

POEMS AND SONGS

DOUBTFULLY OR INCORRECTLY ASCRIBED TO BURNS.

DOUBTFULLY.

The Vowels:

A TALE.

[FROM CROMEK'S EDITION.]

'T WAS where the birch and sounding thong are ply'd,
 The noisy domicile of pedant pride;
 Where ignorance her darkening vapour throws,
 And cruelty directs the thickening blows;
 Upon a time, Sir Abece the great,
 In all his pedagogic powers elate,
 His awful chair of state resolves to mount,
 And call the trembling vowels to account.—
 First enter'd A, a grave, broad, solemn wight,
 But, ah! deform'd, dishonest to the sight!
 His twisted head look'd backward on his way,
 And fragrant from the scourge he grunted, *ai!*
 Reluctant, E stalk'd in; with piteous race
 The justling tears ran down his honest face!
 That name! that well-worn name, and all his own,
 Pale he surrenders at the tyrant's throne!
 The pedant stifles keen the Roman sound
 Not all his mongrel diphthongs can compound;
 And next the title following close behind,
 He to the nameless, ghastly wretch assign'd.
 The cobweb'd gothic dome resounded Y!
 In sullen vengeance, I, disdain'd reply:
 The pedant swung his felon cudgel round,
 And knock'd the groaning vowel to the ground!
 In rueful apprehension enter'd O,
 The wailing minstrel of despairing woe;
 Th' Inquisitor of Spain the most expert,
 Might there have learnt new mysteries of his art:
 So grim, deform'd, with horrors entering U,
 His dearest friend and brother scarcely knew!
 As trembling U stood staring all aghast,
 The pedant in his left hand clutch'd him fast,
 In helpless infants' tears he dipp'd his right,
 Baptiz'd him *eu*, and kick'd him from his sight.

Song.

Air.—"Maggy Lauder."

[CHAMBERS'S EDITION—FROM "NEW-YORK MIRROR," 1846.]

WHEN first I saw fair Jeanie's face,
 I couldna tell what ail'd me,
 My heart went fluttering pit-a-pat,
 My een they almost fail'd me.
 She's aye sae neat, sae trim, sae tight,
 All grace does round her hover;
 Ae look depriv'd me o' my heart,
 And I became her lover.
 She's aye, aye sae blithe, sae gay,
 She's aye sae blithe and cheerie;
 She's aye sae bonny, blithe, and gay,
 O gin I were her dearie!

Had I Dundas's whole estate,
 Or Hopetoun's wealth to shine in;
 Did warlike laurels crown my brow,
 Or humbler bays entwining—
 I'd lay them a' at Jeanie's feet,
 Could I but hope to move her,
 And prouder than a belted knight,
 I'd be my Jeanie's lover.
 She's aye, aye sae blithe, sae gay, &c.

But sair I fear some happier swain
 Has gain'd sweet Jeanie's favour:
 If so, may every bliss be her's,
 Though I maun never have her.
 But gang she east, or gang she west,
 'Twixt Forth and Tweed all over,
 While men have eyes, or ears, or taste,
 She'll always find a lover.
 She's aye, aye sae blithe, sae gay, &c.

INCORRECTLY.

EVAN BANKS: Johnson's Museum; Currie's first edition; Cromek's Reliques, and several editions since: was written by Helen Maria Williams.

TO THREE, LOV'D NITH: Cromek's Reliques and Blackie's edition, as a fragment: was written by Mrs. Walter Riddel, and sent to Burns.

TO THE OWL: Cromek's Reliques: by a certain John M'Creddie—possibly retouched by Burns.

THE RUINED MAID'S LAMENT: Hogg and Motherwell's edition: most probably by Motherwell himself.

THE JOYFUL WIDOWER: Johnson's Museum—reproduced in Cunningham: certainly not by Burns; may have been very slightly retouched by him; is vulgar and stupid.

SHELAH O'NEIL: Cunningham's edition: seems to be a forgery; or may have been copied by Burns.

PRAYER FOR ADAM ARMOUR: Cunningham's edition: like the 'Epistle to a Tailor,' has all the appearance of being a forgery, and a very dull one—which the 'Epistle' is not.

ON AN EVENING VIEW OF LINCLUDEN ABBEY: Blackie's edition: from internal evidence, cannot be by Burns—is not even a good imitation; prosy and weak.

TO MY BED: Blackie's edition: may be found *verbatim* in "Gentleman's Magazine" for May, 1759, with the initials "R. B." appended. This being the very year in which the Poet himself was born, and the initials of the writer being the same as his own, the curious coincidence may have induced him by and by to copy out the piece entire; which, being found in his hand-writing and with his initials, would be accepted without inquiry as his own. We are indebted for this interesting information to a most intelligent and esteemed correspondent, Sergeant John Sim, Bridge-end, Perth. Independently of the above conclusive evidence, the piece has nothing in it characteristic of Burns, and although in his own hand-writing, and even accompanied with his own initials, might be questioned.

BEFORE I SAW CLARINDA'S FACE: Blackie's edition: this certainly must be a mistake: Burns wrote poetry.

ON THE DEATH OF A FAVOURITE CHILD: Blackie's edition: admitted by the editor to be earlier than Burns.

TO A KISS: Blackie's edition: might be an imitation of Byron or Moore—has no resemblance to Burns.

The above list might be considerably extended; but we have quoted perhaps enough to satisfy our readers how carefully every fragment should be scrutinised before being publicly ascribed to such an author. There were indeed a few songs in the Museum and elsewhere retouched by Burns; but so slightly, that his share in their composition cannot be ascertained. 'O'er the Water to Charlie' is said to have been one of these; and 'Peg-a-Ramsey' more distinctly—which, as a specimen, we may here reproduce.

Peg-a-Ramsey.

CAULD is the e'enin blast
O' Boreas o'er the pool,
And dawin it is dreary
When birks are bare at Yule:
O cauld blows the e'enin blast
When bitter bites the frost,
And in the mirk and dreary drift
The hills and glens are lost:
Ne'er sae murky blew the night
That drifted o'er the hill,
But bonie Peg-a-Ramsey
Gat grist to her mill.

Bonnie Peg.

As I came in by our gate-end,
As day was waxin weary,
O wha came tripping down the street
But Bonnie Peg, my dearie!
Her air sae sweet, and shape complete,
Wi' nae proportion wanting;
The Queen of Love did never move
Wi' motion mair enchanting.
Wi' linked hands, we took the sands
A-down yon winding river;
And, oh! that hour and broomy bower,
Can I forget it ever?

As for the rest, such as 'Meg o' the Mill,' 'There's news, lasses, news,' 'Scroggam,' 'Wat ye what my Minnie did?' &c., if Burns did indeed touch such rubbish as these, it could only be to save them from reprobation; and we cannot but look with grave astonishment at their appearance in any respectable edition of his works under his name.

The following, among some other very doubtful Epigrams, may be found in Blackie's Edition:—

ON THE DEFEAT OF THE AUSTRIANS AT GEMAPPE,
BY DUMOURIER, NOVEMBER, 1792.

THE black-headed eagle,
As keen as a beagle,
He hunted o'er height and o'er howe;
But fell in a trap
On the braes o' Gemappe,
E'en let him come out as he dowe.