

# GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL REMARKS.

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### BURNS COMPARED WITH OTHER LETTER-WRITERS.

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HAVING now arrived at the general mass of our Author's Letters, which are devoted to no special subject nor limited to any particular class of correspondents, and in which a number of his best and most characteristic effusions are to be found, we have less of mere criticism to advance than the extent of the subject might seem to call for. It remains, indeed, only farther to say, critically—that in this general department there is more variety and freedom, more abandon and sometimes even more license of style than in most of what (if we except certain letters to Hill) we have yet had before us; as much luxuriance of humour, of eloquence, of illustration, and more diversity of topic than in almost anything, perhaps, of the same sort to be met with in the same number of pages. At this point, however, to illustrate the principles on which our remarks have hitherto been founded, and to justify in some degree the high opinion we have expressed of our Author's epistolary work in comparison with that of others, we think it almost indispensable to present a parallel or two from the same department of literature.

In judging a Letter critically, two distinct considerations must be taken into account: *first*, the style of its composition—its ease, its elegance, its force; its clearness, its conciseness, its fluency; its adaptation to circumstances or to persons; its

general excellence and perfection, as a piece of artistic workmanship—according to which, its rank as a literary composition must be determined: and *second*, its moral characteristics as an exponent of the writer's mind—such as its frankness, its suggestiveness, its reserve; its sprightliness, its tenderness, its humour; its moral dignity or delicacy, its solemnity, its pathos, as the subject or the case may imply: two considerations in criticism which are entirely distinct, but which in judging of letters can hardly ever be separated. The best intentioned letter in the world might be a comparative failure in composition, and the most perfect piece of epistolary workmanship might be contemptible in moral aspect; so that excellence in one way should by no means be accepted as necessarily implying excellence in the other. But because letters, more than any other sort of composition, are understood to be the transcript of the writer's heart, or the reflection of his mind, or the revelation of himself in various ways,—without which they would be of no value at all—both the moral and the artistic qualities of such compositions are almost invariably taken into account together; indeed, the moral are not improperly preferred; although the highest excellence and variety in both are indispensable to give a letter the highest rank

in its own department of literature. The goodness and the honesty which blunder, are not precisely for epistles; but the elegance or perfection which lies, or fawns, or grossly flatters, or outrages, or insults, damns the writer: prolixity and monotony fatigue, and too much brevity disappoints the reader. In short, it requires heart, intellect, and pen—the heart predominating chiefly—to produce a letter; and nothing short of the finest native instinct, or greatest acquired skill, can regulate their union to perfection.

Letter-writing, as a distinct branch of literature, has been cultivated by some of the most distinguished authors in ancient and modern times; but the letter-writing of the moderns has the advantage, perhaps, of being more varied and natural; and foremost, as well as first, among the letter-writers of modern Europe, the Italians demand our critical attention and homage. As for the ancients, we cannot now afford space for criticism on them, nor would it be of much service in our present work. Cicero, for example, as being purely classic and altogether unimaginative; whose letters, although ornate and beautiful, are more elaborate, didactic, or prosaic works than sympathetic or spontaneous effusions—we need not here quote; nor Pliny. They stand by themselves there, as models of their sort; but have little or nothing in common with the passionate or poetic Scotsman. Before all other letter-writers of the highest reputation, we select at once, for comparison with Burns, the name of Annibal Caro, already referred to, as justly entitled to the very foremost rank in that department. Montaigne, who informs us in his vehement entertaining way, that he had (so early as 1580) not fewer than “an hundred several volumes” of Italian letters in his own library, prefers, without hesitation, to them all, those of Annibal Caro, then recently published; and no one who has glanced at the admirable specimens of epistolary writing long known to the world as the “*Lettere Famigliari*” of that author, can have any doubt at all about his pre-eminence.

Annibal Caro—who, besides being a poet and poetical translator of note, and a dignitary in the church, whose shrewdness and accomplishments together secured his own promotion from the humblest sphere, was a recognised letter-writer

of well-known faculty among his own contemporaries; to whom application for a letter to instruct or to enliven them was their favourite order of the day—had an incomparable style of his own, with a certain interwoven charm of familiar elegance in diction, almost indefinable. We speak from some reasonable acquaintance with his text. The style itself is easy, equable, and varied—equable and varied; respectful, deferential, insinuating; entertaining in narrative, gossiping in detail; persistent and effective; jocular, and solemnly absurd at carnival seasons, or on carnival topics—such as masks and noses; clear, concise, methodical on business affairs, and affectionately earnest on all matters of moment; with a vein of friendliest humour, like quicksilver in solution, pervading all. The diction is always elegant:—no slips in that, no inequalities, no blunders, no mistakes. It may not rise to eloquence, for the writer affects nothing; but it never sinks to commonplace, for he knows his capabilities and his rank. Any topic—social, political, religious, artistic or absurd; or no topic at all, but the simple demand of some friend for a letter, is enough for him. He adopts, or creates, or constitutes a topic, from the instant he puts pen to paper till he kisses hands and retires from view. A perfect, masterly, and accomplished letter-writer is this man. In addition to which, certain moral qualities are conspicuous in his epistles, which ought particularly in the present case to be specified. There is much good nature, much inclination to oblige, much real kindness of disposition; amazing discrimination of character, and an almost incomparable tact, when addressing a correspondent with some object of his own in view. It would be difficult, indeed, to imagine anything more perfect than his manner on such occasions. Yet withal, and in the most delicate or even dangerous cases of that kind, a composure resulting from consciousness of superior capacity is perceptible throughout; so that no result, whatever it might be, should seem to take him by surprise. Some expressions of his, indeed (that might be quoted), in such difficult circumstances, with every possible condition of success or failure implied, addressed to those who might have life or death in their hands, are absolute perfection. In these various qualities as an epistolary writer, and in their combination, he is perhaps unrivalled.



As between him and Burns, there are many points of resemblance in this view of their qualifications—in the ease, the fluency, and the adaptation of language to the character and theme in hand; but there are also points of difference most remarkable, which must now be more minutely specified. The most prominent of these are (1) the passionate abandon and luxury of speech in Burns on any, and conspicuously on certain topics, which is scarcely, if ever, manifest in the ecclesiastic. (2) The occasional restlessness, and inequality of tone corresponding to the constitution of the Poet and the Scotchman, which is totally imperceptible in the Italian and the Priest. With him, all thoughts seem to be regulated, all passions subdued, all personal interests kept in decorous abeyance, and all opinions or expressions on all themes however varied (except where display or prominence would be becoming or imperative), dovetailed and adjusted with absolute nicety, and yet with the utmost ease: Burns also *could* do this, but he did not stoop to do it—did often, in fact, to his own disadvantage, the very reverse. (3) Finally, which makes the characteristic distinction between the men as men, and also as letter-writers—and which those who read them for comparison will do well to note, as indicating a most singular moral power, of opposite description and yet of similar effect, in each—that the one with a sort of passionate eloquence assimilates his correspondent to himself, where the other, with elegant adaptation of thought and language, assimilates himself to his correspondent. Burns sympathetically, sometimes forcibly, appropriates his correspondent—takes for granted that there can be no answer, no reply, no effectual resistance at least, when he speaks: Caro sympathetically allows himself to *be* appropriated; is all things, by anticipation, to all men: but in both cases, the process is effected with the hand of a master, and the effect is substantially the same—the correspondent is attracted, or propitiated, or subdued—stormed or taken—and the writer for the moment is triumphant. In writing to ‘Clarinda’ sometimes, for obvious reasons; and occasionally to Thomson on controverted topics, and in one or two other solitary instances, our Author does indeed adopt the self-assimilating style; but never consistently or long. That style

was, in fact, impossible for him; and he inevitably breaks through it, awkwardly or with violence. To Annibal Caro, on the contrary, it was a second nature. There may be solitary instances in him too, in which a little assumption of conscious superiority, or the slightest strain of vehemence occurs; but it is so qualified with easy badinage, or so interwoven with dexterous compliment, that it is scarcely felt or seen. It is impossible, in fact, in such cases, to tell whether it be there or no. To have been anything else to his correspondent than an accomplished, persuasive, entertaining, and irresistible *alter ego*, would with him have been at once an outrage on etiquette and on humanity. No distinction between two writers of the same sort, and writing undeniably for the most part with the same object—the enlightenment or delectation of their correspondents—in view, could be more obvious or complete. The adroitest of the two was Annibal Caro; the manliest of the two was Robert Burns.

Having attempted such a comparison of our Author with so distinguished a model of epistolary excellence, we can hardly avoid referring for a moment to his English counterpart in style, the amiable and illustrious author of ‘The Task,’ who stands confessedly pre-eminent among the letter-writers of his age and country. Cowper in his easy, fluent, elegant self-adaptation, and in his quiet artistic handling of the slightest, of the very slightest themes—imperceptible almost from their mere tenuity till he developes them, and evanescent until he fixes them in ink—investing them with the interest of new discoveries or dreamy narration in the hush of an afternoon, whilst the clock clicks in the neighbourhood or pictures eye him from the wall, reminds a reader at once of Annibal Caro; is Annibal Caro’s second self, in fact, so far as style is concerned, although Annibal Caro’s life and habits were by no means of the secluded sort. He has not, however, the same versatility of power for all subjects as the old Italian; would labour more conspicuously, for example, in handling certain solemn or painful themes; nor has he the same sort of light-heartedness—unqualified, unscrupulous gaiety of soul. In these, the Italian surpasses him. But he has a light-heartedness of his own, most engaging, most beautiful; and a gentle humour that plays upon the paper like a beam—that could



disport itself without excess among butterflies and tea cups, or indulge its utmost vagaries within the limits of a garden walk; but that would certainly never ensconce itself for observation on a ladder, or sun itself, even in the company of nobles, with arms akimbo at a public-house. As to their treatment of trifles, they differ thus from Burns—that they both systematically make much of their difficulty before beginning, and forewarn you they have nothing to say: he says nothing of difficulties at all, yet leaves an admirable letter out of nothing, in your hands.

Cowper's mere diction is, if possible, more like Caro's than his style—a most perfect arrangement of words and unexceptionable choice of phrases. Some expressions, some entire sentences, indeed, both introductory and valedictory (in which he much excels), seem to be actually copied from Caro; and it is difficult to believe that he was not intimately acquainted with him, although anything like mere appropriation of terms from him is not to be conjectured. His pretty frequent elaboration on the other hand, and careful attention to periods and periodic rhythm, to give point and emphasis and periphrasis their proper place, remind us not only of Caro throughout, but also of Burns's earlier and more studied efforts: there is, however, a perceptible difference in the latter case. In Burns one can perceive that the most studied effort of his is far unequal to express, or oftener to repress, himself. There is more below than any formal utterance of his own is adequate either to conceal or divulge. In Cowper it is just the reverse: nothing remains to be written, after what you see. Burns's early formality was the decorous epistolary performance of a youth eager for applause or conscious of superiority; and was never so perfect as Cowper's: Cowper's, on the other hand, was the finished work of a weaker and a smaller man, thankful to have escaped from madness, and conscious of no other passion; who had no other aspirations of the sort beyond those of the moment—which were to amuse himself or gratify a friend, or illustrate his own piety and narrate his own occupations; and who longed again, good-naturedly, to endite another epistle in another "frank," with the same innocent object in view.

In variety of topics and corresponding variety

of style, there is no comparison to be made between them. There was, indeed, a difference in the circumstances of their lives, and in the respective circles of their acquaintance, sufficient to account for this. The seclusion of Huntingdon and Olney, enlivened by an occasional newspaper, was not very likely to suggest much deep or diversified acquaintance with the world; nor the correspondence of two amiable lady cousins, or a couple of orthodox clergymen of the most exemplary sect, endowed equally with all the graces of the Christian life and all the advantages of comfortable livings, to stimulate to much variety of style or elicit untried gifts of epistolary eloquence. The wonder rather is, how with such correspondents only or chiefly, and subjects alone that could be acceptable to them; with hares and pigeons only for playfellows or dependents, and above all wanting that absorbing passion which blazed in Burns like a fiery fountain of inspiration, his correspondence should be so varied as it is. His uniformity, nevertheless, it must be admitted, borders on monotony, and we long in vain for the appearance of some ruder element to endanger its tranquillity and divert its course. But then, it would no longer have been Cowper's. Upon the whole, it seems evident that, with any number of correspondents and with any choice of topics, Cowper could not have written in a lifetime the same number of first-class letters on the same variety of topics, and to the same multitude of correspondents, that Burns did simultaneously in the course of a few months or years.

In one other respect, on which we desire now to touch most briefly, they also differed widely. Cowper's religion as manifested in his letters—however genuine and consolatory it might be to himself—would have been utterly abhorrent to Robert Burns, and could nowhere have found any place in his correspondence. They were both constitutionally subject to the profoundest religious melancholy, and had both, in their youth at least, a strong tendency to doctrinal speculations in theology; but the relief obtained in their respective cases, even by theoretical apprehension of the truth, was diametrically opposite. In his earlier letters, which are full of it; and wherever else he touches on the theme, it is self, religious self, self-humiliation—that is, unconscious self-compla-



gency; gratitude for gifts of grace, which gifts imply of course his own gracious experience; and most affectionate prayerful concern for the spiritual safety of other men, which means that he and all his are spiritually safe: but apparently, an utter inability to extend religious sympathy beyond the smallest section of the world, or to see anything, or at least much, in the wisdom or providence of God beyond what may contribute to the temporal and eternal advantage of the chosen few. These are traits and topics which, if they pervaded the whole of his correspondence, as happily they do not, would fatigue any general reader; and mark the very narrowest phase of complacent pharisaical childhood. But such was the model religion of the age, in the midst of abounding social and political corruption, and such the sort of piety in which this gifted yet be-clouded soul took refuge. A rebel fancy or two, and some natural longings after social endearments unincumbered with religious bigotries and drawbacks are no doubt to be met with, even among these very epistles, which cannot be concluded *always* in the appropriate solemn style. But in this respect alone, so great a difference appears between him and Burns, that no sort of comparison can be attempted. It is serious contrast, all. Yet the geniality, the humility, and godlike charity of Burns are worth a thousand such scriptural epistolary disquisitions as we frequently find in Cowper, and are a thousand times better atonement for the very rudeness and licence which here and there appear, than the most elaborate declarations of repentance.

It was our intention at this point to have quoted at some length one other illustrious name, more nearly resembling our Author's own than perhaps any other—the name of a poet who, like him, was an extensive and spontaneous letter-writer also; but as our limits now preclude any lengthened notice, we shall content ourselves with but a brief reference to Lord Byron. An elaborate notice of Lord Byron's correspondence, indeed, is perhaps less necessary, inasmuch as a very considerable number of the numerous letters his lordship wrote were more descriptive journals of travel—always admirable, with remarks on society in which he mingled—gossipy and shrewd, or diplomatic communications with respect to Greece, than letters properly so called, or such at least as could be

critically compared with the remains of other letter-writers differently situated. A very considerable number also do not rank much higher than mere hurried scrawls about the typographical emendations, or editorial accuracy of his works, and are hardly therefore to be dignified with the name of letters, although they are included as such among the rest. Of the comparatively small number which remain, from a collection amounting to more than five hundred and fifty, and which as letters, in our acceptance of the term, are to be compared with other letters, two things with respect to their style are first to be considered, before any comparisons can be made at all. In the first place, the sort of language, being at the commencement of the modern era, is perceptibly different from that of Burns or Cowper, who were the last representatives of an older era: and secondly, the tone being essentially aristocratic, with the careless dash of nonchalant indifference about it, insensibly assumed in familiar intercourse with social inferiors and sometimes dependents, with the generous enough purpose of breaking down all conventional barriers between himself and them, gives an air of ease and readiness to the diction which, in other circumstances, it might not have retained. With all these deductions and conditions, however, Lord Byron's correspondence is the correspondence of a great letter-writer, and exhibits some of the finest specimens of epistolary composition in the language.

To speak farther of its literary characteristics, however, the monotony of selfish complaint without cause, and of petulant aspersion of his fellow-creatures without end or object, both of which pervade the whole; and the inexcusable accumulation of oaths, and occasional use of slang, which disfigure so much of it, are faults which must offend the most partial reader. They seem utterly inconsistent with his own indisputable greatness, and drag the writer down to the level of the mere misanthrope or flash-man on town. A murmur of dissatisfaction with himself or the world now and then, as we sometimes find in the best writers, would have been natural or excusable in him; and a passionate ejaculation such as frequently occurs in Burns, or even a downright oath upon occasion, interjected to relieve his spleen or to give piquancy to a dull theme, might be ex-



plained and relished in such a man; but page after page of sneering, of wilful swearing, or of petty scandal, with scarcely the relief of a single tear or the sunshine of a genuine smile—is overwhelming at once to taste and patience. In two hundred and fifty letters we remember only one that afforded ourselves a hearty burst of laughter, and not more than a score that rose to the highest level of dignity or beauty—not one of them with pathos. In his journal, indeed, one pathetic touch about the unlucky shooting of an eaglet, which reminds us much of Burns, appears.

On the moral secrets these letters unfold we have nothing here to advance. Many a noble deed of charity and forbearance they record; many an incomprehensible folly, to say the least of it, they suggest. It is of their literary characteristics alone we now speak. All that we see and blame, or at least lament, might be affectation; if so, it was in sorrowful taste. But the perceptible want of geniality and tenderness, to all but a few literary cronies and admiring worshipping friends, defaces the beauty of the whole scroll; and we sigh with dissatisfaction and regret ourselves in the very reading of it, that he who wrote so easily and well, and might have written so delightfully if he would, should have understood so little, after all, the penman's art of human sympathy. In variety of topic, there is nothing in him at all like Burns; and in appropriate diversity of style—on this or that theme, as it occurs—there is but little approach to him. The student who reads carefully five letters of Lord Byron's (except for biographical purposes) has read fifty in fact. The topics are his own works and travels, his extravagancies, his difficulties, and his contemporaries, with a dash of politics; and the style, the highest—sometimes the lowest—style of the clubs, with postscripts out of number. In this view of the matter, few collections of letters perhaps could be imagined more characteristic or reliable; but beyond that, as in relation to other letter-writers—Burns in particular—the comparison ends. In Burns we have sometimes an oath, and sometimes an indecorum—but sympathy and sincerity always, and slang never.

In concluding these remarks, it is perhaps necessary to observe that they refer to our Author's entire correspondence at large, and not exclusively

to the miscellaneous or any other particular portion of it; and farther, that in making such comparison between him and the highest models of epistolary-writing, we are much disposed to limit our review to letters written by him from after the commencement of his authorship. There are comparatively few indeed before that date, but they are not to be compared in general excellence with those which were then and subsequently indited. It seemed to require the encouragement of decided success to liberate his hand, and induce the flow of humour, and of eloquence by which his correspondence was invariably after distinguished.

Of the miscellaneous correspondence now immediately before us—setting the letters to Mr. Graham of Fintry, which, from their special character, have an importance of their own, aside—and looking to the combination of various elements in the several series, we are inclined to select those addressed to Mr. Ainslie (which, after all, is a series very likely incomplete) as the most characteristic of our Author. The letters of that series still preserved to us are all humorous, natural, and varied—humorous and natural, beyond the ordinary sense of these terms. The letters to Cunningham, which have more of the literary cast about them, without being absolutely literary, are characteristic also, but they are not always so natural; whilst those to Nicol have a good deal of exaggerated banter in them—not rising to perfect humour as those to Ainslie generally do, and sometimes overstepping the fair limitations of banter itself. The letters to Smith, in which mirth and humour verge occasionally on uproar, are excellent specimens of their kind; whilst those to Richmond, Brown, Brice, and Candlish are pretty much what one brother might indite in affectionate confidence to another on affairs of the heart, or on prospects in life in which brothers only had an interest: those to Richmond, however, appear to us extremely beautiful in their way, as specimens of such correspondence. The letters to Ballantyne, Gavin Hamilton, Dalrymple, and others of their standing in society, are necessarily somewhat in the style of letters to a patron; but with such an admixture of freedom and jocularly, nevertheless, as to indicate the independence of the writer. One at least, of those addressed to Gavin Hamilton, is inimitable in its solemn sarcastic tone;



and several other individual specimens are conspicuous in their place. The letters to Muir, which are various, ranging from mere notes of exuberant jocularity to something like religious confessions or consolatory thoughts for a dying man, constitute what seems, unfortunately for the world, to be a hopelessly imperfect series. One fragment only we have been able, through the kindness of an esteemed friend and school-fellow, Mr. John Reid of this city, to add to the previous list; the rest, whatever were, we have reason to believe, are irretrievably lost. Their history, which is somewhat singular, may be briefly stated. One of our Author's earliest friends was the late William Reid, Esq., of Messrs. Brash & Reid, booksellers, Glasgow—himself a poet. Of their friendship we shall hereafter have some interesting details to record: but as regards the present correspondence, the following statement, on his son's authority, must suffice. Muir himself, or members of his family, seem to have had some intimate business or other relations with Mr. William Reid; in consequence of which, not only portions of the correspondence now in question, but a considerable amount of other literary property, the remains of our Author, in Muir's possession, came ultimately into Mr. Reid's hands. Some of these pieces found their way to the world by various uncertain channels—most probably in Stewart's Glasgow edition of 1801. But the correspondence and other miscellaneous documents were, shortly before Mr. Reid's death, accidentally so damaged by water, through an inundation of the Clyde,\* as to be not only illegible, but beyond all hope of restoration. Single fragments recovered from the mass were carefully preserved, and have since from time to time obtained circulation. The remaining documents, still in Mr. John Reid's possession, include two of the letters to Muir; one of

which has already been published almost entire, and both of which we have been kindly permitted to transcribe for the present edition.

But of all the series here represented, that addressed to Mr. Aiken was originally the most beautiful and perfect. Only *three* letters, however, out of twenty or thirty, to that early friend and patron of our Author's, are now extant; and of these, one now appears for the first time. This valuable collection, treasured always with the utmost care, was surreptitiously removed from Mr. Aiken's repositories the very year of the Poet's death, and has never since been heard of. The particulars of this loss we learn from Mr. Aiken's grandson, P. F. Aiken, Esq., Wallcroft House, Bristol, who has politely forwarded us a copy of his aunt Miss Aiken's letter to Allan Cunningham on this, and on some other matters affecting the correspondence. Certain erroneous conclusions by Allan Cunningham, with respect to the continuance of our Author's friendly relation to Mr. Aiken, founded apparently on the want of this correspondence, and other circumstances hereafter to be referred to—occasioned some just regret, if not annoyance, to Miss Aiken; who accordingly addressed the letter in question to Mr. Cunningham, July, 1835, to anticipate the second edition of his *Life and Works of Burns*—which letter, we are sorry to learn, Mr. Cunningham never condescended to answer. So far as the loss of the correspondence is concerned, the following quotation from the document now before us will be interesting:

Having heard in the spring of 1796 that our poor friend was in very bad health, we felt how doubly valuable his letters would be in the event of his death, and I collected them all, and tied them up according to their dates, laying them away safely, as I then thought, before setting out for Dumfries and Liverpool where my brother Andrew was settled as a merchant, and recently married. At the former place I staid some days with my uncle Dr. Copeland, and one of them my emaciated, but still animated friend, Burns, spent delightfully with me there—our last meeting! He, alas, sank rapidly after; and before winter I had much communication with Dr. Currie at Liverpool, our friend and medical man, as to his proposed work: and finding a want of letters, and knowing there were few so favourable to the Poet's memory as those to my father, I wrote to him to send them by the mail. On going to the place where the parcel had been deposited, *it was gone!* and although every exertion was made *then* and often since to

\* In spring of 1831, by the breaking up of the ice on the Clyde above Glasgow, that river came down in such flood as to carry all the vessels then in harbour from their moorings, together with much of the strong breast-work to which they were made fast. All the houses in Clyde Buildings, where Mr. Reid's family then resided, were inundated several feet above the street level, and the inhabitants had to employ ladders from the second storey windows to obtain egress. A pillar, since removed in course of improvements, was erected by the Clyde Trustees at Yoker, opposite Renfrew, to mark the height of the inundation there. Date of flood, Tuesday, February 8, 1831.



discover and recover the Letters, we could never trace them; and we were forced to conclude that a gay youth of some genius, then a clerk of my Father's, had secretly taken them to peruse, and my demand coming unexpectedly he could not *restore* and so had *destroyed* them, as he soon after left his situation and the country, and died some years after without making any discovery. I merely, Sir, state these circumstances to you, to prove that there was no interruption in the correspondence between Burns and my father. \* \* \*

The correspondence, thus lost, extended over a period of ten years, and never ceased till Burns had been long in Dumfriesshire. It is described by Miss Aiken elsewhere in the same letter, as "beautiful, pure and interesting." How an attestation of this kind so honourable to all honestly concerned, and so important to the credit of Burns's memory, should have been contemptuously ignored by Mr. Cunningham, we are much at a loss to imagine—unless he had some theory of his own to maintain, which evidence so unimpeachable would have overthrown. This, indeed, seems to have been the case, as we shall hereafter see. In the meantime, it may be observed that the very letter to Mr. Aiken published by Cunningham himself—(2) in our edition of this series—and misplaced by him, demonstrates the inaccuracy of his own conclusion; and if farther evidence were required, letter (3), now for the first time presented to the public, corroborates Miss Aiken's testimony and finishes the argument.

Of the letters to Graham of Fintry, already alluded to as being of special peculiar interest, we have now farther to add that they are in many respects, both literary and biographical, among the most important in the whole of our Author's correspondence. Mr. Graham was not only a true literary friend—to whom therefore many epistolary poetical effusions, as well as prose letters, were addressed; but he was also a generous professional patron, whose influence at the board of Excise, to procure promotion where possible, or to represent the true facts of the case when defence against injurious accusations was required, was of the utmost value; and to this much honoured influential friend, in both these relations, our Author had frequent occasion to address himself. The letters are all of the very highest rank as epistolary compositions; one of them, indeed—letter (5)

—considering the delicacy of the writer's position in asking or acknowledging so many favours, we hold to be one of the most perfect compositions of its kind (his own included) in any language. Of those which refer to, and contain refutations of, the calumnious charges so frequently made against the writer, about the time of the French Revolution, one—letter (9)—we have already had occasion to lament as unworthy of his own dignity, and could wish almost it had never been indited; but the other which follows on the same subject, and written manifestly with more composure, is a clear, manly, and unexceptionable document, which those who have been accustomed to traduce his conduct or his reputation, in this matter, would do well dispassionately to consider. For this valuable series, originally most incomplete, the world is indebted to the editorial care of Mr. Chambers, through whose instrumentality it was first made known, in its present form, to the public.

Among the remaining documents in this department, with special biographical interest attached, we cannot conclude these general remarks without directing our readers' attention to one now for the first time published, which throws much and long desiderated light on the social and financial difficulties of our Author's later years. The true source of these pecuniary troubles, and of the humiliating embarrassments connected with them, so often obscurely referred to, or misapprehended and misrepresented to his disadvantage, the letter (1) to Captain John Hamilton—most beautiful and affecting in its manly avowal of inability and distress, originating in the purest generosity, in a great measure adequately explains. What the full amount of the disastrous obligation referred to might be, we are not informed, and who the very person was to whom it had been incurred we can only conjecture; but that it was enough to originate a debt which was never discharged, we know, and enough to bring a cloud of despondency on the writer's mind for the brief remaining portion of his life, we see. For such opportune elucidation of this painful subject as the letter in question affords, and for the light which it reflects at last on the whole of that period long so dark, we, and all true friends of the Poet's memory, are indebted to Mr. Mannors of Croydon.





*Engraved by J. Bower from a Photograph by J. M. Walker.*

**BURNS'S MONUMENT, AYR.**

*David Wilson, Publisher, Glasgow.*



# CORRESPONDENCE.

## (1.) To Mr. John Richmond.

EDINBURGH.

*Mossiel, Feb. 17, 1786.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I shall only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have enclosed you a piece of rhyming ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the Muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, "The Ordination," a poem on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; "Scotch Drink," a poem; "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" "An Address to the Devil," &c. I have likewise completed my poem on the "Dogs," but have not shown it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr. Aiken, in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Fergusson, by Connel, and I will remit you the money. I have no news to acquaint you with about Mauchline, they are just going on in the old way. I have some very important news with respect to myself, not the most agreeable—news that I am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith; he is the only friend I have now in Mauchline. I can scarcely forgive your long neglect of me, and I beg you will let me hear from you regularly by Connel. If you would act your part as a friend, I am sure neither good nor bad fortune should strange or alter me. Excuse haste, as I got yours but yesterday.

I am, my dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

## (2.) TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND.

EDINBURGH.

*Mossiel, 9th July, 1786.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WITH the sincerest grief I read your letter. You are truly a son of misfortune. I shall be extremely anxious to hear from you how your health goes on; if it is in any way re-establishing, or if Leith promises well; in short, how you feel in the inner man.

No news worth any thing: only godly Bryan was in the inquisition yesterday, and half the country-side as witnesses

against him. He still stands out steady and denying: but proof was led yesternight of circumstances highly suspicious: almost *de facto*, one of the servant girls made faith that she upon a time rashly entered the house—to speak in your cant, "in the hour of cause."

I have waited on Armour since her return home; not from any the least view of reconciliation, but merely to ask for her health and—to you I will confess it—from a foolish hankering fondness—very ill placed indeed. The mother forbade me the house, nor did Jean show the penitence that might have been expected. However, the priest, I am informed, will give me a certificate as a single man, if I comply with the rules of the church, which for that very reason I intend to do.

I am going to put on sack-cloth and ashes this day. I am indulged so far as to appear in my own seat. *Peccavi, pater; miserere mei.* My book will be ready in a fortnight. If you have any subscribers, return them by Connel. The Lord stand with the righteous: Amen, amen!

R. B.

## (3.) TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND.

*Old Rome Forest,\* 30th July, 1786.*

MY DEAR RICHMOND,

MY hour is now come—you and I will never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at farthest, to repair aboard the Nancy, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica, and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it? Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail till I find security for an enormous sum. This they keep an entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of; and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son-of-the-gospel, "have no where to lay my head." I know you will pour an execration on her head, but spare the poor, ill-advised girl, for my sake; though may all the furies that rend the injured, enraged lover's bosom, await her mother until her latest hour! I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn. I can write no more—let me hear from you by the return of coach. I will write you ere I go.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours here and hereafter,

R. B.

\* [Near Kilmarnock.]



## (4.) TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND.

*Mossiel, 7th July, 1787.*

MY DEAR RICHMOND,

I AM all impatience to hear of your fate since the old confounder of right and wrong has turned you out of place, by his journey to answer his indictment at the bar of the other world. He will find the practice of the court so different from the practice in which he has for so many years been thoroughly hackneyed, that his friends, if he had any connections truly of that kind, which I rather doubt, may well tremble for his sake. His chicane, his left-handed wisdom, which stood so firmly by him, to such good purpose, here, like other accomplices in robbery and plunder, will, now the piratical business is blown, in all probability turn king's evidence, and then the devil's bagpiper will touch him off "Bundle and go!"

If he has left you any legacy, I beg your pardon for all this; if not, I know you will swear to every word I said about him.

I have lately been rambling over by Dumbarton and Inveraray, and running a drunken race on the side of Loch Lomond with a wild Highlandman; his horse, which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather, zigzagged across before my old spavin'd hunter, whose name is Jenny Geddes, and down came the Highlandman, horse and all, and down came Jenny and my bardship; so I have got such a skinful of bruises and wounds, that I shall be at least four weeks before I dare venture on my journey to Edinburgh.

Not one new thing under the sun has happened in Mauchline since you left it. I hope this will find you as comfortably situated as formerly, or, if heaven pleases, more so; but, at all events, I trust you will let me know of course how matters stand with you, well or ill. 'Tis but poor consolation to tell the world when matters go wrong; but you know very well your connection and mine stands on a different footing.

I am ever, my dear friend, yours,

R. B.

[The young friend to whom these letters are addressed was originally a clerk in Mr. Hamilton's office at Mauchline. He removed afterwards to pursue his legal studies in Edinburgh; where he received Burns on his first visit to the capital, in his own humble apartment, Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket. Burns shared both room and bed, and seems to have been on terms of brotherly friendship with his correspondent.]

## (1.) To Mr. John Kennedy,

DUMFRIES HOUSE.

*Mossiel, 3rd March, 1786.*

SIR,

I HAVE done myself the pleasure of complying with your request in sending you my Cottager. If you have a leisure minute, I should be glad you would copy it, and return me either the original or the transcript, as I have not a copy of it by me, and I have a friend who wishes to see it.

"Now, Kennedy, if foot or horse, &c."

ROBT. BURNES.

[Mr. Kennedy, afterwards factor to the Earl of Breadalbane, occupied at this time some office in a similar department at Dumfries House, residence of Patrick, last Earl of Dumfries; from whom, by his only daughter and heiress, it accrued, together with extensive estates, to the family of Bute. The house itself was built by Jean Armour's grandfather, and is situated about half-way between Auchinleck and Ochiltree. The generosity on our Author's part of risking the safety of such a treasure as the "Cotter's Saturday Night," without the security of a duplicate, for the gratification of a comparative stranger, may well excite astonishment, and certainly requires no commentary.]

## (2.) TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

*Mossiel, 20th April, 1786.*

SIR,

By some neglect in Mr. Hamilton, I did not hear of your kind request for a subscription paper 'till this day. I will not attempt any acknowledgment for this, nor the manner in which I see your name in Mr. Hamilton's subscription list. Allow me only to say, Sir, I feel the weight of the debt.

I have here likewise enclosed a small piece, the very latest of my productions.\* I am a good deal pleased with some sentiments myself, as they are just the native querulous feelings of a heart, which, as the elegantly melting Gray says, "melancholy has marked for her own."

Our race comes on a-pace; that much-expected scene of revelry and mirth; but to me it brings no joy equal to that meeting with which your last flattered the expectation of,

Sir, your indebted humble Servant,

R. B.

\*[Lines "To a Mountain Daisy."]

## (3.) TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

*Mossiel, 16th May, 1786.*

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE sent you the above hasty copy as I promised. In about three or four weeks I shall probably set the press a-going. I am much hurried at present, otherwise your diligence, so very friendly in my subscription, should have a more lengthened acknowledgment from,

Dear Sir, your obliged Servant,

R. B.

## (4.) TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

*Kilmarnock, [August,] 1786.*

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR truly facetious epistle of the 3rd inst. gave me much entertainment. I was only sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as I passed your way, but we shall bring up all our leeway on Wednesday, the 16th current, when I hope to have it in my power to call on you and take a kind, very probably

a last adieu, before I go for Jamaica: and I expect orders to repair to Greenock every day. I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class. Could I have got a carrier, you should have had a score of vouchers for my authorship; but now you have them, let them speak for themselves.—

Farewell, dear friend! may guid luck hit you,  
And 'mang her favorites admit you!

If e'er Detraction shore to smit you,  
May nane believe him!

And ony de'il that thinks to get you,  
Good Lord deceive him.

R. B.

## (1.) To Mr. Robert Muir,

KILMARNOCK.

*Mossiel, 20th March, 1786.*

DEAR SIR,

I AM heartily sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as you returned through Mauchline; but as I was engaged, I could not be in town before the evening.

I here enclose you my "Scotch Drink," and "may the — follow with a blessing for your edification." I hope, some time before we hear the gowk,\* to have the pleasure of seeing you at Kilmarnock, when I intend we shall have a gill between us, in a mutchkin-stoup; which will be a great comfort and consolation to,

Dear Sir, your humble Servant,

ROBERT BURNES.

\* [The cuckoo is heard in this country, for the first time in the season, in the month of April.]

## (2.) TO MR. ROBERT MUIR,

KILMARNOCK.

*Mossiel, Friday Morning, [Sept. ? 1786.]*

MY FRIEND, MY BROTHER,

WARM recollection of an absent friend presses so hard upon my heart, that I send him the prefixed bagatelle,\* pleased with the thought that it will greet the man of my bosom, and be a kind of distant language of friendship.

You will have heard that poor Armour has repaid me double. A very fine boy and a girl have awakened a thought and feelings that thrill, some with tender pleasure and some with foreboding anguish, through my soul.

The poem was nearly an extemporaneous production, on a wager with Mr. Hamilton, that I would not produce a poem on the subject in a given time.

If you think it worth while, read it to Charles and Mr. W. Parker, and if they choose a copy of it, it is at their service, as they are men whose friendship I shall be proud to claim, both in this world and that which is to come.

I believe all hopes of staying at home will be abortive; but more of this when, in the latter part of next week, you shall be troubled with a visit from, my dear Sir,

Your most devoted,

R. B.

\* [Copy of "The Calf."]

