo” till *eleven years* had passed after its first publication, and what was his condition? Glad to escape from Leith, from the clamour of outraged women, he proceeds to London to be out of the way, and being in difficulties for money, he thinks of the publication of a volume of poems to pay the expenses of what he terms “the jaunt.” By this time he was reckless of consequences, and his letters will show enough to explain the remainder. Logan had more of Bruce’s poems, which had till this time, 1781, been withheld, and here was his chance. The volume may be claimed almost entirely as Bruce’s; at all events, dealing in the first place with the first fourteen entire pieces, meanwhile leaving out the hymns. The first is “The Ode to the Cuckoo,” which has been fully considered, the second is “The Braes of Yarrow.” The first half of the last stanza not claimed for Bruce stands:—

“The tear shall never leave my cheek,  
 No other youth shall be my marrow;  
 I’ll seek thy body in the stream,  
 And then with thee I’ll sleep in Yarrow.”



The lines which Logan claims are :—

“The tear did never leave her cheek,  
No other youth became her marrow,  
She found his body in the stream,  
And now with him she sleeps in Yarrow.”

The remainder of the fourteen pieces are treated elsewhere.

The publication by Logan of this volume of poems *as his own* in 1781 without any preface, marks the clear lines which precede his fall. No justification can be found for conduct so dishonest, and after a careful weighing of the evidence, we are forced to the conclusion, that so far as can be discovered there is really nothing to uphold a claim for Logan of poetry of *any description* until he had visited Kinnesswood in 1767 and got the MSS. book of Michael Bruce. The ballad “Sir James the Ross,” Dr Robertson states, may have been the joint composition of Bruce and Logan. Fortunately we *do* know absolutely that this was composed by Bruce *alone* and sent to David Pearson from Forest Mill. Logan must have missed the letter Bruce sent to Pearson along with the first copy of this ballad, or he would have been more careful; but a thief generally leaves some clue by which he may be traced. It first appeared in the volume of Bruce’s poems in 1770 and issued in the month of May. Then in September of this year a letter is

sent to the Editor of the *Edinburgh Weekly Magazine* along with a MS. copy of the ballad, as follows (*see* Vol. IX, 20th September) :—

“SIR,—Some days ago I met with an old Scottish ballad, of which the following is a copy, which I daresay you will be willing to preserve from oblivion by giving it a place in your entertaining amusements. There are few of your readers, I am persuaded, but will be pleased to see at once such a specimen of Ancient Scottish Poetry and Valour.” Who the writer of this letter was we may conjecture; no mention is made. Yet only four months previously it was published as the writing of Michael Bruce. The particulars of Bruce’s letter to Pearson deserve the most careful reading (*see* Bruce’s letter).

That Bruce could write ballad poetry is beyond all question, but no evidence can be found of Logan ever having done so.

The most remarkable portion of this distressingly sad drama will be found in Dr ~~David~~ Grant’s letter to Rev. Dr Robertson of Dalmeny (*see* page 181) with particulars of Logan’s death, absolutely without a ray of cheering hope as to his condition previously. Notice is however taken of his will, and of the £50 left to him, with instructions to inform Rev. Dr Carlyle about Logan’s two illegitimate children living at Leith, etc. The large sums bequeathed in this settlement unfortunately

*n. donald*

had no counterpart in actual existence, so that there was little provision for the children, and none for their mothers, far less for his clerical friends and others.

But Logan's trustees were equal to the occasion. There was a quantity of MSS. left, and something might be made of these. Accordingly, after consultation, they resolved to publish his sermons, prefixing a preface or introduction, said to have been written by Dr Robertson in the first instance. Of course no notice was then taken that the sermons had been largely supplemented by Logan from other men's productions, while his drunken and immoral life was not once alluded to. In some of these writings his old parishioners were blamed for their want of charity towards one who was so worthy of such at their hands. If Logan's *real character* has at last come to the light, the two Doctors of Divinity have brought this about. His latest champion's—Rev. Dr R. Small—former admissions regarding him would have been accepted as sufficient had he not been bold enough to stake his case “on Logan's *moral character*, rather than upon his poetic reputation.” His former remarks were, “It is a good many years since I attempted to make out, partly from internal evidence, that Bruce had some share in the composition of the Paraphrase, ‘Few are thy days and full of woe,’ etc. He knows enough of John Logan to believe that if he found among his friend's papers *any fragments that might serve his*

*purpose he would* not be scrupulous about using them." We have also D. Pearson's testimony assigned elsewhere as a reason for believing that Bruce wrote a hymn on the Millennium, out of which the stanza beginning, "The beam that shines on Zion Hill" is copied into the revised Paraphrase, as it now stands. This is an honest admission. After that, most people would be inclined to suppose there was not much left whereon to build "a moral character," as this is generally understood to be. Isaac Disraeli is credited with the remark, "that Logan's genius became a prey to that melancholy which constituted so large a portion of it." It is to be feared, that had he known Logan's real character he would have attributed his condition to the conscious remorse for his own evil conduct. For, had he followed the example of Bruce in all that was lovely and of good report, and "been true unto himself and God," his life, even to its close, would have been pure and noble, with a higher moral principle to distinguish him, than was ever the case even in his best days. Had we nothing else to go on than Logan's own letters, there is enough in them to prove how unlike, yea, how unworthy, his life is to be even compared with that of Michael Bruce.

It must not be overlooked that the Society, which was formed in Kinnesswood in 1763 at the instance of Bruce, being composed of the young men there, and to whom those various *noms de plume* were

assigned, by which we can recognise them in the poet's writings, was quite unknown to Logan. Yet in these we are able to discover evidence for Bruce of the most conclusive kind. Add to this the words in which Logan has blundered when transcribing such of Bruce's poems as he claimed for himself; as for example when the adjective "hollowed" is changed to "hallowed," rendering the word quite meaningless.

## CHAPTER X

### LIFE OF REV. JOHN LOGAN

Logan's parentage—Birth—Early training—Enters Edinburgh University—Associates—Michael Bruce—His death—Logan's visit to Kinnesswood—David Pearson's statement—Logan gets Bruce's MSS.—Bruce's poems published—Disappointment—Alexander Bruce's visit to Logan—Logan elected minister at Leith—Candidate for professorship—His visit to London—Publishes a volume in 1781—Returns to Leith—A son born to him by his servant—Disturbance in his congregation—Retires to London—His death in 1788—His will—Publication of his sermons.

AFTER full consideration regarding Michael Bruce, it is necessary that the whole circumstances connected with Mr John Logan should also be submitted. Hitherto, all that has been publicly known regarding him has been gleaned from statements prefixed to those sermons and poems already noticed as issued under his name. In the light of what has recently transpired, these notices must have been written by friends, intending to take a charitable view of his case, and not by way of submitting a challenge for *fuller consideration*.

As the case now stands, there has been demanded a full inquiry. This is what is here submitted in order that justice may be done to all parties concerned. Recent discoveries must naturally affect the opinion hitherto entertained regarding Logan.



We are informed that he was the son of George Logan, a small farmer in East Lothian, in the parish of Fala. His mother's name was Janet Watherstone. He is said to have been born in the year 1748, while his parents were members of the Secession congregation, presided over by the Rev. John Brown, Haddington. Their son John was intended by them for a position in the Secession Church. After leaving the parish school, he entered the University of Edinburgh, and became a class-fellow with Michael Bruce and other Secession students there. They naturally drew together, and linked by a common bond of sympathy met from time to time for mutual improvement. Thus their respective qualifications were made known to each other. Bruce was called on to produce his poetic writings at such gatherings. The evidence of David Pearson is clear upon this point. In course of time Logan became less attached to his Secession friends, and ultimately left them, yet he continued to hold intercourse with some, as occasion offered, and Bruce was one of these. The inherent lovable qualities of Bruce would easily account for this. Doubtless the change made by Logan in the formation of other intimate friendships gave him a greater license. It was not considered by his former intimates that this change was for the better. The session at the University for 1765-66 was closed, and Bruce left Edinburgh, parting with most of these friends for the last time. A few of



these visited him afterwards at his father's home in Kinnesswood during his fatal illness. When his death happened, the sad news spread rapidly, and Logan becoming aware of it, learned also that he had been intending to publish his poems, and had his manuscripts in a forward state for this purpose, a circumstance well known to John Dun, his old teacher's son, also a native of Kinnesswood, while Messrs George Lawson and George Henderson, were also aware of it. As already stated, Bruce died on the 6th July 1767, and soon after David Pearson reports that Logan paid a visit to Kinnesswood (the only one he was known to make). The exact date of Logan's visit is not recorded, but it was about the end of August or early in September following Bruce's death in 1767. Finding his way to the house of one so well-known as Alexander Bruce, he introduced himself as the student who was their gifted son's intimate friend, of course desiring to do all he could to assist them in publishing the excellent poems that Michael had written and which he had wished to have published. Alexander Bruce was much pleased at an offer of so much kindness. It was the desire of his heart to see his son's poems in print, while the hint of publication being sure to bring them a sum of money to ease their poverty—a condition brought about by continued bad trade—made such a prospect highly desirable. Such a favourable-looking train of circumstances overcame

the father's reluctance to part with his son's "poem book." He did so only on loan, however, and it was to be carefully looked after and faithfully returned in due time. The recent recovery of an original MSS. copy of the Secession congregation records of what is now the West U.F. congregation in Kinross exhibits evidence of the straitened circumstances of Alexander Bruce at that time, and the assistance given him for his son's sake from the Church funds. It is very pleasing to learn of the practical Christian sympathy thus shown, though he was not a member of that congregation.

On the occasion of Logan's visit he also learned about David Pearson, and visiting him on his way back to Kinross obtained from him a number of Bruce's poems and letters which Pearson valued highly, but which Logan retained and did not return as promised. Of the material thus secured he was able to set up as a ready-made poet, for it is very remarkable that no evidence has ever been offered to reveal his poetic powers previous to his securing Bruce's MSS. In these he had a large collection, yet when he published the small volume three years afterwards he only included *a few*, and stated that "to make up a miscellany some poems wrote by different authors are inserted, all of them original, and none of them destitute of merit. The reader of taste will easily distinguish them from those of

Mr Bruce without their being particularised by any mark." One thing is very evident, and that is, no honest man would have resorted to such a base subterfuge to preserve anonymity, for it meant a mean betrayal of his dead friend.

When this volume was published early in May of 1770 great disappointment was felt among Bruce's intimate friends, who knew enough of what Logan had got away with him to take such a statement at its true estimate, and caused a suspicion that there must be a future purpose involved by such a plan. It then became a fixed purpose in the mind of the poet's father to obtain the original MSS. lent to Logan. For this end letter after letter was forwarded to Leith, informing the latter of the demand, but no notice whatever was taken of them. At length a visit to Leith was undertaken, beset with great personal difficulties. He found Logan—but such a different man he was from the person who had come to his cottage, and by a smooth persuasive tongue got him to part with his son's valued writings. Logan's set purpose of dishonest possession was not to be frustrated; he had an ulterior purpose yet to effect, and by trumped-up stories, as void of truth as well could be, Alexander Bruce was denied the desire of his heart, and only a few odd sheets of his dear son's writings were given up. It was with a sore heart and bitter disappointment that the old man retraced his steps homewards.

The trial was great, but he did not murmur, and bore it like a Christian hero. The darkly-shadowed life of Logan moved on to its sad culmination. The year 1771 saw him a candidate for Church honours. His friends at Leith were bent on securing for him the vacancy in South Leith Parish Church. The patronage being in the hands of the Kirk-Session and the Incorporated Trades, considerable opposition was raised against this proposal, so that Logan was not ordained till 1773. Feeling had run so high against his settlement, that a small book was written and published, which is noticed elsewhere. Logan's letters show something of his manner of life in Leith between the period of his settlement and the time when he was obliged to quit it for ever. He seems to have been on good terms with the leading men of his presbytery, and was elected a member of a committee in charge of a hymn book then in process of being issued for the Church of Scotland. In this there appeared a number of those hymns he had an interest in, and which were considered suitable for public worship. From what his biographer states, he had in course of time fallen into habits not at all in harmony with the sacred office to which he had been ordained.

During the later years he spent in Leith he was far from being a happy man. He aimed at the Chair of History in Edinburgh University, but it was bestowed upon another. This greatly disap-

pointed him, and he refers to this and certain parties on whose support he was depending in letter No. 2. A notice of a course of lectures Logan delivered in "Mary's Chapel" will be found later. Then he paid a visit to London in 1781. Here again we find the particulars of his doings there in his own words (*see* letters); and here also we have the first intimation of his intended publication of a volume of poems. By this he expected to clear the expenses of his visit. After some delay with the publishers the volume appeared. This it was that gave the friends of Bruce such a surprise, with the "Ode to the Cuckoo" placed in the front of this volume. This and the remainder of the contents have been dealt with on pages 108-114. After this Logan returns to Leith, but he was now upon the horns of a dilemma—a child having been born to him by his servant-maid, Catherine Rogers (*see* Dr Grant's letter), and this must be kept secret; while to free the mother of the care of this child, and hinder observation, it was supposed to have been placed in the West Kirk Poorhouse, or at least Logan was given to understand this had been done. The secret appears to have been well kept, as no one *openly* preferred a charge against him. For all that, his position in Leith was getting intolerable alike to the members of his congregation and himself, and to make things worse a second child was born to him by another woman. Then it is stated by Dr W.

Chambers that, having become quite reckless, he appeared in a drunken condition in the pulpit, from which he had to be removed. His resignation followed, and to get quit of him quietly the congregation agreed to pay him £40 a year for life. His friends in the presbytery made no charge against him. Dr Carlyle of Inveresk, his co-presbyter, continued on good terms with him, as his letters testify. He reports what he is doing in London—his visits to the theatre, etc., and in time becomes anxious to get a post in the Church of England. His language used in defining earnest Christian people amongst whom he had been brought up at Haddington, is certainly very unlike what might be expected from one who was supposed to be a Christian minister. Strangely enough, despite all his delinquencies, his clerical friends, well knowing his real character, persist in palming him on the public in glowing terms, as we find in the following quotation:—“In 1783 he produced the *Tragedy of Runnamede*. From this and other causes disappointment followed, producing irregularities in conduct rather incongruous with the sacredness of the ministerial character. His parishioners (who it seems) could not distinguish between transient deviations from the path of rectitude and determined wickedness were highly enraged, and persecuted with relentless fury the man who had laboured with assiduity for their good.