## (3.) TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.

*Mossiel, 18th Nov., 1786.*

MY DEAR SIR,

INCLOSED you have "Tam Samson," as I intend to print him. I am thinking for my Edinburgh expedition on Monday or Tuesday come se'ennight, for pos. I will see you on Tuesday first.—I am ever, your much indebted,

R. B.

## (4.) [TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.]

MY DEAR SIR,

I DELAYED writing you till I [was] able to give you some rational account of [myself] and my affairs. I am got under the p[atronage] of the Duchess of Gordon, Countess Dowager of Glencairn, Sir John Whitefoord, the Dean of Faculty, Professors Blair, Stewart, Gre[gory] and several others of the noblesse and literati. I believe I shall begin at Mr. Creech's as [publisher]. I am still undetermined as to the future; and, as usual, [ne]ver think of it. I have now neither house nor home that I can call my own, but live on the world at large. I am just a poor wayfaring Pilgrim on the road to Parnassus; thoughtless wanderer and sojourner in a strange land. [I] received a very kind letter from Mr. A. Dalziel, for which please return him my thanks; and [tell] him I will write him in a day or two. Mr. Parker, Charles, Dr. Corsan, and honest John [Wilson?] quondam printer, I remember in my prayers when I pray in rhyme. To all of [whom], till I have an opportunity \* \* \* \*

*Edinr., 15th Dec., 1786.*

I forgot to tell you how honest-hearted [Andrew?] and [his wife?] Matty \* \* \* \* She is [no]blest of the Creator's \* \* \* \*

[The above fragment, which has no address, but which manifestly, from the names and references which occur in it, belongs to this series, we carefully print from original in possession of our friend John Reid, Esq., Kingston Place, Glasgow; to whom, for this and other similar favours we have again to record our acknowledgments. In consequence of this letter, Mr. Muir seems to have interested himself on behalf of the Edinburgh edition, which is acknowledged in the next letter, in our Author's affectionate but independent manner. In filling up the blanks (occasioned, as we have already explained how, p. 139,) the only two about which we have any doubt are those in the concluding sentence; but we are much disposed to believe that the parties alluded to are Andrew Bruce and his wife, or some other female relative, mentioned in letter (6), who seem to have been well known to the Kilmarnock folk, and to whose care, it appears, the letters for Burns from Kilmarnock were addressed. So much, however, is but conjecture.]



(5.) TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.

*Edinburgh, Dec. 20th, 1786.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE just time for the carrier, to tell you that I received your letter; of which I shall say no more but what a lass of my acquaintance said of her bastard wean; she said she "did na ken wha was the father exactly, but she suspected it was some o' the bonny blackguard smugglers, for it was like them." So I only say your obliging epistle was like you. I enclose you a parcel of subscription bills. Your affair of sixty copies is also like you: but it would not be like me to comply.

Your friend's notion of my life has put a crotchet in my head of sketching it in some future epistle to you. My compliments to Charles and Mr. Parker.

R. B.

(6.) TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.

*Stirling, 26th August, 1787.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I INTENDED to have written you from Edinburgh, and now write you from Stirling to make an excuse. Here am I, on my way to Inverness, with a truly original, but very worthy man, a Mr. Nicol, one of the masters of the High School in Edinburgh. I left Auld Reekie yesterday morning, and have passed, besides by-excursions, Linlithgow, Borrowstounness, Falkirk, and here am I undoubtedly. This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for Old Caledonia, over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen by the setting sun the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich carse of Falkirk. The crops are very strong, but so very late, that there is no harvest, except a ridge or two perhaps in ten miles, all the way I have travelled from Edinburgh.

I left Andrew Bruce and family all well. I will be at least three weeks in making my tour, as I shall return by the coast, and have many people to call for.

My best compliments to Charles, our dear kinsman and fellow-saint; and Messrs. W. and H. Parkers. I hope Hughoe is going on and prospering with God and Miss M'Causlin.

If I could think on any thing sprightly, I should let you hear every other post; but a dull, matter-of-fact business, like this scrawl, the less and seldomer one writes the better.

Among other matters-of-fact I shall add this, that I am and ever shall be, my dear Sir,

Your obliged,

R. B.

(7.) TO MR. ROBERT MUIR.

*Mossiel, 7th March, 1788.*

I HAVE partly changed my ideas, my dear friend, since I saw you. I took old Glenconner with me to Mr. Miller's farm, and he was so pleased with it, that I have wrote an offer to Mr. Miller, which, if he accepts, I shall sit down a plain farmer—the happiest of lives when a man can live by it. In this case I shall not stay in Edinburgh above a week. I set out on Monday, and would have come by Kilmarnock, but there are several small sums owing me for my first edition about Galston and Newmills, and I shall set off so early as to dispatch my business and reach Glasgow by night. When I return, I shall devote a forenoon or two to make some kind of acknowledgment for all the kindness I owe your friendship. Now that I hope to settle with some credit and comfort at home, there was not any friendship or friendly correspondence that promised me more pleasure than yours; I hope I will not be disappointed. I trust the spring will renew your shattered frame, and make your friends happy. You and I have often agreed that life is no great blessing on the whole. The close of life, indeed, to a reasoning eye, is

"Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun  
Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams  
Athwart the gloom profound."

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broke machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so; at least there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants: if that part of us called Mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with old-wife prejudices and tales! Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence, they have often, perhaps always, been deceived: a man conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow-creatures—even granting that he may have been the sport at times of passions and instincts—he goes to a great unknown Being, who could have no other end in giving him existence but to make him happy; who gave him those passions and instincts, and well knows their force.

These, my worthy friend, are my ideas; and I know they are not far different from yours. It becomes a man of sense to think for himself; particularly in a case where all men are equally interested, and where indeed all men are equally in the dark.

These copies of mine you have on hand: please send ten of them to Mr. John Ballantine, of the Bank in Ayr; for the remainder, I'll write you about them from Glasgow.

Adieu, my dear Sir! God send us a cheerful meeting—

ROBT. BURNS.

[This letter, important in many ways, is printed by us from original copy now in possession of Mr. John Reid, Kingston Place, Glasgow. The external address is to Mr. Robert Muir, wine merchant, Kilmarnock, and it is probably the last letter now extant (as already explained) of those addressed by our Author to that correspondent. How long Mr. Muir survived after this date, we are not at present able to determine. That his death, however, had taken place sometime, perhaps shortly, before the month of December, 1789, appears from letter (24) to Mrs. Dunlop (p. 21); so that several letters, now supposed to be lost, may have been addressed to him during this interval.]



## (1.) To Mr. [Robert] Aiken.

[VERBATIM.]

DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED your kind letter with double pleasure, in\* account of this second flattering instance of Mrs. C.'s notice and approbation. I assure you I

"Turn out the brunt side o' my shin,"

as the famous Ramsay of jingling memory says, at such a Patroness. Present her my most grateful acknowledgements, in your very best manner of telling Truth. I have inscribed the following stanza on the blank leaf of Miss More's works:—

Thou flatt'ring mark of friendship kind, &c.†

My proposals for publishing I am just going to send to the press. I expect to hear from you first opportunity.

I am ever, dear Sir, yours,

ROBT. BURNES.

Mossgiel, 3rd April, 1786.

\* [So, in original, distinctly—possibly by mistake for *on*.]

† [See Posthumous Poetical Works.]

[We need hardly remind our readers that Mr. Aiken was the esteemed friend and patron to whom "The Cotter's Saturday Night" was inscribed. He seems to have been a man of most amiable disposition, of fine taste, and of the highest honour. To his review many of our Author's earliest productions were submitted, and he ensured a sort of publicity for these by the admirable manner in which he read or recited them to his own friends in private. He was in this respect peculiarly entitled to be called the Patron of the Poet's "Virgin Muse"—for according to our Author's own account, "Mr. Aiken read me into fame." Mr. Aiken died at Ayr, March 24, 1807.

The above letter, by kind permission, we print from the original, which is now in possession of Mr. Edward Broadfield of this city, who received it from a Mr. James M'Creadie, Ayr, about 14 years ago—that is, about 1854. Its history beyond this, we regret to say, is not now known; but the letter has been folded and docketed in the usual business style.—

Mossgiel :  
3d April, 1786.  
R. Burns to  
Mr. Aiken.

We are thus particular for reasons which the reader can now understand, in hopes that some intelligence may possibly be obtained of letters still awaiting in this important series.]

## (2.) TO MR. ROBERT AIKEN.

[A little after Oct. 6? 1786.]

SIR,

I WAS with Wilson, my printer, t'other day, and settled all our by-gone matters between us. After I had paid him all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of the first and readiest, which he declines. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing about fifteen or sixteen: he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition till I grow richer! an epocha which I think will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely any thing hurts me so much in being

disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to show my gratitude to Mr. Ballantine, by publishing my poem of "The Brigs of Ayr." I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable in a very long life of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations; but I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection, but sheerly the instinctive emotion of my heart, too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the Excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequence of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides, I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society or the vagaries of the Muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it. \* \* \* \*

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul: though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet, I think I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stunted bourne of our present existence; if so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? Oh thou great unknown Power!—thou Almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality!—I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me! \* \* \* \*

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power, in that way, to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages, is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail farther misery—\* \* \* \*

To tell the truth, I have little reason for complaint; as the world, in general, has been kind to me fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining, distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while all defenceless I looked about in vain for a cover. It never



occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast), still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be done. When all my school-fellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the "hallachores" of the human race) were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was "standing idle in the market-place," or only left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim. \* \* \* \*

You see, Sir, that if to know one's errors were a probability of mending them, I stand a fair chance; but according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it.

[In the conjectural date of this imperfect letter we adopt Mr. Chambers's suggestion. It was manifestly written at least after the settlement of accounts with Wilson and the proposal for a new edition made to him, to which it refers. In Cunningham's edition, although no date except the year is assigned to this letter, the letter itself is placed in order between June 12 and July 9, which is obviously incorrect, because the first edition of the Poems had not then been published; and on the contents of a letter assumed by him to have been written by Burns to Mr. Ballantine (1), also without date, but in order before July 17, and certainly before publication of the Poems, he formed the supposition that some "coldness" had occurred between Burns and Mr. Aiken. The above letter to that gentleman, so full of gratitude and confidence, absolutely disproves the truth of any such supposition. If "coldness" ever did exist, it must have been short, and easily removed—which, in Burns's mind at least, would have been a kind of moral impossibility. Compare note on above letter to Ballantine.]

(3.) TO MR. ROBERT AIKEN.

DEAR PATRON OF MY VIRGIN MUSE,

I WROTE Mr. Ballantine at large all my operations and "eventful story," since I came to town.—I have found in Mr. Creech, who is my agent forsooth, and Mr. Smellie who is to be my printer, that honor and goodness of heart which I always expect in Mr. Aiken's friends. Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield I shall ever remember: my Lord Glencairn I shall ever pray for. The Maker of man has great honor in the workmanship of his lordship's heart. May he find that patronage and protection in his guardian angel that I have found in him! His lordship has sent a parcel of subscription bills to the Marquiss of Graham, with downright orders to get them filled up with all the first Scottish names about Court.—He has likewise wrote to the Duke of Montague and is about to write to the Duke of Portland for their Graces' interest in behalf of the Scotch Bard's subscription.

You will very probably think, my honored friend, that a hint about the mischievous nature of intoxicated vanity may not be unseasonable; but, alas! you are wide of the mark.—Various concurring circumstances have raised my

fame as a Poet to a height which I am absolutely certain I have not merits to support; and I look down on the future as I would into the bottomless pit.—

You shall have one or two more bills when I have an opportunity of a Carrier.

I am ever,

with the sincerest gratitude,

Honored Sir,

Your most devoted humble servt.,

ROBERT BURNS.

Edinr., 16th Dec., 1786.

[Addressed Mr. Robert Aiken, Writer, Ayr.—This letter, which came to light in Glasgow at the centenary celebration of the Poet's birth, was acquired for the late James Crum, Esq., of Busby, a devout admirer of his genius. It appears in this collection by the courteous permission of Mr. Crum's widow; and, with the exception of the following—(4)—is presumably the only remaining extant letter of the series addressed to Mr. Aiken. There is certainly no appearance of any diminution of respect or gratitude towards Mr. Aiken on the writer's part in either.]

(4.) TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.,

AYR.

[Mauchline, July, 1787.]

MY HONORED FRIEND,

THE melancholy occasion of the foregoing poem affects not only individuals but a country. That I have lost a friend is but repeating after Caledonia. This copy, rather an incorrect one, I beg you will accept, till I have an opportunity in person, which I expect to have on Tuesday first, of assuring you how sincerely I ever am,

Honored and dear Sir,

Your oft obliged,

ROBT. BURNS.

MR. H——'s Office,

Saturday Evening.

[This letter which we print, with thanks, from original in Mr. P. F. Aiken's possession (Bristol), was written most probably in the beginning of July, from Mr. Hamilton's office, Mauchline. The poem it enclosed was the Elegy on Sir J. H. Blair, Bart., who died on the 1st of July, 1787. Burns, wherever else he might be in the interval, spent the month of July at Mauchline, from which he returned again to Edinburgh in the beginning of August. The Elegy, therefore, must have been written in the meantime. (Compare note on Elegy—Posthumous Poetical Works.) Along with the above document we receive from Mr. Aiken the following interesting statement in reference to the lost correspondence between our Author and Robert Aiken, Esq.:—

"It was pre-eminently valuable, not only as being addressed to his early, and, I believe, his constant friend and patron, but because, as his best poems were successively written, they were sent to my grandfather—in whose friendship and literary taste Burns had confidence; and each letter was, in some degree, the Poet's commentary on his own composition, descriptive of the circumstances by which it was suggested, and the feelings which prompted or influenced it. One cannot but deplore the loss of such an accompaniment to The Cotter's Saturday Night, Tam o' Shanter, The Mouse, &c." The *Lost Correspondence*, restored only to the extent of a single letter, we now commit to the affectionate solicitude and research of our readers everywhere, in Great Britain and America. If it anywhere yet exists, let it be forthcoming. The above letter, we may add, comes to hand after our editorial remarks, p. 139, are in type.]



To Mr. M'Whinnie,

WRITER, AYR.

*Mossiel, 17th April, 1786.*

It is injuring some hearts, those hearts that elegantly bear the impression of the good Creator, to say to them you give them the trouble of obliging a friend; for this reason, I only tell you that I gratify my own feelings in requesting your friendly offices with respect to the enclosed, because I know it will gratify yours to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

I have sent you four copies, as I have no less than eight dozen, which is a great deal more than I shall ever need.

Be sure to remember a poor poet militant in your prayers. He looks forward with fear and trembling to that, to him, important moment which stamps the die with—with—with, perhaps the eternal disgrace of, my dear Sir,

Your humbled, afflicted, tormented,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1.) To Mons. James Smith,

MAUCHLINE.

*Monday Morning, Mossiel [1786].*

MY DEAR SIR,

I WENT to Dr. Douglas yesterday, fully resolved to take the opportunity of Captain Smith: but I found the Doctor with a Mr. and Mrs. White, both Jamaicans, and they have deranged my plans altogether. They assure him that to send me from Savannah la Mar to Port Antonio will cost my master, Charles Douglas, upwards of fifty pounds; besides running the risk of throwing myself into a pleuritic fever, in consequence of hard travelling in the sun. On these accounts, he refuses sending me with Smith, but a vessel sails from Greenock the first of September, right for the place of my destination. The Captain of her is an intimate friend of Mr. Gavin Hamilton's, and as good a fellow as heart could wish; with him I am destined to go. Where I shall shelter, I know not, but I hope to weather the storm. Perish the drop of blood of mine that fears them; I know their worst, and am prepared to meet it:—

"I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,  
As lang's I dow."

On Thursday morning, if you can muster as much self-denial as to be out of bed about seven o'clock, I shall see you as I ride through to Cumnock. After all, Heaven bless the sex! I feel there is still happiness for me among them:—

"O woman, lovely woman! Heaven designed you  
To temper man!—we had been brutes without you."

R. B.

[James Smith, our readers are doubtless aware, was the friend to whom the celebrated Epistle by our Author is addressed: Compare note on which, Poetical Works, p. 96.]

(2.)

TO MR. JAMES SMITH,

AT MILLER AND SMITH'S OFFICE, LINLITHGOW.

*Mauchline, 11th June, 1787.*

MY EVER DEAR SIR,

I DATE this from Mauchline, where I arrived on Friday even last. I slept at John Dow's, and called for my daughter; Mr. Hamilton and family; your mother, sister, and brother; my quondam Eliza, &c., all, all well. If any thing had been wanting to disgust me completely at Armour's family, their mean, servile compliance would have done it.

Give me a spirit like my favorite hero, Milton's Satan:

Hail, horrors! hail,  
Infernal world! and thou profoundest hell  
Receive thy new possessor! one who brings  
A mind not to be changed by place or time!

I cannot settle to my mind.—Farming, the only thing of which I know any thing, and heaven above knows, but little do I understand of that, I cannot, dare not risk on farms as they are. If I do not fix, I will go for Jamaica. Should I stay in an unsettled state at home, I would only dissipate my little fortune, and ruin what I intend shall compensate my little ones, for the stigma I have brought on their names.

I shall write you more at length soon; as this letter costs you no postage, if it be worth reading you cannot complain of your penny-worth.

I am ever, my dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

P.S.—The cloot has unfortunately broke, but I have provided a fine buffalo-horn, on which I am going to affix the same cypher which you will remember was on the lid of the cloot.\*

\* [A calf's cloot, polished and ornamented, was a favourite snuff-box in those days.]

[Mr. Chambers's edition of this letter differs considerably from above, which is nearly Cunningham's.]

(3.)

TO MR. JAMES SMITH,

LINLITHGOW.

*June 30, 1787.*

[MY DEAR FRIEND,]

ON our return, at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid formal movements; the ladies sung Scotch songs like angels, at intervals; then we flew at Bab at the Bowster, Tullochgorum, Loch Erroch Side, &c., like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or craws prognosticating a storm in a hairst day.—When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six; except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Benlomond. We all kneeled; our worthy landlord's son held the bowl; each man a full glass in his hand; and I, as priest, repeated some



rhyming nonsense, like Thomas-a-Rhymer's prophecies I suppose.—After a small refreshment of the gifts of Somnus, we proceeded to spend the day on Lochlomond, and reach Dumbarton in the evening. We dined at another good fellow's house, and consequently pushed the bottle; when we went out to mount our horses, we found ourselves "No vera fou but gaylie yet." My two friends and I rode soberly down the Loch side, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gaily mounted, fell sadly astern; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, she strained past the Highlandman in spite of all his efforts with the hair halter. Just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's brockless a—e in a clipt hedge; and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny Geddes trode over me with such cautious reverence, that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future.

I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon. I was going to say, a wife too; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of the house of Parnassus, and like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue, if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry.

I am afraid I have almost ruined one source, the principal one, indeed, of my former happiness—that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. My heart no more glows with feverish rapture. I have no paradisaical evening interviews, stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only \* \* \* \*. This last is one of your distant acquaintances, has a fine figure, and elegant manners; and, in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal; but what piques me is her conduct at the commencement of our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in ———, and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp round the waist, I ventured, in my careless way, to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms; and after her return to ———, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words farther than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve, like a mounting lark in an April morning; and wrote me an answer which measured me out very completely what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climate of her favour. But I am an old hawk at the sport, and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aerial towerings, pop, down at my foot, like Corporal Trim's hat.

As for the rest of my acts, and my wars, and all my wise

sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes, they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by

R. B.

[Mr. Chambers conjectures that Mr. Kennedy, formerly resident at Dumfries House, but now probably removed to this neighbourhood, had introduced our Author to this hospitable society; and that Mr. M'Aulay of Dumbarton was certainly one of his entertainers.]

(4.) TO MR. JAMES SMITH,  
AVON PRINTFIELD, LINLITHGOW.

*Mauchline, April 28, 1788.*

BEWARE of your Strasburgh, my good Sir! Look on this as the opening of a correspondence, like the opening of a twenty-four gun battery!

There is no understanding a man properly, without knowing something of his previous ideas (that is to say, if the man has any ideas; for I know many, who in the animal-muster pass for men, that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, 1·25—1·5—1·75 or some such fractional matter); so to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

"Bode a robe and wear it,"<sup>a</sup>

says the wise old Scots adage! I hate to presage ill-luck; and as my girl has been *doubly* kinder to me than even the best of women usually are to their partners of our sex, in similar circumstances, I reckon on twelve times a brace of children against I celebrate my twelfth wedding-day: these twenty-four will give me twenty-four gossipings, twenty-four christenings (I mean one equal to two), and I hope, by the blessing of the God of my fathers, to make them twenty-four dutiful children to their parents, twenty-four useful members of society, and twenty-four approved servants of their God!

"Light's heartsome," quo' the wife when she was stealing sheep. You see what a lamp I have hung up to lighten your paths, when you are idle enough to explore the combinations and relations of my ideas. 'Tis now as plain as a pike-staff, why a twenty-four gun battery was a metaphor I could readily employ.

Now for business.—I intend to present Mrs. Burns with a printed shawl, an article of which I dare say you have variety: 'tis my first present to her since I have *irrevocably* called her mine, and I have a kind of whimsical wish to get her the said first present from an old and much-valued friend of hers and mine, a trusty Trojan, on whose friendship I count myself possessed of a life-rent lease. \* \* \* \*



Look on this letter as a "beginning of sorrows;" I'll write you till your eyes ache with reading nonsense.

Mrs. Burns ('tis only her private designation) begs her best compliments to you.

R. B.

\* [The entire proverbial couplet runs—

"Bode a robe and wear it,  
Bode a poke and bear it:"

but as the writer did not wish "to presage *ill-luck*," he quotes only the pleasant first half of it—at least so, according to Cromek, whose edition we take to be correct.]

(1.) To Mr. David Brice.

*Mossiel, June 12, 1786.*

DEAR BRICE,

I RECEIVED your message by G. Paterson, and as I am not very throng at present, I just write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate, as your humble servant, still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say, in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you that will give me any pleasure to mention, or you to hear.

Poor ill-advised ungrateful Armour came home on Friday last. You have heard all the particulars of that affair, and a black affair it is. What she thinks of her conduct now, I don't know; one thing I do know—she has made me completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her; and, to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all, though I won't tell her so if I were to see her, which I don't want to do. My poor dear unfortunate Jean! how happy have I been in thy arms! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely: I foresee she is in the road to, I am afraid, eternal ruin. \* \* \* \*

May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her: and may his grace be with her and bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her: I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure: the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then, farewell dear old Scotland! and farewell dear ungrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more.

You will have heard that I am going to commence *Poet* in print; and to-morrow my works go to the press. I expect it will be a volume of about two hundred pages—it is just the last foolish action I intend to do; and then turn a wise man as *fast as possible*.

Believe me to be, dear Brice,  
Your friend and well-wisher,

R. B.

(2.) TO MR. DAVID BRICE,  
SHOEMAKER, GLASGOW.

*Mossiel, 17th July, 1786.*

I HAVE been so throng printing my Poems, that I could scarcely find as much time as to write to you. Poor Armour is come back again to Mauchline, and I went to call for her, and her mother forbade me the house, nor did she herself express much sorrow for what she has done. I have already appeared publicly in church, and was indulged in the liberty of standing in my own seat. I do this to get a certificate as a bachelor, which Mr. Auld has promised me. I am now fixed to go for the West Indies in October. Jean and her friends insisted much that she should stand along with me in the kirk, but the minister would not allow it, which bred a great trouble I assure you, and I am blamed as the cause of it, though I am sure I am innocent; but I am very much pleased, for all that, not to have had her company. I have no news to tell you that I remember. I am really happy to hear of your welfare, and that you are so well in Glasgow. I must certainly see you before I leave the country. I shall expect to hear from you soon, and am,

Dear Brice, yours,

R. B.

[FROM CUNNINGHAM'S EDITION.]

(1.) To John Ballantyne,  
OF AYR.

HONOURED SIR,

MY proposals came to hand last night, and knowing that you would wish to have it in your power to do me a service as early as any body, I enclose you half a sheet of them. I must consult you, first opportunity, on the propriety of sending my quondam friend, Mr. Aiken, a copy. If he is now reconciled to my character as an honest man, I would do it with all my soul; but I would not be beholden to the noblest being ever God created, if he imagined me to be a rascal. Apropos, old Mr. Armour prevailed with him to mutilate that unlucky paper yesterday. Would you believe it? though I had not a hope, nor even a wish, to make her mine after her conduct; yet, when he told me the names were all out of the paper, my heart died within me, and he cut my veins with the news. Perdition seize her falsehood!

R. B.

*We invite the reader's special attention to the following note.*

[This letter, which has neither date nor address, and is most probably a mere scroll, seems to have been discovered by Allan Cunningham, who, without hesitation, allocates it to Mr. Ballantine, and prefixes the following note: "There is a plain account in this letter of the destruction of the lines of marriage which united, as far as civil contract in a matter civil can, the Poet and Jean Armour. Aiken was consulted, and in consequence of his advice the certificate of marriage was destroyed." With reference to which allegation, Miss Aiken, in the letter already quoted (p. 139) addressed to Mr. Cunningham, says—



"I was much distressed by the impression left on the public mind by the 18th letter in the 6th volume, without date and believed to have been addressed to my relative Mr. Ballantine; and would immediately have written to you on the subject, had not the last volume of your work been published before I saw it. It was only yesterday that I learnt from my cousins, the Misses Stewart of Afton, that a second edition is now in the press, and I hope to anticipate the re-publication of your 6th volume by stating, that I am *sure* no such letter as the above was received by Mr. Ballantine, and unless I saw the autograph I cannot believe that it was ever written by the Poet. Because, however grieved my father was on his account for all his irregularities, Mr. Aiken had no knowledge of or interest in the Armours, even if his principles could have allowed him to be a party in any such transaction, which was *impossible*. Besides, as there never was any interruption in their friendship or correspondence, Burns could not have applied the phrase *quondam friend* to my father, and your idea in the note\* that they were no longer correspondents is quite a mistake. \* \* \* The sacred motive which prompts this communication, will, with a man of your feeling, be I hope sufficient apology for, Sir,

Yours, &c.

GRACE AIKEN."

Ayr, 6th July, 1835.

Allan Cunningham, we regret to say, neither acknowledged this communication, nor made any correction of his text in consequence. The only explanation of this neglect we can imagine is, that believing the document in question to be genuine, and having founded some theory of his own upon its contents, he did not feel disposed to withdraw it. But the document might be genuine and yet written in error; and, having been so written in error, was therefore *never* sent, nor even addressed, to the party for whom it was intended; in which case, it ceased to be a document at all in the cause to which it referred, and should never have been founded on for *any conclusion whatever*. Mr. Cunningham ought at least to have added a mark of interrogation to the address of the letter, or to have placed the address in brackets, to intimate its absence or uncertainty in the original. Compare concluding note to this series.

We are thus particular, because Mr. Chambers, influenced apparently by the boldness of Allan Cunningham's assumption, not only adopts his view but speaks of Mr. Aiken as having "presided on the occasion" (vol. ii. 201); and because, until present evidence came before us, we were ourselves (Biography p. xxv.) of the same opinion. The whole affair seems now to be an apocryphal myth, originating in the Poet's own misapprehension, or in some angry threat of Mr. Armour's—in which Mr. Aiken's name might be incautiously used—to perplex and punish him. This we believe to be the simple truth regarding Burns's marriage, which never *was*, and never *could* be dissolved by any such irregular proceeding, even if it had been adopted—which it was not, although the Poet in his passionate frenzy believed it had; and the conviction, thus originated, has been confirmed and circulated by mere reiteration to the present day. It should now cease, unless supported by other and much clearer evidence.]

\* [See note on letter (2) to Mr. Aiken.]

[FROM CROMEK'S EDITION.]

(2.) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.,  
BANKER, AYR.

Edinburgh, 13th Dec., 1786.

MY HONORED FRIEND,

I WOULD not write you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and my matters, which, by the bye, is often no easy task. I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight, and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable head-ache and stomach complaint, but am now a good deal better. I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember, when time shall be no more. By his interest it is passed in the "Caledonian Hunt," and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition, for which they are to pay one guinea. I have been introduced to a good many of the *Noblesse*, but my avowed

patrons and patronesses are the Duchess of Gordon—the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord, and Lady Betty—the Dean of Faculty—Sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati; Professors Stewart, Blair, and Mr. Mackenzie—the Man of Feeling. An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire bard with Mr. Sibbald, which I got. I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq., brother to the Justice Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him, by invitation, at his own house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two, next post; when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr. Aiken. I saw his son to-day, and he is very well.

Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called *The Lounger*, a copy of which I here enclose you. I was, Sir, when I was first honored with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation.

I shall certainly, my ever honored patron, write you an account of my every step; and better health and more spirits may enable me to make it something better than this stupid matter-of-fact epistle.

I have the honor to be, good Sir,

Your ever grateful humble servant,

R. B.

If any of my friends write me, my direction is, care of Mr. Creech, bookseller.

[The reader may compare this letter with letter (4) to Mr. Robert Muir, and also with letter (3) to Mr. Aiken. They contain many similar expressions, and have been written all in immediate succession.—The Lady Betty here alluded to was Lady Betty Cunningham: and the paper alluded to was the review of our Author's poems by Mackenzie the celebrated author of the 'Man of Feeling.']

(3.) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

Edinburgh, Jan. 14, 1787.

MY HONORED FRIEND,

IT gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie Gaw's Skate, "past redemption;" for I have still this favorable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teazes me eternally till I do it.

I am still "dark as was Chaos" in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr. Patrick Miller, has been talking with me about a lease of some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought, near Dumfries. Some life-rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier any where than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr. Miller is no judge of land; and though I dare say he means to favor me, yet he may give me,



in his opinion, an advantageous bargain that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries as I return, and have promised to meet Mr. Miller on his lands some time in May.

I went to a Mason-lodge yesternight, where the most Worshipful Grand Master Charters, and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the different Lodges about town were present, in all their pomp. The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity and honor to himself as a gentleman and mason, among other general toasts, gave "Caledonia, and Caledonia's Bard, Brother B——," which rung through the whole assembly with multiplied honors and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck, and, trembling in every nerve made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the grand officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent, "Very well indeed!" which set me something to rights again.

I have to-day corrected my 152d page. My best good wishes to Mr. Aiken. I am ever, Dear Sir,

Your much indebted humble Servant,

R. B.

(4.) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

[January —, 1787.]

WHILE here I sit, sad and solitary by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound, Auld Toon o' Ayr, conjured up, I will send my last song to Mr. Ballantine. Here it is—

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon, &c.\*

\* [See Posthumous Poetical Works.]

(5.) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

Edinburgh, Feb. 24, 1787.

MY HONORED FRIEND,

I WILL soon be with you now, in *guid black prent*;—in a week or ten days at farthest. I am obliged, against my own wish, to print subscribers' names; so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription-bills, they must be sent in to Creech directly. I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver; and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my book, looking like other *fools* to my title-page.

R. B.

[John Ballantine, Esq., to whom "The Brigs of Ayr" was dedicated, was a banker and for sometime provost in that town—a gentleman held in the highest estimation for his many excellent qualities, both as a citizen and as a magistrate.

His name is spelt in most modern editions with *y* in the last syllable; but in the older editions, and by our Author himself, as well as by Miss Aiken his own relative, the name is spelt otherwise, and we have retained it accordingly in these letters as it was written—Ballantine. This circumstance, although trivial, is strong enough proof that letter (1) as published by Cunningham—where the name is printed with a *y*, had either *no* address at all, or was *not* addressed by our Author. Compare Gilbert Burns's account of Mr. Ballantine, in Appendix. Mr. Ballantine, who lived a bachelor, died at Ayr, July 15, 1812.]

(1.) TO DR. MACKENZIE,

MAUCHLINE.

ENCLOSING THE VERSES ON DINING WITH  
LORD DAER.

Wednesday Morning, [End of October? 1786.]

DEAR SIR,

I NEVER spent an afternoon among great folks with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honor of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the Professor.\* I would be delighted to see him perform acts of kindness and friendship, though I were not the object; he does it with such a grace.

I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus—four parts Socrates—four parts Nathaniel—and two parts Shakspeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore, but a little corrected since. They may entertain you a little with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as to favor the performances of,

Dear Sir, your very humble Servant,

R. B.

\* [Dugald Stewart, Esq., who resided then at his own villa of Catrine, in the neighbourhood of Mauchline. Burns and Mr. M'Kenzie, surgeon in Mauchline—a man universally respected there, dined together at the Professor's on the 23rd of October, 1786. "Lord Daer," the Professor informs us, "happened to arrive at Catrine the same day, and by the kindness and frankness of his manner, left an impression on the mind of the Poet which was never effaced." This was the first occasion of our Author's meeting either with his Lordship or the Professor. Compare note on the Verses.]

(2.) TO DR. MACKENZIE,

MAUCHLINE.

Edinburgh, 11th January, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOURS gave me something like the pleasure of an old friend's face. I saw *your* friend and *my* honored patron, Sir John Whitefoord, just after I received your letter, and gave him your compliments. He was pleased to say many handsome things of you, which I heard with the more satisfaction as I knew them to be just.

His son John, who calls very frequently on me, is in a fuss to-day like a coronation. This is the great day—the



assembly and ball of the Caledonian Hunt; and John has had the good luck to pre-engage the hand of the beauty-famed, and wealth-celebrated Miss M'Adam, our country-woman. Between friends, John is desperately in for it there, and I am afraid will be desperate indeed.

I am sorry to send you the last speech and dying words of "The Lounger."

A gentleman waited on me yesterday, and gave me, by Lord Eglinton's orders, ten guineas by way of subscription for a brace of copies of my second edition.

I met with Lord Maitland\* and a brother of his to-day at breakfast. They are exceedingly easy, accessible, agreeable fellows, and seemingly pretty clever.

I am ever, my dear Sir,

Yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

\* [Afterwards eighth Earl of Lauderdale, at this time a conspicuous member of the House of Commons, on the side of Opposition.]

(1.) To Gavin Hamilton, Esq.,

MAUCHLINE.

*Edinburgh, Dec. 7th, 1786.*

HONORED SIR,

I HAVE paid every attention to your commands, but can only say what perhaps you will have heard before this reach you, that Muirkirklands were bought by a John Gordon, W.S., but for whom I know not; Mauchlands, Haugh-Miln, &c.,\* by a Frederick Fotheringham, supposed to be for Ballochmyle Laird, and Adamhill and Shawood were bought for Oswald's folks.—This is so imperfect an account, and will be so late ere it reach you, that were it not to discharge my conscience I would not trouble you with it; but after all my diligence I could make it no sooner nor better.

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birth-day inserted among the wonderful events, in the Poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the black Monday, and the battle of Bothwell bridge.—My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man of the world. Through my lord's influence it is inserted in the records of the Caledonian Hunt, that they universally, one and all, subscribe for the second edition.—My subscription bills come out to-morrow, and you shall have some of them next post.—I have met, in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, what Solomon emphatically calls "A friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—The warmth with which he interests himself in my affairs is of the same enthusiastic kind which you, Mr. Aiken, and the few patrons that took notice of my earlier poetic days showed for the poor unlucky devil of a poet.

I always remember Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy in my poetic prayers, but you both in prose and verse.

May could ne'er catch you but a hap,  
Nor hunger but in plenty's lap!

Amen!

\* [These lands, the property of the Loudoun family, were disposed of by public roup in Edinburgh, Dec. 5th, of this year. The Earl, as our readers are aware, had perished some months before by an act of despair, in consequence of embarrassment. Compare note on song "Raving Winds," &c., Poetical Works, p. 260.]

[We need hardly direct our readers' attention to the strange truthful prophecy of fame which occurs in this letter.]

(2.) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

*Edinburgh, Jan. 7, 1787.*

To tell the truth among friends, I feel a miserable blank in my heart, with the want of her, and I don't think I shall ever meet with so delicious an armful again. She has her faults; and so have you and I; and so has every body:

Their tricks and craft hae put me daft;  
They've ta'en me in and a' that;  
But clear your decks, and here's the sex,  
I like the jads for a' that:  
For a' that and a' that,  
And twice as muckle's a' that.

I have met with a very pretty girl, a Lothian farmer's daughter, whom I have almost persuaded to accompany me to the west country, should I ever return to settle there. By the bye, a Lothian farmer is about an Ayrshire squire of the lower kind; and I had a most delicious ride from Leith to her house yesternight, in a hackney-coach, with her brother and two sisters, and brother's wife. We had dined all together at a common friend's house in Leith, and danced, drank, and sang till late enough. The night was dark, the claret had been good, and I thirsty. \* \* \* \*

R. B.

(3.) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

*Edinburgh, March 8, 1787.*

DEAR SIR,

YOURS came safe, and I am, as usual, much indebted to your goodness. Poor Captain Montgomery is cast. Yesterday it was tried whether the husband could proceed against the unfortunate lover without first divorcing his wife; and their gravities on the bench were unanimously of opinion that M—— may prosecute for damages directly, and need not divorce his wife at all if he pleases. \* \* \* \* O all ye Powers of love unfortunate, and friendless wo, pour the balm of sympathising pity on the grief-torn, tender heart of the hapless fair one!



My two songs on Miss W. Alexander and Miss P[eggy] K[ennedy] were likewise tried yesterday by a jury of literati, and found defamatory libels against the fastidious powers of Poesy and Taste; and the author forbidden to print them under pain of forfeiture of character. I cannot help almost shedding a tear to the memory of two songs that had cost me some pains, and that I valued a good deal; but I must submit.

My most respectful compliments to Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy.

My poor unfortunate songs come again across my memory. D[amn] the pedant, frigid soul of criticism for ever and ever!

R. B.

[The case of divorce, or no-divorce with penalties, above referred to, was one that seems to have occasioned a good deal of scandal at the time, not without sympathy for the lady. A handsome estate would have been lost if divorce had been sued for; that plea, therefore, was abandoned, and penalties alone enforced. The songs mentioned as being considered unsuitable for publication, were 'The Bonnie Lass of Ballochmyle,' and 'Banks o' Doon.' Compare notes on Songs, Poetical Works, p. 294, and p. 270.]