Logan, foreseeing the storm that was gathering around him, perceived that it would be inexpedient for him to remain longer amongst a people who so ill requited his labour, and with a moderation which does him honour agreed to withdraw from his office. After this he went to London and was engaged in writing for the *English Review*. His health now began to decline, and his literary career and multiplied sorrows were determined by his death on the 28th December 1788." By his will he bequeathed the sum of six hundred pounds sterling in small legacies to his friends, and appointed the Rev. Dr Robertson of Dalmeny and Rev. Dr D. Grant, London, his executors, to whom he entrusted his manuscripts. Accordingly, in 1790, a volume of his sermons was published under the inspection of his friends, Rev. Drs Robertson, Blair and Hardy."

Such is the story of Logan's life as given to the world by his clerical friends, and be it noted, after the letter by Dr D. Grant was sent to Rev. Dr Carlyle of Inveresk, asking to intimate to Rev. Dr Robertson about the two children.

Dr David Laing, a great defender of Logan, states:—"It is indeed matter of regret that Dr Robertson did not publish a complete edition of the works of Logan, which we are informed by Dr R. Anderson he had meditated some time before his death. It would no doubt have been accompanied by a life of this unfortunate author." Such a remark from Dr D. Laing



is surprising, seeing he had possession of these very letters of Logan and Dr D. Grant, and must have known what kind of man Logan was. To expect Dr Robertson to write a life of him, would mean that, if a true account of him, it would be infamous, and if otherwise it would have been unworthy of himself. Dr Robertson knew better than to do such a thing. This calls to mind the fact that in reply to a notice written by Professor Sharp upon the life of Michael Bruce, Dr D. Laing wrote a small book in defence of Logan, a kind of special pleading in its way. For this purpose he took Dr Grant's letter, dated 4th December 1788, but only gives the first line and the last three, as marked, leaving out the great bulk of it, as if he expected that it would not improve the general idea of Logan's character or support the purpose he was aiming at.

The first written statement published to further the sale of Logan's sermons was as follows :—"That his end was truly Christian. When too weak to hold a book he employed his time in hearing such young persons as visited him to read the Scriptures. His conversation turned chiefly on serious subjects, and was most affecting and instructive. He saw and prepared for the approach of death, and gave directions about his funeral with the utmost composure." It is much to be desired that all this was so, only it would have been strengthened had it formed part of Rev. Dr D. Grant's letter, which was so *near* the

time of his death, while the published statement was a considerable time afterwards, and strange that this affecting incident is not repeated. Doubtless, Logan in his youth had been well grounded in the doctrines of the Christian religion by his parents and his minister, Professor John Brown of Haddington, so that whatever may be said regarding his life, let us hope that at its close his joyful experience was "Salvation sought, salvation found," and that his end was peace.

A reference to the hymns and sermons published under the impression that these were Logan's entire compositions remains to be noticed.

Hymns, or as Alexander Bruce called them, "my son's sonnets," were written by Michael Bruce, as has been shown, and formed part of the writings in his finished poem-book. These were lost to sight from the day that Logan carried them out of Kinnesswood in 1767 till the publication of the volume by Logan in London, 1781. The volume published in 1770 under the name of Michael Bruce, edited by John Logan, had no hymns in it; but whenever the volume of Logan's was seen, David Pearson, James Bruce and the poet's mother recollected them in whole or part, all as fully explained at pages 108-114.

Coming now to the sermons, the will of Logan and his MSS. must be treated conjointly. The will is an important factor in his history. One of his biographers records that he bequeathed £600 to his

friends, while the man who was his acting executor, Dr D. Grant, states that all he *left* was £200. But then there was his MSS. sermons, and as several of his ministerial friends had been duly remembered by legacies, and though there was an entire absence of funds to honour these, he showed his good intentions towards them. But this did not quite answer the purpose, so the sermons were duly furbished up, an elegant preface written and prefixed to them, and by their combined influence they were boomed. So successfully was this accomplished that the £200 was in due time reported as having reached the increased proportions of £750. Now the hopes of the fortunate friends were realised after a fair proportion of this money had been set aside for Logan's two illegitimate children; the remainder was utilised to provide for the others, as found on page 144.

In order to give the readers some further notion of how Logan's fame was sought to be bolstered up, the following extract speaks for itself:—

“It has often been regretted that the fame of those who have illuminated the orb of Science or shed lustre on the walks of Literature has been so circumscribed, and that the history of their lives has been known only to their friends, who cherish their memory with enthusiastic fondness, or to those in whom admiration of their works has excited the desire of being introduced to a more intimate acquaintance with their character. To none is this remark more

applicable than to the man who is the subject of these notices."

Who it was that wrote the above on Logan's behalf is now uncertain, though tradition has assigned it to one of his clerical legatees. At all events what follows might be taken as an indication that he was fully aware of the whole truth, for it was all written and published *after* the knowledge about Logan was an open secret amongst all those concerned in his will. From what is here stated the reader will be enabled to form an idea of the difference between the *facts* and the *fiction*. The writer of the above concludes:—"As a man he [Logan] was not free from failings, but charity will wipe away the stains which truth often obliges the biographer to record."

Well would it have been for Logan's memory had his modern clerical friends kept free from fits of fevered exaggeration which took the form of an endeavour to present him to the present generation in a character he never possessed. The man who dared to pass for a Christian minister and leaves a letter behind him in which he styles "Our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ" as one who was what Logan has clearly been proved to be himself, brands him as infamous. Little indeed there is to be found in his letters that will compare with what is true and honourable and of good report as in those of Michael Bruce. It is most remarkable that these very letters written by John Logan were long

in the possession of Rev. Dr Carlyle of Inveresk and Dr David Laing, and yet have not been destroyed, but carefully preserved, and now placed in the Library of the Edinburgh University, doubtless that, however late, the great ends of justice might be accomplished, and that the old promise should once more be fulfilled that "Those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

In regard to the sermons, we are informed by Logan's biographer "that he did not scruple to borrow occasionally from others." Besides the passages in the 4th and 11th sermon of the first part that Dr R. Anderson mentions as borrowed from Dr Seed, there is another in the sermon on "Retirement" taken *verbatim* from Dr Blair's discourse on that subject (though the doctor was said to be one of those who edited these sermons), also a beautiful passage taken from Bishop Sherlock on the sufferings of Christ. These have also been fully admitted by Logan's modern clerical defenders. Much more in this line might be added, but this is enough for the present purpose.

The writer cannot pass from a notice of Logan's sermons without making the following remarks. A careful study of them leads to the conclusion that as these are presented they have been much improved by Rev. Dr Robertson, who supervised the MSS. of Logan, for they are well worthy of the serious

attention of readers at the present time, and it might be added they are very much better in their forcible application of practical Christianity than what is too common in the present day. The selection of texts is admirable, such as Ps. xxiv. 4—"One thing I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after"; Rom. xii. 11.—"Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord"; Eccles. xii. 1—"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth"; Col. iv. 5—"Redeeming the time"; Ps. iv. 4—"Stand in awe"; 1 Cor. xv. 55-57—"O death, where is thy sting"; Prov. x. 18—"The path of the just," etc.; 2 Cor. vi. 2—"Behold now is the accepted time"; Isa. lvii. 21—"There is no peace, saith the Lord to the wicked"; Exod. xxiii. 2—"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"; Gal. vi. 14—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." As a specimen of what some of the sermons contain—

"We are to glory in the Cross of Christ by frequent meditating upon the circumstances of His death and passion, by giving His death that rank in our estimation and that place in our affections which its importance requires. Our virtues are insufficient to procure our acceptance with God, or to merit a title to happiness in the life to come. The Christian Church hath in all ages set apart certain times to keep in remembrance this most important



event, the death and passion of our Redeemer. Do you read of a Rock which, being smitten, furnished waters to a great people? That rock was a figure of Christ, from whom proceed fountains of living waters, springing up into everlasting life. Do you read of a Brazen Serpent lifted up in the wilderness which cured the bitten Israelites? It was a type of the Son of Man who was lifted upon the Cross for the salvation of the world." And though his biographer states that "Logan had a happy talent of borrowing," never were plain and interesting truths sent home to the heart with greater persuasion and elegance.



## CHAPTER XI

### REV. JOHN LOGAN'S LETTERS

Logan's letters to Rev. Dr Carlyle of Inveresk and others—Letters by Rev. Dr Donald Grant, etc.

LOGAN had been settled as one of the ministers of South Leith Parish Church. The comedy written before his ordination had been forgotten, and the only known writings of this minister to be had in evidence of him are *his own letters*, a few of which remain. The earliest is marked No. 1 of the set, dated from Leith, 15th April 1779, all addressed to Rev. Dr Carlyle, minister of Inveresk. The following copies of these are given so far as they illustrate the man (the originals are in the Library of the Edinburgh University):—

#### No. 1

“SIR,—I expect to have the pleasure of your company and Mrs Carlyle at dinner on Wednesday, when the Fencibles are to be reviewed. I have selected a lamb, bred on the same ground where the Fencibles exercise, which I intend as a ‘burnt-offering’ on the occasion. Scotland, Main, Lothian and I dined with Grieve yesterday. Just as the roast beef was about to make its appearance we

were alarmed by a cry of fire. In a moment the whole court was filled with smoke and we could not see one another, although we heard the lamentations and retaliation of the women very distinctly. I have seldom seen a prettier fire. The flame burst out like a pyramid in the midst of the thatched houses adjoining to the manse, and blazing before the wind made one of the most charming fire pieces in the world. The fire drum was beat, the fire bell rung. H. Grieve was very active, but seemed to work out her salvation with fear and trembling, and wisely considered that in case of danger the heritors were obliged to rebuild the manse, and that the furniture might be removed. She laid hold of all her rings, pocketed a hair locket. I have always been a lover of fires, and have often thought that it is *worth one's while to be a saint in order to see the general conflagration to the greatest advantage.* We are just going to give the sacraments. The change of the moon will, I hope, produce rain.—I ever am, sir, your most obedient servant,

J. LOGAN.

“LEITH, 15th April 1779.”

No. 2

“DEAR SIR.—Have you heard of the scheme in agitation for chusing *Titler*, a companion of Willie Robertson, successor to Pringle, Professor of History. Dr Robertson's friends now confess that the opposition to me which began in the College, and

went to the Town Council, was by his contrivance, altho' I had reposed in him entire confidence. Finding, however, that the opposition of both the College and Town was not sufficient to damn me, as Drysdale very eloquently expressed it, he set this new scheme on foot. I know that you are my friend, and I beg that you will mention my affair with warmth to Horne, Dr Ferguson and Dr Smith. If I have not the aid of my friends, I must begin the world *de novo*.

"I shall, however, persist to the last.—Dear sir, I am ever your affect. humble servant,

"J. LOGAN.

"LEITH, *Jany. 25th, 1780.*"

### No. 3

"DEAR SIR,—After a very fatiguing journey I arrived at London on Saturday night last. I saw your friends on the Sunday following. It was dark when I called at Broad Street Buildings. Miss Peggie Dickson shrieked as if she had seen a ghost. She is in very good health just now, and not so fat by a third as when she was in Scotland last summer. Dr Dickson is in every respect the same as he was three years ago. Mr and Mrs Bell and family are all well. Miss Peggie is much improved, but not so pale when I saw her. You will have heard the fate of the Edinburgh election. It was owing to chance and the management of Charles Fox. All the com-

mittee were patriots except three, and Charles Fox wisely took up new ground, as answers were in readiness for the old arguments. Mr Strachan is not only obliging but partial to we countrymen. I find he will not be averse to publish the poems you have seen. I told him in this affair I would be directed by persons of sense and taste, and *that when I had them transcribed in a fair hand* (as mine is not copper-plate) I would show them to some friends. The best judges of poetry and the patrons of poets are the women. Lady Frances Scott was, I think, well pleased with some poems of mine that she saw. If you could use the freedom to desire her to show the manuscript that I shall send her to any of her acquaintances remarkable for taste, and show some patronage to a *wandering Minstrel*, you would do me a very great favour. You may write to her that I am in great habits with Dr Smith, and as she expressed a desire to see my face (owing to the misinterpretation of a line) that she may easily as well as very innocently gratify her desire. *If I can pay the expenses of my jaunt by this publication I shall be very well pleased.* I have been two or three times at the playhouse. I had the good fortune to see Mrs Yates and Mrs Crawford in the same tragedy, *The Discreet Mother*. It was indeed admirable, though Mrs Yates is fallen off and Mrs Crawford is too fat. The fashionable and favourite entertainment here is the opera. The vestures discover

more agility and grace in dancing than I have ever seen united. I dare swear Captain Donaldson felt no inclination to act a caper when he was going to be hanged. I beg you will not let any of my friends know that you have heard from me, as I shall write to them in eight or ten days.—I am, with best compliments to Mrs Carlyle, dear sir, your faithful and affect. friend,

J. LOGAN.

“LONDON, 2nd April 1781.”

No. 4

“DEAR SIR,—I received yours some days ago. I should hardly have understood your hint if it had not been for a letter from my colleague which I received at the same time. I have written him a long and full answer. I never heard of such complication of falsehoods, and if I was not blest with a very good memory, after an interval of two months I might have been puzzled how to answer a charge so new and wonderful. After all there is some mystery here which I do not understand. If I had ever received the least hint of it before I left Edinburgh, I should have informed you and my other friends.

“My poems are still with the booksellers, and I believe I shall publish them. This will require my staying longer here than I expected.

“My supplies end, I believe, with the first Sunday in June. I would be very much obliged to you if

you would talk to some of my friends to fill these vacancies. Dr Blair, Mr Main, Mr Robertson of Dalmeny, will, I believe, be very obliging upon an application from you. I dined with Dr Dickson yesterday at the feast of the sons of the clergy. Miss Dickson is in perfect health, as are Mr and Mrs Bell and family. *The Tragedy of Douglas* is to be acted to-morrow for the benefit of Mr Crawford, who performs the part of Douglas.

“I beg my compliments to Mrs Carlyle, Mr and Mrs Horne and all friends.—I am, dear sir, ever yours,

J. LOGAN.

“LONDON, 18th May 1781.”

No. 5

“DEAR SIR,—There are some situations in life so strangely embarrassing that it is almost impossible to reveal them even when it becomes necessary. *The gentleman* \* to whom you wrote lately feels himself in that state. No interest of his own would have made him discover it, even to his friends, but when he considers their agitation and distress, he thinks himself called upon to lay the situation before them. An event in private life which has recently happened to that gentleman gave occasion to the extravagant appearances which were imputed to another cause. He is not without passions and sensibility, and the event was of such a

\* This *gentleman* is Logan himself.



nature as in much cooler men has frequently disordered the mind for ever. It is needless to describe painful scenes. I can only tell you that he was driven through every point of desperation, that once and again he had seriously determined to walk out of this world, which he could have done, I assure you, with much more ease and pleasure than he writes this letter, and that if the love of letters and literary fame had not aided the principle of self-preservation, the person whom you call your friend would before this time have made his escape from all the miseries of life. It was that event which induced him to take a jaunt to London, and he had fully resolved that if he could not wear off impressions which for many days and nights had deprived him of tranquillity and repose, he would forsake his country and his friends for ever, and go an adventurer into the Church of England. That day he passed at your house he does not know how he appeared, he had been accustomed to force and counterfeit unnatural gaiety. He passed the night at Mr Home's; to want of sleep he had been long accustomed. Whenever daylight appeared he walked home. He wrote a letter to Mr Scotland (whom he had earnestly solicited the night before) desiring his assistance as he knew he was very unfit to preach. Unfortunately he was gone from Mr Home's before the servant arrived. His labours for the season were now over; he had made every prepara-



tion for his journey, he had taken farewell of his friends, as he believed for the last time, and he had nothing to do but to think of his situation, which *was a dismal one*. What followed was the consequence of that situation. Some hints of this affair he gave to you or Dr Blair before he left Edinburgh, or soon after he came here. The full particulars are known to two persons, one of whom you are acquainted with. Nothing but necessity would have made him confide these particulars to you. What use are you to make of them? I confess I do not know. To the greatest part of mankind the reality would appear much worse than what they suppose. In such a situation what answer was he to make to the letters that came here? To have confessed what they supposed would have been false and ruinous. To have told his real situation would have appeared more criminal. He cannot conceive how he could have acted otherwise than he did, for to this day he does not know with what they charge him. With regard to what they mention of his conduct prior to that affair, there is some strange misrepresentation. *In the company of clergymen he will not pretend that he is more temperate than his neighbours*. He has now explained to you with as much candour and ingenuity as possible his real situation. He confides this, however, to the bosom of friendship, and can on no account whatever permit the secrets of his life to be

subject of public talk. He would be happy if he had never any more occasion to correspond on this subject. He will only add that all his efforts to recover tranquillity have hitherto been unavailing, that those who were intimate with him formerly complain that he is strangely altered, and that he has some doubts if he will ever be his own character again. He once intended to have resided longer in this neighbourhood, but in the present state of affairs he thinks it more advisable to return, as his absenting himself would carry the appearance of acquiescing in an opinion which is unjust in itself and hurtful to him.

“LONDON, 12th June 1781.”

No. 6

“DEAR SIR,—The *New Review*, published by Mr Murray, hath never reached this place, so that it hath excited, without gratifying our curiosity. I wish it success, as to every undertaking that tends to the progress and improvement of literature. This is the season when (if you can indulge in a pun) the leaf begins to appear. Dr Ferguson’s *Roman History* hath been advertised. The pomp and glitter, the point and antithesis, and all the tawdry and meretricious ornaments which mark and disgrace some popular historians, he avoids and disdains. He writes history with the simplicity and dignity of an old Roman. The public, however,

will discover that his manly ease of writing is so different from colloquial cant of such a vulgar scribbler as Henry, as the robe of a rustic dictator is from the garb of an ordinary ploughman. Dr Blair's lectures are also to be published some time in spring. I need not tell you that I am very much interested in the fate and fame of all his works. He hath, I confess, one deplorable fault—*From inveterate and incurable habit, he is too much connected with a literary impostor*, whom you have completely stripped of his borrowed plumes, but at his time of life (the grand climacteric) in every other respect he is very deservedly a favourite of the public. Besides his literary merit, he hath borne his *faculties* so *meekly* in every situation, that he is entitled to favour as well as candour. He has never, with pedantic authority, opposed the career of other authors, but on the contrary favoured almost every literary attempt. He has never studied to push himself, immaturely, into the notice of the world, but waited the call of the public for all his productions, and now, when he retires from the Republic of Letters to the Vale of Ease, I cannot help wishing success to Fingall in the last of his fields. In any work where you are concerned, if you happen to be employed by greater objects, I shall very gladly write any short articles that you may have occasion for. With regard to him, your influence to give Dr Blair his last passport to the public will be most agreeable to the

Liberals here—and a particular favour done to me. It will be a special obligation if you will write me such a letter as I can show to him *to quiet his fears*.

“Wishing you success in all your literary undertakings, I am ever, dear sir, your faithful servant,

“J. LOGAN.

“LEITH, *March 1783.*”

Letters marked 7 and 8 contain the writer's opinions and “second-hand” statements, as he terms them, which refer to men of note and position that it cannot serve any good purpose to reproduce them. He tells that he has had a visit from “Palmer the player, who informed me that he is to open his new theatre in the city with the *Tragedy of Runnamede*. This was quite unexpected. It will make the tragedy better known, which is all that can be hoped from it.” Then there is the portion of Letter No. 8, which refers to “Priestley's four volumes, proving that our Saviour was not God Almighty”; I must leave the remainder to anyone desirous to read this for themselves in the University Library.

These letters are dated from 10 Panton Square, London, 4th March and 12th April 1786, and signed—J. Logan.

### No. 9

“DEAR SIR”—[This refers to Dr Ferguson's history, translated into French and being well re-

ceived in Paris, etc.],—"I don't see your name mentioned in the account of the last Assembly. The golden age has now arrived, 'when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb.' We had a charming duel in Hyde Park yesterday. General Stewart seems to be a very bloody-minded fellow. They are to have another tilt if Macartney recovers, but it is reported this morning, upon what authority I know not, that he is dead. Dr Dunbar, who plundered the *Essays on Civil Society*, some years ago, is publishing *Lyric Odes*. He did not begin to write poetry till he was forty, but the enthusiasm of an old clocken hen is proverbial. Burke has gained great credit by his late appearances. Pitt was silent. Many of his young friends deserted him, and the sense of the House (though they would vote an impeachment) was against Hastings.—Believe me ever, dear sir, yours faithfully,

"J. LOGAN.

"10th June."

No. 10

"DEAR SIR"—[This begins by a notice of Dr Ferguson's history, etc.],—"I fancy you will recollect a Dr Rutherford who came from Scotland about twelve years ago to be a dissenting clergyman and teacher of an academy at Uxbridge. He is publishing a *View of Ancient History*, by subscription. He is a good-natured, friendly man, and there is something

very interesting in his situation. Some years after he began the business of teaching, he was called to visit one of his former pupils who was in a fever. The boy died in his arms, and at the same time the father was arrested for the sum of £1500, and would have been carried to jail if Mr Rutherford had not become security for him, and he had the whole to pay. This was probably a London trick, but it embarrassed poor Rutherford exceedingly. Independent of this consideration, the book will not only be a good one, but the best on the subject. May I hope that you will do him the honour to be one of his subscribers, and promote a subscription for his book among your acquaintances. It is to consist of three volumes, but I only ask of you the favour to *subscribe for the first*. If you could interest the family of Buccleuch in this affair, I would look upon it as a great favour. Their name would be of much service.

“The Duke of York is drawing the attention of all here. His popularity is not surprising when we consider the character of his royal father and royal brothers. It is easy for a horse to win the plate in a race of asses. Lord George Gordon has been converted to the religion of Abraham. He lodges at the house of my taylor (a female one, for the women carry on the business of stitching). He gave a hideous and horrid yell when he was circumcised. He has been visited by the Duke of Gordon



and Lady Westmorland, etc. etc. What is Mr Hastings doing in Scotland?—Yours faithfully,

“J. LOGAN.

“LONDON, 20th Augt. 1787.”

No. 11

“DEAR SIR,—You will see from the *Gazette* that the merit of Dr Douglas is at last rewarded by his being appointed Bishop of Carlisle.

“*We English people* lay plans for our interest on every event that happens. The truth is, I had a considerable hand in elevating him to the mitre, for if you will look to the *English Review* for May last (I am not quite certain as to the month), in the account of ‘Cunningham’s History,’ you will find the following expression: ‘Dr Douglas whose merits in any former period of the English Church would have been rewarded with a mitre.’ The mitre was given four months afterwards. As I have had such very great influence in this promotion it is very natural for me to wish to reap some profit by it—that he has a prodigious patronage. Will you therefore do me the favour and the honour, after congratulating him on his dignity, *to recommend me to him for one of his livings under his gift?* You know that you may expatiate at large on such a subject, *about the benefit the Church would receive from having a man of learning and abilities among them, who could defend them against these damned heretical dogs*



*the Dissenters*, who wish to tear out the very bowels of our mother. You may mention to him how agreeable it would be to Mr Home. I have reason to know that he is disposed to serve me, but you know I can ask nothing for myself. It would be extremely agreeable to be within contact of Scotland. I have been living at Uxbridge for these six weeks, which is one of the most lovely spots in England. Another summer in this country will perfectly re-establish my health. In point of revenue I am rather improving. I draw upwards of £300 a year, but it *costs me a damned deal of trouble*, and prevents me from studies of more general and permanent importance, *which is a great loss to the world, especially to posterity*.—I am, dear sir, your faithful, humble servant,

J. LOGAN.

“P.S.—If you write to Dr Douglas, pray don't let him know that the above scheme originated from me. My letters are sent under cover to Metford, No. 47 Marlborough Street.

J. L.

“UXBRIDGE, 27th Septr. 1787.”

*Note*.—This is the last letter of the set written by Logan to Dr Carlyle, Inveresk. The italics in the above letters are added.—J. M.

What follows are from Rev. Dr Donald Grant, 19 London Street, Fitzroy Square, London, and also addressed to Dr Carlyle, Inveresk, dated 4th December 1788.

“SIR,—I am desired by Mr Logan to address you [on the subject of a natural son of his, whom he had by his maidservant, whose name, he thinks, was Catherine Rogers, in the year 1781. He thinks that you may remember the woman’s name, and wishes you would be kind enough to let Mr Robertson of Dalmeny know it, who is commissioned by him to inquire after the boy, who was entrusted to a Mr Ellison, writer in Edinburgh, and was thought to have been put in the ‘West Kirk Poorhouse,’ but upon search the name of Rogers was not to be found.]\*

“Your poor friend is in the last stage of consumption and incapable of writing, which is the reason of your having this trouble from, sir, your most obed. servant,  
D. GRANT.”

“LONDON, 6th January 1789.

“SIR,—Your poor friend is now freed from all his troubles. He died on Sunday, 28th December (last), and was decently and ginteenly buried under my directions on Friday, 2nd January. I should have given you, as his most intimate friend, earlier notice of this had not an inflammation in my hand rendered me incapable of writing. It is now so bad that I cannot enter into particulars. I can only say

\* The portions between these two marks [ ], Dr D. Laing *leaves entirely out* in his defence of Logan.

that the only money he has left is £200 at 3 per cent. Consols, that I do not yet know the extent of his debts, but fancy he does not owe much. He has left Mr Robertson of Dalmeny and me executors, and has committed his MSS. to my charge of them. He was of opinion that some money might be made, and in that expectation has given legacies to several of his friends. These contingent legacies, I daresay, his friends will give up when they shall know that he has two children who have a preferable claim upon him. He has left to you, to Dr Blair, to Mr Mackenzie, Mr Craig, advocate, and other friends, some of his books. In this respect I shall take care that his will be fulfilled. To Mr Carlyle he has left his picture. It would be obliging me much if you would desire Mr Robertson to transmit to me any money of Mr Logan's he may have in his hands, or any that he may hereafter receive from South Leith, if any is due, that our friend's debts if possible may be paid without touching the sum in the stocks, which I would wish to preserve entire for the children. Excuse this hasty sketch. I write in much pain and otherwise far from well.—I am, with regards, sir, your most obedt. servant,

D. GRANT."

"DEAR SIR,—You will before this time have heard that according to the desire expressed by Mr Logan's friends in Scotland I have transmitted to

them all his MS. sermons, etc., together with his poetical and misellaneous MSS. There now remains in my hands only his lectures on Roman History, which Mr Robertson seems to expect much from, but which, as far as I have hitherto seen, appears incomplete and very much deranged. Nor do I imagine they could be published as a history without many alterations and additions—at least such is my opinion. The books to be divided among his legatees I have sent to Leith on board the *Livingston*, James Mackie, master, directed for the Rev. Mr Robertson to the care of Dickson, and hope they will arrive safe. I would not trust the picture along with the books, fearing it might be defaced or otherwise hurt, but carried it to Mr Bells, who has promised to transmit it to you. I was in hopes I should have been able to pay all the debts of the deceased with the money in my hands without touching the stock, or whatever might arise from the sale of the MSS. But a claim of £20 from Dr Hardy, and another claim of a Mr Young, a writer in Edinburgh, have disappointed these expectations. I have taken the liberty to enclose a letter for Mr Robertson which I beg you will forward to him.—I am, with sincere respect and esteem, Rev. sir, your most obedt. servant,

“ D. GRANT.

“ 19 LONDON ST., FITZROY SQUARE,

“ 15<sup>th</sup> June 1789.”