(4.) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

*Stirling, 28th August, 1787.*

MY DEAR SIR,

HERE am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich, fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly waving crops of wheat, barley, &c., but no harvest at all yet, except, in one or two places, an old wife's ridge. Yesterday morning I rode from this town up the meandering Devon's banks, to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast, we made a party to go and see the famous Caudron-linn, a remarkable cascade in the Devon, about five miles above Harvieston; and after spending one of the most pleasant days I ever had in my life, I returned to Stirling in the evening. They are a family, Sir, though I had not had any prior tie—though they had not been the brothers and sisters of a certain generous friend of mine—I would never forget them. I am told you have not seen them these several years, so you can have very little idea of what these young folks are now. Your brother is as tall as you are, but slender rather than otherwise; and I have the satisfaction to inform you that he is getting the better of those consumptive symptoms which I suppose you know were threatening him. His make, and particularly his manner, resemble you, but he will have a still finer face. (I put in the word *still*, to please Mrs. Hamilton.) Good sense, modesty, and at the same time a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact, are striking features in his character; and, what with me is the Alpha and Omega, he has a heart that might adorn the breast of a poet! Grace has a good figure, and the look of health and cheerfulness, but nothing else remarkable in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking a likeness as is between her and your little Beenie; the mouth and chin

particularly. She is reserved at first; but as we grew better acquainted, I was delighted with the native frankness of her manner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Of Charlotte I cannot speak in common terms of admiration; she is not only beautiful but lovely. Her form is elegant; her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness and the settled complacency of good nature in the highest degree; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress:—

—"Her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,  
That one would almost say her body thought."

Her eyes are fascinating; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness, and a noble mind.

I do not give you all this account, my good Sir, to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. Such relations the first peer in the realm might own with pride; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks? I had a thousand questions to answer about you. I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them that John was so good a boy, and so fine a scholar, and that Willie was going on still very pretty; but I have it in commission to tell her from them that beauty is a poor silly bauble, without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh, but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs. Chalmers, only Lady Mackenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat somewhat marred our enjoyment.

I shall not be in Ayrshire for four weeks. My most respectful compliments to Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Kennedy, and Doctor Mackenzie. I shall probably write him from some stage or other. I am ever, Sir,

Yours most gratefully,

R. B.

[Mrs. Hamilton, the stepmother of Gavin—Mrs. Chalmers—and the deceased Mrs. Tait of Harvieston, were sisters—the children of Murdoch of Cumlodden in Galloway, the representative of a gallant peasant who had got lands for the help he gave to Bruce on a perilous occasion. Mr. Tait, being left a widower, invited his sister-in-law, Mrs. Hamilton, with her children, to reside at Harvieston; Mrs. Chalmers also occasionally lived there in summer with her daughters—one of whom was Margaret, and the other the wife of Sir Hector Mackenzie. The Charlotte alluded to in the letter was Mrs. Hamilton's daughter. We summarise the above information from *Chambers*.]

(5.) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

*[Edinburgh, Dec., 1787.]*

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is indeed with the highest pleasure that I congratulate you on the return of days of ease, and nights of pleasure, after the horrid hours of misery in which I saw you suffering existence when last in Ayrshire; I seldom pray for any body, "I'm baith dead-sweer and wretched ill o't;" but most fervently do I beseech the Power that directs the world, that you may live long and be happy, but live no longer than



you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverend care of your health. I know you will make it a point never at one time to drink more than a pint of wine (I mean an English pint), and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time, and that cold drams you will never more taste; and, above all things, I am convinced, that after drinking perhaps boiling punch, you will never mount your horse and gallop home in a chill late hour. Above all things, as I understand you are in the habits of intimacy with that Boanerges of gospel powers, Father Auld, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising the carnal moral works of charity, humanity, generosity, and forgiveness of things, which you practised so flagrantly that it was evident you delighted in them, neglecting, or perhaps profanely despising, the wholesome doctrine of faith without works, the only [means] of salvation. A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion, be highly becoming from you at present, and in my zeal for your well-being, I earnestly press on you to be diligent in chaunting over the two enclosed pieces of sacred poesy. My best compliments to Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy. Yours in the L—d,

R. B.

(6.) TO [MR. GAVIN HAMILTON.]

*Mossiel, Friday Morning.*

THE language of refusal is to me the most difficult language on earth, and you are the man in the world, excepting one of Right Honorable designation,\* to whom it gives me the greatest pain to hold such language. My brother has already got money, and shall want nothing in my power to enable him to fulfil his engagement with you; but to be security on so large a scale, even for a brother, is what I dare not do, except I were in such circumstances of life as that the worst that might happen could not greatly injure me.

I never wrote a letter which gave me so much pain in my life, as I know the unhappy consequences: I shall incur the displeasure of a gentleman for whom I have the highest respect, and to whom I am deeply obliged. I am ever, Sir,

Your obliged and very humble Servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

\* [The Earl of Glencairn is no doubt here referred to.]

[Some time after the date of this letter, and before he settled in Dumfriesshire, our Author advanced from the proceeds of his poems the sum of £180 to Gilbert, to maintain him in the farm, and as some acknowledgment of the filial obligation which devolved on himself as a member of the family. The money was understood to be a loan without interest. See Domestic Correspondence.]

[The following series to Logan and Campbell should have been earlier placed, had the necessary documents been to hand.]

(1.) TO JOHN LOGAN, ESQ.,

OF KNOCKSHINNOCH:

[OTHERWISE OF AFTON.]

SIR,

I GRATEFULLY thank you for your kind offices in promoting my sub[s]cription, and still more for your very friendly letter.—The first was doing me a Favour, but the last was doing me an Honour.—I am in such a bustle at present, preparing for my West-India voyage, as I expect a letter every day from the Master of the vessel, to repair directly to Greenock; that I am under a necessity to return you the subscription bills, and trouble you with the quantum of Copies till called for, or otherwise transmitted to the Gentlemen who have subscribed. Mr. Bruce Campbell is already supplied with two copies, and I here send you 20 copies more.—If any of the Gentlemen are supplied from any other quarter, 'tis no matter; the copies can be returned.

If orders from Greenock do not hinder, I intend doing myself the honour of waiting on you, Wednesday the 16th Inst.

I am much hurt, Sir, that I must trouble you with the Copies; but circumstanced as I am, I know no other way your friends can be supplied.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your much indebted humble Servt.,

ROBERT BURNS.

KILMARNOCK, 10th Aug:

1786.

[By the above letter, which we print from original in possession of Miss Logan (Mr. John Logan's eldest daughter, residing at Bishopsleugh, Lockerbie), obtained for us by the obliging assistance of her cousin, G. Gemmell, Esq., banker, Ayr, it appears that our Author had been much earlier acquainted with Mr. Logan than is commonly supposed. The letter itself is written in a very close, plain, formal hand, smaller than usual, and has all the appearance of being a 'clean copy.' It has a few orthographical slips, as is very often the case in 'clean copies,' and it has had spaces originally left blank for a two or two, till dates, dates and numbers could be settled. In the interval, we may imagine the young Author counting over and allotting the 'copies,' or bundling them up for despatch, before leaving his native land. The blanks, filled up with different ink on the 10th of August, are as follows, 20—in large figures; Wednesday—crowded a little and so spelt in haste; 16th—straight up and down; 10th—without intervening comma and close to Kilmarnock. Subscription—as our readers observe in one case, wants an s, and necessity, in original, has an s too many; honour—contrary to his usual custom, is formally spelt with a u in last syllable throughout. We delight to trace these curious proofs of over-care and over-sight, and dwell on them as records of the past with reverence and love. The Bruce Campbell here referred to was of Sornbeg near Galston, but no relative of the Thomas Campbell whose name occurs immediately below; from the letter to whom it should seem that the above engagement, in which also Mr. Kennedy, at Dumfries House—compare letter (4) to him—was concerned, was never fulfilled.]

(2.) TO JOHN LOGAN, ESQ.

OF AFTON.

*Ellisland, near Dumfries, 7th Aug., 1789.*

DEAR SIR,

I INTENDED to have written you long ere now, and as I told you, I had gotten three stanzas and a half on my way in a poetic epistle to you; but that old enemy of



all *good works*, the Devil, threw me into a prosaic mire, and for the soul of me I cannot get out of it. I dare not write you a long letter, as I am going to intrude on your time with a long Ballad. I have, as you will shortly see, finished "The Kirk's Alarm;" but now that it is done, and that I have laughed once or twice at the conceits in some of the stanzas, I am determined not to let it get into the Public; so I send you this copy, the first I have sent to Ayrshire, except some few of the stanzas, which I wrote off in embryo for Gavin Hamilton, under the express provision and request—that you will only read it to a few of us, and do not on any account give, or permit to be taken, any copy of the Ballad. If I could be of any service to Dr. M'Gill, I would do it, though it should be at a much greater expence than irritating a few bigotted Priests; but as I am afraid, serving him in his present embarrass is a task too hard for me. I have enemies enow, God knows, tho' I do not wantonly add to the number. Still, as I think that there is some merit in two or three of the thoughts, I send it you as a small but sincere testimony how much, and with what respectful esteem, I am, dear Sir,

Your obliged humble servant,  
ROBT. BURNS.

[This letter, as the preceding, we print from original in Miss Logan's possession.]

To Monsr. Thomas Campbell,

PENCLOE.

[12th August? 1786.]

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE met with few men in my life whom I more wished to see again than you, and Chance seems industrious to disappoint me of that pleasure. I came here yesterday fully resolved to see you and Mr. Logan, at New Cumnock; but a conjuncture of circumstances conspired against me. Having an opportunity of sending you a line, I joyfully embraced it. It is perhaps the last mark of our friendship you can receive from me on this side of the Atlantic.

Farewel! May you be happy up to the wishes of parting Friendship!

ROBT. BURNS.

MR. J. MERRY'S, *Saturday Morn.*

[This letter we print from original in possession of George Pagan, Esq., New Cumnock, obtained for us by the same obliging hand as the above. It has been manifestly written in haste; is on a small square scrap of paper, but duly folded, and sealed with an old-fashioned cipher-seal on red wax, too much broken to be now perfectly legible. It bears on the address to be forwarded per Mr. Good; and seems to refer very plainly to the agreement to meet Mr. Logan at New Cumnock, on Wednesday, 16th August. It was therefore probably written on the Saturday *before* that day, and at New Cumnock itself; for Mr. Merry's public-house (Anne Rankine's husband, heroine of the 'Rigs o' Barley') was in that town. The Poet was most likely called away before the engagement could be fulfilled. A blot in the original proves all this—the sentence stood at first: "but at New Cumnock, a conjuncture, &c."

Mr. Pagan, we may mention, in whose possession this letter now is, was a nephew of Mr. Logan's of Afton, and a near kinsman to Mr. Campbell of Pencloe.]

To Mr. William Chalmers,

WRITER, AYR.

*Edinburgh, Dec. 27, 1786.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CONFESS I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner; but of all men living, I had intended to have sent you an entertaining letter; and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding, conceited majesty, preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily solemn oath this!—I am, and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humor, as to write a commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, who was banished to the Isle of Patmos, by the cruel and bloody Domitian, son to Vespasian, and brother to Titus, both emperors of Rome, and who was himself an emperor, and raised the second or third persecution, I forget which, against the Christians, and after throwing the said Apostle John, brother to the Apostle James, commonly called James the Greater, to distinguish him from another James, who was, on some account or other, known by the name of James the Less—after throwing him into a cauldron of boiling oil, from which he was miraculously preserved, he banished the poor son of Zebedee to a desert island in the Archipelago, where he was gifted with the second sight, and saw as many wild beasts as I have seen since I came to Edinburgh; which, a circumstance not very uncommon in story-telling, brings me back to where I set out.

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck.

One blank in the address to Edinburgh—"Fair B—," is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honor to be more than once. There has not been anything nearly like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness the great Creator has formed since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

My direction is—Care of Andrew Bruce, Merchant, Bridge Street.

R. B.

(1.) To Mr. James Candlish,

STUDENT IN PHYSIC, COLLEGE, GLASGOW.

*Edinburgh, March 21, 1787.*

MY EVER DEAR OLD ACQUAINTANCE,

I WAS equally surprised and pleased at your letter; though I dare say you will think by my delaying so long to write to you, that I am so drowned in the intoxication of good fortune as to be indifferent to old, and once dear connections. The truth is, I was determined to write a good letter, full of argument, amplification, erudition, and, as Bayes says, *all that*. I thought of it, and thought of it, but for my soul, I can



not: and, lest you should mistake the cause of my silence, I just sit down to tell you so. Don't give yourself credit, though, that the strength of your logic scares me: the truth is, I never mean to meet you on that ground at all. You have shown me one thing which was to be demonstrated; that strong pride of reasoning, with a little affectation of singularity, may mislead the best of hearts. I, likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in "the daring path Spinoso trod;" but experience of the weakness, not the strength, of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.

I must stop, but don't impute my brevity to a wrong cause. I am still, in the Apostle Paul's phrase, "The old man with his deeds," as when we were sporting about the "Lady Thorn." I shall be four weeks here yet at least; and so I shall expect to hear from you—welcome sense, welcome nonsense.

I am, with the warmest sincerity,

R. B.

[Mr. Candlish married Miss Smith, celebrated for her wit as one of the Belles of Mauchline. A son of this marriage is the Rev. Robert Smith Candlish, D.D., Principal of the Free Church College, Edinburgh. Mr. Candlish died in 1806.]

(2.) TO MR. JAMES CANDLISH.

[Edinburgh, 1787.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IF once I were gone from this scene of hurry and dissipation, I promise myself the pleasure of that correspondence being renewed which has been so long broken. At present I have time for nothing. Dissipation and business engross every moment. I am engaged in assisting an honest Scotch enthusiast,\* a friend of mine, who is an engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste. I have collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen all the songs I could meet with. Pompey's Ghost, words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number: the first is already published. I shall show you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a fortnight or less. Do be so kind as to send me the song in a day or two; you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

Direct to me at Mr. W. Cruikshank's, St. James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh.

R. B.

\* [Johnson, the publisher of the 'Scots Musical Museum.']

To Mr. William Dunbar, M.S.,

(1.)

EDINBURGH.

*Lawnmarket, Monday Morning.*

DEAR SIR,

IN justice to Spenser, I must acknowledge that there is scarcely a poet in the language could have been a more agreeable present to me; and in justice to you, allow me to say, Sir, that I have not met with a man in Edinburgh to whom I would so willingly have been indebted for the gift. The tattered rhymes I herewith present you, and the handsome volumes of Spenser for which I am so much indebted to your goodness, may perhaps be not in proportion to one another; but be that as it may, my gift, though far less valuable, is as sincere a mark of esteem as yours.

The time is approaching when I shall return to my shades; and I am afraid my numerous Edinburgh friendships are of so tender a construction, that they will not bear carriage with me. Yours is one of the few that I could wish of a more robust constitution. It is indeed very probable that when I leave this city, we part never more to meet in this sub-lunary sphere; but I have a strong fancy that in some future eccentric planet, the comet of happier systems than any with which astronomy is yet acquainted, you and I, among the harum-scarum sons of imagination and whim, with a hearty shake of a hand, a metaphor, and a laugh, shall recognise old acquaintance:

Where Wit may sparkle all its rays,  
Uncurst with Caution's fears;  
And Pleasure, basking in the blaze,  
Rejoice for endless years.

I have the honor to be, with the warmest sincerity,  
Dear Sir, &c.,

R. B.

[William Dunbar, Esq., to whom this admirable series of letters is addressed, was, professionally, a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh; *convivially*, Colonel of the "Crochallan Corps;" and poetically, the "Rattling Roaring Willie" of our Author's well-known song. He seems to have been a man of a very genial, mirthful disposition. He was ultimately promoted to the office of Inspector-General of Stamp-duties for Scotland.]

(2.) TO MR. WILLIAM DUNBAR, W.S.

*Mauchline, 7th April, 1788.*

I HAVE not delayed so long to write you, my much respected friend, because I thought no farther of my promise. I have long since given up that kind of formal correspondence, where one sits down irksomely to write a letter, because we think we are in duty bound so to do.

I have been roving over the country, as the farm I have taken is forty miles from this place, hiring servants and preparing matters; but most of all, I am earnestly busy to bring about a revolution in my own mind. As, till within these eighteen months, I never was the wealthy master of ten guineas, my knowledge of business is to learn; add to this,



my late scenes of idleness and dissipation have enervated my mind to an alarming degree. Skill in the sober science of life is my most serious and hourly study. I have dropt all conversation and all reading (prose reading) but what tends in some way or other to my serious aim. Except one worthy young fellow, I have not one single correspondent in Edinburgh. You have indeed kindly made me an offer of that kind. The world of wits, and *gens comme il faut* which I lately left, and with whom I never again will intimately mix—from that port, Sir, I expect your Gazette: what *les beaux esprits* are saying, what they are doing, and what they are singing. Any sober intelligence from my sequestered walks of life; any droll original; any passing remark, important forsooth, because it is mine; any little poetic effort, however embryoth; these, my dear Sir, are all you have to expect from me. When I talk of poetic efforts, I must have it always understood, that I appeal from your wit and taste to your friendship and good nature. The first would be my favorite tribunal, where I defied censure; but the last, where I declined justice.

I have scarcely made a single distich since I saw you. When I meet with an old Scots air that has any facetious idea in its name, I have a peculiar pleasure in following out that idea for a verse or two.

I trust that this will find you in better health than I did last time I called for you. A few lines from you, directed to me at Mauchline, were it but to let me know how you are, will set my mind a good deal [at rest.] Now, never shun the idea of writing me because perhaps you may be out of humour or spirits. I could give you a hundred good consequences attending a dull letter; one, for example, and the remaining ninety-nine some other time—it will always serve to keep in countenance, my much respected Sir, your obliged friend and humble servant,

R. B.

(3.) TO MR. WILLIAM DUNBAR, W.S.

*Ellisland, 14th January, 1790.*

SINCE we are here creatures of a day, since “a few summer days, and a few winter nights, and the life of man is at an end,” why, my dear much-esteemed Sir, should you and I let negligent indolence, for I know it is nothing worse, step in between us and bar the enjoyment of a mutual correspondence? We are not shapen out of the common, heavy, methodical clod, the elemental stuff of the plodding selfish race, the sons of Arithmetic and Prudence; our feelings and hearts are not benumbed and poisoned by the cursed influence of riches, which, whatever blessing they may be in other respects, are no friends to the nobler qualities of the heart: in the name of random Sensibility, then, let never the moon change on our silence any more. I have had a tract of bad health most part of this winter, else you had heard from me long ere now. Thank Heaven, I am now got so much better as to be able to partake a little in the enjoyments of life.

Our friend Cunningham will perhaps have told you of my going into the Excise. The truth is, I found it a very convenient business to have £50 per annum, nor have I yet felt any of those mortifying circumstances in it that I was led to fear.

*Feb. 2.*

I have not, for sheer hurry of business, been able to spare five minutes to finish my letter. Besides my farm-business, I ride on my Excise matters at least two hundred miles every week. I have not by any means given up the Muses. You will see in the 3d vol. of Johnson's Scots Songs that I have contributed my mite there.

But, my dear Sir, little ones that look up to you for paternal protection are an important charge. I have already two fine, healthy, stout little fellows, and I wish to throw some light upon them. I have a thousand reveries and schemes about them, and their future destiny—Not that I am a Utopian projector in these things. I am resolved never to breed up a son of mine to any of the learned professions. I know the value of independence; and since I cannot give my sons an independent fortune, I shall give them an independent line of life. What a chaos of hurry, chance, and changes is this world, when one sits soberly down to reflect on it! To a father, who himself knows the world, the thought that he shall have sons to usher into it must fill him with dread; but if he have daughters, the prospect in a thoughtful moment is apt to shock him.

I hope Mrs. Fordyce and the two young ladies are well. Do let me forget that they are nieces of yours, and let me say that I never saw a more interesting, sweeter pair of sisters in my life. I am the fool of my feelings and attachments. I often take up a volume of my Spenser to realise you to my imagination, and think over the social scenes we have had together. God grant that there may be another world more congenial to honest fellows beyond this: a world where these rubs and plagues of absence, distance, misfortunes, ill-health, &c., shall no more damp hilarity and divide friendship. This I know is your throng season, but half a page will much oblige, my dear Sir, yours sincerely,

R. B.

(4.) TO COL. W. DUNBAR.

*Ellisland, 17th January, 1791.*

I AM not gone to Elysium, most noble Colonel, but am still here in this sublunary world, serving my God by propagating his image, and honoring my king by begetting him loyal subjects. Many happy returns of the season await my friend! May the thorns of Care never beset his path! May Peace be an inmate of his bosom, and Rapture a frequent visitor of his soul! May the blood-hounds of Misfortune never trace his steps, nor the screech-owl of Sorrow alarm his dwelling! May Enjoyment tell thy hours, and Pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the Bard! Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee!!!



As a further proof that I am still in the land of existence, I send you a poem, the latest I have composed. I have a particular reason for wishing you only to show it to select friends, should you think it worthy a friend's perusal; but if, at your first leisure hour, you will favour me with your opinion of, and strictures on, the performance, it will be an additional obligation on, dear Sir, your deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

### To Mr. Pattison,

BOOKSELLER, PAISLEY.

*Berry-well, near Dunse, May 17, 1787.*

DEAR SIR,

I AM sorry I was out of Edinburgh, making a slight pilgrimage to the classic scenes of this country, when I was favoured with yours of the 11th instant, enclosing an order of the Paisley Banking Company on the Royal Bank for twenty-two pounds seven shillings sterling, payment in full, after carriage deducted, for ninety copies of my book I sent you. According to your motions, I see you will have left Scotland before this reaches you, otherwise I would send you "Holy Willie" with all my heart. I was so hurried that I absolutely forgot several things I ought to have minded, among the rest, sending books to Mr. Cowan; but any order of yours will be answered at Creech's shop. You will please remember that non-subscribers pay six shillings—this is Creech's profit; but those who have subscribed, though their names have been neglected in the printed list, which is very incorrect, are supplied at the subscription price. I was not at Glasgow, nor do I intend for London; and I think Mrs. Fame is very idle to tell so many lies on a poor poet. When you or Mr. Cowan write for copies, if you should want any, direct to Mr. Hill, at Mr. Creech's shop, and I write to Mr. Hill by this post, to answer either of your orders. Hill is Mr. Creech's first clerk, and Creech himself is presently in London. I suppose I shall have the pleasure, against your return to Paisley, of assuring you how much I am, dear Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

### (1.) To Mr. William Nicol,

MASTER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

*Carlisle, June 1, 1787,*

*(or, I believe, the 30th o' May rather.)*

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE,

I'm sitten down here after seven and forty miles' ridin, e'en as forjesket and forniaw'd as a forfoughten cock, to gie you some notion o' my land-lower-like stravaguin sin' the sorrowfu' hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' auld Reekie.

My auld, ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchyall'd up hill and down brae, in Scotland and England, as teugh and

birnie as a vera deevil wi' me. It's true, she's as poor's a sang-maker and as hard's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate, just like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle; but she's a yauld, poutherie Girran for a' that, and has a stomach like Willie Stalker's meere, that wad hae disgeested tumbler-wheels, for she'll whip me aff her five stimparts o' the best aits at a down-sittin and ne'er fash her thumb. When ance her ringbanes and spavies, her crucks and cramps, are fairly soupl'd, she beets to, beets to, and ay the hindmost hour the tightest. I could wager her price to a thretty pennies, that for twa or three wooks' ridin at fifty miles a day, the deil-sticket [o'] five gallopers acqueesh Clyde and Whithorn could cast saut on her tail.

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dumbar to Selcraig, and hae forgather'd wi' monie a guid fallow, and monie a weelfar'd huzzie. I met wi' twa dink quines in particular, ane o' them a sonsie, fine, fodgel lass, baith braw and bonnie; the tither was a clean-shankit, straught, tight, weelfar'd winch, as blythe's a lintwhite on a flowerie thorn, and as sweet and modest's a new-blawn plumrose in a hazle shaw. They were baith bred to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane o' them had as muckle smeddum and rumblegumtion as the half o' some presbytries that you and I baith ken. They play'd me sik a deevil o' a shavie that I daur say if my harigals were turn'd out, ye wad see twa nicks i' the heart o' me like the mark o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

I was gaun to write you a lang pystle, but, Gude forgie me, I gat mysel sae notouriously bitchify'd the day after kail-time, that I can hardly stouter but and ben.

My best respects to the guidwife and a' our common friens, especiall Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, and the honest guidman o' Jock's Lodge.

I'll be in Dumfries the morn gif the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale. Gude be wi' you, Willie! Amen!

R. B.

### (2.) TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL.

*Mauchline, June 18, 1787.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM now arrived safe in my native country, after a very agreeable jaunt, and have the pleasure to find all my friends well. I breakfasted with your gray-headed, reverend friend, Mr. Smith; and was highly pleased both with the cordial welcome he gave me, and his most excellent appearance and sterling good sense.

I have been with Mr. Miller at Dalswinton, and am to meet him again in August. From my view of the lands, and his reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended; but still they are but slender.

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks—Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, Gude forgie me! I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account! Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good-humour,



kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart; in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, SATAN. 'Tis true, I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith; that noxious planet so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hare-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with stepbewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop, “he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again.” God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me! but should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have, in life, I have felt along the lines, and, damn them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear Sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me “through good report and bad report”—the love which Solomon emphatically says “is strong as death.” My compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

R. B.

P.S.—I shall be in Edinburgh about the latter end of July.

(3.) TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL.

*Auchtertyre, Monday, [Oct. 15, 1787.]*

MY DEAR SIR,

I FIND myself very comfortable here, neither oppressed by ceremony nor mortified by neglect. Lady Augusta is a most engaging woman, and very happy in her family, which makes one's outgoings and incomings very agreeable. I called at Mr. Ramsay's of Auchtertyre as I came up the country, and am so delighted with him that I shall certainly accept of his invitation to spend a day or two with him as I return. I leave this place on Wednesday or Thursday.

Make my kind compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, and Mrs. Nicol, if she is returned. I am ever, dear Sir,

Your deeply indebted,

R. B.

(4.) TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL.

*Ellisland, Feb. 9, 1790.*

MY DEAR SIR,

THAT d-mned mare of yours is dead. I would freely have given her price to have saved her; she has vexed me beyond description. Indebted as I was to your goodness beyond what I can ever repay, I eagerly grasped at your offer to have the mare with me. That I might at least show my readiness in wishing to be grateful, I took every care of her in my power. She was never crossed for riding above half a score of times by me or in my keeping. I drew her in the plough, one of three, for one poor week. I refused fifty-five shillings for her, which was the highest bode I could squeeze for her. I fed her up and had her in fine order for Dumfries fair; when four or five days before the fair, she was seized with an unaccountable disorder in the sinews, or somewhere in the bones of the neck; with a weakness or total want of power in her fillets; and in short the whole vertebræ of her spine seemed to be diseased and unhinged, and in eight-and-forty hours, in spite of the two best farriers in the country, she died, and be d-mned to her! The farriers said that she had been quite strained in the fillets beyond cure before you had bought her; and that the poor devil, though she might keep a little flesh, had been jaded and quite worn out with fatigue and oppression. While she was with me, she was under my own eye, and I assure you, my much-valued friend, every thing was done for her that could be done; and the accident has vexed me to the heart. In fact I could not pluck up spirits to write to you, on account of the unfortunate business.

There is little new in this country. Our theatrical company, of which you must have heard, leave us this week. Their merit and character are indeed very great, both on the stage and in private life: not a worthless creature among them; and their encouragement has been accordingly. Their usual run is from eighteen to twenty-five pounds a night: seldom less than the one, and the house will hold no more than the other. There have been repeated instances of sending away six, eight, and ten pounds a night for want of room. A new theatre is to be built by subscription; the first stone is to be laid on Friday first to come. Three hundred guineas have been raised by thirty subscribers, and thirty more might have been got if wanted. The manager, Mr. Sutherland, was introduced to me by a friend from Ayr; and a worthier or cleverer fellow I have rarely met with. Some of our clergy have slipt in by stealth now and then; but they have got up a farce of their own. You must have heard how the Rev. Mr. Lawson of Kirkmahoe, seconded by the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate and Rev. Mr. Heron of Kirkgunzeon, that in ordaining Mr. Nielson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he, the said Heron, feloniously and treasonably bound the said Nielson to the Confession of Faith, so far as it was agreeable to Reason and the Word of God!

Mrs. B. begs to be remembered most gratefully to you.



Little Bobby and Frank are charmingly well and healthy. I am jaded to death with fatigue. For these two or three months, on an average, I have not ridden less than two hundred miles per week. I have done little in the poetic way. I have given Mr. Sutherland two Prologues; one of which was delivered last week. I have likewise strung four or five barbarous stanzas, to the tune of Chevy Chase, by way of Elegy on your poor unfortunate mare, beginning (the name she got here was Peg Nicholson)

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare, &c.\*

My best compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and little Neddy, and all the family; I hope Ned is a good scholar, and will come out to gather nuts and apples with me next harvest.

R. B.

\* [See Posthumous Poetical Works.]

(5.) TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL.

20th February, 1792.

O THOU, wisest among the Wise, meridian blaze of Prudence, full-moon of Discretion, and chief of many Counsellors! How infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units, up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration, may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that father of Proverbs and master of Maxims, that anti-pode of Folly, and magnet among the Sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol! Amen! Amen! Yea, so be it!

For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon, to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say, When shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills? As for him, his works are perfect: never did the pen of Calumny blur the fair page of his reputation, nor the bolt of Hatred fly at his dwelling.

Thou mirror of Purity, when shall the elfin-lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers!—As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness, and the pleasures of darkness, pollute the sacred flame of thy sky-descended and heaven-

bound desires: never did the vapours of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine were the tenor of my life, like thine the tenor of my conversation!—then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness! Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid. May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for, O thou lamp of Wisdom and mirror of Morality! thy devoted slave,  
R. B.

[In connection with the above series of Letters, the reader may compare notes on 'Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut:' also 'Highland Tour,' Appendix.]

(1.) To Mr. Robert Ainslie.

Arrochar, by Loch Long, June 28,\* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WRITE you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly over-spread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage, Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins.

R. B.

\* [Mr. Chambers corrects this date, by interrogation, to 27.]

[The tour here referred to is the West Highland Tour, of the return from which we have an account in letter (3) to Mr. J. Smith at Linlithgow. On his way to Ayrshire, Burns seems to have passed through Paisley.]

(2.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Mauchline, 23rd July, 1787.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,

THERE is one thing for which I set great store by you as a friend, and it is this—that I have not a friend upon earth, besides yourself, to whom I can talk nonsense without forfeiting some degree of his esteem. Now, to one like me, who never cares for speaking any thing else but nonsense, such a friend as you is an invaluable treasure. I was never a rogue, but have been a fool all my life; and, in spite of all my endeavours, I see now plainly that I shall never be wise. Now it rejoices my heart to have met with such a fellow as you, who, though you are not just such a hopeless fool as I, yet I trust you will never listen so much to the temptations of the devil, as to grow so very wise that you will in the least disrespect an honest fellow because he is a fool. In short, I have set you down as the staff of my old age, when the whole list of my friends will, after a decent share of pity, have forgot me.

'Though in the morn comes sturt and strife,

Yet joy may come at noon;

And I hope to live a merry, merry life

When a' thir days are done.'



Write me soon, were it but a few lines just to tell me how that good sagacious man your father is—that kind dainty body your mother—that strapping chiel your brother Douglas—and my friend Rachel, who is as far before Rachel of old, as she was before her blear-eyed sister Leah.

R. B.

(3.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, JUNIOR,  
BERRYWELL, DUNSE.

*Edinburgh, 23rd August, 1787.*

“As I gaed up to Dunse  
To warp a pickle yarn,  
Robin, silly body,  
He gat me wi’ bairn.”

FROM henceforth, my dear Sir, I am determined to set off with my letters like the periodical writers; namely, prefix a kind of text, quoted from some classic of undoubted authority, such as the author of the immortal piece, of which my text is a part. What I have to say on my text is exhausted in the chatter which I wrote you the other day, before I had the pleasure of receiving yours from Inverleithing; and sure never was anything more lucky, as I have but the time to write this, that Mr. Nicol, on the opposite side of the table, takes to correct a proof-sheet of a thesis. They are gabbling Latin so loud that I cannot hear what my own soul is saying in my own skull, so must just give you a matter-of-fact sentence or two, and end, if time permit, with a verse *de rei generatione*.

To-morrow I leave Edinburgh in a chaise; Nicol thinks it more comfortable than horse-back, to which I say, Amen; so Jenny Geddes goes home to Ayrshire, to use a phrase of my mother’s, “wi’ her finger in her mouth.”

Now for a modest verse of classical authority:—

The cats like kitchen;  
The dogs like broo;  
The lasses like the lads weel,  
And th’ auld wives too.  
And we’re a’ noddin,  
Nid, nid, noddin,  
We’re a’ noddin fou at e’en.

If this does not please you, let me hear from you: if you write any time before the 1st of September, direct to Inverness, to be left at the post-office till called for; the next week at Aberdeen, the next at Edinburgh.

The sheet is done, and I shall just conclude with assuring you that I am, and ever with pride shall be,

My dear Sir, yours, &c.,

R. B.

Call your boy what you think proper, only interjeet Burns. What do you say to a Scripture name? Zimri Burns Ainslie, or Architophel, &c. Look your Bible for these two heroes; if you do this, I will repay the compliment.

(4.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE,  
EDINBURGH.

*Edinburgh, Sunday Morning,  
Nov. 23, [25?] 1787.*

I BEG, my dear Sir, you would not make any appointment to take us to Mr. Ainslie’s to-night. On looking over my engagements, constitution, present state of my health, some little vexatious soul concerns, &c., I find I can’t sup abroad to-night. I shall be in to-day till one o’clock, if you have a leisure hour.

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence. —You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of blue-devilism, and you laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my good things. I don’t know, upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God’s world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now, in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may perhaps sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be your friend,

R. B.

(5.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*[Mauchline, 3rd March, 1788.]\**

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM just returned from Mr. Miller’s farm. My old friend whom I took with me was highly pleased with the bargain, and advised me to accept of it. He is the most intelligent sensible farmer in the county, and his advice has staggered me a good deal.† I have the two plans before me: I shall endeavour to balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. On the whole, if I find Mr. Miller in the same favourable disposition as when I saw him last, I shall in all probability turn farmer.

I have been through sore tribulation and under much buffeting of the Wicked One since I came to this country. Jean I found banished like a martyr—forlorn, destitute, and friendless: I have reconciled her to her fate, and I have reconciled her to her mother. \* \* \* \*

I shall be in Edinburgh the middle of next week. My farming ideas I shall keep private till I see. I got a letter from Clarinda yesterday, and she tells me she has got no letter of mine but one. Tell her that I wrote to her from Glasgow, from Kilmarnock, from Mauchline, and yesterday from Cumnock as I returned from Dumfries. Indeed, she is the only person in Edinburgh I have written to till this day. How are your soul and body putting up?—a little like man and wife, I suppose.

Your faithful friend,

R. B.

\* [This date is given by Mr. Ainslie. Compare letter to Mr. —, immediately following this series.]

† [Mr. James Tennant of Glenconner is the person here referred to.]



## (6.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*Mauchline, May 26, 1788.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM two kind letters in your debt, but I have been from home, and horridly busy, buying and preparing for my farming business, over and above the plague of my Excise instructions, which this week will finish.

As I flatter my wishes that I foresee many future years' correspondence between us, 'tis foolish to talk of excusing dull epistles; a dull letter may be a very kind one. I have the pleasure to tell you that I have been extremely fortunate in all my buyings and bargainings hitherto—Mrs. Burns not excepted; which title I now avow to the world. I am truly pleased with this last affair: it has indeed added to my anxieties for futurity, but it has given a stability to my mind, and resolutions unknown before; and the poor girl has the most sacred enthusiasm of attachment to me, and has not a wish but to gratify my every idea of her department. I am interrupted.—Farewell! my dear Sir.

R. B.

## (7.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*Ellisland, June 14, 1788.*

THIS is now the third day, my dearest Sir, that I have so-journed in these regions; and during these three days you have occupied more of my thoughts than in three weeks preceding: in Ayrshire I have several variations of friendship's compass, here it points invariably to the pole. My farm gives me a good many uncouth cares and anxieties, but I hate the language of complaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says well—"Why should a living man complain?"

I have lately been much mortified with contemplating an unlucky imperfection in the very framing and construction of my soul: namely, a blundering inaccuracy of her olfactory organs in hitting the scent of craft or design in my fellow-creatures. I do not mean any compliment to my ingenuousness, or to hint that the defect is in consequence of the unsuspecting simplicity of conscious truth and honor: I take it to be, in some way or other, an imperfection in the mental sight; or, metaphor apart, some modification of dullness. In two or three small instances lately, I have been most shamefully out.

I have all along hitherto, in the warfare of life, been bred to arms among the light-horse—the piquet-guards of fancy; a kind of Hussars and Highlanders of the *Brain*; but I am firmly resolved to *sell out* of these giddy battalions, who have no ideas of a battle but fighting the foe, or of a siege but storming the town. Cost what it will, I am determined to *buy in* among the grave squadrons of heavy-armed Thought, or the artillery corps of plodding Contrivance.

What books are you reading, or what is the subject of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession? You said something about religion in your last. I don't

exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire; but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being well-married; you have so much sense, and knowledge of human nature, that though you may not realize perhaps the ideas of romance, yet you will never be ill-married.