“DEAR SIR,—My not being able to procure a ‘Frank’ has prevented my answering your favour of the 26th Feby. till this day. Had I not read your letter I had proposed consulting you about some proper person in Scotland to supply the place of the late Dr Robertson, in paying some attention to our deceased friend Mr Logan’s children, and now beg that you will point out someone who may take that charge. By Mr Logan’s will £5 a year were to be paid to his daughter till she should arrive at the age of fifteen years, then the yearly allowance to cease and she to receive at the age of twenty-one years £50. No provision was made by the will for the maintenance of the *boy*, but he is to receive on coming of age £200. As both Dr Robertson and myself were of opinion that the testator could not mean that the boy should have no support during the time he was under age, this provision of the will has not been strictly adhered to, and therefore a few pounds have been allowed for his yearly maintenance. To each of your nieces, Miss Jessie Bell and Miss Margt. Bell, Mr Logan left £100, to Dr Robertson £50, to Miss Sommerville £20, to myself £20. These legacies have therefore not been paid except Miss Sommerville’s, the executors knowing that she stood in need of it, and that she had more than merited it by her attention to Mr Logan during a long illness upon his death-bed. Upon looking at the will since writing the

above, I find that no time is specified for the boy receiving his £200, so that, as far as I know (for I am no lawyer), he may receive it at any time, and the legacies may of course be paid. But on this subject I must have proper advice. There is a provision in the will which states, that should there remain after the children are provided for as above a larger sum disposable than what is apportioned for legacies, then the legatees to share that larger sum proportionally among them, and if a lesser sum, then they are to receive a proportionally smaller sum. It remains now for me to say what funds there are to answer the purpose of the will. There are in my hands about £30, with which I shall purchase stocks for the estate of Mr Logan, if the money is not at present required for the children, and there are in three per cents. £750. This is the whole which the executors have been able to realise, and is indeed much more than I expected to have been realised.

“I have desired my friend, Mr Henry Mackenzie, to receive Mr Logan’s unpublished MSS. and the accounts of his estate from Dr Robertson’s administration.

“The boy and girl (Logan’s illegitimate children) should, I think, be made acquainted with each other. —I am, with much regard, Rev. sir, your most obedt. and humble servant,

D. GRANT.

“LONDON, 7th March 1800.”



"DEAR SIR,—Your card of 10th March was delivered to me the other day by poor Logan's son. I wish he had stayed at home," etc. [The other portions of this letter are of little importance.]

"I shall thank God I have done with a business which has given me considerable trouble, etc.—I am, sir, your obedt. servant, D. GRANT.

"19 LONDON ST., FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON,  
*6th April 1804.*"

These letters are all addressed to Rev. Dr Carlyle at Inveresk, and the perusal of them shows a dark shade upon all Logan's protestations of innocence and inability to know what his enemies in Leith hinted at. Little wonder at his restlessness and sleepless nights, his leaving Leith to be out of the midst of his misery. However much he would like to make Dr Carlyle imagine that he had confided all to him, it is left for Dr Donald Grant to intimate the existence of his illegitimate children, which must have been known to some in Leith, the dread of which seems to have almost turned his mind and compelled him to accept a settlement between the session and himself of £40 a year and to quit the place. This closing scene he depicts in sad characters, revealing him as a poor hunted being, chased by his own evil deeds. Yet note his self-assertion in letter No. 11 to Dr Carlyle about his great influence assisting so much to get Dr Douglas



elevated to the Bishopric of Carlisle, and his desire to get Dr Carlyle to bring him under the Bishop's notice, with the view of his getting one of the livings under his gift, *and the benefits this would secure to the English Church by having a man like him holding a position in that Church.* Logan's character comes out in his language, which is at times unlike a minister of the Gospel or the former companion of Michael Bruce, Dryburgh, Lawson, Greig and other dissenting students at the University, when he calls such men "*these damned heretical dogs the Dissenters.*"

## CHAPTER XII

### REV. JOHN LOGAN AND HIS INTERDICT IN 1782

Logan interdicts second edition of Bruce's poems.—Alexander Young, W.S., his agent—Case in court—Logan's statements wholly untrue—Logan withdraws—Stationers' Hall—Statement and replies.

FOLLOWING up the line of evidence upon the *moral* aspect of the case as to how Mr Logan is affected by his action, when a second edition of the works of Michael Bruce was about to be published by Mr Anderson, bookseller, Stirling, in July 1782, we must keep in view that it was in 1781 that Logan was in London and published the first edition of poems, etc., under his *own name* for the first time. Rev. Dr Mackelvie took considerable trouble to get the facts, which were furnished by Alexander Young, Esq., W.S., who had been Logan's law agent, so that he was intimately acquainted with the fullest particulars, and from this source they are placed before the reader.

After explaining the process regarding what follows, Mr Young states:—"In July 1782 I applied for an interdict at Mr Logan's instance against the publishers of Bruce's poems, and obtained what is called a *sist*, which was followed

with answers for the printers and other pleadings, then called replies and duplies. I have laid my hand on my earliest letter-book, and beg to quote two letters on the subject. The one is from me to Mr Patrick Robb, messenger at Stirling, dated 6th July 1782, in which I say to him:—‘I send you notarial copy of a Bill of Suspension and Interdict, at the Rev. John Logan’s instance, against John Robertson, printer here, and William Anderson, bookseller, Stirling, which you will immediately intimate to Mr Anderson, either himself or by leaving a copy within his house, and send me an execution to that purpose.’ The other is from me to Mr Logan, of the same date:—‘I am assured by C. Elliot and P. Anderson, booksellers, Parliament Close, that they will not sell a copy of Bruce’s poems till the interdict is removed. Any further prohibition will therefore be unnecessary; but if they do not keep their promise the remedy is easy. If Robertson does not desist, you may raise an action of damages against him, or give in a complaint to the court.’ The circumstances which led Mr Logan to apply for an interdict in this case were these: Mr, afterwards Provost, Anderson, bookseller in Stirling, had resolved upon publishing a new edition of Bruce’s poems, purposing, of course, to reprint all the pieces which had previously appeared under the name of our poet; and, with this view, employed Mr John Robertson, who had printed the

first edition of the book, to print the second. Mr Logan was apprised of the intention of the parties by Mr Robertson waiting upon him to request a copy of Bruce's poems from which to print the second edition ; but the impression was thrown off and in course of being issued to the public before Mr Logan proceeded to take steps to prevent its publication. Messrs Anderson and Robertson resolved to defend, and accordingly employed James Walker, Esq., as their agent. The whole pleadings in the case are now before us, having obtained them by ordering a search in the Register House, together with the decision of the Lord Ordinary extracted from the Minute-book of the Bill Chamber." The substance of the whole is given in the form of narrative, as the mode of stating the case with the greatest brevity.

The reasons assigned by Logan, or as lawyers say put forth for him by his agent—though Mr Young affirms he advanced only as he was instructed—are “that in 1770 he employed Mr John Robertson to print a volume of poems under the name of Michael Bruce, an early acquaintance of his *who had left his works to his charge*, with additions by *himself and another gentleman* ;\* that these poems were

\* The words in the original preface are, “Some poems wrote by different authors are inserted, all original, and none of them destitute of merit.” Now, save Logan himself, as confessed, there was only Sir James Foulis named, and he never wrote a line of verse (*see* page 140).

not intended for the public, never advertised for sale, never put into the hands of a bookseller, and never sold, but only distributed by him among his friends and acquaintances ; that the copyright of the book was his, which, by the Act of Queen Anne, he had power to retain for fourteen years, and that period was not yet expired ; \* that the book as required *was entered in 'Stationers' Hall,'* and therefore the copyright was his exclusive property ; that he was not willing to grant permission to any party to reprint the book in question ; and that therefore Messrs Robertson and Anderson should be ordered by the Court to desist from the prosecution of their design. On these grounds, a *sist* was granted by Lord Elliock 25th July 1782."

To this the respondent made answer, admitted "that the whole impression of the first edition consisted only of 250 copies, and the expense of printing amounted only to nine pounds ; but it was contended, 2s. 6d. or 3s., the price charged, was extravagantly high for so small a book : and the reason given for charging this enormous price was that the profits were to go wholly to *Bruce's parents*, who were said to be in indigent circumstances ; *that the book was not entered at Stationers' Hall* (as stated by Mr Logan) ; that, so far from the printer supposing that Mr Logan had any interests in the copyright, he applied to him for a copy from which to print a

\* This was a perfect untruth.

new edition ; that Mr Anderson had made offer to give up the impression which he had caused to be thrown off, if Mr Logan would indemnify the expense, which he rejected ; that Mr Logan was not the *heir-at-law* to Michael Bruce, and had produced no legal right to the MSS., and consequently none to the copyright ; *that copies of the book were sold* in the usual manner at the high price already mentioned ; that he understood that Bruce was the *author of the whole*, or, at least, the greatest part of the poems ; and that Mr Logan had never condescended to say *which were his* or prove any right to the book from authorship, and had not shown that he had acquired any right thereto, either from Mr Bruce or his heirs."

In the replies to these answers several of the former assertions were reiterated, and, in addition, it was argued that "the preface to the first edition clearly showed that the book was not printed for publication to the world, but to a small circle of the author's particular acquaintances ; that Mr Logan was entrusted by *Michael Bruce, previous to his death, with these very poems* ; that as proprietor and, indeed, in a great measure *the author of the collection of the poems in question*, he had in view, some months before, to publish for sale an elegant edition of that work, and entered into a transaction with Mr Creech, bookseller, and Mr Robertson, by which he agreed to give the one the benefit of printing and the other

the advantage of selling the poems." The respondent in reply to the above states:—"It is not a little astonishing that the suspender should gravely aver that the poems in question were neither published nor sold, but were in every respect in the same situation as an unpublished manuscript; and that he should also say, that he is the author of most of the poems. *He surely cannot condescend on one instance*, where so many copies of a book were ever printed, except with a view to publication. Besides, the preface of the book affords convincing evidence that they were intended for the public. After mentioning that Mr Bruce had composed them during the vacation of the College, and that the sentiments were interesting and pathetic, the writer of the preface observes that 'if these and many other beauties of nature and art are allowed to constitute true poetic merits, the following poems will stand the judgment of men of taste'; and he concludes, that he '*publishes* the poems, not with solicitude and anxiety, but with the pleasurable reflection that he is *furnishing* out a classical entertainment to *every reader of refined taste*.' The respondent does not certainly know who wrote this preface. Probably the reverend suspender was the author of it. But who ever it was, your lordship has here clear evidence under the editor's own hand that the book was *published*, and that it was meant for the use and entertainment of every reader of



taste. The *book was sold*, and if your lordship shall think it material to have *this fact proved*, the respondent will instantly undertake to prove the same in the clearest manner."

All the material facts on which the interdict was obtained are either disproved or *admitted not to be true*. The preface proves that the book was published, and it is not now alleged that the same was entered in "Stationers' Hall." No right has been produced from the author of the poems; and so far was the suspender from alleging that he had the property thereof, that *a letter is herewith produced under his own hand acknowledging that they are the property of two gentlemen in London*.<sup>\*</sup> The edition of the poems printed by Mr Anderson is thrown off on the finest writing-paper, and is in every respect superior to that printed for Mr Logan in 1770, though sold nearly one-half cheaper. The respondent never heard of the new edition proposed by Mr Logan till Mr Anderson's edition was well advanced; and he does not suppose the suspender had any other view in advertising this edition than to knock Mr Anderson's on the head. The reader may perhaps regard it as a circumstance in favour of Mr Logan that he ordered only 250 copies of Bruce's poems to be printed; but it should be kept in mind that it was a number too large to be given in presents, especially by one who was not himself in affluent circumstances,

\* Another of the statements Logan has had proved against him.

yet it was a sufficient number for an experiment as to whether or not the book was likely to take with the public, which, if it did, after deducting expenses, allowing for booksellers' profits, and leaving the editor a few numbers to give away, would still have secured to the parents of the poet, considering their circumstances *at the time*, a sum which would have been a little fortune, more particularly so if the copyright of the book had been secured to them. With these statements, exhibiting both sides of the case, the reader is left to form an opinion upon the prevarications and averments advanced by Logan, and again it is asked, How does his *moral character* work out?

Mr Young, W.S., further adds, "I cannot take it upon me to affirm that I ever heard my friend Dr Hardy or Dr Robertson assert that Logan was the author of the 'Ode to the Cuckoo.' *He certainly never said to me that he was.* When Mr Chambers first spoke to me on the subject I looked out two or three letters from Mr Logan relating to the interdict which have since fallen aside, but they contained *no such statement.* My present impression and belief, I own, is not favourable to Mr Logan's claims, whether made by himself or by others in his name. I must say that it appears to me unaccountable, why, after the interdict was applied for and obtained, he never brought it under discussion in the Court of Session." The interdict was removed in August 1782.

The following is the decision given by the Lord Ordinary in the case, as extracted from the Minute of the Bill Chamber, 21st August 1782:—"In respect no title from the author is produced, and that from the preface and number of copies it appears that the book in question was printed for publication in the year 1770, *and there being no evidence of its being entered at Stationers' Hall*, therefore refuses the bill, and recalls the interdict, and finds no expenses due.

"(Signed) THOMAS MILLER,

"~~Lord Justice Clerk.~~"

## CHAPTER XIII

### ANALYSIS OF LOGAN'S POEMS

Poems first published in 1770 as Bruce's—Logan's defence—The *noms de plume*—Detailed evidences—Ballad, "Sir James the Ross"—"Danish Odes"—"Loch Leven"—"Paoli"—Logan's volume of 1781—"Ode to the Cuckoo"—"Vernal Ode"—The poet's mother—Ballad, "The Braes of Yarrow"—Professor Veitch's exposure—Professor Aytoun's "Ode on Death of a Young Lady"—"Ode to Women"—Ossian's hymns—"Ode to Spring"—Logan's blunders—"Ode to a Man of Letters"—"The Lovers"—"A Tale"—Cleish—Logan's *Runnamede*—Dr R. Anderson.