Were it not for the terrors of my ticklish situation respecting provision for a family of children, I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness. As it is, I look to the Excise scheme as a certainty of maintenance. A maintenance!—luxury to what either Mrs. Burns or I were born to. Adieu!

R. B.

## (8.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*Mauchline, 23rd June, 1788.*

THIS letter, my dear Sir, is only a business scrap. Mr. Miers, profile painter in your town, has executed a profile of Dr. Blacklock for me: do me the favour to call for it, and sit to him yourself for me, which put in the same size as the Doctor's. The account of both profiles will be fifteen shillings, which I have given to James Connell, our Mauchline carrier, to pay you when you give him the parcel. You must not, my friend, refuse to sit. The time is short: when I sat to Mr. Miers, I am sure he did not exceed two minutes. I propose hanging Lord Glencairn, the Doctor, and you in trio, over my new chimney-piece that is to be. Adieu!

R. B.

## (9.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*Ellisland, 30th June, 1788.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I JUST now received your brief epistle; and, to take vengeance on your laziness, I have, you see, taken a long sheet of writing-paper, and have begun at the top of the page, intending to scribble on to the very last corner.

I am vexed at that affair of the \* \* \*, but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death.\* I am concerned for the old fellow's exit, only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect—for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life that the welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind, benevolent animal, but he is dropped into such a needy situation here in this vexatious world, and has such a whoreson hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food;



that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others that he may look properly to himself. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr. Miers for the profile of a Mr. H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did I ever give Mr. Miers any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will not have any such profile in my possession.

I desired the carrier to pay you, but as I mentioned only fifteen shillings to him, I will rather enclose you a guinea note. I have it not, indeed, to spare here, as I am only a sojourner in a strange land in this place; but in a day or two I return to Mauchline, and there I have the bank-notes through the house like salt permits.

There is a great degree of folly in talking unnecessarily of one's private affairs. I have just now been interrupted by one of my new neighbours, who has made himself absolutely contemptible in my eyes, by his silly, garrulous prurience. I know it has been a fault of my own, too; but from this moment I abjure it as I would the service of hell! Your poets, spendthrifts, and other fools of that kidney, pretend forsooth to crack their jokes on prudence; but 'tis a squalid vagabond glorying in his rags. Still, imprudence respecting money matters is much more pardonable than imprudence respecting character. I have no objection to prefer prodigality to avarice, in some few instances; but I appeal to your observation, if you have not met, and often met, with the same disingenuousness, the same hollow-hearted insincerity, and disintegrative depravity of principle, in the hackneyed victims of profusion, as in the unfeeling children of parsimony. I have every possible reverence for the much-talked-of world beyond the grave, and I wish that which piety believes, and virtue deserves, may be all matter of fact. But in things belonging to, and terminating in this present scene of existence, man has serious and interesting business on hand. Whether a man shall shake hands with welcome in the distinguished elevation of respect, or shrink from contempt in the abject corner of insignificance; whether he shall wanton under the tropic of plenty, at least enjoy himself in the comfortable latitudes of easy convenience, or starve in the arctic circle of dreary poverty; whether he shall rise in the manly consciousness of a self-approving mind, or sink beneath a galling load of regret and remorse—these are alternatives of the last moment.

You see how I preach. You used occasionally to sermonize too; I wish you would, in charity, favor me with a sheet full in your own way. I admire the close of a letter Lord Bolingbroke writes to Dean Swift: "Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely; make an effort to love me with all mine!" Humble servant, and all that trumpery, is now such a prostituted business, that honest Friendship, in her sincere way, must have recourse to her primitive, simple,—farewell!

R. B.

\* [Mr. Samuel Mitchelson, W.S., had been Mr. Ainslie's master. He died June 21, 1788.—*Chambers*.]

(10.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*Ellisland, January 6, 1789.*

MANY happy returns of the season to you, my dear Sir! May you be comparatively happy up to your comparative worth among the sons of men; which wish would, I am sure, make you one of the most blest of the human race.

I do not know if passing a "Writer to the Signet" be a trial of scientific merit, or a mere business of friends and interest. However it be, let me quote you my two favourite passages, which, though I have repeated them ten thousand times, still they rouse my manhood and steel my resolution like inspiration:—

—On reason build resolve,  
That column of true majesty in man.—*Young*.

'Hear, Alfred, hero of the state,  
Thy genius Heaven's high will declare;  
The triumph of the truly great,  
Is never, never to despair!  
Is never to despair!'—*Masque of Alfred*.

I grant you enter the lists of life, to struggle for bread, business, notice, and distinction, in common with hundreds.—But who are they? Men like yourself: and of that aggregate body your compeers, seven-tenths of them come short of your advantages natural and accidental; while two of those that remain either neglect their parts, as flowers blooming in a desert, or mis-spend their strength, like a bull goring a bramble-bush.

But to change the theme: I am still catering for Johnson's publication; and among others, I have brushed up the following favourite song a little, with a view to your worship. I have only altered a word here and there; but if you like the humour of it, we shall think of a stanza or two to add to it.

R. B.

(11.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*Ellisland, 8th June, 1789.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM perfectly ashamed of myself when I look at the date of your last. It is not that I forget the friend of my heart and the companion of my peregrinations; but I have been condemned to drudgery beyond sufferance, though not, thank God, beyond redemption. I have had a collection of poems by a lady put into my hands to prepare them for the press; which horrid task, with sowing corn with my own hand, a parcel of masons, wrights, plasterers, &c., to attend to, roaming on business through Ayrshire—all this was against me, and the very first dreadful article was of itself too much for me.

13th. I have not had a moment to spare from incessant toil since the 8th. Life, my dear Sir, is a serious matter. You know by experience that a man's individual self is a good deal; but believe me, a wife and family of children,



whenever you have the honour to be a husband and a father, will show you that your present and most anxious hours of solitude are spent on trifles. The welfare of those who are very dear to us, whose only support, hope, and stay we are—this, to a generous mind, is another sort of more important object of care than any concerns whatever which centre merely in the individual. On the other hand, let no young, unmarried, rakehell dog among you, make a song of his pretended liberty and freedom from care. If the relations we stand in to king, country, kindred, and friends, be any thing but the visionary fancies of dreaming metaphysicians; if religion, virtue, magnanimity, generosity, humanity, and justice, be aught but empty sounds; then the man who may be said to live only for others, for the beloved, honourable female, whose tender faithful embrace endears life, and for the helpless little innocents who are to be the men and women, the worshippers of his God, the subjects of his king, and the support, nay the very vital existence of his COUNTRY, in the ensuing age;—compare such a man with any fellow whatever, who, whether he bustle and push in business among labourers, clerks, statesmen; or whether he roar and rant, and drink and sing in taverns—a fellow over whose grave no one will breathe a single heigh-ho, except from the cobweb-tie of what is called good-fellowship—who has no view nor aim but what terminates in himself—if there be any grovelling earthborn wretch of our species, a renegade to common sense, who would fain believe that the noble creature Man is no better than a sort of fungus, generated out of nothing, nobody knows how, and soon dissipated in nothing, nobody knows where; such a stupid beast, such a crawling reptile, might balance the forgoing unexaggerated comparison, but no one else would have the patience.

Forgive me, my dear Sir, for this long silence. *To make you amends*, I shall send you soon, and more encouraging still, without any postage, one or two rhymes of my later manufacture.

R. B.

(12.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*Ellisland, 1st Nov., 1789.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAD written you long ere now, could I have guessed where to find you, for I am sure you have more good sense than to waste the precious days of vacation-time in the dirt of business and Edinburgh.—Wherever you are, God bless you, and lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil!

I do not know if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an Excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. In this I was extremely lucky. Without ever having been an expectant, as they call their journeymen excisemen, I was directly planted down to all intents and purposes an officer of Excise; there to flourish and bring forth fruits—worthy of repentance.

I know not how the word exciseman, or still more opprobrious, gauger, will sound in your ears. I too have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject; but a wife and children are things which have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow, is no bad settlement for a *poet*. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting sergeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable audience, in the streets of Kilmarnock.—“Gentlemen, for your further and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown, and consequently with us an honest fellow has the surest chance for preferment.”

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence in the most favourable situations does not abound with pleasures, and has its inconveniences and ills; capricious, foolish man mistakes these inconveniences and ills, as if they were the peculiar property of his particular situation; and hence that eternal fickleness, that love of change, which has ruined, and daily does ruin, many a fine fellow, as well as many a blockhead, and is almost without exception a constant source of disappointment and misery.

I long to hear from you how you go on—not so much in business as in life. Are you pretty well satisfied with your own exertions, and tolerably at ease in your internal reflections? 'Tis much to be a great character as a lawyer, but beyond comparison more to be a great character as a man. That you may be both the one and the other is the earnest wish, and that you *will* be both is the firm persuasion of,

My dear Sir, &amp;c.,

R. B.

(13.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

*[Dumfries, 1791.]*

MY DEAR AINSLIE,

CAN you minister to a mind diseased? can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, head-ache, nausea, and all the rest of the d—d hounds of hell, that beset a poor wretch who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul?

*Misérable perdu* that I am! I have tried every thing that used to amuse me, but in vain: here must I sit, a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every click of the clock as it slowly, slowly numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours, who, d—n them, are ranked up before me, every one at his neighbour's back-side, and every one with a burthen of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me.



My wife scolds me! my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow. \* \* \* I began *Elibanks and Elibraes*, but the stanzas fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue: at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours, that lay by me in my book-case, and I felt something for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence.—Well—I begin to breathe a little since I began to write to you. How are you, and what are you doing? How goes Law? Apropos, for connexion's sake, do not address to me supervisor, for that is an honor I cannot pretend to.—I am on the list, as we call it, for a supervisor, and will be called out by and by to act as one; but at present, I am a simple gauger, tho' t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of £25 per annum better than the rest. My present income, down money, is £70 per annum.

I have one or two good fellows here whom you would be glad to know.

R. B.

(14.) TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE,  
ST. JAMES'S STREET, EDINBURGH.

[April 26, 1793.]

I AM d-mnably out of humour, my dear Ainslie, and that is the reason why I take up the pen to you: 'tis the nearest way (*probatum est*) to recover my spirits again.

I received your last, and was much entertained with it; but I will not at this time, nor at any other time, answer it.—Answer a letter! I never could answer a letter in my life!—I have written many a letter in return for letters I have received; but then—they were original matter—spurt-away! zig here, zag there; as if the devil that, my Grannie (an old woman *indeed*) often told me, rode on Will-o'-wisp, or in her more classic phrase, SPUNKIE, were looking over my elbow. A happy thought that idea has engendered in my head! SPUNKIE—thou shalt henceforth be my Symbol, Signature, and Tutelary Genius! Like thee, hap-step-and-lowp, here-awa-there-awa, higglety-pigglety, pell-mell, hither-and-yont, ram-stam, happy-go-lucky, up-tails-a'-by-the-light-o'-the-moon—has been, is, and shall be, my progress through the mosses and moors of this vile, bleak, barren, wilderness of a life of ours.

Come then, my guardian spirit! like thee may I skip away, amusing myself by and at my own light: and if any opaque-souled lubber of mankind complain that my elfine, lambent, glimmerous wanderings have misled his stupid steps over precipices, or into bogs, let the thick-headed blunderbuss recollect that he is not SPUNKIE:—that

"SPUNKIE's wanderings could not copied be:  
Amid these perils none durst walk but he."—

I feel vastly better. I give you joy \* \* \* \* \*  
I have no doubt but scholarship may be caught, as a Scotchman catches the itch,—by friction. How else can you

account for it, that born blockheads, by mere dint of *hand-ling* books, grow so wise that even they themselves are equally convinced of and surprised at their own parts? I once carried this philosophy to that degree that in a knot of country folks who had a library amongst them, and who, to the honor of their good sense, made me factotum in the business;\* one of our members, a little, wise-looking, squat, upright, jabbering body of a tailor, I advised him, instead of turning over the leaves, to *bind the book on his back*.—Johnnie took the hint; and as our meetings were every fourth Saturday, and Pricklouse having a good Scots mile to walk in coming, and of course another in returning, Bodkin was sure to lay his hand on some heavy quarto or ponderous folio, with, and under which, wrapt up in his grey plaid, he grew wise as he grew weary, all the way home. He carried this so far, that an old musty Hebrew concordance, which we had in a present from a neighbouring priest, by mere dint of applying it as doctors do a blistering plaster, between his shoulders, Stitch, in a dozen pilgrimages, acquired as much rational theology as the said priest had done by forty years' perusal of the pages.†

Tell me, and tell me truly, what you think of this theory.

Yours,

SPUNKIE.

\* [Compare letter to Sir John Sinelair—p. 116.]

† [The reader will observe in this, and in several other sentences in immediately preceding letters—(11) and (12) particularly—of this series, a sort of unconnected desultory style—which seems to indicate the occasional irritability and haste the writer was exposed to at this period of his life; which, although they were not allowed to appear before all correspondents, could hardly be concealed from a friend.]

To Mr. [—]\*

[Mauchline, March 3d—8th,] 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

MY life, since I saw you last, has been one continued hurry; that savage hospitality which knocks a man down with strong liquors, is the devil. I have a sore warfare in this world; the devil, the world, and the flesh are three formidable foes. The first I generally try to fly from; the second, alas! generally flies from me; but the third is my plague, worse than the ten plagues of Egypt.

I have been looking over several farms in this country; one in particular, in Nithsdale, pleased me so well, that if my offer to the proprietor is accepted, I shall commence farmer at Whitsunday. If farming do not appear eligible, I shall have recourse to my other shift: but this to a friend.

I set out for Edinburgh on Monday morning; how long I stay there is uncertain, but you will know so soon as I can inform you myself. However I determine, poesy must be laid aside for some time; my mind has been vitiated with idleness, and it will take a good deal of effort to habituate it to the routine of business.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

R. B.



\* [This letter is published by Cunningham as addressed to Ainslie; but the letter, it appears, has no address of its own, and is most reasonably supposed by Chambers to have been addressed to some other correspondent, name unknown. Two letters at the same time, on the same subject, and almost in the same words, were not likely to be addressed by our Author to the same person. Compare letter (5) to Ainslie, also (2) to Cruikshank.]

## To Mr. William Cruikshank,

(1.) ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

*Auchtertyre, Monday, [Oct. 15, 1787.]*

I HAVE nothing, my dear Sir, to write to you, but that I feel myself exceedingly comfortably situated in this good family: just notice enough to make me easy but not to embarrass me. I was storm-staid two days at the foot of the Ochil-hills, with Mr. Tait of Herveyston and Mr. Johnston of Alva; but was so well pleased, that I shall certainly spend a day on the banks of the Devon, as I return. I leave this place I suppose on Wednesday, and shall devote a day to Mr. Ramsay at Auchtertyre, near Stirling—a man to whose worth I cannot do justice. My respectful kind compliments to Mrs. Cruikshank, and my dear little Jeanie; and if you see Mr. Masterton, please remember me to him.

I am ever, my dear Sir, &c.,

R. B.

[Mr. Cruikshank, our readers are aware, is the friend by whom our Author was so kindly entertained after his accident in Edinburgh. This letter was first published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1832, without an address, but manifestly belongs to Mr. Cruikshank. The reader may compare letter (3) to Nicol, of the same date, p. 159.]

## (2.) TO MR. WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

*Mauchline, 3rd March, 1788.*

MY DEAR SIR,

APOLOGIES for not writing are frequently like apologies for not singing—the apology better than the song. I have fought my way severely through the savage hospitality of this country, [the object of all hosts being] to send every guest drunk to bed if they can.

I executed your commission in Glasgow, and I hope the cocoa came safe. 'Twas the same price and the very same kind as your former parcel, for the gentleman recollected your buying there perfectly well.

I should return my thanks for your hospitality (I leave a blank for the epithet, as I know none can do it justice) to a poor, wayfaring bard, who was spent and almost overpowered fighting with prosaic wickednesses in high places; but I am afraid lest you should burn the letter whenever you come to the passage, so I pass over it in silence. I am just returned from visiting Mr. Miller's farm. The friend whom I told you I would take with me was highly pleased with the farm; and as he is, without exception, the

most intelligent farmer in the country, he has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans of life before me; I shall balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. I have written Mr. Miller, and shall wait on him when I come to town, which shall be the beginning or middle of next week; I would be in sooner, but my unlucky knee is rather worse, and I fear for some time will scarcely stand the fatigue of my Excise instructions. I only mention these ideas to you; and, indeed, except Mr. Ainslie, whom I intend writing to to-morrow, I will not write at all to Edinburgh till I return to it. I would send my compliments to Mr. Nicol, but he would be hurt if he knew I wrote to anybody and not to him: so I shall only beg my best, kindest, kindest compliments to my worthy hostess and the sweet little Rose-bud.\*

So soon as I am settled in the routine of life, either as an Excise-officer, or as a farmer, I propose myself great pleasure from a regular correspondence with the only man almost I ever saw who joined the most attentive prudence with the warmest generosity.

I am much interested for that best of men, Mr. Wood; I hope he is in better health and spirits than when I saw him last. I am ever, my dearest friend,

Your obliged, humble servant,

R. B.

\* [Mr. Cruikshank's daughter. Compare note on Lines to Miss C., Poetical Works, p. 248.]

## (3.) TO MR. WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

*Ellisland, [December,] 1788.*

I HAVE not room, my dear friend, to answer all the particulars of your last kind letter. I shall be in Edinburgh on some business very soon; and as I shall be two days, or perhaps three, in town, we shall discuss matters *visà voce*. My knee, I believe, will never be entirely well; and an unlucky fall this winter has made it still worse. I well remember the circumstance you allude to respecting Creech's opinion of Mr. Nicol; but, as the first gentleman owes me still about fifty pounds, I dare not meddle in the affair.

It gave me a very heavy heart to read such accounts of the consequences of your quarrel with that puritanic, rotten-hearted, hell-commissioned scoundrel, A——. If, notwithstanding your unprecedented industry in public, and your irreproachable conduct in private life, he still has you so much in his power, what ruin may he not bring on some others I could name?

Many and happy returns of seasons to you, with your dearest and worthiest friend, and the lovely little pledge of your happy union. May the great Author of life, and of every enjoyment that can render life delightful, make her that comfortable blessing to you both, which you so ardently wish for, and which, allow me to say, you so well deserve! Glance over the foregoing verses, and let me have your blots.

R. B.



## To James Dalrymple, Esq.,

ORANGEFIELD.

Edinburgh, [December 10, 1786?]

DEAR SIR,

I SUPPOSE the Devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main* to complete his purposes on you all at once, in making you a poet. I brokè open the letter you sent me; hummed over the rhymes; and, as I saw they were extempore, said to myself, they were very well; but when I saw at the bottom a name that I shall ever value with grateful respect, "I gapit wide, but naething spak." I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction-bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

I am naturally of a superstitious cast, and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its consciousness, and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My forboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility; and several events, great in their magnitude, and important in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfal of the conclave, or the crushing of the Cork rumps; a ducal coronet to Lord George Gordon and the Protestant interest; or St. Peter's keys to \* \* \* \*

You want to know how I come on. I am just *in statu quo*, or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, in "auld use and wont." The noble Earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent Being whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul, than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let the worshipful squire H. L., the reverend Mass J. M., go into their primitive nothing. At best, they are but ill-digested lumps of chaos—only, one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity, and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

R. B.

[Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield, near Ayr, was, by the mother's side, cousin-german to the Earl of Glencairn.]

## To St. James's Lodge,

TARBOLTON.

Edinburgh, 23rd August, 1787.

MEN AND BRETHREN,

I AM truly sorry it is not in my power to be at your quarterly meeting. If I must be absent in body, believe me, I shall be present in spirit. I suppose those who owe us monies, by bill or otherwise, will appear,—I mean those we summoned. If you please, I wish you would delay

prosecuting defaulters till I come home. The court is up, and I will be home before it sits down. In the meantime, to take a note of who appear and who do not, of our faulty debtors, will be right in my humble opinion; and those who confess debt and crave days, I think we should spare them. Farewell!

Within your dear mansion may wayward Contention,  
And withered Envy ne'er enter;  
May Secrecy round be the mystical bound,  
And Brotherly Love be the centre.

ROBT. BURNS.

To the Free Masons of  
ST. JAMES'S LODGE,  
Care of H. Manson,  
TARBOLTON.

[The insignia used by the Poet are still preserved with religious care in this Lodge.]

## To Charles Hay, Esq.,

ADVOCATE.

[ENCLOSING VERSES ON THE DEATH OF THE LORD PRESIDENT.]

SIR,

THE enclosed poem was written in consequence of your suggestion, last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. It cost me an hour or two of next morning's sleep, but did not please me; so it lay by, an ill-digested effort, till the other day that I gave it a critic brush. These kind of subjects are much hackneyed; and, besides, the wailings of the rhyming tribe over the ashes of the great are cursedly suspicious, and out of all character for sincerity. These ideas damped my Muse's fire; however, I have done the best I could, and, at all events, it gives me an opportunity of declaring that I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

## To Mr. Francis Howden.

JEWELLER, PARLIAMENT SQUARE.

THE bearer of this will deliver you a small shade to set; which, my dear sir, if you would highly oblige a poor cripple devil as I am at present, you will finish at furthest against to-morrow evening. It goes a hundred miles into the country; and if it is at me by five o'clock to-morrow evening, I have an opportunity of a private hand to convey it; if not, I don't know how to get it sent. Set it just as you did the others you did for me—"in the neatest and cheapest manner;" both to answer as a breast-pin, and with a ring to answer as a locket. Do despatch it; as it



is, I believe, the pledge of love, and perhaps the prelude to ma-tri-mo-ny. Everybody knows the auld wife's observation when she saw a poor dog going to be hanged—"God help us! it's the gate we ha'e a' to gang!"

The parties, one of them at least, is a very particular acquaintance of mine—the honest lover. He only needs a little of an advice which my grandmother, rest her soul, often gave me, and I as often neglected—

"Leuk twice or ye loup ance." [ere]

Let me conjure you, my friend, by the bended bow of Cupid—by the unloosed cestus of Vestus—by the lighted torch of Hymen—that you will have the locket finished by the time mentioned! And if your worship would have as much Christian charity as call with it yourself, and comfort a poor wretch, not wounded indeed by Cupid's arrow, but bruised by a good, serious, agonising, damned, hard knock on the knee, you will gain the earnest prayers, when he does pray, of, dear sir, your humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, No. 2, *Attic Story*.

(1.) **To Mr. Richard Brown,**  
IRVINE.

*Edinburgh, 30th Dec., 1787.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE met with few things in life which have given me more pleasure than Fortune's kindness to you since those days in which we met in the vale of misery; as I can honestly say, that I never knew a man who more truly deserved it, or to whom my heart more truly wished it. I have been much indebted since that time to your story and sentiments for steeling my mind against evils, of which I have had a pretty decent share. My will-o'-wisp fate you know: do you recollect a Sunday we spent together in Eglington woods? You told me, on my repeating some verses to you, that you wondered I could resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine. It was from this remark I derived that idea of my own pieces, which encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet. I am happy to hear that you will be two or three months at home. As soon as a bruised limb will permit me, I shall return to Ayrshire, and we shall meet; "and faith, I hope we'll not sit dumb, nor yet cast out!"

I have much to tell you "of men, their manners, and their ways," perhaps a little of the other sex. Apropos, I beg to be remembered to Mrs. Brown. There I doubt not, my dear friend, but you have found substantial happiness. I expect to find you something of an altered but not a different man; the wild, bold, generous young fellow composed into the steady affectionate husband, and the fond careful parent. For me, I am just the same will-o'-wisp being I used to be. About the first and fourth quarters

of the moon, I generally set in for the trade-wind of wisdom; but about the full and change, I am the luckless victim of mad tornadoes, which blow me into chaos. Almighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom; and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow, who has wit and wisdom more murderously fatal than the assassinating stiletto of the Sicilian bandit, or the poisoned arrow of the savage African. My Highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have gravely removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the following verses, which she sent me the other day.\*

My best compliments to our friend Allan. Adieu!

R. B.

\* ["Talk not of love, it gives me pain," &c.—Letter (3) to Clarinda, p. 37.]

(2.) **TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.**

*Edinburgh, February 15, 1788.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I RECEIVED yours with the greatest pleasure, I shall arrive at Glasgow on Monday evening, and beg, if possible, you will meet me on Tuesday. I shall wait you Tuesday all day. I shall be found at Davies's Black Bull Inn. I am hurried, as if hunted by fifty devils, else I should go to Greenock; but if you cannot possibly come, write me, if possible, to Glasgow, on Monday; or direct to me at Mossiel by Mauchline; and name a day and place in Ayrshire, within a fortnight from this date, where I may meet you. I only stay a fortnight in Ayrshire, and return to Edinburgh.

I am ever, my dearest friend, yours,

R. B.

(3.) **TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.**

*Mossiel, 24th February, 1788.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT get the proper direction for my friend in Jamaica, but the following will do:—To Mr. Jo. Hutchinson, at Jo. Brownrigg's, Esq., care of Mr. Benjamin Henriquez, merchant, Orange Street, Kingston. I arrived here, at my brother's, only yesterday, after fighting my way through Paisley and Kilmarnock, against those old powerful foes of mine, the devil, the world, and the flesh—so terrible in the fields of dissipation. I have met with few incidents in my life which gave me so much pleasure as meeting you in Glasgow. There is a time of life beyond which we cannot form a tie worth the name of friendship. "O youth! enchanting stage, profusely blest." Life is a fairy scene; almost all that deserves the name of enjoyment or pleasure is only a charming delusion; and in comes repining age in



all the gravity of hoary wisdom, and wretchedly chases away the bewitching phantom. When I think of life, I resolve to keep a strict look-out in the course of economy, for the sake of worldly convenience and independence of mind: to cultivate intimacy with a few of the companions of youth, that they may be the friends of age; never to refuse my liquorish humour a handful of the sweetmeats of life, when they come not too dear; and, for futurity—

"The present moment is our ain,  
The nicest we never saw!"

How like you my philosophy? Give my best compliments to Mrs. B., and believe me to be,

My dear Sir, yours most truly,

R. B.

(4.) TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.

*Mauchline, 7th March, 1788.*

I HAVE been out of the country, my dear friend, and have not had an opportunity of writing till now, when I am afraid you will be gone out of the country too. I have been looking at farms, and, after all, perhaps I may settle in the character of a farmer. I have got so vicious a bent to idleness, and have ever been so little a man of business, that it will take no ordinary effort to bring my mind properly into the routine: but you will say a "great effort is worthy of you." I say so myself; and butter up my vanity with all the stimulating compliments I can think of. Men of grave, geometrical minds, the sons of "which was to be demonstrated," may cry up reason as much as they please: but I have always found an honest passion, or native instinct, the truest auxiliary in the warfare of this world. Reason almost always comes to me like an unlucky wife to a poor devil of a husband—just in sufficient time to add her reproaches to his other grievances.

[He speaks afterwards of Jean and her then unpleasant circumstances, and adds]

I am gratified with your kind enquiries after her [Jean]; as, after all, I may say with Othello:—

—————"Excellent wretch!  
Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee."

I go for Edinburgh on Monday. Yours,

R. B.

(5.) TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.

*Glasgow, 26th March, 1788.*

I AM monstrously to blame, my dear Sir, in not writing to you, and sending you the Directory. I have been getting my tack extended, as I have taken a farm; and I have been racking shop accounts with Mr. Creech; both of which, to-

gether with watching, fatigue, and a load of care almost too heavy for my shoulders, have in some degree actually fevered me.\* I really forgot the Directory yesterday, which vexed me; but I was convulsed with rage a great part of the day. I have to thank you for the ingenious, friendly, and elegant epistle from your friend Mr. Crawford.† I shall certainly write to him, but not now. This is merely a card to you, as I am posting to Dumfries-shire, where many perplexing arrangements await me. I am vexed about the Directory; but, my dear Sir, forgive me: these eight days I have been positively crazed. My compliments to Mrs. B. I shall write to you at Grenada.

I am ever, my dearest friend, yours,

R. B.

\* [Mr. Chambers computes that at this time, all accidental and other expenses taken into account as deductions from his capital, our Author could not have more than £380 in pocket. Mr. Creech's business relations to the Poet will be found more fully stated in note to "Willie's Awa"—Posthumous Works.]

† [Mr. Thomas Crawford of Cartburn, Greenock, from whom the Poet a few days before had a friendly, jocular invitation to visit him—much too highly spoken of in above terms.]

(6.) TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.

*Mauchline, 21st May, 1789.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WAS in the country by accident, and hearing of your safe arrival, I could not resist the temptation of wishing you joy on your return—wishing you would write to me before you sail again—wishing you would always set me down as your bosom-friend—wishing you long life and prosperity, and that every good thing may attend you—wishing Mrs. Brown and your little ones as free of the evils of this world, as is consistent with humanity—wishing you and she were to make two at the ensuing lying-in, with which Mrs. B. threatens very soon to favour me—wishing I had longer time to write to you at present; and, finally, wishing that, if there is to be another state of existence, Mr. B., Mrs. B., our little ones, and both families, and you and I, in some snug retreat, may make a jovial party to all eternity!

My direction is at Ellisland, near Dumfries. Yours,

R. B.

(7.) TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.

*Ellisland, 4th November, 1789.*

I HAVE been so hurried, my ever-dear friend, that though I got both your letters, I have not been able to command an hour to answer them as I wished; and even now, you are to look on this as merely confessing debt, and craving days. Few things could have given me so much pleasure as the news that you were once more safe and sound on



terra firma, and happy in that place where happiness is alone to be found—in the fireside circle. May the benevolent Director of all things peculiarly bless you in all those endearing connexions consequent on the tender and venerable names of husband and father! I have indeed been extremely lucky in getting an additional income of £50 a year, while, at the same time, the appointment will not cost me above £10 or £12 per annum of expenses more than I must have inevitably incurred. The worst circumstance is, that the Excise division which I have got is so extensive—no less than ten parishes to ride over; and it abounds besides with so much business, that I can scarcely steal a spare moment. However, labour endears rest, and both together are absolutely necessary for the proper enjoyment of human existence. I cannot meet you any where. No less than an order from the Board of Excise, at Edinburgh, is necessary before I can have so much time as to meet you in Ayrshire. But do you come, and see me. We must have a social day, and perhaps lengthen it out half the night, before you go again to sea. You are the earliest friend I now have on earth, my brothers excepted: and is not that an endearing circumstance? When you and I first met, we were at the green period of human life. The twig would easily take a bent, but would as easily return to its former state. You and I not only took a mutual bent, but, by the melancholy, though strong influence of being both of the family of the unfortunate, we were entwined with one another in our growth towards advanced age; and blasted be the sacrilegious hand that shall attempt to undo the union! You and I must have one bumper to my favorite toast, “May the companions of our youth be the friends of our old age!” Come and see me one year; I shall see you at Port-Glasgow the next; and if we can contrive to have a gossiping between our two bed-fellows, it will be so much additional pleasure. Mrs. Burns joins me in kind compliments to you and Mrs. Brown. Adieu! I am ever, my dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

[On the above correspondence Professor Walker remarks—“The letters to Richard Brown, written at a period when the Poet was in the full blaze of reputation, showed that he was at no time so dazzled with success as to forget the friends who had anticipated the public by discovering his merit.”]

Brown himself, we are informed by Cunningham, “retrieved his fortunes, and lived much respected in Greenock to a good old age. He said Burns had little to learn in matters of levity, when he became acquainted with him.” To judge by all the letters now before us, our own conviction certainly is, that our Author, in his celebrated letter to Dr. Moore, has exaggerated both his own failings in this respect and those of his young friend Brown. He could never have written such letters as the above to any man who had done him so grievous a moral injury as there implied. Compare Autobiographical Letter to Dr. Moore—p. 72.]

(1.) **To Mr. Robert Cleghorn,**  
[SAUGHTON MILLS, EDINBURGH.]

*Mauchline, 31st March, 1788.*

YESTERDAY, my dear Sir, as I was riding thro’ a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire; it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and

hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favorite air, “Captain O’Kean,” coming at length into my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated.

The small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,  
The murmuring streamlet winds clear through the vale;  
The hawthorn-trees blow in the dew of the morning,  
And wild scatter’d cowslips bedeck the green dale;  
But what can give pleasure, or what can seem fair,  
While the lingering moments are number’d by care?  
No flowers gaily springing, nor birds sweetly singing,  
Can soothe the sad bosom of joyless despair.

I am tolerably pleased with these verses, but as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harassed with care and anxiety about this farming project of mine, that my Muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders, or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming; at present, the world sits such a load on my mind, that it has effaced almost every trace of the [poet]\* in me.

My very best compliments and good wishes to Mrs. Cleghorn.  
R. B.

\* [This word was left purposely by our Author, in the original, a —. So at least it stands in Currie’s edition, significantly and well.]

[Mr. Cleghorn, who, in reply to the above, addresses our Author as “My dear Brother Farmer,” was a jovial man and also a musical. At his special request, the above lines were modified, and by the addition of as many more were converted into the beautiful Jacobite song entitled “The Chevalier’s Lament.” The air, as we learn from other sources, from the testimony of his widow in particular, was a great favourite of our Author’s. The reader may compare note on the “Chevalier’s Lament,” Poetical Works, p. 294. Mr. Cleghorn promised some practical advice on farming, which, however, was of slight avail.]

(2.) **TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN,**  
SAUGHTON.

*[Dumfries, 21st August, 1795.]*

MY DEAR CLEGHORN,

INCLOSED you have Clarke’s Gaffer Gray.—I have not time [to take a] copy of it, so, when you have taken a copy for yourself, please return me the original. I need not caution you against giving copies to any other person. Peggy Ramsay I shall expect to find in Gaffer Gray’s company, when he returns to Dumfries.

I intended to have taken the advantage of the frank, and given you a long letter; but cross accident has detained me untill the Post is just going.—Pray, has Mr. Wight got the better of his fright, and how is Mr. Allan? I hope you got all safe home. Dr. Maxwell and honest John Syme beg leave to be remembered to you all. They both speak in high terms of the acquisition they have made to their acquaintance. Did







[ENGRAVED FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.]

[BY KIND PERMISSION OF DR. T. B. GRIERSON, THORNHILL, DUMFRIESSHIRE.]

Thomson meet you on Sunday? If so, you would have a world of conversation. Mrs. Burns joins in thanks for your obliging, *very obliging* visit.

Yours ever,

R. BURNS.

P.S.—Did you ever meet with the following “*Todlin Hame*,” by the late Mr. M'Culloch of Airdwell, Galloway?

[A good deal of conjectural interest is connected with this short epistle; for if the Mr. Allan referred to was David Allan the painter, commonly known as the “*Scottish Hogarth*”—which seems possible, from the occurrence of his name and Cleghorn's again in a letter (55) to Thomson, p. 103—then he must have been on a visit to the Poet at Dumfries along with Cleghorn in 1795, which would be the first and only time in their lives these two men of genius met. Before that date our Author had not the pleasure of Allan's acquaintance, although Allan had been illustrating his works, and had even hit an imaginary likeness of him in his picture of the “*Cotter's Saturday Night*”—compare letters (43) and (50) to Thomson;—and after that date there was no opportunity. This interview, therefore, between “*Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns*,” “the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world,” as our Poet honours Allan by saying, would be interesting to us—like the interview with Neil Gow: and it would be a source of great gratification to themselves, more especially as they were both indebted for early patronage and friendship to the same liberal hand. David Allan, although born at Alloa, was educated as an artist first in Glasgow and then at Rome, chiefly by the interest or at the personal expense of Gavin Hamilton. On the other hand—we find a Mr. John Allan associated with Robert Cleghorn and Robert Wight as a subscriber on behalf of the Poet's family; which looks like presumptive evidence equally strong against the above pleasant theory. Having nothing more to guide us to a conclusion in the matter, we must leave it thus undetermined with our readers.

This final interview with Cleghorn himself seems to have been social and friendly in the truest sense, and one in which not only Maxwell and Syme, but Mrs. Burns herself could join, and which doubtless she enlivened with her voice, agreeably. The letter itself, which we print from original in possession of George Manners, Esq., F.S.A., Croydon, has no date of its own inside, but is dated at full outside, and franked by P. Miller—that is, younger of Dalswinton, who was then Member for the Dumfries Burghs. Compare letter (6) to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry.]

### To Mr. George Lockhart,

MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

*Mauchline, 18th July, 1788.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM just going for Nithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my rhyming things for you. The Miss Baillies I have seen in Edinburgh. “Fair and lovely are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who would not praise Thee for these Thy gifts in Thy goodness to the sons of men!” It needed not your fine taste to admire them. I declare, one day I had the honor of dining at Mr. Baillie's, I was almost in the predicament of the children of Israel, when they could not look on Moses' face for the glory that shone in it when he descended from Mount Sinai.

I did once write a poetic address from the Falls of Bruar to his Grace of Athole, when I was in the Highlands. When you return to Scotland, let me know, and I will send such of my pieces as please myself best. I return to Mauchline in about ten days.

My compliments to Mr. Purden. I am in truth, but at present in haste, yours sincerely,

R. B.

[Burns had never felt the full measure of the beauty of his poems till he heard Mr. Aiken read them. Mr. Lockhart of Glasgow did him a similar service regarding his songs. On hearing him for the first time sing some of these pieces, he exclaimed with great naïveté—“I'll be hanged if I ever knew half their merit till now!”—*Chambers*.]

### (1.) To Robert Graham, Esq.,

OF FINTRY.\*

SIR,

WHEN I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakspeare, asked Old Kent why he wished to be in his service, he answers, “Because you have that in your face which I would fain call master.” For some such reason, Sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of Excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business, except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted.

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life, in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to see throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jail; whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, Sir, that to need your goodness, is to have a claim on it; may I, therefore, beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division; where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation.

R. B.

\* [Mr. Graham, of Fintry, Fintra, or Fintray (for his designation is thus variously spelt), was cousin to Sir William Murray of Auchtertyre; and seems to have been introduced to our Author at supper, in the Duke of Athole's at Blair—compare *Highland Tour*, Appendix; also letter to Mr. Walker. The important series of letters addressed to him appeared for the first time complete in Appendix to Mr. Chambers's edition, from which we now quote them, with some explanatory notes of our own. Mr. Graham, as our readers are aware, was a Commissioner at the Board of Excise, and one of our Author's warmest friends there in his professional capacity.]



## (2.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

*Ellisland, 10th Sept., 1788.*

SIR,

THE scrapes and premunires into which our indiscretions and follies, in the ordinary constitution of things, often bring us, are bad enough; but it is peculiarly hard that a man's virtues should involve him in disquiet, and the very goodness of his heart cause the persecution of his peace. You, Sir, have patronized and befriended me—not by barren compliments, which merely fed my vanity, or little marks of notice, which perhaps only encumbered me more in the awkwardness of my native rusticity, but by being my persevering friend in real life; and now, as if your continued benevolence had given me a prescriptive right, I am going again to trouble you with my importunities.

Your Honourable Board sometime ago gave me my Excise commission, which I regard as my sheet-anchor in life. My farm, now that I have tried it a little, though I think it will in time be a saving bargain, yet does by no means promise to be such a pennyworth as I was taught to expect. It is in the last stage of worn-out poverty, and it will take some time before it pay the rent. I might have had cash to supply the deficiencies of these hungry years; but I have a younger brother and three sisters on a farm in Ayrshire, and it took all my surplus over what I thought necessary for my farming capital, to save not only the comfort, but the very existence of that fireside family circle from impending destruction. This was done before I took the farm; and rather than abstract my money from my brother—a circumstance which would ruin him—I will resign the farm, and enter immediately into the service of your Honours. But I am embarked now in the farm; I have commenced married man; and I am determined to stand by my lease till resistless necessity compel me to quit my ground.

There is one way by which I might be enabled to extricate myself from this embarrassment—a scheme which I hope and am certain is in your power to effectuate. I live here, Sir, in the very centre of a country Excise division; the present officer lately lived on a farm which he rented, in my nearest neighbourhood; and as the gentleman, owing to some legacies, is quite opulent, a removal could do him no manner of injury; and on a month's warning to give me a little time to look again over my instructions, I would not be afraid to enter on business. I do not know the name of his division, as I have not yet got acquainted with any of the Dumfries Excise people; but his own name is Leonard Smith. It would suit me to enter on it beginning of next summer; but I shall be in Edinburgh to wait upon you about the affair, sometime in the ensuing winter.

When I think how and on what I have written to you, Sir, I shudder at my own *hardiesse*. Forgive me, Sir, I have told you my situation. If asking anything less could possibly have done, I would not have asked so much.

If I were in the service, it would likewise favour my poetical schemes. I am thinking of something in the rural way, of the drama kind. Originality of character is, I think, the

most striking beauty in that species of composition, and my wanderings in the way of my business would be vastly favourable to my picking up original traits of human nature.

I again, Sir, earnestly beg your forgiveness for this letter. I have done violence to my own feelings in writing it.

—‘If I in aught have done amiss,  
Impute it not!’—

My thoughts on this business, as usual with me when my mind is burdened, vented themselves in the enclosed verses, which I have taken the liberty to inscribe to you.

You, Sir, have the power to bless; but the only claim I have to your friendly offices is my having already been the object of your goodness, which [indeed looks like] producing my debt instead of my discharge.

I am sure I go on Scripture grounds in this affair, for I “ask in faith, nothing doubting;” and for the true Scripture reason too, because I have the fullest conviction that “my benefactor is good.”

I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply indebted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

## (3.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

*Ellisland, 23rd Sept. 1788.*

SIR,

THOUGH I am scarce able to hold up my head with this fashionable influenza, which is just now the rage hereabouts, yet, with half a spark of life, I would thank you for your most generous favour of the 14th, which, owing to my infrequent calls at the post-office in the hurry of harvest, came only to hand yesternight. I assure you, my ever-honoured Sir, I read it with eyes brimful of other drops than those of anguish. Oh, what means of happiness the Author of goodness has put in their hands to whom he has given the power to bless!—and what real happiness has he given to those on whom he has likewise bestowed kind, generous, benevolent dispositions! Did you know, Sir, from how many fears and forebodings the friendly assurance of your patronage and protection has freed me, it would be some reward for your goodness.

I am cursed with a melancholy prescience, which makes me the veriest coward in life. There is not any exertion which I would not attempt, rather than be in that horrid situation—to be ready to call on the mountains to fall on me, and the hills to cover me from the presence of a haughty landlord, or his still more haughty underling, to whom I owed—what I could not pay. My muse, too, the circumstance that, after my domestic comfort, is by far the dearest to my soul, to have it in my power to cultivate her acquaintance to advantage—in short, Sir, you have, like the great Being whose image you so richly bear, made a creature happy, who had no other claim to your goodness than his necessity, and who can make you no other return than his grateful acknowledgment.



My farm, I think I am certain, will in the long-run be an object for me; and as I rent it the first three years something under [its value], I will be able to weather by a twelvemonth, or perhaps more; though it would make me set fortune more at defiance, if it can be in your power to grant my request, as I mentioned, in the beginning of next summer. I was thinking that, as I am only a little more than five miles from Dumfries, I might perhaps officiate there, if any of these officers could be removed with more propriety than Mr. Smith; but besides the monstrous inconvenience of it to me, I could not bear to injure a poor fellow by outing him to make way for myself; to a wealthy son of good-fortune like Smith, the injury is imaginary where the propriety of your rules admits.

Had I been well, I intended to have troubled you further with a description of my soil and plan of farming; but business will call me to town about February next. I hope then to have the honour of assuring you in *propria persona*, how much and how truly I am, Sir, your deeply indebted and ever-grateful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(4.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

*Ellisland, 13th May, 1789.*

SIR,

THOUGH I intend making a little manuscript-book of my unpublished poems for Mrs. Graham, yet I cannot forbear in the meantime sending her the enclosed, which was the production of the other day. In the plea of humanity, the ladies, to their honour be it spoken, are ever warmly interested. That is *one* reason of my troubling you with this; another motive I have is a hackneyed subject in my letters to you—God help a poor devil who carries about with him a load of gratitude, of which he can never hope to ease his shoulders but at the expense of his heart! I waited on Collector Mitchell with your letter. It happened to be collection-day, so he was very busy; but he received me with the utmost politeness, and made me promise to call on him soon. As I don't wish to degrade myself to a hungry rook, gaping for a morsel, I shall just give him a hint of my wishes. I am going on with a bold hand in my farm, and am certain of holding it with safety for three or four years; and I think, if some cursed malevolent star have not taken irremovable possession of my zenith, that your patronage and my own priority then as an expectant, should run a fair chance for the division I want. By the bye, the Excise instructions you mentioned were not in the bundle; but 'tis no matter; Marshall in his *Yorkshire*, and particularly that extraordinary man, Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, find my leisure employment enough. I could not have given any mere *man* credit for half the intelligence Mr. Smith discovers in his book. I would covet much to have his ideas respecting the present state of some quarters of the world that are, or have been, the

scenes of considerable revolutions since his book was written. Though I take the advantage of your goodness, and presume to send you any new poetic thing of mine, I must not tax you with answers to each of my idle letters. I remember you talked of being this way with my honoured friend, Sir William Murray, in the course of this summer. You cannot imagine, Sir, how happy it would make me, should you, too, illuminate my humble domicile. You will certainly do me the honour to partake of a farmer's dinner with me. I shall promise you a piece of good old beef, a chicken, or perhaps a Nith salmon, fresh from the wear, and a glass of good punch, on the shortest notice; and allow me to say that Cincinnatus or Fabricius, who presided in the august Roman senate, and led their invincible armies, would have jumped at such a dinner. I expect your honours with a kind of enthusiasm. I shall mark the year, and mark the day, and hand it down to my children's children, as one of the most distinguished honours of their ancestor.

I have the honour to be, with sincerest gratitude, your obliged and very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(5.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

*Ellisland, 31st July, 1789.*

SIR,

THE language of gratitude has been so prostituted by servile adulation and designing flattery, that I know not how to express myself when I would acknowledge the receipt of your last letter. I beg and hope, ever-honoured

"Friend of my life! true patron of my rhymes,"

that you will always give me credit for the sincerest, chastest gratitude! The callous hypocrite may be louder than I in his grateful professions—professions which he never felt; or the selfish heart of the covetous may pocket the bounties of beneficence with more rejoicing exultation; but for the brimful eye, springing from the ardent throbbings of an honest bosom, at the goodness of a kindly active benefactor and politely generous friend, I dare call the Searcher of hearts and Author of all goodness to witness how truly these are mine to you.

Mr. Mitchell did not wait my calling on him, but sent me a kind letter, giving me a hint of the business, and on my waiting on him yesterday, he entered with the most friendly ardour into my views and interests. He seems to think, and from my own private knowledge I am certain he is right, that removing the officer who now does, and for these many years has done, duty in the division in the middle of which I live, will be productive of at least no disadvantage to the revenue, and may likewise be done without any detriment to him. Should the Honourable Board think so, and should they deem it eligible to appoint me to officiate in his present place, I am then



at the top of my wishes. The emoluments of my office will enable me to carry on and enjoy those improvements in my farm, which, but for this additional assistance, I might in a year or two have abandoned. Should it be judged improper to place me in this division, I am deliberating whether I had not better give up my farming altogether, and go into the Excise wherever I can find employment. Now that the salary is £50 per annum, the Excise is surely a much superior object to a farm, which, without some foreign assistance, must for half a lease be a losing bargain. The worst of it is, I know there are some respectable characters who do me the honour to interest themselves in my welfare and behaviour, and as leaving the farm so soon may have an unsteady, giddy-headed appearance, I had perhaps better lose a little money than hazard such people's esteem.

You see, Sir, with what freedom I lay before you all my little matters—little indeed to the world, but of the most important magnitude to me. You are so good, that I trust I am not troublesome. I have heard and read a good deal of philanthropy, generosity, and greatness of soul, and when rounded with the flourish of declamatory periods, or poured in the mellifluous of Parnassian measure, they have a tolerable effect on a musical ear; but when these high-sounding professions are compared with the very act and deed as they are usually performed, I do not think there is anything in or belonging to human nature so baldly disproportionate. In fact, were it not for a very few of our kind, among whom an honoured friend of mine, that to you, Sir, I will not name, is a distinguished individual, the very existence of magnanimity, generosity, and all their kindred virtues, would be as much a question among metaphysicians, as the existence of witchcraft. Perhaps the nature of man is not so much to blame for all this, as the situation in which, by some miscarriage or other, he is placed in this world. The poor, naked, helpless wretch, with such voracious appetites and such a famine of provision for them, is under a kind of cursed necessity of turning selfish in his own defence. Except here and there a scelerat, who seems to be a scoundrel from the womb by original sin, thorough-paced selfishness is always a work of time. Indeed, in a little time, we generally grow so attentive to ourselves, and so regardless of others, that I have often in poetic frenzy looked on this world as one vast ocean, occupied and commoved by innumerable vortices, each whirling round its centre, which vortices are the children of men; and that the great design and merit, if I may say so, of every particular vortex consists, in how wide it can extend the influence of its circle, and how much floating trash it can suck in and absorb.

I know not why I have got into this preaching vein, except it be to shew you, Sir, that it is not my ignorance but my knowledge of mankind which makes me so much admire your goodness to your humble servant.

I hope this will find my amiable young acquaintance, John, recovered from his indisposition, and all the members of your charming fireside circle well and happy. I am sure I am anxiously interested in all their welfares; I wish it

with all my soul; nay, I believe I sometimes catch myself praying for it. I am not impatient of my own impotence under that immense debt which I owe to your goodness, but I wish and beseech that BEING who has all good things in His hands, to bless and reward you with all those comforts and pleasures which He knows I would bestow on you, were they mine to give.

I shall return your books very soon. I only wish to give Dr. Smith one other perusal, which I will do in two or three days. I do not think that I must trouble you for another cargo, at least for some time, as I am going to apply to Leadbetter and Symons on Gauging, and to study my Sliding Rule, Brannan's Rule, &c., with all possible attention.

An apology for the impertinent length of this epistle would only add to the evil.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your deeply indebted humble Servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

(6.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

9th December, 1789.

SIR,

I HAVE a good while had a wish to trouble you with a letter, and had certainly done it long ere now—but for a humiliating something that throws cold water on the resolution, as if one should say, “You have found Mr. Graham a very powerful and kind friend indeed, and that interest he is so kindly taking in your concerns, you ought by every thing in your power to keep alive and cherish.” Now, though, since God has thought proper to make one powerful and another helpless, the connection of obliger and obliged is all fair; and though my being under your patronage is to me highly honourable, yet, Sir, allow me to flatter myself, that, as a poet, and an honest man you first interested yourself in my welfare, and principally as such still you permit me to approach you.

I have found the Excise business go on a great deal smoother with me than I expected; owing a good deal to the generous friendship of Mr. Mitchell, my collector, and the kind assistance of Mr. Findlater, my supervisor. I dare to be honest, and I fear no labour. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the Muses. Their visits to me, indeed, and I believe, to most of their acquaintance, like the visits of good angels, are “short and far between;”\* but I meet them now and then as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr. I take the liberty to enclose you a few bagatelles, all of them the productions of my leisure thoughts in my Excise rides.

If you know or have ever seen Captain Grose, the antiquary, you will enter into any humour that is in the verses on him. Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London newspaper. Though I dare say



you have none of the Solemn-League-and-Covenant fire, which shone so conspicuous in Lord George Gordon, and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet I think you must have heard of Dr. McGill, one of the Clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help him, poor man! Though he is one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest of the whole priesthood of the Kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor Doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being thrown out to the mercy of the winter-winds. The enclosed ballad on that business is, I confess, too local, but I laughed myself at some conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.†

The Election Ballad, as you will see, alludes to the present canvass in our string of burghs. I do not believe there will be a harder-run match in the whole general election. The great man here, like all renegadoes, is a flaming zealot kicked out before the astonished indignation of his deserted master, and despised, I suppose, by the party who took him in to be a mustering faggot at the mysterious orgies of their midnight iniquities, and a useful drudge in the dirty work of their country elections; he would fain persuade this part of the world that he is turned patriot, and, where he knows his men, has the impudence to aim away at the unmistrusting manner of a man of conscience and principle. Nay, to such an intemperate height has his zeal carried him that in convulsive violence to every feeling in his bosom, he has made some desperate attempts at the hopeless business of getting himself a character for benevolence; and, in one or two late terrible strides in pursuit of party-interest, has actually stumbled on something like meaning the welfare of his fellow-creatures.

I beg your pardon, Sir, if I differ from you in my idea of this great man; but were you to know his sins, as well of omission as commission, to this outraged land, you would club your curse with the execrating voice of the country. I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for, individuals of both parties; but a man who has it in his power to be the father of a country, and who is only known to that country by the mischiefs he does in it, is a character of which one cannot speak with patience.

Sir James Johnston does "what man can do," but yet I doubt his fate. Of the burgh of Annan he is secure; Kirkcudbright is dubious. He has the provost; but Lord Daer, who does the honours of great man to the place, makes every effort in his power for the opposite interest. Luckily for Sir James, his lordship, though a very good lord, is a very poor politician. Dumfries and Sanquhar are decidedly the duke's "to let or sell;" so Lochmaben, a city containing upwards of fourscore living souls that cannot discern between their right hand and their left—for drunkenness—has at present the balance of power in her hands. The honourable council of that ancient burgh are fifteen in number; but alas! their fifteen names indorsing a bill of fifteen pounds, would not discount the said bill in any banking-office. My lord provost, who is one of the soundest-headed, best-hearted, whisky-drinking fellows in the south of Scotland, is devoted to Sir James;

but his Grace thinks he has a majority of the council, though I, who have the honour to be a burgess of the town, and know somewhat behind the curtain, could tell him a different story.

The worst of it for the buff and blue folks is, that their candidate, Captain M[iller], my landlord's son, is, *entre nous*, a youth by no means above mediocrity in his abilities, and is said to have a huckster-lust for shillings, pence, and farthings. This is the more remarkable, as his father's abilities and benevolence are so justly celebrated.‡

The song beginning "Thou lingering star," &c., is the last, and, in my own opinion, by much the best of the enclosed compositions. I beg leave to present it with my most respectful compliments to Mrs. Graham.

I return you by the carrier, the bearer of this, Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Marshall's *Yorkshire*, and *Angola*. *Les Contes de Fontaine* is in the way of my trade, and I must give it another reading or two. *Chansons Joyeuses*, and another little French book, I keep for the same reason. I think you will not be reading them, and I will not keep them long.

Forgive me, Sir, for the stupid length of this epistle. I pray Heaven it may find you in a humour to read *The Belfast New Almanac*, or *The Bachelor's Garland*, containing five excellent new songs, or the Paisley poet's version of the Psalms of David, and then my impertinence may disgust the less.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your ever-grateful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

\* [Marsh, of America, in his Lectures on the English Language, thus traces the origin of this celebrated idea:—John Norris, about close of the seventeenth century, has—

"Like angels' visits, short and bright:"

Dr. Blair, fifty years later, improves into—

"Visits, like those of angels, short and far between:"

Thomas Campbell perfects, by help of mere alliteration, in the well-known line—

"Like angels' visits, few and far between."

Our Author, whom Marsh seems not to have observed, manifestly quotes from Blair, but with an alteration most characteristic of himself, and which renders the idea not only more significant in every way, but entirely new: Not *all* angels (he seems to say) seldom visit this world; but only "*good* angels"—alas!

+ [Kirk's Alarm is here no doubt referred to. Compare letter (2) to Logan of Afton, to whom a few months before, with the very same expressions regarding it, the original copy was sent.]

‡ [This gentleman was the successful candidate, notwithstanding. His supporter, "the great man" referred to above, was the Duke of Queensberry.—Compare Election Ballads.]

(7.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

*Dumfries, Globe Inn, 4th Sept., 1790.*

SIR,

THE very kind letter you did me the honour to write me reached me just as I was setting in to the whirlpool of an Excise fraud-court, from the vortex of which I am just emerged,—Heaven knows in a very unfit situation to do justice to the workings of my bosom when I sit down to write to the

"Friend of my life—true patron of my rhymes."



As my division consists of ten large parishes, and, I am sorry to say, hitherto very carelessly surveyed, I had a good deal of business for the justices; and I believe my decretet will amount to between fifty and sixty pounds. I took, I fancy, rather a new way with my frauds. I recorded every defaulter; but at the court I myself begged off every poor body that was unable to pay, which seeming candour gave me so much implicit credit with the honourable bench, that, with high compliments, they gave me such ample vengeance on the rest, that my *decretet* is double the amount of any division in the district.\*

I am going either to give up or subset my farm directly. I have not liberty to subset; but if my master will grant it me, I propose giving it, just as I have it to myself, to an industrious fellow of a near relation of mine. Farming this place in which I live would just be a livelihood to a man who would be the greatest drudge in his own family; so is no object; and living here hinders me from that knowledge in the business of Excise which it is absolutely necessary for me to attain.

I did not like to be an incessant beggar from you. A port-division I wish, if possible, to get; my kind, funny friend, Captain Grose, offered to interest Mr. Brown, and perhaps Mr. Wharton, for me: a very handsome opportunity offered of getting Mr. Corbet, supervisor-general, to pledge every service in his power; and then I was just going to acquaint you with what I had done, or rather what was done for me, that as everybody have their particular friends to serve, you might find the less obstacle in what, I assure you, Sir, I constantly count on—your wishes and endeavours to be of service to me. As I had an eye to getting on the examiner's list, if attainable by me, I was going to ask you if it would be of any service to try the interest of some great, and some *very* great folks, to whom I have the honour to be known—I mean in the way of a Treasury warrant. But much as early impressions have given me of the horrors of spectres, &c., still I would face the arch-fiend, in Miltonic pomp, at the head of all his legions, and hear that infernal shout which blind John says “tore hell's concave,” rather than crawl in, a dust-licking petitioner, before the lofty presence of a mighty man, and bear, amid all the mortifying pangs of self-annihilation, the swelling consequence of his d— state, and the cold monosyllables of his hollow heart!

It was in the view of trying for a port, that I asked Collector Mitchell to get me appointed, which he has done, to a vacant foot-walk in Dumfries. If ever I am so fortunate as to be called out to do business as a supervisor, I would then choose the north of Scotland; but until that Utopian period, I own I have some wayward feelings of appearing as a simple gauger in a country where I am only known by fame. Port-Glasgow, Greenock, or Dumfries ports would, in the meantime, be my ultimatum.

I enclose you a tribute I have just been paying to the memory of my friend, Matthew Henderson, whom I daresay you must have known. I had acknowledged your goodness sooner, but for want of time to transcribe the poem. Poor Matthew! I can forgive poverty for hiding virtue and piety. They are not only plants that flourish best in the shade, but

they also produce their sacred fruits, more especially for another world; but when the haggard beldam throws her invidious veil over wit, spirit, &c.—but I trust another world will cast light on the subject.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply obliged and very humble servant,  
ROBT. BURNS.

\* [Compare letter to Collector Mitchell, and Answers to Petition of T. J. immediately following. These decreets were, of course, additions to salary.]

(8.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

[Post-mark, Oct. 6.]

I OUGHT to have written you long ago; but a mere letter of thanks must be to you an insipid business. I wish to send you something that will give you at least as much amusement as *The Aberdeen New Prognostication*, or *Six Excellent New Songs*. Along with two other pieces, I enclose you a sheetful of groans, wrung from me in my elbow-chair, with one unlucky leg on a stool before me. I will make no apology for addressing it to you: I have no longer a *choice* of patrons: the truly noble Glencairn is no more! I intend soon to do myself the honour of writing Mrs. Graham, and sending her some other lesser pieces of late date. My Muse will sooner be in mischief than be idle; so I keep her at work.

I thought to have mentioned some Excise ideas that your late goodness has put in my head; but it is so like the sorning impudence of a sturdy beggar, that I cannot do it. It was something in the way of an officiating job. With the most ardent wish that you may be rewarded by *Him* who can do it, for your generous patronage to a man who, though feeling sensible of it, is quite unable to repay it, I have the honour, &c.

[Here follows Note to Mrs. Graham, with Prologue, “Rights of Woman.”—See note on.]

(9.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

December, 1792.

SIR,

I HAVE been surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your Board to enquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government.

Sir, you are a husband—and a father. You know what you would feel, to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas, Sir! must I think that such, soon, will be my lot! and from the d-mned, dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy too! I believe, Sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience,



that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head; and I say, that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British constitution on Revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached. You, Sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, Sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent; has given you patronage, and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin; for at the worst, “Death’s thousand doors stand open;” but, Good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due. To these, Sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved.

R. B.

(10.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

*Dumfries, 5th Jan., 1793.*

SIR,

I AM this moment honoured with your letter; with what feelings I received this other instance of your goodness, I shall not pretend to describe.

Now to the charges which malice and misrepresentation have brought against me. It has been said, it seems, that I not only belong to, but head a disaffected party in this place. I know of no party in this place, either republican or reform, except an old party of borough-reform, with which I never had anything to do. Individuals, both republican and reform, we have, though not many of either: but if they have associated, it is more than I have the least knowledge of, and if there exists such an association, it must consist of such obscure nameless beings, as precludes any possibility of my being known to them, or they to me. I was in the playhouse one night when *Ca ira* was called for. I was in the middle of the pit, and from the pit the clamour arose. One or two individuals with whom I occasionally associate were of the party, but I neither knew of the plot nor joined in the plot, nor ever opened my lips either to hiss or huzza that or any other political tune whatever. I looked on myself as far too obscure a man to have any weight in quelling a riot; at the same time, as a character of higher respectability than to yell in the howlings of a rabble. This was the conduct of all the first characters in the place; and these characters know, and will avow, that such was my conduct.\*

I never uttered any invectives against the king. His

private worth it is altogether impossible that such a man as I can appreciate; and in his public capacity I always revered, and always will, with the soundest loyalty, revere the monarch of Great Britain, as, to speak in masonic, the sacred KEYSTONE OF OUR ROYAL ARCH CONSTITUTION.

As to REFORM PRINCIPLES, I look upon the British constitution, as settled at the Revolution, to be the most glorious constitution on earth, or that perhaps the wit of man can frame; at the same time, I think, and you know what high and distinguished characters have for some time thought so, that we have a good deal deviated from the original principles of that constitution; particularly, that an alarming system of corruption has pervaded the connection between the executive power and the House of Commons. This is the truth, and the whole truth, of my reform opinions, which, before I was aware of the complexion of these innovating times, I too unguardedly (now I see it) sported with; but henceforth I seal up my lips. However, I never dictated to, corresponded with, or had the least connection with, any political association whatever—except, that when the magistrates and principal inhabitants of this town met to declare their attachment to the constitution, and their abhorrence of riot, which declaration you would see in the papers, I, as I thought my duty as a subject at large, and a citizen in particular, called upon me, subscribed the same declaratory creed. Of Johnston, the publisher of the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*, I know nothing. One evening, in company with four or five friends, we met with his prospectus, which we thought manly and independent: and I wrote to him, ordering his paper for us. If you think that I act improperly in allowing his paper to come addressed to me, I shall immediately countermand it. I never, so judge me God! wrote a line of prose for the *Gazetteer* in my life. An occasional address, spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her benefit-night here, which I called the *Rights of Woman*, I sent to the *Gazetteer*, as also some extempore stanzas on the commemoration of Thomson; both these I will subjoin for your perusal. You will see that they have nothing whatever to do with politics. At the time when I sent Johnston one of these poems, but which one I do not remember, I enclosed, at the request of my warm and worthy friend, Robert Riddel, Esq., of Glenriddel, a prose essay, signed Cato, written by him, and addressed to the delegates for the County Reform, of which he was one for this country. With the merits or demerits of that essay I have nothing to do, further than transmitting it in the same frank, which frank he had procured me.

As to France, I was her enthusiastic votary in the beginning of the business. When she came to shew her old avidity for conquest, in annexing Savoy, &c., to her dominions, and invading the rights of Holland, I altered my sentiments. A tipling ballad, which I made on the Prince of Brunswick’s breaking up his camp, and sung one convivial evening, I shall likewise send you, sealed up, as it is not everybody’s reading. This last is not worth your perusal; but lest Mrs. FAME should, as she has already done, use, and even abuse her old privilege of lying, you shall be master of everything, *le pour et le contre*, of my political writings and conduct.

This, my honoured patron, is all. To this statement I



challenge disquisition. Mistaken prejudice, or unguarded passion, may mislead, and have often misled me; but when called on to answer for my mistakes, though—I will say it—no man can feel keener compunction for his errors, yet, I trust, no man can be more superior to evasion or disguise.

I shall do myself the honour to thank Mrs. Graham for her goodness in a separate letter.

If, Sir, I have been so fortunate as to do away these misapprehensions of my conduct and character, I shall, with the confidence which you were wont to allow me, apply to your goodness on every opening in the way of business where I think I, with propriety, may offer myself. An instance that occurs just now: Mr. M'Farlane, supervisor of the Galloway district, is and has been for some time very ill. I spoke to Mr. Mitchell as to his wishes to forward my application for the job; but though he expressed, and ever does express, every kindness for me, he hesitates, in hopes that the disease may be of short continuance. However, as it seems to be a paralytic affection, I fear that it may be some time ere he can take charge of so extended a district. There is a great deal of fatigue and very little business in the district—two things suitable enough to my hardy constitution, and inexperience in that line of life.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your ever-grateful, as highly obliged, humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

\* [We have somewhere seen a letter giving a different and very disadvantageous account of Burns's conduct on this occasion. The writer, according to our recollection, seemed to speak with political prejudice; but the above, from its very minuteness as well as from its earnestness, is manifestly a truthful statement of what occurred—if the occasion referred to be the same.]

(11.) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

[Jan., 1794.]

SIR,

I AM going to venture on a subject which, I am afraid, may appear, *from me*, improper; but as I do it from the best of motives, if you should not approve of my ideas, you will forgive them.

Economy of the public monies is, I know, highly the wish of your honourable board; and any hint conducive thereto which may occur to any, though the meanest, individual in your service, it is surely his duty to communicate it.

I have been myself accustomed to labour, and have no notion that a servant of the public should eat the bread of idleness; so, what I have long digested, and am going to propose, is the reduction of one of our Dumfries divisions. Not only in these unlucky times, but even in the highest flush of business, my division, though by far the heaviest, was mere trifling—the others, still less. I would plan the reduction as thus: Let the second division be annihilated, and be divided among the others. The duties in it are, two chandlers, a common brewer, and some victuallers: these, with some tea and spirit stocks, are the whole division. The

two chandlers I would give to the third or tobacco division; it is the idlest of us all. That I may seem impartial, I shall willingly take under my charge the common brewer and the victuallers. The tea and spirit stocks divide between the Bridgend and Dumfries second divisions. They have at present but very little, *comparatively*, to do, and are quite adequate to the task,

I assure you, Sir, that by my plan the duties will be equally well charged, and thus an officer's appointment saved to the public. You must remark one thing—that our common brewers are, every man of them in Dumfries, completely and unexceptionally, fair traders. One or two rascally creatures are in the Bridgend division; but besides being nearly ruined, as all smugglers deserve, by fine and forfeiture, their business is on the most trifling scale you can fancy.

I must beg of you, Sir, should my plan please you, that you will conceal my hand in it, and give it as your own thought. My warm and worthy friend, Mr. Corbet, may think me an impertinent intermeddler in his department; and Mr. Findlater, my supervisor, who is not only one of the first, if not the very first, excisemen in your service, but is also one of the worthiest fellows in the universe—he, I know, would feel hurt at it; and as he is one of my most intimate friends, you can easily figure how it would place me to have my plan known to be mine.\*

For further information on the subject, permit me to refer you to a young beginner whom you lately sent among us—Mr. Andrew Pearson, a gentleman that, I am happy to say, from manner, abilities, and attention, promises, indeed, to be a great acquisition to the service of your honourable board.

This is a letter of business; in a future opportunity I may, and most certainly will, trouble you with one in my own way *à la Parnasse*.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your much indebted, and ever-grateful servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—I forgot to mention that, if my plan takes, let me recommend to your humanity and justice the present officer of the second division. He is a very good officer, and is burdened with a family of small children, which, with some debts of early days, crush him much to the ground.

R. B.

\* [The reader will find the whole of this and a kindred subject more fully treated in letter to Provost Staig—*infra*.]

To Mr. Morison,

MAUCHILINE.

Ellisland, September 22, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

NECESSITY obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plastered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will at farthest be my time, beyond which I cannot stay in this present house.

If ever you wished to deserve the blessing of him that was ready to perish; if ever you were in a situation that a little kindness would have rescued you from many evils; if ever you hope to find rest in future states of untried being—get these matters of mine ready.\* My servant will be out in the beginning of next week for the clock. My compliments to Mrs. Morison. I am, after all my tribulation,

Dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

\* [The "matters" here referred to were chiefly articles of household furniture, chairs and tables of hardwood. These are the same, if we mistake not, which were given by Mrs. Burns as a marriage plenishing to a faithful domestic—Mary M'Lachlan, for fourteen years housekeeper to Mrs. Burns—and are now in possession of her husband, Andrew Nicolson, who survives her—a humble artizan in Dumfries, but a devout worshipper of the Poet's, and who would not part with those reliques of his study for a ransom. The eight-day clock, we are told by Cunningham, was sold at Mrs. Burns's death "for thirty-eight pounds, to one who would have paid one hundred sooner than wanted it."]

### To Mr. John Tennant.

December 22, 1788.

I YESTERDAY tried my cask of whiskey for the first time, and I assure you it does you great credit. It will bear five waters, strong; or six, ordinary toddy. The whiskey of this country is a most rascally liquor; and, by consequence, only drunk by the most rascally part of the inhabitants. I am persuaded, if you once get a footing here, you might do a great deal of business, in the way of consumpt; and should you commence distiller again, this is the native barley country. I am ignorant if, in your present way of dealing, you would think it worth your while to extend your business so far as this country side. I write you this on the account of an accident, which I must take the merit of having partly designed to. A neighbour of mine, a John Currie, miller in Carse-mill—a man who is, in a word, a "very" good man, even for a £500 bargain,—he and his wife were in my house the time I broke open the cask. They keep a country public-house and sell a great deal of foreign spirits, but all along thought that whiskey would have degraded their house. They were perfectly astonished at my whiskey, both for its taste and strength; and, by their desire, I write you to know if you could supply them with liquor of an equal quality, and what price. Please write me by first post, and direct to me at Ellisland, near Dumfries. If you could take a jaunt this way yourself, I have a spare spoon, knife, and fork very much at your service. My compliments to Mrs. Tennant, and all the good folks in Glenconner and Barquharrie.

R. B.

[In Mr. Chambers's edition we find the following note attached to this letter: "If this is rightly addressed, it might refer to a different person from the Tennant of Glenconner, to whom Burns wrote a rhymed epistle, as the latter is called 'Jamie.' Perhaps John was a brother, engaged in business as a distiller." James had several brothers, or half-brothers; and the person most probably addressed in this letter was Mr. Tennant of Auchanbay, who is described by a correspondent in *Notes and Queries* as a "sagacious, decisive business man: he minded No. 1." —For further information, compare note on the Epistle to James Tennant.]

### To Mr. Cunningham.

Ellisland, 4th May, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR *duty-free* favour of the 26th April I received two days ago: I will not say I perused it with pleasure—that is the cold compliment of ceremony—I perused it, Sir, with delicious satisfaction;—in short, it is such a letter, that not you, nor your friend, but the legislature, by express proviso in their postage laws, should frank. A letter informed with the soul of friendship is such an honour to human nature, that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to super-eminent virtue.

I have just put the last hand to a little poem, which I think will be something to your taste. One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields, sowing some grass seeds,\* I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when all of them have young ones. Indeed, there is something in that business of destroying for our sport individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue.

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE WITH A SHOT,

April, 1789.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!  
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,  
Nor never pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field!  
The bitter little that of life remains:  
No more the thickening brakes or verdant plains  
To thee a home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled innocent, some wonted form;  
That wonted form, alas! thy dying bed!  
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,  
The cold earth with thy blood-stained bosom warm.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its wo;  
The playful pair crowd fondly by thy side:  
Ah! helpless nurslings, who will now provide  
That life a mother only can bestow?

Oft as by winding Nith, I, musing, wait  
The sober eve, or hail the chearful dawn;  
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,  
And curse the ruthless wretch and mourn thy hapless fate:†

Let me know how you like my poem. I am doubtful whether it would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one altogether.



Cruikshank is a glorious production of the Author of man. You, he, and the noble Colonel of the Crochallan Fencibles are to me

"Dear as the ruddy drops which warm my heart."

I have got a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of *Three gude fellows ayont the glen*.

R. B.

\* [On this subject, compare Memoranda by Mrs. Burns, of the Poet's life as a farmer—Appendix.]

+ [The version here quoted is the original draft of the poem, which the Author submitted to Dr. Gregory for revision. Compare the poem as published after revision—Poetical Works, p. 122. The person referred to in the poem was a young man of the name of Thomson, who rehearsed the incident to Allan Cunningham, and stated that Burns not only cursed him for his thoughtlessness, but threatened to throw him into the Nith. Thomson, when he told Cunningham this, had not seen the poem.]

(2.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

*Ellisland, 13th February, 1790.*

I BEG your pardon, my dear and much valued friend, for writing to you on this very unfashionable, unsightly sheet—

"My poverty but not my will consents."

But to make amends, since of modish post I have none, except one poor widowed half-sheet of gilt, which lies in my drawer among my plebeian fool's-cap pages, like the widow of a man of fashion, whom that unpolite scoundrel, Necessity, has driven from Burgundy and Pine-apple, to a dish of Bohea with the scandal-bearing help-mate of a village-priest; or a glass of whisky-toddy with a ruby-nosed yoke-fellow of a foot-padding exciseman—I make a vow to enclose this sheetful of epistolary fragments in that my only scrap of gilt paper.

I am indeed your unworthy debtor for three friendly letters. I ought to have written to you long ere now, but it is a literal fact, I have scarcely a spare moment. It is not that I *will* not write to you; Miss Burnet is not more dear to her guardian angel, nor his grace the Duke of Queensberry to the powers of darkness, than my friend Cunningham to me. It is not that I *cannot* write to you; should you doubt it, take the following fragment, which was intended for you some time ago, and be convinced that I can *antithesize* sentiment, and *circumvolute* periods, as well as any coiner of phrase in the regions of philology.

*December, 1789.*

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

WHERE are you? And what are you doing? Can you be that son of levity who takes up a friendship as he takes up a fashion; or are you, like some other of the worthiest fellows in the world, the victim of indolence, laden with fetters of ever-increasing weight?