IN instituting a close examination of those poems claimed by Logan or by others on his behalf, great care has been taken not to lay inordinate stress on points where the evidence intended to support his case exhibits defects which no amount of ingenuity or skill can remedy. The well-meaning friends of Logan have failed to observe the difficulties which surround the defence of such a man. The facts brought out by the existence of the Society of young men in Kinnesswood, with their *noms de plume* as employed by Bruce, determine the writings to be his, a circumstance of which Logan was entirely unaware of. The rare little volume of Bruce's poems, published in 1770, already fully noticed, defines the

individual members of this Society, the locality and his early loves.

ALEXIS : A PASTORAL.

“Where Leven's waters break against the shore.”

“Well I remember, in the sunny scene,  
We ran, we play'd together on the green.”

In this he employs his own “Amyntas,” while his early friend “Willie Arnot” is also noticed as “Daphnis,” and the girl who was the subject of his early love, Eumelia, is not forgotten. Then follows “An Eclogue” claimed for Logan. In this we find Damon representing James Bruce the poet's brother, while John Birrell is known by “Varro.” The shepherd life is also introduced in the “Pastoral Song.” There this young woman is mentioned as “Peggy,” with his apt allusion to his favourite themes, the flowers, the birds, the wood, the brook, the plain, etc.

“Sir James the Ross : An Historical Ballad.”—Bruce's letter to his intimate friend is clearly dealt with by his letter and copy of the ballad sent to David Pearson (*see* pages 119, 142). “The Vernal Ode” has been treated as one of those pieces in which Logan and his friends do not derive much credit.

“The Danish Odes.”—Efforts have been made to give Logan credit for these. Here also we know

that Bruce had made a study of this subject, and with a patriot's blood in his veins he pictures the warlike scenes of former days. Logan was not pronounced in his claim of these. Some of his friends presume to better knowledge, but they must remain to the credit of Bruce *till Logan's trust is made good*.

"Loch Leven" has been fully treated. Logan may have spoiled some of the lines, but certainly he did not improve this poem by the addition of any of his own work. At a further portion of this chapter it may be noticed what use he made of this poem in his dramatic piece called *Runnamede*.

As has been pointed out now, Logan has clearly made a mistake when he transcribed that portion of this piece, "*First on thy banks the Doric reed I tuned,*" where reference is made to Gairney Water, for *this is contrary to fact*, as is shown by David Pearson. Bruce was composing poetry before he left home in 1762, and it was now 1765, so that a fair inference makes this word *First* to have been *Fresh*, and then we have the facts properly fitted.

"Ode to Paoli."—This has on Logan's authority been claimed for him. Yet, as this is all the evidence produceable, it is hardly worth a moment's consideration. Doubtless in Bruce's time the literature of the country was calling attention to the efforts being made to secure liberty for Corsica by a determined leader and band, and who more likely than a Bruce to sing a hero's fame, and that—

“ His name shall fill th' immortal page.  
 O Liberty ! to man a guardian given,  
 Thou best and brightest attribute of heaven ” ;

and bursting with the gushing heart-thoughts he cries :—

“ Thy sons shall lay the proud oppressor low,  
 And break the head of tyrant kings.”

^ usurper

Here we have the keynote to Burns's “ Scots wha hae ” :—

“ Lay the proud oppressor low,  
 Tyrants fall in every foe.”

Turning now to the volume which Logan in his dark days of adversity published in London on the occasion of his visit in 1781. Doubtless it had long been his intention to publish such a volume, yet required the pressure of his surroundings to complete this bold step. He had utterly failed to effect an interdict preventing the publication of a second edition of Bruce's poems by Mr W. Anderson, bookseller, Stirling. The full particulars of this case will be found in Chapter XII. The first piece in the 1781 volume is the “ Ode to the Cuckoo.”

The boldness of this conduct on Logan's part startled Bruce's friends, and some of the remarks made upon his doing so were severe, particularly by those who knew *the whole truth* concerning it, though <sup>14</sup>eleven years had passed since Logan got the loan of Bruce's MSS. The young poet's father had



passed away, but plenty of witnesses remained. Logan knew that the poem had been admired, and considered it was sure to bring him credit, if these country folks in Kinross-shire would only say little concerning it. For the sake of illustration a list of the alterations made by Logan, in his mind to justify his claims to the authorship, are here submitted. The last word on the first line is changed from "Wood" to "Grove"; the second line has "attendant" changed to "messenger"; the fifth line, "When Heaven is filled with music sweet" is changed to "And hear the sound of music sweet"; the twelfth line, "Of birds among the bowers" to "*From* birds," etc.; the fourteenth line, "To pull the flowers so gay" to "To pull the primrose," etc.; the fifteenth line, "Starts thy curious voice" to "Starts the *new* voice," etc.; the seventeenth line, "Soon as the pea puts on the bloom" to "What time the pea," etc.; the twenty-sixth line, "Social wing" to "Joyful wing."

Can anyone suppose that alterations of such a kind will justify Logan's claim to the authorship of this ode, when the changes in most instances are neither true to nature nor consonant with sense or poetry?

The older inhabitants were wont to affirm that when they first knew this ode the words of the fifteenth line were "Starts thy curious voice to hear."

The reader should now compare this poem with

the "Vernal Ode," in order to observe how the same idea is to a considerable extent in both.

Some time after Logan's death the whole of his papers passed into the hands of Mr Miller, K.C., Lincoln's Inn, London, and he states, "After a careful examination of these, and the whole case, *my own firm persuasion is*, that the 'Ode to the Cuckoo' is decidedly in favour of Michael Bruce," adding, "The fact I mentioned of Logan's having left behind him a book in his own handwriting, which contained various pieces of poetry, and amongst others the 'Ode to the Cuckoo,' is no evidence in his favour at all. He might have copied it from anybody as well as been the author of it himself." Indeed, the fact that such a book existed at all, and that this ode was there amongst others, while "Bruce's finished poem book" *was not existing*, forms *strong circumstantial evidence against Logan*. There is also the story regarding the poet's mother, who had remarked, when someone near had shot a cuckoo, "Will that be the bird our Michael made a sang about?" This was testified to the writer by the same old lady already referred to (who was born in 1805), and who stated that she had heard this repeated by her mother.

Following the contents of Logan's book, we come to the ballad "The Braes of Yarrow." The locality of this fine ballad has long been a favourite with poets, while painters have revelled in its story, the genius of Sir Noel Paton, R.S.A., having

made it famous. Under the writings of the poets it is known also as "The Dowie Dens of Yarrow," "The Rose of Yarrow," etc. With this ballad in Logan's publication it gave the idea that he was a poet of no mean order, and this piece was held as conclusive that the man who wrote it was entitled to claim the authorship of the "Ode to the Cuckoo." Sir Walter Scott is credited with having given some portions of it his highest commendations. Careful study of the ballad caused Rev. Dr. Grosart to express the opinion, when engaged on his "Life," etc., of Michael Bruce, published in 1865, that it was *not* the production of John Logan, yet the Rev. Dr R. Small, in his elaborate defence of Logan, writes as follows:—"As a reason for assigning the "Cuckoo" to Bruce, it has been suggested that no one of Logan's unquestioned pieces makes the slightest approach to it in beautiful simplicity—a verdict in which we cannot altogether concur. Is there not beautiful simplicity and deep pathos besides in Logan's 'Braes of Yarrow'?" At the time this was written the doctor did not even dream of the exposure that was to be made by Professor Veitch, an authority in such literature, which changes both the argument and evidence, and consequently the conclusion. Till then much had been *presumed* to be true, but the publication of the *Border Essays* in 1896 presented another view of the case, and that the lines so much admired stood in no better relation to Logan

than other pieces claimed by him. The special lines so much admired are :—

“ They sought him east, they sought him west,  
 They sought him all the forest through ;  
 They only saw the cloud of night,  
 They only heard the roar of Yarrow.”

They occur in the very old ballad, “ The Dowie Dens of Yarrow,” published long before Logan was born. In the thirteenth stanza of this poem are found two lines of those thought to be Logan’s, as follows :—

“ But she wandered east, so did she west,  
 And searched the forest through.”

Then in the last two lines of the twelfth stanza is :—

“ But only saw the cloud o’ night,  
 Or heard the roar of Yarrow.”

Here then we have a sample of how a “ Logan ballad ” is composed without a single word of comment or explanation.

Well might Professor Veitch write, “ Some lines in the ballad imputed to Logan are something higher than any other thing he is *known* to have written,” and concludes “ that Logan was a plagiarist,” which is “ a person *who steals the thoughts or writings of others and gives them out as his own.*” The odd thing about this ballad as it stands in Logan’s book is that no note accompanies the book, no preface, and yet, while it consists of forty-four lines, *forty of these are under*

*inverted commas*, while four lines only are without these. Possibly Logan left this as a mode of escape from a difficulty should it arise. This has, so far as known, not been observed.

Professor Aytoun's *Ballads of Scotland* has one entitled "Willie's Drowned in Yarrow," in which the following lines are found written long before Logan's day :—

"She sought him east, she sought him west,  
 She sought him braid and narrow ;  
 Syne in the cleaving o' a craig  
 She fand him drowned in Yarrow."

The third piece in Logan's volume is entitled "Ode on the Death of a Young Lady." A careful study of this poem reveals both the real author and the subject of it. While the title has undergone a change to suit Logan's purpose, the groundwork of the piece has a decided *local* ring about it, founded upon homely yet sad memories. It can easily be traced as a confirmation to the well-known story given in part on page 6, and was no other than "Mary Millar," the orphan girl whom Alexander Bruce took into his home, and who became the loved nurse of the poet when a child, and whose early death was lamented by the Bruce family as if she had been a daughter of the house. The poem too plainly speaks for itself, viz.:—

"The peace of Heaven attend thy shade,  
*My early friend*, my favourite maid ;  
 When life was new, companions gay,  
 We hailed the morning of the day.

*Untimely gone, for ever fled,  
The roses on the cheek so red,  
Th' affection warm, the temper mild,  
The sweetness that in sorrow smiled.*

O from thy kindred early torn,  
And to the grave untimely borne,  
Vanished for ever from *my view*,  
Thou sister of my soul, adieu.

Fair with my *first ideas* twined,  
Thine image oft will meet my mind,  
And while remembrance brings thee near,  
Affection, sad, will drop a tear."

In these verses is found sentiments fitted to express the feelings of the poet towards his early nurse—the friend of his early years, "When life was new"; his lament for her death, "Untimely gone"; her manner, "temper mild"; the adopted in his father's family, "Thou sister of my soul, adieu." Can anything analogous be indicated in Logan's history?

"Ode to Women."—Anyone who has read Logan's letters and at all familiar with his character would be justified in stating, "this poem is far too lofty and pure in its style and language to have been the spontaneous utterance of Logan." Amongst its verses are to be found lines embracing sentiments that Bruce *could and did write*. There is also in it evidence of *his* style—the use of words known as special to Bruce. For example:—

"But 'tis the sweet sequester'd walk,  
The muse with flowers the path will strew,



To Nature's robe of vernal green  
 See spring approach with sweet delay,  
 See rosebuds open to the ray,  
 And leaf by leaf unfold.  
 O Nature, Nature, thine the charm,  
 Thy colours too thy features warm,  
 Thy accents win my heart."

In contradistinction to these the following three lines exhibits Logan's tinkering hand :—

"The midnight minstrel of the grove,  
 Who still renews the hymn of love  
 And woos the wood to hear."

What these lines are intended to express or represent it is difficult to define. They are not such as Bruce would have written.

"Ossian's Hymns to the Sun."—Without much consideration these may easily be claimed for Bruce. David Pearson was familiar with them, for they had been explained to him, and had formed a subject of contemplation by Bruce while he was engaged on them.

"Ode written in Spring."—To one familiar with the land of Bruce, and who has eyes to observe its local features with some little knowledge of his style, it is not difficult to see at a glance that this is not the work of a stranger. Logan's letter No. 3 states, "he would require to *transcribe carefully*," for the sequel proves how it had been copied by a ridiculous blunder he has made in it, over the



Cuckoo. Curiously enough, this word or bird seems to have haunted him, for he introduces it into this piece where there is no occasion, if sense is to be made of the context. Of this we shall speak more particularly afterwards.

The *scene* of this poem is one unknown to Logan, but ever present to the eye or mind of Bruce, for it is his own "hills and dales," so familiar to him under all the different aspects of season, described also in other well-known pieces.

The long dreary winter has passed, when, as is expressed by one of the natives of this village in his letter, every one meets his fellow with the expression, "O man, but it's cauld." The morning sun sheds its early rays upon the ice-bound stream, which trickles from the hill. Thus the poet in jubilant strains sings :—

" No longer hoary winter reigns,  
 No longer binds the stream in chains,  
 Or heap with snow the meads.  
*Array'd with robes of rainbow dye,*  
 At last the spring appears on high,  
 And smiling over earth and sky  
 Her new creation leads."

In the "Vernal Ode," which *Logan did not claim*, is the line :—

"*In spangled robes of varying light.*"

A glance at these two lines will show they are by the same author. The Lomond Hills and the

Bishopshire bask in the southern sun, and how this affects the frost-bound hills and streams is observable in the following lines of this poem.

“The snows confess a warmer ray,  
 The loosen'd streamlet loves to stray  
 And echo down the dale.  
 The hills uplift their summits green,  
 The vales, more verdant, spread between.”

These words describe a perfect picture of the locality from Lomond's green top to Loch Leven shore.

The two following lines show how Logan had copied the poem into his own book, for he makes them read :—

“The *Cuckoo* in the woods unseen  
 Coos ceaseless to the gale.”

Had Logan corrected this in any of the three editions of his book it would have been put right, but no—so it was printed and so it remains. Yet what nonsense it is to suppose a *Cuckoo* sitting in the wood *cooing*; that restless bird can make no cry but its own. The word “*cushie*” or *cushet* would be what Bruce wrote, which was the proper description of a wood-pigeon. The wonder is that even Logan did not observe this blunder. The state he was in when he transcribed this may account for it, though he was *not* in the company of other clergyman, (*see* his letter No. 5).

Also in the third stanza Logan has introduced the word *sudden*, which he has mistaken for *sodden*, as, the sodden fields now put on the flowers. Seen from his old standpoint, "the Wood," he sees the manse garden below him once more bursting into beauty. In the fourth stanza appears another of Bruce's phrases, viz., "The cattle *wander in the wood*." There he falls back upon his shepherd life, and adds :—

"Blythe in the sun the shepherd swain,  
Like Pan, attunes the past'ral strain,  
While many echoes sound again  
The music of the hills."

Then follows a favourite line of Bruce's :—

"Fair as the lily of the vale  
That gives its bosom to the gale."

Again there are lines which might easily have been penned by one who wrote the hymn "Where high the heavenly temple stands" (Paraphrase 58) :—

"When all was fair to God's own eye,  
When stars consenting hung on high,  
And all Heaven's chorus made the sky  
With Hallelujahs ring."

Then he concludes with "a pen sketch" of what he was brought up amid and so intimately observed :—

“Where hills by storied streams ascend,  
 My dreams and waking wishes lend  
 Poetic ease to woo,  
 Alone, enamour'd with the love  
 Of Nature and of you.”

In the above we have his allusion to the trickling streams that are seen so freely descending the southern slope of the hill and running by the pathway richly garnished by numerous pretty wild flowers growing there.

The next in order is entitled, “A Song, The Day is Departing.” In this is depicted “the bashful lover.” Whether this was written by Bruce or not, it represents his shepherd life better than it can do that of Logan in *any* condition.

“Ode to Sleep.”—Here we can trace the gentle Bruce in the situation descriptive of his delicate youth, his active poetic brain, his consequent feverish condition being a more likely resemblance to him than Logan.

“Ode to a Man of Letters.”—We have Bruce’s style to the life in this piece :—

“Lo, winter’s hoar domain is past,  
 Arrested in his Eastern blast,  
 The fiend of Nature flies.  
 Breathing the spring, the zephyrs play,  
 And re-enthroned the lord of day  
 Resumes the golden skies.

Attendant on the genial hours  
 The voluntary shades and flowers

For rural lovers spring,  
Wild choirs unseen in concert join,  
And round Apollo's rustic shrine  
The sylvan Muses sing."\*

In the first stanza is seen a repetition of the thoughts in "Ode in Spring," as the line "No longer hoary winter reigns." Indeed these two first stanzas are but reflections of each other. Bruce in his "Ode to the Cuckoo" has this "Attendant on the Spring," here it is "Attendant on the genial hours"; again, it is in the "Cuckoo," "Of birds among the bowers," while in this ode it is "Wild choirs unseen."

In the fourth stanza Bruce refers to his young friend John Birrell under his *nom de plume*—a circumstance Logan was ignorant of—introducing him as "*Varro*." This is the second time it has been done, the other being already noticed in the "Eclogue." Returning to the "Ode in Spring." Formerly it was "The snows confess a warmer ray," while here it is "The radiant rulers of the year confess a nobler hand." One illustration more by way of conclusive proof that the ode was by Bruce is the close resemblance there is between Bruce's "Elegy to Spring," admitted to be his, and this "Ode to a Man of Letters."

The next in order is "The Lovers," strangely differing from all the others by having a

\* The last nine lines of this ode Logan has placed under inverted commas.

note intimating the origin of the poem, and that "The Lovers" were descended of Houses that had long been at variance. "The lady leaves her father's house and ventures out at night to meet her lover," etc. Clearly this is the production of Bruce, and is founded upon the well-known *local story*, very commonly repeated in Bruce's youth, the lady being the daughter of the Laird of Arnot Tower, and her lover the son of the Castle of Burleigh, families of influence residing about three or four miles apart. The former was the favourite haunt of Bruce, and often it is brought into his writings. The scene and circumstances of this tradition are so faithfully given in this poem that none but a native of the place could have known these, and that was surely no other than Michael Bruce. In this are the lines "O hills, O vales, where I have played." In Bruce's "Daphnis" we find the words, "When o'er the flowery green we ran, we played." The escape of the lady and her rescue at Scotland Well by her enraged family, when on her way to Burleigh Castle, is still known as "the Battle of Scotland Well," and has been the subject of description by others. But the whole piece is far too local in all its bearings. Besides, like some of the others, there are thoughts in it which are too high and pure to emanate from Logan.

"A Tale."—Again we have a familiar story and tradition located within the little county of Kinross

and well known to Michael Bruce. Clearly the piece is intended to describe the Castle of Cleish and its noble lord, though Logan has tried to confuse and generalise the picture by introducing another stream for that which the author originally was likely to have had in it :—

“ Where pastoral *Tweed*, renowned in song,  
 With rapid murmur flows,  
 In *Caledonia's* classic ground  
 The hall of Arthur rose.

Twice he arose from rebel rage  
 To save the *British* crown,  
 And in the field where heroes stood  
 He won him high renown.”

Here we notice a word in each of these verses, first that of *Tweed*, to lead us past the truth, as originally in the MS. Then we see *Caledonia*, which locates it so far that, oblivious to consequences, the hero is made to save the *British Crown*—a thing that never existed till Queen Anne had reached the middle years of her reign. The author uses a poet's license to furnish his story—hence the introduction of portions clearly intended for this purpose. Reaching the fourth verse, we come upon a familiar line in one of Bruce's hymns, best known as the 18th Paraphrase, where the line is :—

1st. “ To ploughshares men shall beat their swords,”  
 while in the “ Tale ” it is :—

1st. “ But to the ploughshare turn'd the sword.”



Following this observation, the better plan will be to collect other lines in this piece which are quite familiar to every reader of Bruce's poetry :—

2nd. "Subdue the monster of the wood" (in "Loch Leven").

3rd. "Beneath the coverts of this rock" (in "Loch Leven" and "Fable").

4th. "A stranger wandering thro' the wood" (in "Cuckoo").

5th. "One day a wanderer in the wood" (in "Cuckoo").

6th. "Where we have often played" (in "Alexis").

8th. "Queen of the vale, the lily fair" (in "Loch Leven").

9th. "But when the night is o'er" (in "Elegy to Spring").

10th. "The eternal morn will spring on high" (in "Elegy to Spring").

As the piece is given to us it is entitled "The Hall of Arthur." No doubt this was the hall of "Meldrum," which rises not far from the banks of the "Gairney." The historic nature of this castle is classic enough. Another poet has put it :—

"Cleish grandly gray in ancient days,  
Where oft in glorious plaudits ring,  
Thy chief procured thee fadeless bays,  
And bled renowned to *save his King.*"

Instances might be further given of the words, etc., used by Bruce, but the above are enough to place this poem amongst those of which Michael Bruce alone was the author.

On the remaining three pieces in this collection, apart from the hymns, it were needless to enter.

Suffice to state they exhibit distinct traces of Bruce's composition. Yet it is to be feared that Logan has taken liberties with them which are, in general, very far from being an improvement.

However the last on the list deserves some little attention. It is named "Ode," written in a visit to the country in autumn. This poem is clearly another reflection of Michael Bruce, and was a description of his surroundings when in the autumn of 1766 he was residing at Forest Mill. His own state of mind, his declining health, the moral he deduces from this, resemble the reflections of the piece as given in his letter to David Pearson; while in the last six lines we see the poet's dream of home and the scenes of his youth. In one of the following lines we trace another of Logan's blunders:—

“ Belated oft by fabled rill,  
While nightly o'er the *hallowed* hill  
Aerial music seems to mourn,  
I'll listen, Autumn's closing strain,  
And woo the walks of youth again,  
And pour my sorrows o'er the untimely Urn.”

This word inserted, *hallowed*, is not consistent with the sense of the context, for the aerial music was produced by the wind's whirl o'er the *hollowed* hill as it really is, and that was well known to Bruce, as already stated. No doubt Logan thought what he had transcribed was more like the author, in the absence of any local knowledge

of the hollowed state of part of the Lomond Hill.

It is somewhat remarkable that in the year 1766 there was published the poetical works of "John Langhorne," in two small volumes of the same size and style that Logan adopted for the first edition of Bruce's works of 1770. One of the poems in this of Langhorne's begins, "Where Tweed's fair plains in liberal beauty lie," so possibly the first line of "A Tale"—already dealt with—may have found its suggestion here. There is also a dramatic poem, *The Fatal Prophecy*,\* amongst Langhorne's works which recalls Logan's *Runnamede*. Strange there is to be found in it passages which are so well known to readers of Bruce's writings. A few examples will suffice to make this better understood :—

"My dear companions in the days of youth," etc.  
 "Hail, native land, O scenes of early days," etc.  
 "Then in the appointed house I'll rest in peace,  
 And wait the morning that awakes the dead."

These last lines recall Bruce's elegy, which reads :—

"There let me sleep forgotten in the clay,  
 Rest in the hope of an eternal day,  
 Till the long night's gone and the last morn arise."

It is in Act III. of *Runnamede* we find those

\* The persons in the drama of Langhorne's *Fatal Prophecy* are not unlike those in Logan's *Runnamede*, and the first lines of Bruce's "Last Day" are to be found in this tragedy.

words with which Bruce opens his poem on Loch Leven as, “Hail, native land,” etc.

Logan has it (Scene 4) :—

“Loud as the trumpet that awakes the dead,  
His people’s voice shall thunder in his ear.”

BRUCE’S “THE LAST DAY.”

“To judge mankind according to their works  
The trumpet sounds,  
The dead arising, the wide world in flames,  
When ruin and destruction fierce shall ride.”

Logan did not publish or give any account of Bruce’s poem entitled “The Last Day.” True, Dr Robertson refers to it, and this is the first intimation we have of it, and that “it was but fragments,” which Logan had picked up when at Kinnesswood. It was not till Mr John Birrell found another rough copy of this poem in Bruce’s mother’s house that Dr Mackelvie was able to publish what appears in his book in 1837. Fuller examination would possibly show much more evidence of how the lines of this poem were used by Logan.

One reason why so many mistakes have been made regarding the number of poems for which Logan got credit at the expense of Bruce was due the fact that the first edition of these poems had an elaborate preface in which the author gets credit for

ten of the pieces in the little volume he had published as *Bruce's*, 1770—the authority for this being Dr Anderson's *Lives of the Poets*. Of course, after Dr Anderson received better information, he modified his statement, and instead of ten pieces only three were afterwards assigned, and the claim even for these has vanished under closer examination.

After the publication of the volume by Logan in 1781 the friends of Bruce *protested at such base conduct*. But what more could humble men residing in their retired home do. Not till they came in touch with Dr Anderson were they able to table their unquestionable evidence, and show that the laurels of authorship must be torn from the brow of the usurper and placed with honour on that of Michael Bruce.

From all that can be gathered of the opinions expressed by critics upon the poetry of Michael Bruce, the verdict is that considering his youth and the difficulties arising from his delicate health and straitened circumstances, he had achieved a remarkable work. While claiming for him nothing more than a fair position as a minor poet of great promise, it is interesting to observe that his poems were valued and praised by the two greatest poets who immediately succeeded him, viz., Robert Fergusson, and his successor, Robert Burns.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CONTENDINGS FOR LOGAN ANSWERED

Contendings for Logan answered—His clerical defenders—Sir Walter Scott—Rev. Dr Small's test—"The Vernal Ode"—Rev. Dr Robertson—"Paoli"—Evidence of Bruce's authorship—"The Danish Odes"—"The Ode to the Cuckoo"—John Birrell—Principal Baird—Logan's conceit—"Lavinia"—*Runnamede*—Remarks on Bruce—Varro—Planters of the vineyard.

Reply to the evidences produced, and arguments used in support of John Logan's claims which have been published by his clerical friends.

REV. DR ROBERT SMALL, who, as already mentioned, had the honour of having been born in the same loan in Kinnesswood where the young poet Michael Bruce was born, states that he had taken up and weighed the conflicting claims of Bruce and Logan. At the time this was done he used the words of Sir Walter Scott in another cause and considered this contention "a gangin plea." But my friend the doctor, so cautious generally and so correct in all other respects, has fairly put an end to this plea by what he has stated regarding it, while he has rendered a great service to the case, particularly in assisting to maintain an interest in Bruce without intending it, at the same time contending for Logan. He puts it thus:—

"Matters of literary interest are involved, and the 'moral character' of one of the parties is



seriously implicated. The whole question, so far as Logan is concerned, involves *moral character* far more than literary rights."

Those who are familiar with the case from first to last must heartily agree with this statement, though we may question the justness of the scales in which it was formerly weighed.

However, a careful and impartial perusal of the preceding chapters will enable the reader to re-weigh the evidence submitted, and to form for himself conclusions between the interests of the two parties. There is, however, forced upon us the question—Has Logan any moral character to defend? Can the man who has been proved to have set at defiance all regard for *morality, truth* and *honesty*, have any claim to the defence of doctors of divinity of such high standing in letters? After what Dr R. Small *now* knows of Logan's "moral character," if he has not withdrawn from his defence he *should have done so*. So long as there was a mere possibility of defending or producing substantial materials tending to set the case in a more favourable light in Logan's interest it was right he should decline to admit defeat, but it would be impossible to continue a special pleading on the distinct test of "*moral character*." There is, however, another of the doctor's suggestions that is worthy of serious consideration, viz., "May it not be possible, through minute analysis of the entire materials, to reach a clear and definite



conclusion?” To this also the writer gives his emphatic “Amen”; and that the evidence formerly used in Logan’s interest may be re-analysed is the present intention. Dr Small states that the poem known as “The Vernal Ode,” as published in the first edition of Bruce’s poems, “is admitted on all hands to have been written by neither Bruce nor Logan.” To this a distinct objection is taken. As already shown, there is not the slightest evidence to uphold the statement. One thing is true, Logan did *not* claim it, so it was included amongst those pieces of which indistinct mention is made by Logan in the preface to Bruce’s poems, “as wrote by different authors.” True, Rev. Dr Robertson of Dalmeny was responsible for the statement that Logan had said to him that it was by Sir James Foulis. Yet, as already stated, during the twenty-one years from the time it was first published till 1791, when Foulis died, he cannot be said to have been aware of this honour or to have claimed it, nor can it be discovered that he was the author of any poem whatever. The most curious thing about this is, that it was not till *about a month after Sir James Foulis’s death* that his name was coupled with the poem. Thus the only evidence adduced to show the statement was accepted as correct is simply the testimony of John Logan, who had died in 1788.