What strange beings we are! Since we have a portion of conscious existence, equally capable of enjoying pleasure, happiness, and rapture, or of suffering pain, wretchedness, and misery, it is surely worthy of an inquiry, whether there be not such a thing as a science of life; whether method,

economy, and fertility of expedients be not applicable to enjoyment, and whether there be not a want of dexterity in pleasure, which renders our little scantling of happiness still less; and a profuseness, an intoxication in bliss, which leads to satiety, disgust, and self-aborrence. There is not a doubt but that health, talents, character, decent competency, respectable friends, are real substantial blessings; and yet do we not daily see those who enjoy many or all of these good things, contrive notwithstanding to be as unhappy as others to whose lot few of them have fallen? I believe one great source of this mistake or misconduct is owing to a certain stimulus, with us called ambition, which goads us up the hill of life—not as we ascend other eminences, for the laudable curiosity of viewing an extended landscape, but rather for the dishonest pride of looking down on others of our fellow-creatures, seemingly diminutive in humbler stations, &c., &c.

*Sunday, 14th February, 1790.*

God help me! I am now obliged to

"Join night to day, and Sunday to the week."

If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am d-mned past redemption, and what is worse, d-mned to all eternity. I am deeply read in Boston's Four-fold State, Marshall on Sanctification, Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest, &c.; but "there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there," for me; so I shall e'en turn Arminian, and trust to "sincere though imperfect obedience."

*Tuesday, 16th.*

Luckily for me, I was prevented from the discussion of the knotty point at which I had just made a full stop. All my fears and cares are of this world: if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it. I hate a man that wishes to be a Deist: but I fear, every fair, unprejudiced enquirer must in some degree be a sceptic. It is not that there are any very staggering arguments against the immortality of man; but like electricity, phlogiston, &c., the subject is so involved in darkness, that we want data to go upon. One thing frightens me much: that we are to live for ever, seems *too good news to be true*. That we are to enter into a new scene of existence, where, exempt from want and pain, we shall enjoy ourselves and our friends without satiety or separation—how much should I be indebted to any one who could fully assure me that this was certain!

My time is once more expired. I will write to Mr. Cleg-horn soon. God bless him and all his concerns! And may all the powers that preside over conviviality and friendship be present with all their kindest influence, when the bearer of this, Mr. Syme, and you meet! I wish I could also make one. I think we should be \* \* \*

Finally, brethren, farewell! Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gentle, whatsoever things are charitable, whatsoever things are kind, think on these things, and think on

ROBERT BURNS.

(3.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

*Ellisland, 8th August, 1790.*

FORGIVE me, my once dear, and ever dear friend, my seeming negligence. You cannot sit down and fancy the busy life I lead.

I laid down my goose-feather to beat my brains for an apt simile, and had some thoughts of a country grannum at a family christening; a bride on the market-day before her marriage; an orthodox clergyman at a Paisley sacrament \* \* \* or a tavern-keeper at an election-dinner; &c., &c.: but the resemblance that hits my fancy best is that black-guard miscreant, Satan, who roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching* whom he may devour. However, tossed about as I am, if I chuse (and who would not chuse?) to bind down with the crampets of attention the brazen foundation of integrity, I may rear up the superstructure of Independence, and from its daring turrets, bid defiance to the storms of fate. And is not this a “consummation devoutly to be wished?”

“Thy spirit, Independence, let me share ;  
Lord of the lion-heart, and eagle-eye !  
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,  
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky !”

Are not these noble verses? They are the introduction of Smollet's "Ode to Independence:" if you have not seen the poem, I will send it to you.—How wretched is the man that hangs on by the favours of the great! To shrink from every dignity of man, at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who amid all his tinsel glitter, and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art—and perhaps not so well formed as thou art—came into the world a puling infant as thou didst, and must go out of it, as all men must, a naked corpse. \* \* \*

[Compare letter (27) to Mrs. Dunlop—*p.* 23. With respect to which Dr. Currie observes—"The preceding letter explains the feelings under which this was written. The strain of indignant invective goes on some time longer in the style which our bard was too apt to indulge, and of which the reader has already seen so much."—Mr. Chambers explains the circumstance of these two letters (the one to Mrs. Dunlop, and the other to Cunningham) having been written on the same day, when the writer's time was so much occupied, by stating "that the 8th of August, 1790, was a Sunday."—Certainly not a day of *rest* to him, as the letter to Mrs. Dunlop painfully shows.]

(4.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

*Ellisland, 23rd January, 1791.*

MANY happy returns of the season to you, my dear friend! As many of the good things of this life, as is consistent with the usual mixture of good and evil in the cup of Being!

I have just finished a poem—'Tam o' Shanter'—which you will receive enclosed. It is my first essay in the way of tales.

I have these several months been hammering at an elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnet. I have got, and can get, no farther than the following fragment, on which please give me your strictures. In all kinds of poetic com-

position, I set great store by your opinion; but in sentimental verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman Catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of the Holy Father than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets as text verses.

ELEGY ON THE LATE MISS BURNET OF MONBODDO.

Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize,  
As Burnet lovely from her native skies ;  
Nor envious death so triumph'd in a blow,  
As that which laid th' accomplish'd Burnet low.

&c. &c.

Let me hear from you soon. Adieu!

R. B.

(5.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

*Ellisland, 12th March, 1791.*

If the foregoing piece be worth your strictures, let me have them. For my own part, a thing that I have just composed always appears through a double portion of that partial medium in which an author will ever view his own works. I believe in general, novelty has something in it that inebriates the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication, and leaves the poor patient, as usual, with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced, in the revolution of many a hymeneal honeymoon. But lest I sink into stupid prose, and so sacrilegiously intrude on the office of my parish-priest, I shall fill up the page in my own way, and give you another song of my late composition, which will appear perhaps in Johnson's work, as well as the former.

You must know a beautiful Jacobite air, "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame." When political combustion ceases to be the object of princes and patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of historians and poets.

By yon castle wa' at the close of the day,  
I heard a man sing, tho' his head it was grey;  
And as he was singing, the tears fast down came—  
There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.\*

If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you would oblige me, if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to "the memory of joys that are past," to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure. But I have scribbled on till I hear the clock has intimated the near approach of

That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane.—

So good night to you! Sound be your sleep and delectable  
your dreams! Apropos, how do you like this thought in a  
ballad, I have just now on the tapis?



I look to the west when I gae to rest,  
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;  
† Far, far in the west is he I lo'e best,  
The lad that is dear to my babie and me!

Good night, once more, and God bless you!

R. B.

\* [Compare perfect edition—"There'll never be peace"—Poetical Works, p. 175.]  
+ [Compare correct edition—"Out over the Forth"—Poetical Works, p. 181.]

(6.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

11th June, 1791.

LET me interest you, my dear Cunningham, in behalf of the gentleman who waits on you with this. He is a Mr. Clarke, of Moffat, principal schoolmaster there, and is at present suffering severely under the persecution of one or two powerful individuals of his employers. He is accused of harshness to boys that were placed under his care. God help the teacher, if a man of sensibility and genius—and such is my friend Clarke—when a booby father presents him with his booby son, and insists on lighting up the rays of science in a fellow's head whose skull is impervious and inaccessible by any other way than a positive fracture with a cudgel: a fellow whom in fact it savours of impiety to attempt making a scholar of, as he has been marked a blockhead in the book of fate, at the almighty fiat of his Creator.

The patrons of Moffat-school are, the ministers, magistrates, and town-council of Edinburgh, and as the business comes now before them, let me beg my dearest friend to do every thing in his power to serve the interests of a man of genius and worth, and a man whom I particularly respect and esteem. You know some good fellows among the magistracy and council, but particularly you have much to say with a reverend gentleman to whom you have the honour of being very nearly related, and whom this country and age have had the honour to produce. I need not name the historian of Charles V.\* I tell him through the medium of his nephew's influence, that Mr. Clarke is a gentleman who will not disgrace even his patronage. I know the merits of the cause thoroughly, and say it, that my friend is falling a sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance, and \* \* \*

God help the children of dependence! Hated and persecuted by their enemies, and too often, alas! almost unexceptionally, received by their friends with disrespect and reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O! to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his deserts; rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for a subsistence, precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature! Every man has his virtues, and no man is without his failings; and curse on that privileged plain-dealing of friendship, which, in the hour of my calamity, cannot reach forth the helping hand without at the same time pointing out those failings, and

apportioning them their share in procuring my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls ye, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues if you please, but do also spare my follies: the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude must be incident to human nature, do thou, Fortune, put it in my power, always from myself, and of myself, to bear the consequence of those errors! I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning.

To return in this rambling letter to the subject I set out with, let me recommend my friend, Mr. Clarke, to your acquaintance and good offices; his worth entitles him to the one, and his gratitude will merit the other. I long much to hear from you. Adieu!

R. B.

\* [Mr. Cunningham was nephew to Dr. Robertson, the historian.]

(7.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

Dumfries, 10th September, 1792.

No! I will not attempt an apology.—Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise; making ballads, and then drinking, and singing them; and, over and above all, the correcting the press-work of two different publications; still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, snatched an hour near "witching time of night," and scrawled a page or two. I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage; or I might have thanked the Caledonian archers for the honour they have done me (though to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both long ere now). Well then, here is to your good health! for you must know, I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me, just by way of spell, to keep away the meikle horned deil, or any of his subaltern imps who may be on their nightly rounds.

But what shall I write to you?—"The voice said cry," and I said, "what shall I cry?"—O, thou spirit! whatever thou art, or wherever thou makest thyself visible! be thou a bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herd-callan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the faulde!—Be thou a brownie, set, at dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle, or in the solitary barn, where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself, as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy ample cog of substantial brose—Be thou a kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse, or in the tumbling boat!—Or, lastly, be thou a ghost, paying thy



nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of the time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent, ghastly dwellings of the dead around thee: or taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, pourtraying on his dreaming fancy, pictures, dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed Deity!—Come, thou spirit, but not in these horrid forms; come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations, which thou breathest round the wig of a prating advocate, or the *tête-à-tête* of a tea-sipping gossip, while their tongues run at the light-horse gallop of clish-maclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half a hundred words; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark worth putting pen to paper for.

I feel, I feel the presence of supernatural assistance! circled in the embrace of my elbow-chair, my breast labours, like the bloated Sybil on her three-footed stool, and like her, too, labours with Nonsense.—Nonsense, auspicious name! Tutor, Friend, and Finger-post in the mystic mazes of law; the cadaverous paths of physic; and particularly in the sightless soarings of SCHOOL DIVINITY, who, leaving Common Sense, confounded at his strength of pinion; Reason, delirious with eyeing his giddy flight; and Truth creeping back into the bottom of her well, cursing the hour that ever she offered her scorned alliance to the wizard power of Theologic Vision—raves abroad on all the winds. “On earth Discord! a gloomy Heaven above, opening her jealous gates to the nineteen-thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! and below, an incapable and inexorable hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals!!!”—O doctrine! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of man! Ye sons and daughters of affliction, ye *pauvres misérables*, to whom day brings no pleasure, and night yields no rest, be comforted! “Tis but *one* to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will mend in this world;” so, alas, the experience of the poor and the needy too often affirms; and ’tis nineteen hundred thousand to *one*, by the dogmas of \* \* \* \* \* that you will be damned eternally in the world to come! \*

But of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the bye, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful; but still your children of sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril—snuffing putrescence, and a foot—spurning filth; in short, with a conceited dignity that your titled \* \* \* \* \*, or any other of your Scottish lordlings of seven centuries standing display, when they accidentally mix among the many apron’d sons of mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys!—Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a \* \* \* \* \*!—But hold—Here’s t’ye again—this rum is generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

Apropos, how do you like—I mean *really* like—the married life? Ah, my friend! matrimony is quite a different thing from what your love-sick youths and sighing girls take it to be! But marriage, we are told, is appointed by God, and I shall never quarrel with any of his institutions. I am a husband of older standing than you, and shall give you *my* ideas of the conjugal state (*en passant*—you know I am no Latinist—is not *conjugal* derived from *jugum*, a yoke?). Well then, the scale of good wifeship I divide into ten parts:—Good-nature, four; Good Sense, two; Wit, one; Personal Charms, viz.—a sweet face, eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage (I would add a fine waist too, but that is so soon spoilt, you know), all these, one; as for the other qualities belonging to, or attending on, a wife, such as Fortune, Connexions, Education (I mean education extraordinary), Family Blood, &c., divide the two remaining degrees among them as you please; only, remember that all these minor properties must be expressed by *fractions*, for there is not any one of them, in the aforesaid scale, entitled to the dignity of an *integer*.

As for the rest of my fancies and reveries—how I lately met with Miss Lesley Baillie, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world—how I accompanied her and her father’s family fifteen miles on their journey, out of pure devotion, to admire the loveliness of the works of God, in such an unequalled display of them—how, in galloping home at night, I made a ballad on her, of which these two stanzas make a part—

Thou, bonie Lesley, art a queen,  
Thy subjects we before thee;  
Thou, bonie Lesley, art divine,  
The hearts o’ men adore thee.

The very deil he could na scaith  
Whatever wad belang thee!  
He’d look into thy bonie face  
And say, “I canna wrang thee.”†

—behold all these things are written in the chronicles of my imaginations, and shall be read by thee, my dear friend, and by thy beloved spouse, my other dear friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee, and to thy before-designed *bosom*-companion, be given the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things brought forth by the moon, and the benignant influences of the stars, and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life, and by the tree of life, for ever and ever! Amen!

R. B.

\* [Compare “Holy Willie’s Prayer,” “Address to the Deil,” and similar poetico-religious effusions. Compare also letter (9) of this series, on genuine religion.]

† [Rough draft apparently: compare song as finished for Thomson’s Collection—Poetical Works, p. 205.]



## (8.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

3rd March, 1793.

SINCE I wrote to you the last lugubrious sheet, I have not had time to write you further. When I say that I had not time, that, as usual, means that the three demons, indolence, business, and ennui, have so completely shared my hours among them, as not to leave me a five minutes' fragment to take up a pen in.

Thank heaven, I feel my spirits buoying upwards with the renovating year. Now I shall in good earnest take up Thomson's songs. I dare say he thinks I have used him unkindly, and I must own with too much appearance of truth. Apropos, do you know the much admired old Highland air called "The Sutor's Dochter?" It is a first-rate favourite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it to you as it was sung with great applause in some fashionable circles by Major Robertson, of Lude, who was here with his corps.

There is one commission that I must trouble you with. I lately lost a valuable seal, a present from a departed friend, which vexes me much.

I have gotten one of your Highland pebbles which I fancy would make a very decent one; and I want to cut my armorial bearing on it; will you be so obliging as enquire what will be the expense of such a business? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all; but I have invented arms for myself, so you know I shall be chief of the name; and, by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These, however, I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald, and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly-bush, seeded, proper, in base; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colours, a wood-lark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes; round the top of the crest, *Wood Notes Wild*; at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, *Better a wee bush than nae bield*. By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters of Arcadia, but a *Stock and Horn* and a *Club*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the *Gentle Shepherd*. By the bye, do you know Allan? He must be a man of very great genius—Why is he not more known?—Has he no patrons? or do "Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy" on him? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of the noblest pastoral in the world; and dear as it was, I mean, dear as to my pocket, I would have bought it; but I was told that it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the *only* artist who has hit *genuine* pastoral costume. What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and harden the heart so? I think, that were I as rich as the sun, I should be as generous as the day; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than any other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a bird-lime quality to the possessor, at which the man, in his native poverty, would have revolted. What has led me to this, is the idea of such merit as Mr. Allan possesses, and

such riches as a nabob or government contractor possesses, and why they do not form a mutual league. Let wealth shelter and cherish unprotected merit, and the gratitude and celebrity of that merit will richly repay it.

R. B.

## (9.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

25th February, 1794.

CANST thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tost on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame, tremblingly alive as the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries, with thy inquiries after me?

For these two months I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these cursed times; losses which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill bear, have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel; he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility.

Still there are two great pillars that bear us up amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The ONE is composed of the different modifications of a certain noble stubborn something in man, known by the names of courage, fortitude, magnanimity. The OTHER is made up of those feelings and sentiments, which, however the sceptic may deny them, or the enthusiast disfigure them, are yet, I am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*, if I may be allowed the expression, which connect us with, and link us to, those awful obscure realities—an all-powerful, and equally beneficent God; and a world to come, beyond death and the grave. The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field: the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure.

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty FEW, to lead the undiscerning MANY; or at most as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know any thing of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do.\* Nor would

I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what, to me and to others, were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart; and an imagination, delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life.† He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson—

"These, as they change, Almighty Father, these  
Are but the varied God.—The rolling year  
Is full of thee."

And so on in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn.

These are no ideal pleasures, they are real delights; and I ask what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say equal, to them? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious virtue stamps them for her own; and lays hold on them to bring herself into the presence of a witnessing, judging, and approving God.‡

R. B.

\* [Compare Memoranda by Mrs. Burns—Burns's Habit of Reading the Bible—Appendix.]

† [Compare Miniature of Poet's son—Boy with flowers in his hand—in which this idea seems to have been carried out.]

‡ [The reader may advantageously compare the whole of this letter with letter (7), in which so strong a contrast of religious dogmatism is made. It is worthy of notice, however, that there is a slight inconsistency between the theory here admitted of religion being like a musical ear—which is certainly most true, and the practice inculcated of "imbuing the mind of every child with it"—unless by that only is meant the affectionate and prayerful cultivation of the religious sense—which is indeed all that can possibly be done in that way—and which, on multiplied evidence, we know the Poet as a father tried to do. Compare Memoranda by Mrs. Burns—Poet's Bearing to his Children—Appendix.]

(10.) TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

*Brow, Sea-bathing quarters, 7th July, 1796.*

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

I RECEIVED yours here this moment, and am indeed highly flattered with the approbation of the literary circle you mention; a literary circle inferior to none in the two kingdoms. Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more! For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me.—Pale, emaciated, and so feeble, as occasionally to need help

from my chair—my spirits fled! fled! but I can no more on the subject—only the medical folks tell me that my last and only chance is bathing and country-quarters, and riding.—The deuce of the matter is this: when an exciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to £35 instead of £50.—What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain myself, and keep a horse in country-quarters—with a wife and five children at home, on £35? I mention this, because I had intended to beg your utmost interest, and that of all the friends you can muster, to move our Commissioners of Excise to grant me the full salary; I dare say you know them all personally. If they do not grant it me, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poëte*—if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs; the other my memory does not serve me with, and I have no copy here; but I shall be at home soon, when I will send it you.—Apropos to being at home: Mrs. Burns threatens, in a week or two, to add one more to my paternal charge, which, if of the right gender, I intend shall be introduced to the world by the respectable designation of *Alexander Cunningham Burns*. My last was *James Glencairn*, so you can have no objection to the company of nobility. Farewell!

R. B.

[Alexander Cunningham, Esq., to whom this beautiful and important series of letters is addressed, was a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, of most respectable position, and connection. He was also one of a convivial set with whom Burns associated much when in that city; members of the Crochallan corps, and similar spirits, among whom a certain freedom of social intercourse was the bond of union. Whatever their failings or excesses, in this respect, may have been, they seem all to have been most affectionate friends of the Poet, and by their kindness to him to have merited the honour of his gratitude and the distinction of his correspondence. Dunbar was one of these; and Cunningham in particular, after the Poet's death, manifested the sincerity of his attachment by the most generous efforts on behalf of his widow and family.]

(1.) TO JOHN M'URDO, ESQ.,  
[DRUMLANRIG.]

*Ellisland, 9th Jan., 1789.*

SIR,

A POET and a beggar are, in so many points of view, alike, that one might take them for the same individual character under different designations; were it not that, though with a trifling poetic license most poets may be styled beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold, that every beggar is a poet. In one particular, however, they remarkably agree: if you help either the one or the other to a mug of ale, or the picking of a bone, they will very willingly repay you with a song. This occurs to me at present, as I have just dispatched a well-lined rib of John Kirkpatrick's Highlander;\* a bargain for which I am indebted to you, in the style of our ballad printers, "Five excellent new songs." The enclosed is nearly my newest song, and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of its excellence. Two or three others, which I have by me, shall



do themselves the honour to wait on your after leisure: petitioners for admittance into favour must not harass the condescension of their benefactors.

You see, Sir, what it is to patronise a poet. 'Tis like being a magistrate in Petty-borough: you do them the favour to preside in their council for one year, and your name bears the prefatory stigma of Bailie for life.

With, not the compliments, but the best wishes, the sincerest prayers of the season for you, that you may see many happy years with Mrs. M'Murdo and your family—two blessings by the bye, to which your rank does not, by any means, entitle you; a loving wife and fine family being almost the only good things of this life to which the farmhouse and cottage have an exclusive right.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your much indebted and very humble servant,

R. B.

\* [Mr. Chambers explains this allusion with reference to some present of a piece of Highland mutton, conveyed to the Author at Mr. M'Murdo's instance, by Kirkpatrick; whose name in Chambers's edition is given as Kilpatrick—a neighbouring blacksmith.]

(2.) TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

*Ellisland, 2nd August, 1790.*

SIR,

Now that you are over with the sirens of Flattery, the harpies of Corruption, and the furies of Ambition—these infernal deities, that on all sides, and in all parties, preside over the villainous business of politics—permit a rustic Muse of your acquaintance to do her best to soothe you with a song.—

You knew Henderson\*—I have not flattered his memory.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

\* [Matthew Henderson, subject of the well-known Elegy. Mr. Chambers, it appears, had searched the obituaries in vain for some notice of his death; and the fact itself was not known to us except from its commemoration in the Elegy. We have been favoured, however, by Mr. Carruthers of the *Inverness Courier* with the following extract from the *Scots Magazine*.

1788, "November 21, at Edinburgh, Matthew Henderson, Esq."—Which determines the matter. Compare note on Elegy—Poetical Works, p. 242.]

(3.) TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

*Dumfries, 1793.*

WILL Mr. M'Murdo do me the favour to accept of these volumes? a trifling but sincere mark of the very high respect I bear for his worth as a man, his manners as a gentleman, and his kindness as a friend. However inferior now, or afterwards, I may rank as a poet, one honest virtue to which few poets can pretend I trust I shall ever claim as mine—to no man, whatever his station in life, or his power to serve me, have I ever paid a compliment at the expense of TRUTH.

THE AUTHOR.

[These words appear as Prefatory Note on blank leaf of his Poems—Two vols. octavo, 1793.]

(4.) TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.,

WITH A PARCEL.

*[Dumfries,] December, 1793.*

SIR,

It is said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, and I pay myself a very high compliment in the manner in which I am going to apply the remark. I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man. Here is Ker's account, and here are six guineas; and now I don't owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these damned dirty dog's-ear'd little pages, I had done myself the honour to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under; the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itself was fully as much as I could ever make head against; but to owe you money too, was more than I could face.

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scots songs I have for some years been making: I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not conveniently spare them above five or six days, and five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr. Clint, of the King's Arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world; and I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.

R. B.

[Mr. M'Murdo, as our readers are aware, was chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry, and resided at his Grace's mansion of Drumlanrig in the neighbourhood of Thornhill. He was one of our Author's most hospitable friends and distinguished patrons in that district. His family circle afforded most attractive society, and his daughter, Miss Philadelphia, was one of the most celebrated and beautiful of the Poet's heroines.

We think it right to state that in this series of letters to Mr. M'Murdo, there are a few slight variations as between the editions of Cunningham and Chambers. The explanation in such cases generally is, that there have been rough drafts as well as finished copies of the several letters; and that they have been printed accordingly by the respective editors, as the rough draft or finished copy was before them. In the present instance, we incline rather to Mr. Chambers's reading, without invalidating Cunningham's at all, except in the date of letter (1), where he is manifestly wrong in reading June for Jan.]

TO Mr. James Hamilton,

GROCER, GLASGOW.

*Ellisland, May 26, 1789.*

DEAR SIR,

I SEND you by John Glover, carrier, the above account for Mr. Turnbull, as I suppose you know his address.

I would fain offer, my dear Sir, a word of sympathy with your misfortunes; but it is a tender string, and I know not how to touch it. It is easy to flourish a set of high-flown sentiments on the subject that would give great satisfaction to—a breast quite at ease; but as ONE observes, who was very seldom mistaken in the theory of life, "The heart

knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith."

Among some distressful emergencies that I have experienced in life, I ever laid this down as my foundation of comfort—*That he who has lived the life of an honest man has by no means lived in vain!*

With every wish for your welfare and future success,

I am, my dear Sir, sincerely yours,

R. B.

[This letter—which we print from Cromek, in Chambers's edition wants the introductory sentence. In this, as in other cases, one editor may have printed from a rough draft, and the other from a finished copy. The Mr. Hamilton addressed, we are told by Cunningham, was a friend in Glasgow, "who had interested himself early in the fortunes of the Poet."]

To Mr. [John] M'Auley,  
[DUMBERTON.]

*Ellisland, 4th June, 1789.*

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I am not without my fears respecting my fate at that grand, universal inquest of right and wrong, commonly called *The Last Day*, yet I trust there is one sin which that arch-vagabond, Satan, who I understand is to be king's evidence, cannot throw in my teeth—I mean ingratitude. There is a certain pretty large quantum of kindness for which I remain, and from inability, I fear, must still remain, your debtor; but though unable to repay the debt, I assure you, Sir, I shall ever warmly remember the obligation. It gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear by my old acquaintance, Mr. Kennedy, that you are, in immortal Allan's language, "Hale, and weel, and living;" and that your charming family are well, and promising to be an amiable and respectable addition to the company of performers, whom the Great Manager of the Drama of Man is bringing into action for the succeeding age.

With respect to my welfare, a subject in which you once warmly and effectively interested yourself, I am here in my old way, holding my plough, marking the growth of my corn, or the health of my dairy; and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather, or holding an intrigue with the Muses; the only gypsies with whom I have now any intercourse. As I am entered into the holy state of matrimony, I trust my face is turned completely Zion-ward; and as it is a rule with all honest fellows to repeat no grievances, I hope that the little poetic licences of former days will, of course, fall under the oblivious influence of some good-natured statute of celestial proscription. In my family devotion, which, like a good Presbyterian, I occasionally give to my household folks, I am extremely fond of the psalm, "Let not the errors of my youth," &c., and that other, "Lo children are

God's heritage," &c., in which last Mrs. Burns, who by the bye has a glorious "wood-note wild" at either old song or psalmody, joins me with the pathos of Handel's Messiah.

R. B.

[Mr. M'Auley, who was a legal practitioner of respectability in Dumbarton, seems to have been remarkable also for handsome personal exterior. The following anecdote corroborative, and highly characteristic so far as Lord Affleck is concerned, which Mr. Chambers quotes from *Glasgow Reformers' Gazette*, Dec. 4, 1852, we here transcribe. "He was at one time examined as a witness before Lord Affleck, at the Circuit Court here, who asked M'Auley 'where he came frae?' 'From Dumbarton, my Lord.' 'The deevil, ye do? I did not think there had been sae weel-faured a fallow in a' Dumbarton.'—This must have been some time before Burns's day as a poet, for Lord Affleck died in 1782. M'Auley must therefore have been either a mere youth at the time, or was considerably older than Burns at the date of their acquaintance. From the mention made of Mr. Kennedy in this letter, it seems very probable, as Mr. Chambers conjectures, that it was through the medium of that gentleman our Author was introduced to the hospitable gentry of Dumbartonshire and Locheilomondside. Compare letter (3) to Smith—Prose Works, p. 147.]

To Captain Riddel,

(1.)

CARSE.

*Ellisland, 16th Oct., 1789.*

SIR,

BIG with the idea of this important day at Friars-Carse,\* I have watched the elements and skies in the full persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent. Yesternight until a very late hour did I wait with anxious horror, for the appearance of some Comet firing half the sky; or aerial armies of sanguinary Scandinavians, darting athwart the startled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning, and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations.

The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly: they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the day. For me, as Thomson in his Winter says of the storm—I shall "Hear astonished, and astonished sing"

The whistle and the man I sing;

The man that won the whistle, &c.

"Here are we met, three merry boys,  
Three merry boys I trow are we;  
And mony a night we've merry been,  
And mony mae we hope to be.

"Wha first shall rise to gang awa,  
A cuckold coward loon is he;  
Wha *last* beside his chair shall fa'  
He is the king amang us three."†

To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose. I have some misgivings that I take too much



upon me, when I request you to get your guest, Sir Robert Lowrie, to frank the two enclosed covers for me, the one of them to Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, Bart., at Auchenskeith, Kilmarnock—the other to Mr. Allan Masterton, Writing-Master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on Sir Robert, as being a brother Baronet, and likewise a keen Foxite; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius; so, allow me to say, he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them to the post to-night. I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow, I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

\* [The day on which "the Whistle" was to be contended for. The Poet's own date of this contest, as in 1790, was an error of the pen undoubtedly.]

+ [Compare note on "Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut"—Poetical Works, p. 267.]

(2.) TO CAPTAIN RIDDEL.

[*Ellisland*, 1789.]

SIR,

I WISH from my inmost soul it were in my power to give you a more substantial gratification and return for all your goodness to the poet, than transcribing a few of his idle rhymes.—However, "an old song," though to a proverb an instance of insignificance, is generally the only coin a poet has to pay with.

If my poems which I have transcribed, and mean still to transcribe, into your book, were equal to the grateful respect and high esteem I bear for the gentleman to whom I present them, they would be the finest poems in the language.—As they are, they will at least be a testimony with what sincerity I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your devoted humble servant,

R. B.

[The reader may compare with this the letter to Captain Riddel at commencement of Literary Correspondence, containing a collection of fragments from our Author's earliest writings.]

MEMORANDUM

FOR

Provost E[dward] W[higham.]

To get from John French his sets of the following old Scots airs—

- 1st. The auld yowe jump't o'er the tether—
- 2d. Nine nights awa, welcome hame my dearie—
- 3d. A' the nights o' the year, the chapman drinks nae water.

If Mr. Whigham will either of himself, or through the medium of that [hardy?] hearty Veteran of original wit, and social iniquity—Clackleith—procure these airs, it will be extremely obliging to

R. B.

[Edward Whigham, Esq., was at that time Provost of Sanquhar. The original document is now in possession of Miss Johnston, Sanquhar, a daughter of Mr. Johnston's, Clackleith. We are under obligation to G. Gemmell, Esq., Ayr, for the privilege of introducing this as well as several other documents in the present edition. The MS. being slightly decayed at the place, we have some difficulty in deciding whether the word in brackets should be hardy or hearty; we incline to the latter reading.]

To Provost Maxwell,

OF LOCHMABEN.

*Ellisland*, 20th December, 1789.

DEAR PROVOST,

As my friend Mr. Graham goes for your good town to-morrow, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines, and as I have nothing to say I have chosen this sheet of foolscap, and begun as you see at the top of the first page, because I have ever observed, that when once people have fairly set out they know not where to stop. Now that my first sentence is concluded, I have nothing to do but to pray heaven to help me on to another. Shall I write you on Politics or Religion, two master subjects for your sayers of nothing. Of the first I dare say by this time you are nearly surfeited: and for the last, whatever they may talk of it, who make it a kind of company concern, I never could endure it beyond a soliloquy. I might write you on farming, on building, on marketing, but my poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedeviled with the task of the superlatively damned to make *one guinea do the business of three*, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word business, though no less than four letters of my very short surname are in it.

Well, to make the matter short, I shall betake myself to a subject ever fruitful of themes; a subject the turtle-feast of the sons of Satan, and the delicious secret sugar-plum of the babes of grace—a subject sparkling with all the jewels that wit can find in the mines of genius; and pregnant with all the stores of learning from Moses and Confucius to Franklin and Priestley—in short, may it please your Lordship, I intend to write \* \* \* \*

If at any time you expect a field-day in your town, a day when Dukes, Earls, and Knights pay their court to weavers, tailors, and cobblers, I should like to know of it two or three days beforehand. It is not that I care three skips of a cur dog for the politics, but I should like to see such an exhibition of human nature. If you meet with that worthy old veteran in religion and good-fellowship, Mr. Jeffrey, or any of his amiable family, I beg you will give them my best compliments.

R. B.

## To Mr. Sutherland,

PLAYER,

ENCLOSING A PROLOGUE.

*Monday Morning.*

I WAS much disappointed, my dear Sir, in wanting your most agreeable company yesterday. However, I heartily pray for good weather next Sunday; and whatever aerial Being has the guidance of the elements, may take any other half-dozen of Sundays he pleases, and clothe them with

"Vapours, and clouds, and storms,  
Until he terrify himself  
At combustion of his own raising."

I shall see you on Wednesday forenoon. In the greatest hurry,

R. B.

## To Collector Mitchell.

*Ellisland, [Oct. 13, 1790.]*

SIR,

I SHALL not fail to wait on Captain Riddel to-night—I wish and pray that the goddess of Justice herself would appear to-morrow among our hon. gentlemen, merely to give them a word in their ear that mercy to the thief is injustice to the honest man. For my part, I have galloped over my ten parishes these four days, until this moment that I am just alighted, or rather, that my poor jackass-skeleton of a horse has let me down; for the miserable devil has been on his knees half a score of times within the last twenty miles, telling me in his own way, "Behold, am not I thy faithful jade of a horse, on which thou hast ridden these many years!"

In short, Sir, I have broke my horse's wind, and almost broke my own neck, besides some injuries in a part that shall be nameless, owing to a hard-hearted stone of a saddle. I find that every offender has so many great men to espouse his cause, that I shall not be surprised if I am not\* committed to the strong hold of the law to-morrow for insolence to the dear friends of the gentlemen of the country.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obliged and obedient humble

R. B.

\* [Negative too many, in haste.]

## Answer to the Petition of T. J.

1. Whether the Petitioner has been in use formerly to malt all his grain at one operation, is foreign to the purpose: this last season he certainly malted his crop at four or five operations; but be that as it may, Mr. J. ought to have known

that by express act of parliament no malt, however small the quantity, can be legally manufactured until previous entry be made in writing of all the ponds, barns, floors, &c., so as to be used before the grain can be put to steep. In the Excise entry-books for the division, there is not a syllable of T. J.'s name for a number of years bygone.

2. True it is that Mr. Burns, on his first ride, in answer to Mr. J.'s question anent the conveying of the notices, among other ways pointed out the sending it by post as the most eligible method, but at the same time added this express clause, and to which Mr. Burns is willing to make faith: "At the same time, remember, Mr. J., that the notice is at your risk until it reach me!" Further, when Mr. Burns came to the Petitioner's kiln, there was a servant belonging to Mr. J. ploughing at a very considerable distance from the kiln, who left his plough and three horses without a driver, and came into the kiln, which Mr. B. thought was rather a suspicious circumstance, as there was nothing extraordinary in an Excise-officer going into a legal malt-floor so as to [induce a man to] leave three horses yoked to a plough in the distant middle of a moor. This servant, on being repeatedly questioned by Mr. Burns, could not tell when the malt was put to steep, when it was taken out, &c.—in short, was determined to be entirely ignorant of the affair. By and by, Mr. J.'s son came in; and on being questioned as to the steeping, taking out of the grain, &c., Mr. J., junior, referred me to this said servant, this ploughman, who, he said, must remember it best, as having been the principal actor in the business. The lad *then*, having gotten his cue, circumstantially recollected all about it.

All this time, though I was telling the son and servant the nature of the premunire they had incurred, though they pleaded for mercy keenly, the affair of the notice having been sent never once occurred to them, not even the son, who is said to have been the bearer. This was a stroke reserved for, and worthy of the gentleman himself. As to Mrs. Kellock's oath, it proves nothing. She did, indeed, depone to a line being left for me at her house, which said line miscarried. It was a sealed letter; she could not tell whether it was a malt-notice or not; she could not even condescend on the month, nor so much as the season of the year. The truth is, T. J. and his family being Seceders, and consequently coming every Sunday to Thornhill Meeting-house, they were a good conveyance for the several maltsters and traders in their neighbourhood to transmit to post their notices, permits, &c.

But why all this tergiversation? It was put to the Petitioner in open court, after a full investigation of the cause: "Was he willing to swear that he meant no fraud in the matter?" And the Justices told him, that if he swore he would be assoilzied [absolved], otherwise he should be fined; still the Petitioner, after ten minutes' consideration, found his conscience unequal to the task, and declined the oath.

Now, indeed, he says he is willing to swear; he has been exercising his conscience in private, and will perhaps stretch a point. But the fact to which he is to swear was equally and in all parts known to him on that day when he refused to swear as to-day: nothing can give him further light as to the intention of his mind, respecting his meaning or not meaning



a fraud in the affair. *No time can cast further light on the present resolves of the mind; but time will reconcile, and has reconciled many a man to that iniquity which he at first abhorred.*

[The above document forms Burns's official share of the business to which the previous letter to Collector Mitchell refers; and is an illustration of the system adopted by him, and explained in letter (7) to Robert Graham, Esq., in prosecuting the defaulters of his district. The document appeared for the first time in Chambers's Edition, 1856. It is worthy of notice how the Poet's peculiar style of observation characterises the document—"the distant middle of a moor" being an expression, descriptive and truthful, that nobody almost but himself, in such a case, would have used. The rest of the document, in moral and other respects, is equally characteristic. The Petitioner, it appears, was a farmer at Mirecleugh, and had been fined £5 for contravention; against which he had reclaimed.]

To A. Fergusson, Esq.,

[OF CRAIGDARROCH.]

Globe Inn, Noon, Wednesday.

[Oct. ? 1789.]