Reference is made to “Paoli,” another of those poems published by Logan in the first edition of Bruce’s poems. The evidence of chronology is

called in support of Logan's authorship, while Dr R. Small is satisfied that "Paoli" could not have been written before 1768, the year after Bruce's death. It is clear to any candid mind, after a careful study of the great events which had passed and were in process of development in Corsica, that Bruce had quite enough of information and material to supply him with all that is contained in this ode. Besides, the very language and expressions used in it are to be found in Bruce's other pieces. Till 1766 the ordinary literature of the country was full of statements anent that unequal but eventful conflict, all of which Bruce would be fully alive to. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* an excellent article appeared as an example of others, full of particulars fitted to exhibit the case as it stood, as well as to anticipate all that happened shortly afterwards.

It is readily admitted that if certain lines are taken by themselves, such as those quoted by Dr R. Small, they appear to bear out his contention. Yet it must be borne in mind that a poetic license will justify a prospective as well as a retrospective aspect of the case, as in the present instance. Take some of the lines of the poem and compare these with what are admitted to have been Bruce's and the case has a better foundation, viz. :—

"As the lone shepherd hides him in the rocks  
When high heav'n thunders ; as the tim'rous flocks  
From the descending torrent flee."

We find the following lines in Bruce's "Ossian's Hymn :"—

“ Thus have I seen beneath a hollow rock  
A shepherd hunt his dog among his flock,  
When tempests with their train impend on high,  
Darken the day and load the labouring sky,  
When heaven's wide convex glows with lightning dire.”

The shepherds are referred to by Bruce frequently in his writings. He never tires recounting the experiences of his early shepherd life.

Bruce was one who owned a patriot's heart ; he loved his country and all who had struggled to make her free. His sympathies went out to Paoli in his brave struggle, and he burst out in those stirring words already quoted :—

“ Oh liberty ! to man a guardian given,” etc.

Doubtless, when this poem was being composed, the spirit of Scotland's greatest king, himself a Bruce, was upon him, coursing in his usually gentle veins, as he writes :—

“ Thy sons shall lay the proud oppressor low,” etc.

Bruce could have composed such lines, certainly not John Logan—the man who writes in one of his letters to Rev. Dr Carlyle, “ *We English,*” etc.

Coming now to the “Danish Odes.” I claim these for Bruce. Logan did not appropriate them, though Dr R. Small states, “they are undoubtedly

his." Yet none has given *him* credit for them, nor has anyone else claimed them. Of all that was meant by Logan in the words, "Some poems wrote by different authors," careful investigation, as already shown, has proved no other names than that of Bruce, Logan and Sir James Foulis. Taking the last first, that esteemed name must be withdrawn ; the second does not claim, so who else can it be but *Bruce*, and that is enough. Regarding Dr R. Small's second article, and his claim of the "Ode to the Cuckoo" for Logan, that has been fully answered already. Yet the further contention raised is, that while Logan had been claiming this ode (for about ten years), the first formal notice of an opposing claim is found in a letter by Mr John Birrell to Rev. Principal Baird, written in 1791—fully two years after the death of Logan. The reply to this is, Who was to be for ever asserting Bruce's claim to this ode? Was it not perfectly well known to many persons in his native village that *Bruce was* the undoubted author of this ode? The young poet's father was dead, while the various friends who knew it were perfectly satisfied on the subject. Logan might state what he liked, but truth to them stood, and they were quite satisfied that the statements of one would not do much to refute the *knowledge* and belief of many. Some of those interested in Bruce possessed a copy of his poems in print, and as Logan would not return the MSS. copy

of Bruce's poems—*which was known to be the truth manifested beyond dispute*—the honest and worthy men in Kinnesswood, including Dr R. Small's venerable ancestors, whose name he bears, little dreamed that a descendant of theirs would become *the unit* that was to try his best to rob the gentle poet Bruce of his honest fame, and support the claims of one who was believed then, and beyond a doubt is *now* proved to have been the actor of so contemptible a part from first to last. Indeed, had circumstances not called forth the letter of Mr John Birrell mentioned, it might not have been till 1837, when Rev. Dr Wm. Mackelvie published his *Life of Bruce*, etc., that any notice was taken of the case. Even at this distance of time it would not have detracted one iota from the facts, or weakened these in the least degree. Had Dr R. Small's great-grandfather or even his grandfather been alive, it were easy to have fancied them saying to him, "You have gone far wrong now in trying to defend that graceless loon, who came but once to our town, pretending to be a friend of Michael Bruce's, and got his poems away and kept them. And ye say nobody protested. Ye may as well expect that each Lord's day morning we should have recorded that the sun rose on the Bishopshire and that the earth was lighted by it, as to expect that any of us Kinnesswood folks were to be for ever writing down what we kent of this worthy lad and his poems ; that we are all so

proud of, and knew long before Logan was e'er heard tell of." However, in fairness to Dr R. Small, it must be added, that at the time he wrote what is complained of there was more doubt upon the subject than now exists. Had Rev. Dr Mackelvie got his eyes upon Logan's letters, his stolen laurels had all been stripped from his brow long since. Apart from everything else, the retention of Bruce's MSS. was an act of gross injustice, alike to *himself* and Bruce. This theft was committed for a future purpose, and what was the result of it? It met him at Leith when he became a candidate for a church there; it haunted him at every turn of his sad remaining life, and has left a stigma on his name which, in the light of to-day, brands him in the annals of literature in the judgment of every honest man. Add to this, we are deprived of the power of reading and judging the completed works of Michael Bruce as he left them by the tampering that Logan took it upon himself to perform. Take, for instance, Bruce's "<sup>logue</sup> Loch Leven," where lines have been added, as in the following:—

“Lavinia come ! here primroses upspring,  
 Here choirs of linnets, here yourself may sing,  
 Here meadows worthy of thy foot appear,  
 Oh come, Lavinia, let us wander here.”

They have in this what Bruce *never wrote*, but *there* is the name “Lavinia,” afterwards noticed along with Logan's favourite “*primroses upspringing*,” in



the *altered* version of the "Ode to the Cuckoo," etc. Surely in this we see the application of Dr R. Small's remarks *even on Logan* when he says, "A conceit very like one of those Logan occasionally mistook for poetry." Rev. Dr Robertson also states that Logan claimed "Lavinia." If this was what he claimed as suitable to establish his reputation as a poet we make him welcome to it. Yet Dr R. Small remarks concerning Bruce's poems, "Though Logan in preparing them for the press improved and embellished some of his friends' pieces so much," adding, in the words of Rev. Dr Douglas, "as to make them in a great measure his own." Had we seen the poem as it first reached Logan's hands we would have been better able to judge—"To make them in great measure his own." His own indeed he did try to make them, but it was by mean and unmanly modes, while the poetry exhibits a very different calibre.

There has also been gleaned a collection of quotations from Logan's *Runnamede* in support of Logan. Yet this proves nothing, save that he had so closely studied Bruce's writings as to have become familiar with his style and phrase, and these were used as required. A reference to this, however, proves clearly what has already been noted, that we afterwards find in Logan's work what he did *not* publish in 1770, as was first done by Rev. Principal Baird in 1796, viz., Bruce's "Last Day."



Where did Logan get those lines in his *Runnamede* which were afterwards seen in Bruce's "Last Day" but in Bruce's MSS. book. Thus what was supposed by Dr R. Small to be substantial evidence in favour of Logan is after all converted into that which is in favour of Bruce. As for many of the other suggestions or reasons furbished up in order to excuse Logan they need hardly be noticed, for it is clear that they were constructed upon the supposition that Logan was *an honest man* and that his moral character could stand examination. Another D.D. thinks that Logan's fault lay in claiming *too little*, and adds, "To have revealed in his preface" (to the first vol. of Bruce's poems) \* "the full extent of his own labours might be expected to tell unfavourably on the sale of Bruce's poems." But mark what follows :—" *Let readers ad-*

\* The little book mentioned is entitled *The Planters of the Vineyard*, was published in 1771, and had been written regarding the contest for the presentation for South Leith parish. It is rare, and is not obtainable in any of the city libraries.

In regard to what has been published about "Lavinia," so far as the writer is aware no one has observed that in 1760 there was published a volume of poetry "by the Rev. Mr Blacklock, and other gentlemen," in which there is a poem by Mr A. E., entitled "Lavinia." The theme is not unlike that afterwards followed in Bruce's "Loch Leven." It is not unreasonable to suppose that this little volume was known to both Bruce and Logan, the one working it into his "Loch Leven" under the term "Lavinia" and the other using it exactly as it was in Mr Blacklock's volume. And so with Falconer's poems in which the "lily of the vale" appears. While the characters named by Thomson in his "Seasons" are used by Bruce, though in quite a different sense.

*mire the contents, and ask no troublesome questions."*

Surely this advice was at least convenient. If not the best part of the defence, there is however added what is sadly true, "Logan erred sure enough, and the error has recoiled heavily on his own head." With the knowledge of this, why will these so-called friends of Logan's not let his name and claims rest in silence? It is very clear that none of Bruce's friends would willingly have brought the whole truth of the case once more before the public had it not been for the *persistent carping of Logan's friends.*

## CHAPTER XV

### THE HYMNS SUPPRESSED BY LOGAN, BUT AFTERWARDS PUBLISHED AS HIS OWN IN 1781

THESE form the second portion of the volume which Logan published while in London in 1781, of which there were three editions. In regard to these nine hymns it is sad to find that Logan pursues the same line of conduct, with this difference, as in the poems, that he begins with one by Rev. Dr Doddridge, which had been published by him in 1745. Before entering on the full consideration of these, it may be well to call to mind the circumstances under which they were produced. Rev. Dr Mackelvie tells us that a farmer named Gibson settled in Kinnesswood with his family, all of whom were fond of church music. One of them took pleasure in teaching singing to those who cared to receive his instruction. Among these was a young man, John Buchan, a member of this class, who, afterwards residing elsewhere, had improved himself in this art, returned to his native village and set up a singing-class. Till then the "old eight tunes" were alone used. Indeed some even went so far as to say these eight were all that should be used in congregational worship. They were named French, Dundee, Stilt or York, Elgin, Newton, London, Martyr's and Abbey (tunes). In the practice of song

they were not permitted to use the Psalms, so some silly doggerel rhymes were used for practising. Buchan, who was aware that Bruce could and did write poetry, applied to him for a set of proper or suitable words. Bruce complied with this request, and the verses he furnished being often used, the young folks became familiar with them, and thus they were afterwards able to verify what Bruce had written when seen among Logan's publications. It must be kept in view that at that period nothing but the Psalms were used in church. The evidence gained in this way became the strongest that under the circumstances could be desired. It resulted in two kinds of compositions which Bruce supplied, viz., some of the English hymns simplified and improved, and others that were entirely his own. Logan does not appear to have known this, hence two of these nine hymns he published were improvements on what had been issued by Rev. Dr Doddridge in 1745. The following specimens will illustrate this, and the further alteration of a word in several stanzas by Logan was all he required to constitute it his own.

## THE HYMN BY DR DODDRIDGE

1745

*(As originally published)*

“In latter days the mount of God  
His sacred house will rise  
Above the mountains and the hills,  
And strike the wond’ring eyes.”

1781

*(As Logan published)*

“Behold the mountain of the Lord  
 In latter days shall rise  
 Above the mountains and the hills,  
 And draw the wondering eyes.”

*(As Bruce wrote it and Logan found it)*

“Behold the mountain of the Lord  
 In latter days shall rise  
 On mountain tops above the hills,  
 And draw the wondering eyes.”

## THE OTHER HYMN BY DR DODDRIDGE

1745

“O God of Bethel, by whose hand  
 Thine Israel still is fed,  
 Who thro’ this weary pilgrimage  
 Hast all our fathers led.”

1781

“O God of Abraham, by whose hand  
 Thy people still are fed,  
 Who through this weary pilgrimage  
 Has all our fathers led.”

Logan seems to have been quite satisfied with this as he found it, for he published it so, but was quite unaware whose it had originally been. These two hymns stand as eighteenth and second of the Paraphrases.

The remainder are purely Bruce’s and portions of them are among the Paraphrases. The reader should recollect all these were published without a single word of explanation or even an inverted comma. While these and other pieces were thought to have been Logan’s, great credit was

given him for the other pieces he claimed, but it was a reputation dishonestly obtained. One has expressed himself upon this subject as follows :—  
“It is difficult to restrain one’s indignation against plagiarism so base and audacity so supreme.” Logan had to do with the second issue of the Paraphrases in 1781. It is believed that there were other two hymns, but these had been so changed as to be beyond recognition. No doubt Logan counted much on the death of Alexander Bruce, who lent him his son’s “poem book,” but there remained the poet’s mother, his brother James, and David Pearson, besides others, to witness against him. The entire absence of what Alexander Bruce termed “The Gospel Sonnets” in the 1770 volume of his son’s poems gave rise to the thought that Logan was retaining these for a purpose. So, after waiting for eleven years, the friends of Bruce were not slow in discovering the so-called “Sonnets” in Logan’s volume. Statements to this effect were communicated to the writer by old Mrs Gordon in her ninety-third year, who, as a member of a musical family, had learned the story from her parents in her youth. As has been aptly remarked, Michael Bruce deserves well of his country, and his writings are dear to pious hearts at home and abroad.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MR LOGAN'S LECTURES ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND HIS CONNECTION WITH DR WILLIAM RUTHERFORD

THIS forms another of those curiously complex events in Logan's life over which hangs considerable uncertainty.