"Blessed be he that kindly doth  
The poor man's case consider."

I HAVE sought you all over the town, good Sir, to learn what you have done, or what can be done, for poor Robie Gordon. The hour is at hand when I must assume the execrable office of whipper-in to the blood-hounds of Justice, and must let loose the carrion sons \* \* \* on poor Robie. I think you can do something to save the unfortunate man, and am sure, if you can, you will. I know that Benevolence is supreme in your bosom, and has the first voice in, and last check on, all you do; but that insidious \* \*, Politics, may [word wanting] the honest cully Attention, until the practicable moment of doing good is no more. I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

[This letter to Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch, Esq., in juxtaposition with the above document, shows how anxiously solicitous the writer was to save from ruin, or even from suffering, the unfortunate victim of law, however stern he might be in bringing regular transgressors to punishment. This note, Mr. Chambers informs us, was found in Craigdarroch House, along with another very brief metrical note from our Author, in reply to the invitation to Carse.—See Miscellaneous Poetical Pieces.]

To Crauford Tait, Esq.,

EDINBURGH.\*

Ellisland, Oct. 15, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

ALLOW me to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer, Mr. Wm. Duncan, a friend of mine, whom I have long known and long loved. His father, whose only son he is, has a decent little property in Ayrshire, and has bred the young

man to the law, in which department he comes up an adventurer to your good town. I shall give you my friend's character in two words: as to his head, he has talents enough, and more than enough, for common life; as to his heart, when Nature had kneaded the kindly clay that composes it, she said—"I can no more."

You, my good Sir, were born under kinder stars; but your fraternal sympathy, I well know, can enter into the feelings of the young man, who goes into life with the laudable ambition to *do* something, and to *be* something among his fellow-creatures; but whom the consciousness of friendless obscurity presses to the earth, and wounds to the soul!

Even the fairest of his virtues are against him. That independent spirit, and that ingenuous modesty, qualities inseparable from a noble mind, are, with the million, circumstances not a little disqualifying. What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and the happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of such depressed youth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse:—the goods of this world cannot be divided without being lessened—but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow-creature, yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment! We wrap ourselves up in the cloak of our own better fortune, and turn away our eyes, lest the wants and woes of our brother-mortals should disturb the selfish apathy of our souls!

I am the worst hand in the world at asking a favor. That indirect address, that insinuating implication, which, without any positive request, plainly expresses your wish, is a talent not to be acquired at a plough-tail. Tell me then, for you can, in what periphrasis of language, in what circumvolution of phrase, I shall envelope, yet not conceal this plain story.—"My dear Mr. Tait, my friend Mr. Duncan, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you, is a young lad of your own profession, and a gentleman of much modesty, and great worth. Perhaps it may be in your power to assist him in the, to him, important consideration of getting a place; but at all events, your notice and acquaintance will be a very great acquisition to him; and I dare pledge myself that he will never disgrace your favor."

You may possibly be surprised, Sir, at such a letter from me; 'tis, I own, in the usual way of calculating these matters, more than our acquaintance entitles me to; but my answer is short:—Of all the men at your time of life, whom I knew in Edinburgh, you are the most accessible on the side on which I have assailed you. You are very much altered indeed from what you were when I knew you, if generosity point the path you will not tread, or humanity call to you in vain.

As to myself, a being to whose interest I believe you are still a well-wisher; I am here, breathing at all times, thinking sometimes, and rhyming now and then. Every situation has its share of the cares and pains of life, and my situation, I am persuaded, has a full ordinary allowance of its pleasures and enjoyments.

My best compliments to your father and Miss Tait. If you have an opportunity, please remember me in the solemn league and covenant of friendship to Mrs. Lewis Hay. I am a wretch for not writing her; but I am so hackneyed with self-accusa-

tion in that way, that my conscience lies in my bosom with scarce the sensibility of an oyster in its shell. Where is Lady M'Kenzie?—wherever she is, God bless her! I likewise beg leave to trouble you with compliments to Mr. Wm. Hamilton; Mrs. Hamilton and family; and Mrs. Chalmers, when you are in that country. Should you meet with Miss Nimmo, please remember me kindly to her.

R. B.

\*[This gentleman was, we believe, the only son of Mr. Tait of Harveyston, Clackmannanshire, to whose hospitable mansion our Author paid two visits, whilst his correspondent was a youth. Mr. Crawford Tait, who settled as a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, married there a daughter of the late Sir Ilay Campbell, Bart., of Succoth; the fifth and youngest son of which marriage is the Right Rev. Archibald Campbell Tait, D.D., Archbishop of Canterbury.]

To ———.

[*Ellisland*, 1790.]

DEAR SIR,

WHETHER in the way of my trade I can be of any service to the Rev. Doctor is, I fear, very doubtful. Ajax's shield consisted, I think, of seven bull-hides and a plate of brass, which altogether set Hector's utmost force at defiance. Alas! I am not a Hector, and the worthy Doctor's foes are as securely armed as Ajax was. Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, stupidity, malevolence, self-conceit, envy—all strongly bound in a massy frame of brazen impudence. Good God, Sir! to such a shield, humour is the peck of a sparrow, and satire the pop-gun of a school-boy. Creation-disgracing *Scélérats* such as they, God only can mend, and the devil only can punish. In the comprehending way of Caligula, I wish they all had but one neck. I feel impotent as a child to the ardour of my wishes! O for a withering curse to blast the germins of their wicked machinations. O for a poisonous Tornado, winged from the Torrid Zone of Tartarus, to sweep the spreading crop of their villainous contrivances to the lowest hell!

R. B.

To Mr. Alexander Dalziel,

FACTOR, FINDLAYSTON.\*

[*Ellisland*, 19th March, 1791.]

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE taken the liberty to frank this letter to you, as it encloses an idle poem of mine, which I send you; and God knows you may perhaps pay dear enough for it if you read it through. Not that this is my own opinion; but the author by the time he has composed and corrected his work, has quite pored away all his powers of critical discrimination.

I can easily guess from my own heart, what you have felt

on a late most melancholy event. God knows what I have suffered, at the loss of my best friend, my first, my dearest patron and benefactor; the man to whom I owe all that I am and have! I am going into mourning for him, and with more sincerity of grief than I fear some will, who by nature's ties ought to feel on the occasion.

I will be exceedingly obliged to you, indeed, to let me know the news of the noble family, how the poor mother and the two sisters support their loss. I had a packet of poetic bagatelles ready to send to Lady Betty, when I saw the fatal tidings in the newspaper. I see by the same channel, that the honored REMAINS of my noble patron are designed to be brought to the family burial-place. Dare I trouble you to let me know privately before the day of interment, that I may cross the country, and steal among the crowd to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression.

R. B.

\*[This gentleman, the factor, or steward, of Burns's noble friend, Lord Glencairn, with a view to encourage a second edition of the poems, laid the volume before his lordship, with such an account of the rustic bard's situation and prospects as from his slender acquaintance with him he could furnish. The result, as communicated to Burns by Mr. Dalziel, is highly creditable to the character of Lord Glencairn. After reading the book, his lordship declared that its merits greatly exceeded his expectation, and he took it with him as a *literary curiosity* to Edinburgh. He repeated his wishes to be of service to Burns, and desired Mr. Dalziel to inform him, that in patronizing the book, ushering it with effect into the world, or treating with the booksellers, he would most willingly give every aid in his power; adding his request that Burns would take the earliest opportunity of letting him know in what way he could best further his interests. He also expressed a wish to see some of the unpublished manuscripts, with a view to establishing his character with the world.—*Cromek*.]

To Mr. Thomas Sloan.

[*Ellisland*, 1st Sept., 1791.]

MY DEAR SLOAN,

SUSPENSE is worse than disappointment; for that reason I hurry to tell you, that I just now learn that Mr Ballantine does not choose to interfere more in the business. I am truly sorry for it, but cannot help it.

You blame me for not writing you sooner; but you will please to recollect that you omitted one little necessary piece of information—your address.

However, you know equally well my hurried life, indolent temper, and strength of attachment. It must be a longer period than the longest life “in the world's hale and undegenerate days,” that will make me forget so dear a friend as Mr. Sloan. I am prodigal enough at times, but I will not part with such a treasure as that.

I can easily enter into the *embarras* of your present situation. You know my favourite quotation from Young—

—————“On Reason build RESOLVE!  
That column of true majesty in man;”

And that other favourite one from Thomson's *Alfred*—

“What proves the hero truly GREAT  
Is never, never, to despair.”



Or, shall I quote you an author of your acquaintance?

"—Whether DOING, SUFFERING, OR FORBEARING,  
You may do miracles by—PERSEVERING."

I have nothing new to tell you. The few friends we have are going on in the old way. I sold my crop on this day se'ennight, and sold it very well. A guinea an acre, on an average, above value. But such a scene of drunkenness was hardly ever seen in this country. After the roup was over, about thirty people engaged in a battle, every man for his own hand, and fought it out for three hours. Nor was the scene much better in the house. No fighting, indeed, but folks lying drunk on the floor, and decanting, until both my dogs got so drunk by attending them, that they could not stand. You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene; as I was no farther over than you used to see me.

Mrs. B. and family have been in Ayrshire these many weeks.

Farewell! and God bless you, my dear Friend!

R. B.

[Readers may perhaps be shocked at such an account of rural debauchery at a sale, but the present was no exception to the usual routine at that time in such cases—and at funerals, it is lamentable to think, as well as at "Roups" and "Holy Fairs," the abuse of refreshments provided for visitors was the same. The reader will find an interesting anecdote of Burns and Mr. Sloan at Wanlockhead, in Chambers's edition, vol. iii. p. 9.—See also verses to John Taylor—Posthumous Works.]

To Col. Fullarton,

OF FULLARTON.

*Ellisland, October 3, 1791.*

SIR,

I HAVE just this minute got the frank, and next minute must send it to post, else I purposed to have sent you two or three other bagatelles, that might have amused a vacant hour about as well as "Six excellent new songs," or, the Aberdeen "Prognostications for the Year to come." I shall probably trouble you soon with another packet. About the gloomy month of November, when "the people of England hang and drown themselves," any thing generally is better than one's own thought.

Fond as I may be of my own productions, it is not for their sake that I am so anxious to send you them. I am ambitious, covetously ambitious of being known to a gentleman whom I am proud to call my countryman; a gentleman who was a foreign ambassador as soon as he was a man, and a leader of armies as soon as he was a soldier, and that with an *éclat* unknown to the usual minions of a court—men who, with all the adventitious advantages of princely connexions and princely fortune, must yet, like the caterpillar, labour a whole lifetime before they reach the wished for height, there to roost a stupid chrysalis, and doze out the remaining glimmering existence of old age.

If the gentleman that accompanied you when you did me the honor of calling on me, is with you, I beg to be respect-

fully remembered to him. I have the honor to be, Sir, your highly obliged, and most devoted humble servant,

R. B.

[Compare Note on "Vision"—Poetical Works, p. 99—"Brydon's brave Ward I well could spy."]

To ———.

*Ellisland, 1791.*

DEAR SIR,

I AM exceedingly to blame in not writing you long ago; but the truth is, that I am the most indolent of all human beings; and when I matriculate in the herald's office, I intend that my supporters shall be two sloths, my crest a slow-worm, and the motto, "Deil tak the foremost." So much by way of apology for not thanking you sooner for your kind execution of my commission.

I would have sent you the poem; but somehow or other it found its way into the public papers, where you must have seen it.

I am ever, dear Sir, yours sincerely.

R. B.

(1.) To James Gracie, Esq.

*Globe Inn, 8 o'clock p.m. [1791.]*

SIR,

I have your letter anent Crombie's bill. Your forbearance has been very great. I did it to accommodate the thoughtless fellow. He asks till Wednesday week. If he fail, I pay it myself. In the meantime, if horning and caption be absolutely necessary, *grip him by the neck, and welcome.* Yours.

ROBERT BURNS.

[Mr. Chambers, from whose edition we quote this letter, informs us that the defaulter alluded to was a mason about Dalswinton, Alexander Crombie by name, who had been employed at the building of the farm-steading at Ellisland, and whom Burns had accommodated with his name, as a worthy man struggling with difficulties in the world. Mr. Gracie was an official in the Bank at Dumfries.]

(2.) TO JAMES GRACIE, ESQ.

*Brow, Wednesday Morning, [13th July, 1796.]*

MY DEAR SIR,

It would [be] doing high injustice to this place not to acknowledge that my rheumatisms have derived great benefits from it already; but, alas! my loss of appetite still continues. I shall not need your kind offer *this week*, and I return to town the beginning of next week, it not being a tide-week. I am detaining a man in a burning hurry. So, God bless you!

R. B.

[Mr. Gracie had been a kind friend to our Author; and the offer here referred to, was *that* of his carriage, to bring the Poet home from sea-bathing quarters to Dumfries.—Chambers.]

To Mr. James C[larke],

(1.) MOFFAT.

*Dumfries, 10th January, 1792.*

I RECEIVED yours this moment, my dear Sir. I sup with Captain Riddel in town to-night, else I had gone to Carse directly. Courage, *mon ami*! The day may, after all, be yours; but at any rate, there is other air to breathe than that of Moffat, pestiferously tainted as it is with the breath of that arch-scoundrel, J—. There are two quotations from two poets which, in situations such as yours, were congenial to my soul. Thomson says:

"What proves the hero truly great,  
Is never, never to despair."

And Dr. Young:

—"On Reason build Resolve,  
That column of true majesty in man."

To-morrow, you shall know the result of my consultation with Captain Riddel.—Yours,

R. B.

(2.) TO MR. JAMES C[LARKE],

MOFFAT.

*Dumfries, 17th Feb., 1792.*

MY DEAR SIR,

IF this finds you at Moffat, or as soon as it finds you at Moffat, you must without delay wait on Mr. Riddel, as he has been very kindly thinking of you in an affair that has occurred of a clerk's place in Manchester; which, if your hopes are desperate in your present business, he proposes procuring for you. I know your gratitude for past, as well as hopes of future favors, will induce you to pay overy attention to Glen-riddel's wishes; as he is almost the only, and undoubtedly the best friend that your unlucky fate has left you.

Apropos, I just now hear that you have beat your foes *every tail hollow*. Huzza! *To triumphe*! Mr. Riddel, who is at my elbow, says that if it is so, he begs that you will wait on him directly, and I know you are too good a man not to pay your respects to your saviour. Yours,

R. B.

[These two letters, for the discovery of which the public is indebted to Mr. Chambers, read in connection with letter (6) to Cunningham, indicate very plainly the affectionate interest the Poet had taken in the welfare of his friend the then schoolmaster of Moffat. What triumph is here celebrated over his "foes," we do not learn;—but whatever it might be, it is certain that he required and received still further assistance from our Author, and finally relinquished his situation at Moffat for another of the same kind at Forfar, as the following letter, given by Mr. Chambers, shows:—

CLARKE TO BURNS.

[Forfar, 18th Feb., 1796.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,  
Your letter makes me very unhappy; the more so, as I had heard very flattering accounts of your situation some months ago. A note [20s.] is enclosed; and if such partial payment will be acceptable, this shall soon be followed by more. My appointment here has more than answered my expectations; but furnishing a large house, &c., has kept me still very poor; and the persecution I suffered from that rascal, Lord H—, brought me into expenses which, with all my economy, I have not yet rubbed off. Be so kind as write me. Your disinterested friendship has made an impression which time cannot efface. Believe me, my dear Burns, yours in sincerity,

JAMES CLARKE.]

(3.)

TO MR. CLARKE,

SCHOOLMASTER, FORFAR.

*Dumfries, 26th June, 1796.*

MY DEAR CLARKE,

STILL, still the victim of affliction! Were you to see the emaciated figure who now holds the pen to you, you would not know your old friend. Whether I shall ever get about again is only known to Him, the Great Unknown, whose creature I am. Alas, Clarke! I begin to fear the worst. As to my individual self, I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not; but Burns's poor widow, and half-a-dozen of his dear little ones—helpless orphans!—*there* I am weak as a woman's tear.\* Enough of this! 'Tis half of my disease.

I duly received your last, enclosing the note. It came extremely in time, and I am much obliged by your punctuality. Again I must request you to do me the same kindness. Be so very good as, by return of post, to enclose me *another* note. I trust you can do it without inconvenience, and it will seriously oblige me.† If I must go, I shall leave a few friends behind mē, whom I shall regret while consciousness remains. I know I shall live in their remembrance. Adieu, dear Clarke. That I shall ever see you again, is, I am afraid, highly improbable.

R. B.

\* [This adaptation from Shakspeare—

"But I am weaker than a woman's tear,"

*Troilus and Cressida*: Act I., Scene 1.—

is far from being merely rhetorical. It is manifestly employed to save the use of terms by himself that would have been too painful and enervating for him to utter, in prospect of the desolation to which he could not help looking forward.]

† [Compare note on letter (1) to Captain John Hamilton. The forbearance and gentleness of this application to a debtor, in the circumstances of the case, are beyond mere commentary: sermons might be written on them.]

To Mr. Stephen Clarke,

EDINBURGH.

*July 16, 1792.*

MR. BURNS begs leave to present his most respectful compliments to Mr. Clarke.—Mr. B. some time ago did himself the honor of writing Mr. C. respecting coming out to the country, to give a little musical instruction in a highly respectable family, where Mr. C. may have his own terms, and may be as happy as indolence, the Devil, and the gout will permit him. Mr. B. knows well how Mr. C. is engaged with another family; but cannot Mr. C. find two or three weeks to spare to each of them? Mr. B. is deeply impressed with, and awfully conscious of, the high importance of Mr. C.'s time, whether in the winged moments of symphonious exhibition, at the keys of harmony, while listening Seraphs cease their own less delightful strains; or in the drowsy hours of slumb'rous Repose, in the arms of his dearly



beloved elbow-chair, where the frowsy, but potent power of Indolence circumfuses her vapours round, and sheds her dews on the head of her darling son. But half a line conveying half a meaning from Mr. C. would make Mr. B. the happiest of mortals.

[The gentleman here addressed is the celebrated musician so frequently alluded to in the correspondence with Thomson; and Mr. M'Murdo's, at Drumlanrig, is understood to be the "highly respectable family" where Mr. C.'s services were in requisition; and where, it is said, a tender impression was afterwards made on Mr. C.'s heart by one of his elegant and accomplished pupils. In Cromeck's Reliques the letter is addressed, by misprint, to "Mr. T. Clarke."]

## To Captain Johnstone.

*Dumfries, Nov. 13, 1792.*

SIR,

I HAVE just read your prospectus of the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*. If you go on in your paper with the same spirit, it will, beyond all comparison, be the first composition of the kind in Europe. I beg leave to insert my name as a subscriber, and if you have already published any papers, please send me them from the beginning. Point out your own way of settling payments in this place, or I shall settle with you through the medium of my friend, Peter Hill, bookseller in Edinburgh.

Go on Sir! Lay bare with undaunted heart and steady hand that horrid mass of corruption called politics and statecraft. Dare to draw in their native colours those

"Calm thinking villains whom no faith can fire,"

whatever be the shibboleth of their pretended party.

The address to me at Dumfries will find, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

[Compare letter (10) to Robert Graham, Esq., on this subject.]

## To Captain [John] Hamilton,

(1.)

DUMFRIES.

[*After Martinmas, 1793.*]

SIR,

It is even so.—You are the only person in Dumfries or in the world, to whom I have *run in debt*; and I took the freedom with you, because I believed, and do still believe, that I may do it with more impunity as to my feelings than any other person almost that I ever met with.—I will settle with you soon; and I assure you, Sir, it is with infinite pain that I have transgressed on your goodness. The unlucky fact for me is, that about the beginning of these disastrous times, in a moment of imprudence I lent my name to a friend who has since been unfortunate; and of course, I had a sum to pay which my very

limited income and large family could ill afford.—God forbid, Sir, that anything should ever distress you as much as writing this card has done me.

With the sincerest gratitude and most respectful esteem,

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your very humble sert.,

ROBERT BURNS.

[We have no conclusive evidence either as to the exact date of this painfully interesting letter, or the unfortunate monetary transaction to which it refers. We have more than one reference to "these disastrous times" in the correspondence with Hill, which enable us to fix the date as being at least posterior to summer of 1793; and one obscure reference to money matters—letters (11) and (12) to Hill—which seems to imply that Hill himself had knowledge of, perhaps disagreeable interest in, some such transaction. But Gilbert Burns's distinct statement about Mr. Clark's *bill* (schoolmaster at Forfar—see letter (3) to him), and the well-known fact that the Poet had in some way, by pecuniary advance or otherwise, befriended him, and was still a creditor of his at the time of his own death, seem to leave very little doubt on the subject. "The Poet would appear to have never quite succeeded in squaring accounts with his landlord, Captain Hamilton," says Mr. Chambers. The above letter, which appears now for the first time in print, explains satisfactorily the origin of these painful obligations, which so darkened and distressed his last hours, and which were undoubtedly the cause of his self-alienation from Captain Hamilton, and perhaps other esteemed friends, in pride and sorrow. The above document, as our readers are already aware, has been opportunely supplied to us by George Manners, Esq., F.S.A., Croydon, and completes the *elucidation* of a subject on which Mr. Chambers has bestowed much care.]

(2)

TO CAPTAIN HAMILTON.

*Saturday Morning, [January 31, 1795.]*

SIR,

I WAS from home, and had not the opportunity of seeing your more than polite, your most friendly card. It is not possible, most worthy Sir, that you could do anything to offend anybody. My backwardness proceeds alone from the abashing consciousness of my obscure station in the ranks of life. Many an evening have I sighed to call in and spend it at your social fireside; but a shyness of appearing obtrusive amid the fashionable visitants occasionally there, kept me at a distance. It shall do so no more. On Monday, I must be in the country, and most part of the week; but the first leisure evening I shall avail myself of your hospitable goodness. With the most ardent sentiments of gratitude and respect, I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your highly-obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

[The friendly communication to which the above letter is a reply we find in Mr. Chambers's Edition, vol. iv., p. 131,—as follows:—

DUMFRIES, 30th Jan., 1795.

DEAR SIR,

At same time that I acknowledge the receipt of three guineas to account of house-rent, will you permit me to enter a complaint of a different nature? When you first came here, I courted your acquaintance; I wished to see you; I asked you to call in and take a family-dinner now and then, when it suited your convenience. For more than twelve months you have never entered my door, but seemed rather shy when we met. This kept me from sending any farther particular invitation. If I have in any shape offended, or from inadvertency hurt the delicacy of your feelings, tell me so, and I will endeavour to set it to rights.

If you are disposed to renew our acquaintance [I] will be glad to see you to a family-dinner at three o'clock on Sunday; and, at any rate, hope you will believe me, dear Sir, your sincere friend,

JOHN HAMILTON.

On our Author's reply—(2)—to the above, Mr. Chambers remarks:—"One can scarcely doubt that there were other considerations pressing upon him—the unpleasant sense of debt towards his landlord, and the consciousness that he was under the ban of a large part of respectable society on account of politics, the Riddel quarrel, and his own many imprudences." So far as a painful sense of indebtedness to his landlord was a cause of this unwillingness on the Poet's part to intrude on Captain Hamilton, the reader has now the clearest evidence; and it was probably the chief, if not the only cause—although, as we perceive, he was honestly endeavouring to remove it. Captain Hamilton, proprietor of Allershaw, was landlord of both the houses our Author tenanted in succession at Dumfries, and was a man of the highest respectability and most amiable disposition.]

### To Captain ———\*

*Dumfries, 5th December, 1793.*

SIR,

HEATED as I was with wine yesternight, I was perhaps rather seemingly impertinent in my anxious wish to be honoured with your acquaintance. You will forgive it—it was the impulse of heart-felt respect. "He is the father of Scottish county reform, and is a man who does honour to the business, at the same time that the business does honour to him," said my worthy friend Glenriddel to somebody by me, who was talking of your coming to this country with your corps. "Then," I said "I have a woman's longing to take him by the hand, and say to him, 'Sir, I honour you as a man to whom the interests of humanity are dear, and as a patriot to whom the rights of your country are sacred.'"

In times like these, Sir, when our commoners are barely able by the glimmering of their own twilight understandings to scrawl a frank, and when lords are what gentlemen would be ashamed to be, to whom shall a sinking country call for help? To the independent country gentleman. To him who has too deep a stake in his country not to be in earnest for her welfare; and who, in the honest pride of man, can view with equal contempt the insolence of office and the allurements of corruption.

I mentioned to you a Scots ode or song I had lately composed, and which, I think, has some merit. Allow me to enclose it. When I fall in with you at the theatre, I shall be glad to have your opinion of it. Accept of it, Sir, as a very humble but most sincere tribute of respect from a man who, dear as he prizes poetic fame, yet holds dearer an independent mind.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

\* [Supposed by Mr. Chambers to be Captain or Major Robertson, of Lude: Compare letter (8) to Cunningham. The poem enclosed was "Bruce's Address"—of which our Author distributed, among literary and political friends, several copies about this time.]

### To John Syme, Esq.

YOU know that among other high dignities, you have the honor to be my supreme court of critical judicature, from which there is no appeal. I enclose you a song which I composed since I saw you, and I am going to give you the history of it. Do you know that among much that I admire in the characters and manners of those great folks whom I have now the honor to call my acquaintances, the Oswald family, there is nothing charms me more than Mr. Oswald's unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman? Did you ever, my dear Syme, meet with a man who owed more to the Divine Giver of all good things than Mr. O.? A fine fortune; a pleasing exterior; self-evident amiable dispositions, and an ingenuous upright mind, and that informed too, much beyond the usual run of young fellows of his rank and fortune: and to all this, such a woman!—but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying anything adequate: in my song I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings on seeing, in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Lucy. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I, in my first fervour, thought of sending it to Mrs. Oswald, but on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect might, from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification or other of that servility which my soul abhors. Do let me know some convenient moment, ere the worthy family leave town, that I, *with propriety*, may wait on them. In the circle of the fashionable herd, those who come either to show their own consequence, or to borrow consequence from the visit—in such a mob I will not appear; mine is a different errand.—Yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

[John Syme, Esq., of Ryedale, was distributor of stamps for the district, and had his office on the ground floor of the house in which Burns took up his residence on coming to Dumfries. Here they got acquainted. Mr. Syme was perhaps a true enough friend of Burns—he was at least a constant associate; and, being a man of taste and literary accomplishments, was often consulted by the Poet on such subjects, and was, indeed, selected by Dr. Currie himself as the person to whom the writing of the Poet's life should be entrusted. At the same time, it appears to us that Mr. Syme's egotism and propensity to exaggerate, in his own favour and for his own glory, any incident or detail of the Poet's life connected with himself, render him a very doubtful authority in such matters. The well-known story, for example, of Burns drawing his sword-cane to avenge an imaginary insult at Syme's table, and trembling at Syme's affectionate remonstrance, is manifestly an absurd exaggeration of some convivial joke. The reader is referred for a variety of incidents in his name, to Chambers's edition, 1856, vol. iv. p. 155, &c. It need hardly be mentioned that the lady referred to in the letter was Mrs. Richard Oswald of Auchencruive, and that the song enclosed for Mr. Syme's critical examination is the beautiful lyric, "O, Wat ye wha's in yon town?"—See Poetical Works, p. 208.]

### To David M'Culloch, Esq.

*Dumfries, 21st June, 1794.*

MY DEAR SIR,

MY long projected journey through your country is at last fixed: and on Wednesday next, if you have nothing of more importance than to take\* a saunter down to Gatehouse about



two or three o'clock, I shall be happy to take a draught of M'Kune's best with you. Collector Syme will be at Glen's about that time, and will meet us about dish-of-tea hour. Syme goes also to Kerroughtree, and let me remind you of your kind promise to accompany me there: I will need all the friends I can muster, for I am indeed ill at ease whenever I approach your honourables and right honourables.

Yours sincerely,

R. B.

\* [So, elliptically, in original.]

[Mr. David M'Culloch, younger of Ardwell, is the gentleman to whom we are indebted, through Mr. Lockhart, for the sentimental account of an interview with Burns at Dumfries, as he, Burns, was "walking alone on the shady side of the street, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of ladies and gentlemen, all drawn together for the festivities of the night [King's Birth-day assembly night, 1794], not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him," &c.; a story about which, like some of Syme's stories, we must be allowed to express a little qualifying scepticism.—Compare Memoranda by Mrs. Burns—Appendix. The visit here alluded to was to Mr. Heron of Heron—See Ballads on his election.]

## To Mr. Samuel Clarke, Jun.,

DUMFRIES.

(1.)

*Sunday Morning [1794.]*

DEAR SIR,

I WAS, I know, drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Capt. [Dods] made use of to me, had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manners of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not ruin the peace and welfare of a wife and a family of children in a drunken squabble. Further, you know that the report of certain political opinions being mine, has already once before brought me to the brink of destruction, I dread lest last night's business may be misrepresented in the same way.—You, I beg, will take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for Mrs. Burns's welfare with the task of waiting, as soon as possible, on every gentleman who was present, and state this to him, and, as you please, shew him this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast?—"May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause"—a toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to. I request and beg that this morning you will wait on the parties present at the foolish dispute. I shall only add, that I am truly sorry that a man who stood so high in my estimation as Mr. —, should use me in the manner in which I conceive he has done.

R. B.

[The above letter refers to one of those painful, and sometimes dangerous, political discussions into which the Poet was precipitated at this crisis by the violence of his own zeal, and his contempt for the "lobster-coated epauletted puppies" of the service, who took every occasion to assert offensively their own professional loyalty in his presence. Neither love nor respect, it may be imagined, was lost on either side. Compare letter (4) to Mrs. Riddel, p. 59. Wine may have had something to do with such collisions, but not so much as sheer political animosity.]

By some unexplained oversight, Mr. Chambers allocates this letter to "Mr. Stephen Clarke, jun."—being ignorant, perhaps, of Mr. Samuel Clarke, jun.'s acquaintance with the Poet. There were three Clarks, correspondents of our Author's, who may be here briefly distinguished: 1—James Clarke, schoolmaster at Moffat, afterwards at Forfar: 2—Stephen Clarke, teacher of music, and organist of the Episcopal Chapel, Cowgate, Edinburgh—a man of great musical genius, frequently referred to in our Author's correspondence with Thomson—died August, 1797: 3—Samuel Clarke, jun., a resident in Dumfries, and who occupied an important legal position there, as Assessor, if we mistake not, to the Burgh. To him this letter is undoubtedly addressed, as well as that, on a similar topic, which immediately follows.]

## (2.) TO MR. SAMUEL CLARKE, JUN.

MY DEAR SIR,

I RECOLLECT something of a drunken promise yesternight to breakfast with you this morning.—I am very sorry that it is impossible. I remember too, you very oblidgingly mentioning something of your intimacy with Mr. Corbet, our Supervisor-General. Some of our folks about the Excise Office, Edinr., had and perhaps still have conceived a prejudice against me as being a drunken dissipated character.—I might be all this, you know, and yet be an honest fellow; but you know that I am an honest fellow, and am nothing of this. You may in your own way let him know that I am not unworthy of subscribing myself, my dear Clarke, your friend,

R. BURNS.

[This letter, already quoted and commented on by us in Biography (p. xlv.), is thus in original "Docketted: R. Burns's—S. Clarke, jun., witness, Dumfries." No trace of any date visible. The original is in possession of his daughter, Mrs. Stewart Gladstone of Capenoch, Dumfriesshire.]

## To Mr. Alexander Findlater,

SUPERVISOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

[1795?]

SIR,

INCLOSED are the two schemes. I would not have troubled you with the Collector's one, but for suspicion lest it be not right. Mr. Erskine promised me to make it right, if you will have the goodness to shew him how. As I have no copy of the scheme for myself, and the alterations being very considerable from what it was formerly, I hope that I shall have access to this scheme I send you, when I come to face up my new books. *So much for schemes*—And that no scheme to betray a FRIEND, or mislead a STRANGER; to seduce a YOUNG GIRL, or rob a HENROOST; to subvert LIBERTY, or bribe an EXCISEMAN; to disturb the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, or annoy a GOSSIPING; to overthrow the credit of ORTHODOXY, or the authority of OLD SONGS; to oppose *your wishes*, or frustrate *my hopes*—MAY PROSPER—is the sincere wish and prayer of

ROBT. BURNS.

[In Mr. Findlater's opinion, who was a true friend of our Author's in life, and to whose affectionate vindication in some respects his reputation since death has been indebted, the rebuke administered to Burns, by authority of the Board, was not so severe as commonly supposed at the time; and in this opinion of his on that subject, the Poet's widow herself concurs. Compare Memoranda by Mrs. Burns, also Reminiscences, 8—Appendix.]

To Mr. Heron,

OF HERON.

[*Dumfries*, 1794 or 1795.]

SIR,

I INCLOSE you some copies of a couple of political ballads; one of which, I believe, you have never seen. Would to Heaven I could make you master of as many votes in the Stewartry! But—

“Who does the utmost that he can,  
Does well, acts nobly—angels could no more.”

In order to bring my humble efforts to bear with more effect on the foe, I have privately printed a good many copies of both ballads, and have sent them among friends all about the country.

To pillory upon Parnassus the rank reprobation of character, the utter dereliction of all principle, in a profligate junto which has not only outraged virtue, but violated common decency, spurning even hypocrisy as paltry iniquity below their daring—to unmask their flagitiousness to the broadest day—to deliver such over to their merited fate, is surely not merely innocent, but laudable; is not only propriety, but virtue. You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind on the heads of your opponents; and I swear by the lyre of Thalia, to muster on your side all the votaries of honest Laughter, and fair, candid Ridicule!

I am extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests in a letter which Mr. Syme shewed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisors' list, and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed, *of course*. Then, a FRIEND might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about a hundred and twenty to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a compleat bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor, in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collectors' list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of compleat leisure. A life of literary leisure with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, or would not be indebted to a political friend; at the same time, Sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I shall petition your goodness with the same frankness as I now do myself the honor to subscribe myself,

R. B.

[Compare Ballads on Mr. Heron's election, &c.]

To [Richard A. Oswald, Esq.]

*Dumfries*, 23d April, 1795.

SIR,

You see the danger of patronizing the rhyming tribe: you flatter the Poet's vanity—a most potent ingredient in the composition of a son of rhyme—by a little notice; and he, in return, persecutes your good-nature with his acquaintance. In these days of volunteering, I have come forward with my services, as Poet Laureate to a highly respectable political party, of which you are a distinguished member. The enclosed are, I hope, only a beginning to the songs of triumph which you will earn in that contest.—I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obliged and devoted humble servant,

R. BURNS.

[This letter, Mr. Chambers informs us, was found among the papers of the Aucheneruive family, and is supposed to have enveloped our Author's Election Ballads of the crisis.]

To Mr. John Edgar,

EXCISE-OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

25th April, 1795.

SIR,

I UNDERSTAND that I am to incur censure by the wine-account of this district not being sent in. Allow me to state the following circumstances to you, which, if they do not apologise for, will at least extenuate my part of the offence.

The general letter was put into my hands sometime about the beginning of this month, as I was then in charge of the district, Mr. Findlater being indisposed. I immediately, as far as in my power, made a survey of the wine-stocks; and where I could not personally survey, I wrote the officer of the division. In a few days more, and previous to collection-week, Mr. Findlater resumed charge; and as, in the course of collection, he would have both the officers by him, and the old books among his hands, it very naturally occurred to me the wine-account business would rest with him. At the close of that week, I got a note from the collector that the account-making-up was thrown on my hands. I immediately set about it; but one officer's books, James Graham of Sanquhar, not being at hand, I wrote him to send me them by first post. Mr. Graham has not thought proper to pay the least attention to my request, and to day I have sent an express for his stock-book.

This, Sir, is a plain state of facts; and if I must still be thought censurable, I hope it will be considered that this officiating job being my first, I cannot be supposed to be completely master of all the etiquette of the business.

If my supposed neglect is to be laid before the Honourable Board, I beg you will have the goodness to accompany the complaint with this letter.

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.



## ADDRESS OF THE SCOTTISH DISTILLERS

## To the Right Hon. William Pitt.

SIR,

WHILE pursy burgesses crowd your gate, sweating under the weight of heavy addresses, permit us, the quondam distillers in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, to approach you, not with venal approbation, but with fraternal condolence; not as what you are just now, or for some time have been; but as what, in all probability, you will shortly be.—We shall have the merit of not deserting our friends in the day of their calamity, and you will have the satisfaction of perusing at least one honest address. You are well acquainted with the dissection of human nature; nor do you need the assistance of a fellow-creature's bosom to inform you that man is always a selfish, often a perfidious being.—This assertion, however the hasty conclusions of superficial observation may doubt of it, or the raw inexperience of youth may deny it, those who make the fatal experiment we have done will feel.—You are a statesman, and consequently are not ignorant of the traffic of these corporation compliments.—The little great man who drives the borough to market, and the very great man who buys the borough in that market, they two do the whole business; and you well know they, likewise, have their price. With that sullen disdain which you can so well assume, rise, illustrious Sir, and spurn these hireling efforts of venal stupidity. At best they are the compliments of a man's friends on the morning of his execution; they take a decent farewell, resign you to your fate, and hurry away from your approaching hour.

If fame say true, and omens be not very much mistaken, you are about to make your exit from that world where the sun of gladness gilds the paths of prosperous men: permit us, great Sir, with the sympathy of fellow-feeling to hail your passage to the realms of ruin.