Logan had been for some years one of the ministers in South Leith parish, and, besides his usual work, had been engaged writing a variety of articles for the newspapers. He had also cultivated an acquaintance with the leading members of the Edinburgh Presbytery, and had pushed his way into the best society of the city. He had also delivered a course of lectures in "Mary's Chapel" upon the Philosophy of History. These lectures were patronised by some leading men and were much appreciated. The Chair of History in the University becoming vacant, he at once approached his friends as a means of attaining it, expecting that Principal Robertson would aid him for this purpose. The reader should now turn to No. 2 of "Logan's letters," dated 25th January 1780. This shows what he thought of his chance of success as against Mr Tytler, who ultimately was the successful candidate. From this letter turn now to the one marked No. 10. The first half of this clearly



exhibits Logan's opinion regarding Dr Rutherford's book, then about to be published. The title of this work was *A View of Ancient History*. This was in August 1787. When the book arrived in Edinburgh it was seen by members who had listened to Logan's lectures, who soon recognised in it the substance of what Logan had delivered some time before. Yet, strange to say, Logan himself never claimed to be the author of the book mentioned, though it had acquired a high reputation and a rapid sale. Nor did he offer the smallest trace of any written evidence regarding such a purpose. There was a second volume of this work published. Some have tried to modify or explain this by a supposition that these lectures were really Logan's and that he had handed them to Dr Rutherford as a security for a debt. If this was so, the author of this suggestion could not have read Logan's letter already mentioned, where he distinctly testifies to his friend, Dr Carlyle of Inveresk, that *Dr Rutherford* is publishing *A View of Ancient History* and solicits subscribers on *his* behalf, etc. Unlike the case with Michael Bruce's MSS., Dr Rutherford was still alive, so that there was a danger and difficulty in claiming a work so popular at that time. Yet, strange as it may appear, Logan did publish a work entitled *Elements of the Philosophy of History*, intended to be an analysis of his lectures, so far as this related to ancient history. Such, then, is a short outline of

what had been done and published regarding these lectures, and the curious position which Logan is known to have occupied concerning them. The publication of this volume by Logan may have been to get over the difficulty arising in the minds of many regarding the fact that there was first the lectures, then Rutherford's book, with the strange likeness between the two.

#### NOTES

By Logan's biographer, as illustrated in the front of his sermons, particularly in the Edinburgh edition, 1819, and also in the volume of poems of 1805, the best has been made of a poor subject, and much has been assumed, but there are no direct statements of facts on the points which are interesting as bearing on the life of Bruce. It is stated that "during the summers of 1764 and 1765 his muse was not idle, but it is uncertain whether his productions were consigned to oblivion or preserved and moulded afterwards into a form more proper to appear before the public." This statement answers the purpose of leading up to a proof, but there is, unfortunately, not a spark of evidence to uphold it. We have to step forward to 1767 before we get the least trace of Logan's association with poetry *of his own*. When this date is reached the words are "'The Ode to the Cuckoo' was handed about and highly extolled among his literary acquaintances in East Lothian long before its publication, probably (though not certainly) in 1767." This statement, which it is admitted, was not certain, but his inserting it as his own in a small volume published eleven years afterwards seems pretty decisive of his claim. Take this in connection with another statement, "In the summer 1768 he (Logan) accompanied his pupil to Caithness, and *perhaps* it was on his way going or returning that he snatched time to make a short call on the father of Michael Bruce and obtained possession of his MSS. Yet this visit most probably did not take place till the following season, 1769, for it was then that the fact of these MSS. being in his hands was

first known *to his* companions, and the resolution adopted of publishing them by subscription." The above is loaded by two words which materially affect its value as evidence. These are, *perhaps* and *probably*, yet the "perhaps" may be as aptly applied in the negative as in the positive side of the question. But the *probably* can be met by a direct negative, because we have a number of witnesses who have testified that Logan came to Kinnesswood in 1767 shortly after the death of Michael Bruce, and this took place in the month of July, so we may fix the time of his visit as September. Thus it was an easy thing to have seen copies of Bruce's writings which had been copied by Logan handed about in East Lothian. We have not yet heard of any of Logan's poetry till he got Bruce's MSS., and for anyone to assume that after the "Ode to the Cuckoo" had been given to the world as Bruce's by Logan for eleven years, that he should be reasonably entitled to the statement that this is "pretty decisive of his claims of appropriation" is inconceivable. Mr Miller, K.C., who held all Logan's papers from his executors, gives it as his (legal) opinion that this is not so, or that copying the writings of another into a book does not constitute him the author. Much has been made of Logan having had possession of unfinished pieces of Bruce's poetry. That is readily explained, for not only did he get the complete and finished book of Bruce's poetry, but he actually secured those unfinished, first casts which merely the family interest in all that the young poet had handled and left, had preserved. These Logan seems to have shown freely, but who has testified to their having seen the finished book that would have been fatal to Logan's pretensions. If the lines which have been pointed out as inserted into Bruce's "Loch Leven" and other pieces are Logan's, then assuredly his claims to "embellishments" in connection with Logan's poetry are very inaptly applied.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MASTON VINDICATION OF LOGAN

Reply to Rev. W. Tidd Maston's complete vindication of Rev. John Logan—Rev. Dr Mackelvie's intended new edition.

Reply to a complete vindication of the Rev. John Logan, F.R.S.E., from the slanderous charges brought against him by "Mackelvie, Grosart, Brooke, Julian and others," by W. Tidd Maston, for stealing the hymns and poems of Michael Bruce (published in 1892).

THE title page of this threepenny pamphlet, with the large letters employed to illustrate the top line, is at first sight rather alarming. The person to be vindicated appears with his full titles "fore and aft," while the gentlemen he intends to refute are deprived of all reverend consideration, their D.D.'s, LL.D.'s, and other honourable distinctions being quite ignored. The first glance at the production is apt to cause the reader to put it aside on the supposition that an advocate without courtesy is generally wanting in candour, while the absence of these qualifications renders the party unfit for the purpose he has set himself to perform. The opening sentence, however, starts with a truism, and concludes with an assumption, viz. :—

"Nothing sticks like calumny, so rooted is the propensity in human nature to believe the worst

rather than the best about a man, and thus has it fared with the abominable charges of literary felony brought by Mr William Mackelvie of Balgedie to traduce the fair name of one of Scotland's sweetest and truest poets, the much injured John Logan." The person so charged above is presumed to mean Rev. Dr William Mackelvie of Balgedie. As one who knew this gentleman with his kindly open expression, who could look all the world in the face, his manly character, his admiration for truth, who dared to express it too when occasion required, he was about the last man who could be charged justly with what Mr Maston brings against him. It was the fair name and fame of a purer-minded, truer and better man than John Logan that the doctor defended. He contested the question of literary authorship after Logan had for fifty-five years been credited with what he had no claim to. And where is the just man who will justify a proven thief, no matter how long he may have retained his ill-gotten gains. To deny an honest man his own is to become an aider and abettor of such a crime. Dr Mackelvie took the side of the party wronged, and well did he prove the claim. The mode of Mr Maston's vindication is simply to compile a collection of unproven statements of his own making. He calls no witnesses, he tabulates no facts capable of refuting the evidence which has been produced, so that this "vindication" hardly demands an answer, though it cannot

be permitted to pass unchallenged. Much has been made of the hymns, but we have shown that long before (1763-64) Michael Bruce was solicited, when attending a singing-class in his native village, to furnish a set of words or verses suitable for class practice. In church music the Psalms were considered too sacred for practice, so Bruce had recourse to what he knew to be in existence, then known as English hymns. That portions of these improved verses were used in this class practice, and were familiar to the minds of the old folks, who, in youth, attended this class, is pretty evident; also to what extent all of these were original or merely improvements. These were at the same time dear to the ear and heart of Alexander Bruce, the poet's father; so after what they were familiar with as Ralph Erskine's Sonnets Mr Bruce names the above "My Son's Sonnets." Some of these have been fully treated in another chapter. Keeping in mind that about fifteen years had passed since Bruce wrote them, and also the time when Logan openly claimed them, and published them as his own in 1781, yet he had not failed to let it be known that he had such productions past him, and had showed some of them in his own handwriting.

When the poet's father gave up the cherished volume of poems in his much-loved son's handwriting, it may truly be said it was "His poverty and not his will consented." Had Bruce's



MSS. been offered to Logan, and he pressed to publish them, the case might have been different. To give an example of Mr Maston's style of leading evidence, he states at the outset, "I must fix certain dates, for they will be found of material importance. Michael Bruce died in 1767. The 'Ode to the Cuckoo' was handed about among Logan's literary acquaintances in East Lothian during the same year. The father of Michael Bruce placed his son's manuscripts in Logan's hands in 1768 or 1769. Which of the two dates is not very material though Dr R. Douglas of Galashiels, Logan's biographer, thinks the latter date the most probable." This absurd statement is best met by a reference to the evidence of David Pearson, who states distinctly "that it was *shortly after* the young poet's death that Logan visited Kinnesswood and got the manuscripts from the poet's father and *himself*." This in fact was in September of 1767. It is left to the reader to judge whether the statement of Rev. Dr Douglas, who wrote some years after the event, and was a stranger to the persons and facts, or those of David Pearson, the confidential friend of the poet and his family, and who *saw Logan* when he got the MSS. volume and letters, is best able to testify as to the facts on which the whole evidence is built. Add to this, there is the evidence of Alexander Bruce, who gave the volume, etc., to Logan; Ann Bruce, his wife, James Bruce, his son, who were eye-witnesses



and testified to John Birrell and others as to this after the event had taken place.

As for the handing about of copies of the "Ode to the Cuckoo" even in 1767, during the last three months or afterwards, by Logan was quite likely; but who can testify that this was actually done previous to Logan getting the MSS.

Well may David Pearson state that Logan might as well claim the framing of the universe as to have been the author of this ode he knew *so well and so early*. The remarks of James Bruce must be understood only to mean in so far as they refer to his brother's writings, particularly those hymns published by Logan in 1781, viz., "that they were such as had engaged his brother's attention, but as to their being wholly composed by Michael, or only improved versions of what had existed, he did not really know," and yet he was quite conversant with their lines. Had the works of Bruce been published *as he left them* ready for this purpose and the MSS. volume returned, a distinct statement as to all particulars relating to these hymns would have appeared. I am surprised that the very theft of Bruce's MSS. volume by Logan (not odd scrap papers) does not satisfy every honest man that here is damaging evidence of Logan's own making which cannot be got over or explained, *while no single witness can be produced to testify in Logan's favour*, at least such an one as at first hand knew the particulars of the case.

Mr Maston states that he is writing at great disadvantage in consequence of his absence from books sufficient for his purposes. The fact rather is, that Mr Maston suffers from the want of general information of the whole bearings of the case and of evidence which is not to be found in books, but has been searched for and found on the spot where Bruce was born, lived and died, among the family traditions of honest men and women, whose memory was fresh on all that they had learned from their parents. Many of these lived to a great age, and particulars of their evidence have been furnished. There was less difficulty in securing facts in the days when Rev. Dr Mackelvie was gathering materials for his valuable work on Michael Bruce. Mr Maston's manner of referring to Dr Mackelvie, the pastor of a church that had two ~~thousand~~ <sup>hundred</sup> members, and to Alexander Bruce, a man indeed beloved by all who knew him, is paltry indeed. Poor he may have been, but he had a heart full of love and charity, who was not even known to have reviled John Logan for all his unworthy conduct towards him and his son. Only a saint could compose such letters as have here been produced, that would possibly beat Mr Maston to rival, hymn-writer though he tells us he is. When referring to his love for his son's Gospel Sonnets, Maston says:—"But old Bruce cared for nothing else; the literary merits of his son's writings were nothing to him, as witness the fact that

when Bruce went invalided home he had to dispossess himself of some of his most valued books, Shakespeare among them, lest his father should find out that such works were among his reading. That Logan should not have published these pieces tells neither one way nor other." Such remarks have been already answered, but are really beneath contempt. Questions are however prompted by the last remark. Does the stealing of Bruce's MSS. affect the case in Mr Maſton's estimation? Does any length of time condone Logan's unjustifiable conduct? And when all the charges can be fully proved, where is the slander? Mr Maſton, in his ignorance of facts, declares that "Logan's 'Braes of Yarrow' is a perfect gem of lyric verse." The piece is as stated, but it has been satisfactorily proved that it is not Logan's, thanks to Professor Veitch for his exposure of his fraud, as given elsewhere. This is excused as kleptomania, but it cannot pass. Mr Maſton quotes Dr Robert Chambers in Logan's favour, but he forgets that Dr Chambers improved on that by the following:—"No one of Logan's unquestioned pieces makes the slightest approach to Bruce's 'Ode to the Cuckoo' in beautiful simplicity. Logan published this in the posthumous poems of Michael Bruce. Were such literary frauds to be tolerated and editors of posthumous poems allowed to claim and possess without title the best pieces in such volumes, no author's fame resting on such

works would be safe" (see Dr Mackelvie's *Bruce*, page 127 onwards). If this had been consulted by Mr Maston, he would have been better able to judge as to the bearing of facts, and also have been more courteous towards so worthy a Christian gentleman as Rev. Dr Mackelvie. I conclude my reply to Mr Maston's *Complete Vindication* of the Rev. John Logan, F.R.S.E., in the words of a recent writer on this subject:—"I know from personal perusal of Logan's own correspondence and that of his executor, preserved in the Edinburgh University Library, but still unpublished, what a scandalously immoral life this man had been leading, even while a minister of the Gospel at Leith; and how disreputable in many ways was his subsequent career in London. The plagiarism and drunkenness which have hitherto been charged on him are small offences compared with the grosser immoralities which these years reveal. Under this cloud of disgrace Logan left Leith, and the facts were known" [in the circle in which he had moved] "through Logan's executor, and his own last will, providing for his illegitimate children" [by different women].

After this, it shows the kind of material that Logan's vindication is composed of by his *zealous friends*.

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University Library, Edinburgh	- 1
Wyllie, James, Esq., Pathhead, Cockburnspath	- 1
Wise, Mrs, West Manse, Auchtermuchty	- 1
Young, Robert S., Esq., Solicitor, etc., Kinross	- 1