Whether the sentiment proceed from the selfishness or cowardice of mankind is immaterial; but to point out to a child of misfortune those who are still more unhappy, is to give him some degree of positive enjoyment. In this light, Sir, our downfall may be again useful to you:—though not exactly in the same way, it is not perhaps the first time it has gratified your feelings. It is true, the triumph of your evil star is exceedingly despicable.—At an age when others are the votaries of pleasure, or underlings in business, you had attained the highest wish of a British statesman; and with the ordinary date of human life, what a prospect was before you! Deeply rooted in *Royal Favour*, you overshadowed the land. The birds of passage, which follow ministerial sunshine through every clime of political faith and manners, flocked to your branches; and the beasts of the field (the lordly possessors of hills and valleys) crowded under your shade. “But behold a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven, and cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches!” A blow from an unthought-of quarter, one of those terrible accidents which peculiarly mark the hand of

Omnipotence, upset your career, and laid all your fancied honours in the dust. But turn your eyes, Sir, to the tragic scenes of our fate:—an ancient nation, that for many ages had gallantly maintained the unequal struggle for independence with her much more powerful neighbour, at last agrees to a union which should ever after make them one people. In consideration of certain circumstances, it was covenanted that the former should enjoy a stipulated alleviation in her share of the public burdens, particularly in that branch of the revenue called the Excise. This just privilege has of late given great umbrage to some interested, powerful individuals of the more potent part of the empire, and they have spared no wicked pains, under insidious pretences, to subvert what they dared not openly to attack, from the dread which they yet entertained of the spirit of their ancient enemies.

In this conspiracy we fell; nor did we alone suffer, our country was deeply wounded. A number of (we will say) respectable individuals, largely engaged in trade, where we were not only useful, but absolutely necessary to our country in her dearest interests; we, with all that was near and dear to us, were sacrificed, without remorse, to the infernal deity of political Expediency!\* We fell to gratify the wishes of dark Envy, and the views of unprincipled Ambition! Your foes, Sir, were avowed; were too brave to take an ungenerous advantage; *you* fell in the face of day.—On the contrary, our enemies, to complete our overthrow, contrived to make their guilt appear the villainy of a nation.—Your downfall only drags with you your private friends and partizans: in our misery are more or less involved the most numerous and most valuable part of the community—all those who immediately depend on the cultivation of the soil, from the landlord of a province down to his lowest hind.

Allow us, Sir, yet further, just to hint at another rich vein of comfort in the dreary regions of adversity;—the gratulations of an approving conscience. In a certain great assembly, of which you are a distinguished member, panegyrics on your private virtues have so often wounded your delicacy, that we shall not distress you with anything on the subject. There is, however, one part of your public conduct which our feelings will not permit us to pass in silence: our gratitude must trespass on your modesty; we mean, worthy Sir, your whole behaviour to the Scots Distillers.—In evil hours, when obtrusive recollection presses bitterly on the sense, let that, Sir, come like a healing angel, and speak the peace to your soul which the world can neither give nor take away.

We have the honor to be, Sir,

Your sympathizing fellow-sufferers,

And grateful humble Servants,

JOHN BARLEYCORN—PRÆSES.

\* [Compare “Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer”—Poetical Works, p. 10.]

[“This ironical letter,” we are informed by Cunningham, “was found among the papers of Burns.” It first appeared, however, in Cromek's Reliques. We are afraid so admirable a piece of Satire never found its way to the Right Honourable Gentleman's eye for whom it was intended. It is in the very best style of Junius, with a genial vein of merriment and solemnity combined running through it, which he was not capable of; and it is pleasant to see by such evidence, that Burns could rightly appreciate both the character and position of the great legislator by whom he, in his obscurity, and for his too great honesty, had been neglected, if not contemned.]



## To the Hon. Probst, Bailies, and Town Council of Dumfries.

GENTLEMEN,

[1793?]

THE literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school-fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me.

Some years ago your good town did me the honor of making me an honorary burgess.—Will you allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on the footing of a real freeman of the town, in the schools?

[That I may not appear altogether unworthy of this favor, allow me to state to you some little services I have lately done a branch of your revenue. The two-pennies exigible on foreign ale vended within your limits: in this rather neglected article of your income I am ready to shew that within these few weeks my exertions have secured for you of those duties nearly the sum of Ten Pounds; and in this too, I was the only one of the gentlemen of the Excise (except Mr. Mitchell, whom *you pay* for his trouble) who took the least concern in the business.\*]

If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where I can officially serve you; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Your devoted humble Servant,

R. B.

\* [For supplying this important paragraph we are indebted to Mr. Carruthers of the *Inverness Courier*.

[The request contained in this letter, one is glad to know, was immediately complied with. Burns had been made an honorary burgess on occasion of his first visit to Dumfries in 1787, as he was returning from England, and the above application was certainly not made till 1793; so there had been no haste on his part, to convert this honour to advantage: and by the letter which follows, it appears he was still going on, doing all in his power to augment the revenues of the Burgh, and more than compensate for the privilege conferred of free education for his children. His boys, under the special care of his esteemed friend, Rev. James Gray, then master of the grammar-school, Dumfries, were in the full enjoyment of its advantages at the time of their father's death.]

## To Probst Staig.

Friday, Noon, [1795.]

I KNOW, Sir, that anything which relates to the Burgh of Dumfries's interests will engage your readiest attention, so shall make no apology for this letter. I have been for some time turning my attention to a branch of your good town's revenue, where, I think, there is much to amend: I mean the "Twa-Pennies" on ale. The Brewers and Victuallers within the jurisdiction pay accurately: but three common brewers in the Bridgend, whose consumpt is almost entirely in Dumfries, pay nothing: Annan Brewer, who daily sends in great

quantities of ale, pays nothing: because in both cases Ale certificates are never asked for; and\* of all the English ale, porter, &c., scarcely any of it pays. For my part, I never recorded an ale certificate in Dumfries, and I know most of the other officers are in the same predicament. It makes no part of our official duty, and besides, until it is universally assessed on all dealers, it strikes me as injustice to assess one. I know that our collector has a per-centage on the collection: but as it is no great object to him he gives himself no concern as to what is brought into the town. The supervisor would suit you better. He is an abler and a keener man, and what is all important in the business, such is his official influence over, and power among his offrs.,\* that were he to signify that such was his wish, not a "pennie" would be left uncollected. It is by no means the case with the collector. The offrs. are not so immediately among his hands, and they would not pay the same attention to his mandates. Your brewers here, the Richardsons, one of whom, Gabriel, I survey, pay annually in "twa-pennies" about thirty pounds, and they complain, with great justice, of the unfair balance against them in their competition with the Bridgend, Annan, and English traders. As they are respectable characters, both as citizens and men of business, I am sure they will meet with every encouragement from the Magistracy of Dumfries. For their sakes partly I have interested myself in this business, but still much more on account of many obligations which I feel myself to lie under to Mr. Staig's civility and goodness. Could I be of the smallest service in anything which he has at heart, it would give me great pleasure. I have been at some pains to ascertain what your annual loss on this business may be, and I have reason to think it may amount fully to one-third of what you at present receive. These crude hints, Sir, are entirely for your private use. I have by no means any wish to take a sixpence from Mr. Mitchell's income: nor do I wish to serve Mr. Findlater; I wish to show any attempt, I can, to do anything to declare with what sincerity I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged humble Servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

\* [Contraction for "officers."]

[The above interesting document first appeared, as a note, in a local pamphlet, published by Mr. M'Diarmid, on the Established Churches of Dumfries. Our attention having been directed to it by Mr. W. R. M'Diarmid, we extract it with much satisfaction, as one among the many proofs now accumulating of the care with which Burns discharged all the duties, directly or indirectly, devolving on him; and that he could not have been so much the slave of dissipation, as he has frequently been represented to be, at this period.]

Provost Staig, we are further informed, took the opinion of counsel on the question, which confirmed the views set forth in this letter that the Burgh had the power to tax all imported malt liquor. Our readers will remember that a similar subject, the reduction of Excise Divisions in Dumfries with a view to economise the public, as well as the local revenues, was fully represented by our Author to Mr. Graham of Fintry, in his capacity of Commissioner—letter (11) to him. How Robert Burns, on any rational ground, could be accused of neglecting his duties, as a citizen or as a public official, is to us incomprehensible. Let our readers compare the above and similar preceding documents with our own remarks on the subject, in *Reminiscences*, 8, *Excise Rebuke*—Appendix—and judge for themselves in the matter.]

[For special reasons assigned, our Author's correspondence with Mr. Miller and his family at Dalswinton; and his letter of thanks, now for the first time published, for the gift of a Pair of Pistols, since much spoken of, occupy here a separate and more conspicuous place at the end of this department.]



## CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE DALSWINTON FAMILY.

As our Author's connection with Mr. Miller—patron, friend, and landlord—was peculiar, and upon the whole unsatisfactory; and as the reader may naturally desire to see all now extant of the correspondence on his part with that gentleman and his family, we think it advisable to arrange these letters in a separate group, with a few introductory remarks, that all necessary information may be presented at once.

Patrick Miller, Esq., then of Dalswinton, and brother to the Lord Justice-Clerk of that day, was by profession a banker, by taste an amateur in practical science, by position a country gentleman of influence and character; also, a sort of self-constituted patron of struggling genius in poetry and the fine arts; but with a sufficiently high estimate of his own importance, crotchety and capricious—the last person in the world, perhaps, to be really servicable to a man like Burns. Burns accordingly was never on very cordial terms with him, and we have no doubt was glad enough to get rid of Ellisland without an open rupture. Mr. Miller, however, showed all the sort of interest in, and attention to the Poet a man of his kind could be expected to show; and it is a pleasant memento of their friendship to learn that, besides being an occasional guest at the mansion, Burns was present by invitation at the first trial trip of the first steamboat in the world, on Dalswinton Loch. The incident has been thus commemorated:

"An engine was built under Symington (James Symington) the engineer's direction and superintendence, sent to Dalswinton and put together in October, 1788. This engine and the little vessel in which it was placed formed the first steamer that was ever built. The little boat was launched on Dalswinton Loch, and steamed across the Loch at the rate of five miles an hour. The company on board on that memorable occasion were Mr. Miller; Mr. Taylor, tutor to Mr. Miller's boys; and Alexander Nasmyth, the well-known painter. Besides these, there was a brisk stripling with strongly marked features, by name Harry Brougham, afterwards to be Lord-Chancellor of England; and last, but not least of the group, was one of Mr. Miller's tenants, the farmer of Ellisland—Robert Burns, the great bard of Scotland. 'Many a time,' says Mr. James Nasmyth, son of the distinguished painter, 'I have heard my father describe the delight of the party in question at this first and successful essay of steam navigation. I only wish Burns had immortalised it in verse; for it was worthy of his highest muse.'"

Mr. Miller, as our readers may remember, first introduced himself to the Poet with a handsome enough donation of ten guineas—letter (2) to John Ballantine, Esq.; and afterwards proposed the taking of a farm by him on his own estate of Dalswinton—letter (3) to the same. This estate, which Mr. Miller had recently purchased (1785 or 1786) was, on his own public avowal, in a wretched condition—"It was in the most miserable state of exhaustion, and all the tenants in poverty."\* Burns, it should seem, was expected to invest both labour and capital in a portion of this exhausted soil, at far too high a rental for its value, and with whatever prospects of remuneration he could hope for.

Before concluding this disadvantageous bargain, however, Burns twice or thrice visited the locality: first in June, 1787, on returning from his Border Tour by Dumfries; again, in

September of the same year; and again, it would appear, at some later date—before deciding: Compare letters to Miss Chalmers (1) and (2); also (7), March 14th, 1788, when the lease was agreed on. According to Cunningham, whose father was steward on the estate, Burns had the choice of three farms, including Ellisland; two of which, Foregirth and Bankhead, were infinitely superior in an agricultural point of view, but not so romantically situated as Ellisland; and therefore had made a "poet's choice rather than a farmer's." Mrs. Burns, indeed, admits that "this may be true." [Memoranda by her—Appendix.] Gilbert Burns, on the contrary, maintained that no such choice was ever offered; that Mr. Miller not only specified the farm, but fixed the rent, with all conditions: so that the Poet had no option but either to take or not; which his own first letter seems to imply.

However this may be, Mr. Miller ultimately "granted a lease of seventy-six years at the annual rent of £50 for the three first years, and £70 for the remainder; agreeing farther to give his tenant £300 to build a new farm—steading and enclose the fields." Mr. Chambers, whose words we here quote, is of opinion, all things considered, that "there is no reason to suppose that Mr. Miller drove a hard bargain with Burns." Cunningham, however, distinctly assures us that, in the opinion of his neighbours, it would require the utmost economy and hard labour for the tenant to save £20 a year from Ellisland—no fortune assuredly! and Burns himself we know, by repeated intimations in his letters, was of the same opinion—else had he never thought seriously of the Excise, as a provision against poverty.

Thus, then, stood the bargain in March, 1788, when the Poet entered on the farm; and in November, 1791, with curses on its yet hopeless sterility, he quitted the scene for ever—leaving nothing behind him, as Cunningham tells us, "but a putting-stone with which he loved to exercise his strength, a memory of his musings which can never die; and £300 of his money sunk beyond redemption" in its furrows!

Ellisland, including the Isle—an old tower-like residence on some level land, at one time surrounded by water from the river—lies on the south side of the Nith, opposite the mansion house and policies of Dalswinton. The Poet lived in this old fabric till the new steading on the farm was built—the Ellisland that now is—of his own designing; where he spent the two remaining years of his brief sojourn here, and which is still an object of universal interest to readers of his works. The name of this now celebrated farm was originally Ailiesland, then Ellesland, finally Ellisland. It was purchased from Mr. Miller, as a reasonable investment, by a Mr. Morine, for £2000, when Burns was prepared to give it up. This gentleman, therefore, must either have had some special fancy for the spot, or believed in the possibility of realising a much handsomer percentage from it than the Poet ever dreamed of; and, with capital for improvements, he might not be wrong,

Dalswinton, now a magnificent estate, although no longer in possession of Mr. Miller's family, was originally the patrimony of the noble House of Cummin; whose representative—cousin and rival of the Bruce—was by him slain at the altar of the Grey-Friars in Dumfries.

\* [General View of the Agriculture, &c., of Dumfriesshire, 8vo. Edinburgh: 1812. Account by Mr. Miller—as quoted by Chambers.]

## (1.) To Patrick Miller, Esq.,

DALSWINTON.

Edinburgh, 28th September, 1787.

SIR,

I HAVE been on a tour through the Highlands, and arrived in town but the other day, so could not wait on you at Dalswinton about the latter end of August, as I had promised and intended.

Independent of any views of future connections, what I owe you for the past, as a friend and benefactor, when friends I had few, and benefactors I had none, strongly in my bosom prohibits the most distant instance of ungrateful disrespect. I am informed you do not come to town for a month still, and within that time I shall certainly wait on you, as by this time I suppose you will have settled your scheme with respect to your farms.

My journey through the Highlands was perfectly inspiring, and I hope I have laid in a good stock of new poetical ideas from it. I shall make no apology for sending you the enclosed: it is a small but grateful tribute to the memory of our common countryman.\* I have the honour to be, with the most grateful sincerity, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

*P.S.*—I have added another poem, partly as it alludes to some folks nearly and dearly connected with Ayrshire, and partly as rhymes are the only coin in which the poor poet can pay his debts of gratitude. The lady alluded to is Miss Isabella M'Leod, aunt to the young Countess of Loudon.

As I am determined not to leave Edinburgh till I wind up my matters with Mr. Creech, which I am afraid will be a tedious business, should I unfortunately miss you at Dalswinton, perhaps your factor will be able to inform me of your intentions with respect to the Elesland farm [*so in MS.*], which will save me a jaunt to Edinburgh again.

There is something so suspicious in the professions of attachment from a little man to a great man, that I know not how to do justice to the grateful warmth of my heart, when I would say how truly I am interested in the welfare of your little troop of angels, and how much I have the honour to be again, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

\* [Most probably the elegy on Sir James Hunter Blair: Mr. Miller's family, of Barskimming and Glenlee, belonged also to Ayrshire. He was therefore a fellow-countryman both of the deceased baronet's and of our Author's.]

## (2.) TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ.,

DALSWINTON.

Edinburgh, 20th October, 1787.

SIR,

I WAS spending a few days at Sir William Murray's, Oughtertyre, and did not get your obliging letter till to-day I came

to town. I was still more unlucky in catching a miserable cold, for which the medical gentlemen have ordered me into close confinement, "under pain of death"—the severest of penalties. In two or three days, if I get better, and if I hear at your lodgings that you are still at Dalswinton, I will take a ride to Dumfries directly. From something in your last, I would wish to explain my idea of being your tenant. I want to be a farmer in a small farm, about a plough-gang, in a pleasant country, under the auspices of a good landlord. I have no foolish notion of being a tenant on easier terms than another. To find a farm where one can live at all is not easy—I only mean living soberly, like an old-style farmer, and joining personal industry. The banks of the Nith are as sweet poetic ground as any I ever saw; and besides, Sir, 'tis but justice to the feelings of my own heart, and the opinion of my best friends, to say that I would wish to call you landlord sooner than any landed gentleman I know. These are my views and wishes; and in whatever way you think best to lay out your farms, I shall be happy to rent one of them. I shall certainly be able to ride to Dalswinton about the middle of next week, if I hear you are not gone.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obliged, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

[On this letter Mr. Chambers, chiefly, and justly relies to prove that our Author's second Tour by Stirling to Clackmannanshire was in the month of October, and not in August, as Dr. Adair by an error of memory imagined. Compare Second Tour—Appendix.

Both the above letters, which we quote from Mr. Chambers's edition, were first printed by him from copies of the originals in possession of Mr. W. C. Aitken, Broad Street, Birmingham.]

## (3.) TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ.,

OF DALSWINTON.

Dumfries, April, 1793.

SIR,

MY poems having just come out in another edition, will you do me the honor to accept of a copy? A mark of my gratitude to you, as a gentleman to whose goodness I have been much indebted; of my respect for you, as a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country; and of my veneration for you, as a man, whose benevolence of heart does honor to human nature.

There *was* a time, Sir, when I was your dependant: this language *then* would have been like the vile incense of flattery—I could not have used it. Now that that connection is at an end, do me the honor to accept of this *honest* tribute of respect from, Sir,

Your much indebted humble servant,

R. B.



## To Captain Miller,

DALSWINTON.

[ENCLOSING COPY OF "SCOTS WHA HAE."]

[1793, or 1794.]

DEAR SIR,

THE following ode is on a subject which I know you by no means regard with indifference.

"O Liberty,—

Thou mak'st the gloomy face of nature gay,  
Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day." \*

It does me so much good to meet with a man whose honest bosom glows with the generous enthusiasm, the heroic daring, of liberty, that I could not forbear sending you a composition of my own on the subject, which I really think is in my best manner. I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir, &c.,

ROBERT BURNS.

\* [ADDISON.]

[At a sale of old manuscripts and books in London lately, the following lot was included:—Robert Burns's ode, "Bruce's Address to his troops at Bannockburn"—*Tune*, "Lewie Gordon." The autograph manuscript of this poem is written on two sides of a letter addressed to Captain Miller, Dalswinton. This precious relic of the great Scottish Poet is framed and glazed, and enclosed in a handsome mahogany case; it went for £12, and was purchased by Mr. Robert Thallon, who immediately drew a cheque for the amount, and was congratulated by the auctioneer on his obtaining so great a bargain.—*Newspaper Notice*, 1868.]

## To Patrick Miller, Jun., Esq.,

OF DALSWINTON.

*Dumfries, Nov. 1794.*

DEAR SIR,

YOUR offer is indeed truly generous, and most sincerely do I thank you for it; but in my present situation, I find that I dare not accept it. You well know my political sentiments; and were I an insular individual, unconnected with a wife and a family of children, with the most fervid enthusiasm I would have volunteered my services: I then could and would have despised all consequences that might have ensued.

My prospect in the Excise is something; at least it is, encumbered as I am with the welfare, the very existence, of near half-a-score of helpless individuals, what I dare not sport with.

In the mean time, they are most welcome to my Ode; only, let them insert it as a thing they have met with by accident, and unknown to me. Nay, if Mr. Perry—whose honor, after your character of him, I cannot doubt—if he will give me an address and channel by which any thing will come safe from those spies with which he may be certain that his correspondence is beset, I will now and then send him any bagatelle that I may write. In the present hurry of Europe, nothing but news and politics will be regarded; but against the days of peace, which Heaven send soon, my little assistance may perhaps fill up an idle column of a newspaper. I have long

had it in my head to try my hand in the way of little prose essays, which I propose sending into the world through the medium of some newspaper; and should these be worth his while, to these Mr. Perry shall be welcome: and all my reward shall be, his treating me with his paper, which, by the bye, to any body who has the least relish for wit, is a high treat indeed. With the most grateful esteem, I am ever,

Dear Sir, &c.,

R. B.

[The gentleman addressed in the above two letters is presumably one and the same person—Captain Patrick Miller, younger of Dalswinton, and M.P. for the Dumfries district of Boroughs. He is described in the 'Five Carlins' as a "sodger youth, wi' modest grace;" but our Author certainly did not entertain the highest opinion of his capabilities in any way—compare letter (6) to Robert Graham, Esq. His recommending Burns to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, however, was friendly, and, as a friendly act, acknowledged; but the engagement proposed would have been manifestly dangerous to Burns—besides being, in our humble opinion, morally unsuitable for him. It was wise in him to decline it. The "Ode" referred to in both letters is, no doubt, also one and the same—viz. "Bruce's Address"—for which the Author seems to have been anxious to secure publicity, knowing its value; but which, through the delay or pottering stupidity of editors, he was doomed never to see.

The above distinction of the individual addressed was rendered necessary by the fact, that Captain Patrick Miller had a younger brother William, also Captain, afterwards Major Miller, who married Miss Jessy Staig, second daughter of Provost Staig, Dumfries, celebrated by our Author in his song of "True-hearted was he," &c.—*Poetical Works*, p. 205.]

## To A. Newal,

[DUMFRIES.]

DIR. SIR,

ENCLOSED is a state of the account between you and me and James Halliday respecting the drain. I have stated it at 20d. per rood, as, in fact, even at that they have not the wages they ought to have had, and I cannot for the soul of me see a poor devil a loser at my hand.

Humanity, I hope, as well as Charity, will cover a multitude of sins; a mantle of which—between you and me—I have some little need.—I am, Sir, yours,

R. B.

[The above letter, which first appeared in Chambers's edition, was addressed to Mr. David Newal, writer in Dumfries, and factor on the Dalswinton estate. It refers to some agricultural improvement, in which the tenant and the landlord seem to have been equally concerned; but in which humanity on the tenant's part is foremost. Besides this, Mr. Chambers, at the same place, gives the substance of another account with one D. Halliday, some relative of James's, doubtless, which infers a debit on Burns's side of £10, 17s. 3d., as wages to D. H. for building a yard-dike; and a credit of £11, 1s. 6d., "composed of so much in cash, so much in meal and cheese, and certain other sums paid for Halliday." It is not the same account as that referred to in above letter, but a memorandum only of D. Halliday's wages at the Martinmas Term. "It contains, however, equally characteristic matter," says Mr. Chambers; "for the Poet makes an error of summation to the extent of 5s. in Halliday's favour, and overpays him 4s. 3d. besides. As to this 'poor-devil' too, he took special care that 'he should not be a loser at his hand.'"—A very rare and beneficent illustration of the 'truck system,' surely!

Mr. Newal had been tenant of the Isle before Burns went to reside there, but left it in consequence of strange "nocturnal sounds in the old tower," which his family would no doubt imagine to be haunted.\* He seems to have been afterwards an intimate friend of our Author's at Dumfries, who, according to Mr. Chambers, would occasionally step in to hear a Scotch air on the piano from his daughters.

\* The notorious persecutor, Grierson of Lagg, whose ghost might well disturb any ordinary household, lies buried in the neighbourhood.]

## BURNS'S PISTOLS:

## LETTER OF THANKS TO THE MAKER.

FROM ORIGINAL IN POSSESSION OF MISS MARY S. GLADSTONE,  
FASQUE, LAWRENCEKIRK.

To Mr. David Blair,

GUN-MAKER, ST. PAUL'S SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM.

*Ellisland, 23d Jany., 1789.*

MY DEAR SIR,

My honor has lien bleeding these two months almost, as 'tis near that time since I received your kind tho' short epistle of the 29th Oct. The defensive tools do more than half mankind do, they do honor to their maker; but I trust that with me they shall have the fate of a miser's gold—to be often admired, but never used.

Long before your letter came to hand, I sent you, by way of Mr. Nicol, a copy of the book, and a proof-copy of the print, loose, among the leaves of the book. These, I hope, are safe in your possession some time ago. If I could think of any other channel of communication with you than the villainous expensive one of the Post, I could send you a parcel of my Rhymes; partly as a small return for your kind, handsome compliment, but much more as a mark of my sincere esteem and respect for Mr. Blair. A piece I did lately I shall try to cram into this letter, as I think the turn of thought may perhaps please you.

WRITTEN IN FRIARS-CARSE HERMITAGE, ON THE  
BANKS OF THE NITH.

OCT. 1788.

[Here follows version alluded to, Poetical Works—Various Readings—p. 239.]

I remember with pleasure, my dear Sir, a visit you talked of paying to Dumfries, in Spring or Summer.—I shall only say, I have never parted with a man, after so little acquaintance, whom I more ardently wished to see again. At your first convenience, a line to inform me of an affair in which I am much interested—just an answer to the question, How you do, will highly oblige, my dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

[The above letter, which, by Miss Gladstone's courteous permission, we have the privilege of first presenting to the public, seems to have been originally among the documents entrusted to Dr. Currie, but why not employed by him does not appear. It is connected with, and indeed forms, in part, the subject of a most interesting discussion, in which Dr. Maxwell, Bishop Gillis, and other parties claiming to be possessors of the celebrated pistols, are involved.

The reader, whose attention is thus invited to the subject, will find the whole circumstances detailed in the Appendix—Reminiscences Original, Part I, 10.—Dr. Maxwell, &c.]

## FRAGMENTS, NOTES, &amp;c.

To ———.

*Ellisland, 1792.*

THOU Eunuch of language: thou Englishman, who never was south of the Tweed: thou servile echo of fashionable barbarisms: thou quack, vending the nostrums of empirical elocution: thou marriage-maker between vowels and consonants, on the Gretna-green of caprice: thou cobbler, botching the flimsy socks of bombast oratory: thou blacksmith, hammering the rivets of absurdity: thou butcher, embruining thy hands in the bowels of orthography: thou arch-heretic in pronunciation: thou pitch-pipe of affected emphasis: thou carpenter, mortising the awkward joints of jarring sentences: thou squeaking dissonance of cadence: thou pimp of gender: thou Lyon Herald to silly etymology: thou antipode of grammar: thou executioner of construction: thou brood of the speech-distracting builders of the Tower of Babel: thou lingual confusion worse confounded: thou scape-gallows from the land of syntax: thou scavenger of mood and tense: thou murderous accoucheur of infant learning: thou *ignis fatuus*, misleading the steps of benighted ignorance: thou pickle-herring in the puppet-show of nonsense: thou faithful recorder of barbarous idiom: thou persecutor of syllabication: thou baleful meteor, foretelling and facilitating the rapid approach of Nox and Erebus.

[The above extraordinary invective, which it would require some solidity of moral constitution to withstand, and which reminds one very much of the "flytings" of Polwart, Kennedy, Dunbar, &c., is supposed by some to have been intended for the same hypercritical reviewer referred to by our Author in his Epistle to Graham of Fintra—Poetical Works, p. 117. "It first appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August, 1832. The original MS. was in possession of Mr. Andrew Henderson, surgeon, Berwick-upon-Tweed—one of the sons of the *Rosebud*."—*Chambers*.]

## (1.) Draught of Love Letter.

[FOR A FARMER.]

MADAM,

WHAT excuse to make for the liberty I am going to assume in this letter, I am utterly at a loss. If the most unfeigned respect for your accomplished worth—if the most ardent attachment—if sincerity and truth—if these, on my part, will in any degree weigh with you, my apology is these, and these alone. Little as I have had the pleasure of your acquaintance, it has been enough to convince me what enviable happiness must be his whom you shall honour with your particular regard, and more than enough to convince me how unworthy I am to offer myself a candidate for that partiality. In this kind of trembling hope, Madam, I intend very soon doing myself the honour of waiting on you, persuaded that, how-



ever little Miss G—— may be disposed to attend to the suit of a lover as unworthy of her as I am, she is still too good to despise an honest man, whose only fault is loving her too much for his own peace. I have the honour to be, Madam, your most devoted humble servant.

(2.) DRAUGHT OF LOVE LETTER.  
[FOR THE SAME.]

DEAR MADAM,

THE passion of love had need to be productive of much delight; as where it takes thorough possession of the man, it almost unfits him for anything else. The lover who is certain of an equal return of affection, is surely the happiest of men; but he who is a prey to the horrors of anxiety and dreaded disappointment, is a being whose situation is by no means enviable. Of this, my present experience gives me sufficient proof. To me, amusement seems impertinent, and business intrusion, while you alone engross every faculty of my mind. May I request you to drop me a line, to inform me when I may wait on you? For pity's sake, do; and let me have it soon. In the meantime, allow me, in all the artless sincerity of truth, to assure you, that I truly am, my dearest Madam, your ardent lover, and devoted humble servant.

[Love is perhaps the only passion pathetic in reality that is ridiculous by proxy, and it is certainly ridiculous here. The worthy swain whose ardour thus found vent, we learn from Mr. Carruthers of the *Inverness Courier*, through Mr. Chambers, was a farmer on the estate of Rockhall in the neighbourhood of Dumfries, and the lady a Miss G——, of respectable connections, in the same locality. Which of the two 'draughts,' or whether both were employed to propitiate her favour, we do not know, but the suit was successful. The worthy man was blessed with an excellent wife, in consequence of this vicarious intercession; and both the couple themselves, and the Poet for a while, lived to enjoy the marriage-making joke. The originals are, or lately were, in possession of Mr. W. Smith, perfumer, Dumfries.]

## Inscriptions on Books.

(1.) [CICERO'S SELECT ORATIONS TRANSLATED.\*]

*Edin., 23d April, 1787.*

THIS book, a present from the truly worthy and learned DR. GREGORY, I shall preserve to my latest hour, as a mark of the gratitude, esteem, and veneration I bear the Donor. So help me God!

ROBERT BURNS.

\* [London, 1756.]

(2.) [DELOLME ON THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION.]

Mr. Burns presents this book to the Library, and begs they will take it as a creed of British liberty—until they find a better.

R. B.

[Early in March, 1793, our Author was admitted by vote of committee, a free member of the Public Library, Dumfries, "out of respect and esteem for his abilities as a literary man." On the 30th of the same month, he presented to the library the following books;—*Humphry Clinker*, *Julia de Roubigné*, *Knock's History of the Reformation*, and *Delolme on the British Constitution*; the last of which had the above characteristic inscription. The tradition is, that "early in the morning after Delolme had been presented, Burns came to Provost Thomson's bedside before he was up, anxiously desiring to see the volume, as he feared he had written something upon it, 'which might bring him into trouble.' On the volume being shewn to him, he looked at the inscription which he had written upon it the previous night, and having procured some paste, he pasted over it the fly-leaf in such a way as completely to conceal it. I have seen the volume," says Mr. Chambers's informant, "which is the edition of 1790, neatly bound, with a portrait of the Author at the beginning. Some stains of ink shine through the paper, indicating that there is something written on the back of the engraving; but the fly-leaf being pasted down upon it, there is nothing legible. On holding the leaf up to the light, however, I distinctly read, in the undoubted manuscript of the Poet, the following words"—as above. See Mr. McRobert, the librarian's information, *Chambers*, vol. iv., p. 35.

It seems in vain, after this, to say that Burns's fears of mischief in consequence of his political opinions were groundless.]

In various departments of the foregoing Correspondence, as our readers are aware, not a few interesting and important documents have been recovered by us, and arranged as nearly as possible in their appropriate order. We regret to say that more than one series of letters is still imperfect, and that the missing letters are in many cases beyond all reasonable hope of recovery: among these are most to be lamented the letters to Muir and Aiken. Besides these, however, there was another important series addressed to Dr. George Grierson, an intimate friend of our Author's and also of the late Mr. William Reid's, of Brash & Reid, booksellers, Glasgow; in whose possession the lost letters to Muir also were. These valuable relics were almost all destroyed by the inundation of the Clyde in 1831, alluded to at p. 139. But although part of our Author's correspondence in this way perished, a document by Dr. George Grierson himself, in relation to Burns's West Highland Tour—letter (3) to J. Smith, p. 147—fortunately survives, in which many curious particulars about that hitherto mysterious excursion are narrated; and which, by the courtesy of our friend John Reid, Esq., we have the satisfaction of presenting now. In connection with which, another document relating to subsequent Northern Tour—see Appendix—by the kindness of our esteemed correspondent, George Manners, Esq., of Croydon, to whom we are indebted for many similar favours, is appended.

Besides these, some interesting quotations from our Author's manuscripts in the British Museum, in elucidation or correction of Letters hitherto imperfectly edited, most obligingly supplied to us by Robert Carruthers, Esq., of the *Inverness Courier*, and which may be here more appropriately introduced than elsewhere, are inserted, and close this department of our work.

## West Highland Tour.

BURNS AT INVERARY AND DUMBARTON:

BY DR. GEORGE GRIERSON.

WHOE'ER thou art that lodgest here,  
Heaven help thy wofu' case;  
Unless thou com'st to visit Him,  
That King of Kings, his Grace.

There's Highland greed, there's Highland pride;  
There's Highland scab and hunger;  
If Heaven it was that sent me here,  
It sent me in an anger.

N.B.—The above lines were written at the Inn at Inverary by R. Burns, on the pane of glass, in presence of George Grierson, in 1788.

Burns wrote an encomium on Mary M'Lachlan, the Inn-keeper's daughter, at Tarbert—ending with

To fair Maria add M'Lachlan,  
Quod Burns, a rhym'er lad frae Mauchlin.

George Grierson was with him when he wrote the stanzas on Miss M'Lachlan, in 1788: and he, a day or two after this, wrote an Invocation to the *Sun*, at Bannachra, on the banks of Lochlomond.—It was in June, 1788; when Burns made a young man, Duncan M'Lachlan, son of Mr. M'Lachlan of Bannachra, bring out the largest bowl of punch his house could furnish, and made all the ladies and gentlemen kneel down, till he would repeat *extempore*, at the dawn of Day, an Invocation to the Sun. The company were Dr. Grierson, Mr. M'Lachlan, junior, and the family, Mr. M'Farlan from Jamaica, Mr. John Sheddan, merchant, and Miss Sheddan of Glasgow, Mr. Gardner of Lady-Kirk, and the two Misses Butters from Edinburgh. Next day, Messrs. Grierson, Gardner and Burns left Arden in the evening, and in coming to Dumbarton met with a Highlandman riding with his bare-back — on a bare-backed horse. Burns pursued the Highlandman, till he was thrown from his horse into a thorn tree, and Burns's face was all bloody, he having fallen from his horse and cut his face.—They came that night safe to Dumbarton—when the magistrates did them all the honour of conferring the freedom of their city [on them]; and Oliphant preached next day, being the Fast-day, against the parties foresaid, and found great fault [with] the magistrates for conferring honours on the author of *vile, detestable, and immoral* publications.

[From original, entitled "Hints respecting Burns the Ayrshire Poet, by G. Grierson," in possession of John Reid, Esq., Kingston Place, Glasgow.]

[On the above curious and plain-spoken document the following remarks, to make it perfectly intelligible, are required:—

(1.) Dr. Grierson, who seems to be accurate enough as to facts, has evidently been misled in recollection as to the exact year. This celebrated, but hitherto mysterious, excursion took place in the last week of June, 1787.

(2.) If the Tarbert here referred to was the Tarbert on Lochfine, as we suppose it was, then Burns and his friends must have approached Inverary from the south, most probably, as Mr. Chambers conjectures, from Greenock, by way of Bute or Cowal; of which latter district Mary Campbell was a native, and whose birth-place Burns might secretly desire to see.—Compare *Chambers*, Vol. II., p. 93. The only objection to this theory would be the difficulty of transporting so many

horses across lochs and arms of the sea, with speed enough to accomplish the journey in so short a time as implied. If, on the other hand, it is only a misspelling for Tarbet on Lochlomond, then the party must have remained longer there than Burns's own letters—(1) to Ainslie and (3) to J. Smith—import; or they must have come from the east, and Burns wrote the complimentary lines to Miss M'Lachlan, on his way to Inverary—returning a day or two after on the same track, which seems very unlikely indeed. Nothing more of the encomium on Miss M'Lachlan, so far as we are aware, remains; or of the Invocation to the Sun either—which is to be regretted.

(3.) The inscription on the window-pane at Inverary, as our readers will perceive, differs, according to Grierson, from the edition usually given; and we are much disposed to believe that Grierson's edition is the correct one.

(4.) About the year 1770, George Buchanan, Esq., merchant, Glasgow, acquired by purchase the lands of Auchindennan-Dennistoun, and the adjoining lands of Bannachra, on the banks of Lochlomond. Mr. Buchanan fixed his residence at Auchindennan, converted by him into Arden—now the property and residence of Sir James Lumsden, Lord-Provost of Glasgow. The M'Lachlans at Bannachra, therefore, would be tenants of Mr. Buchanan's.

From Mr. Buchanan's hospitable board our travellers, in a state of high exhilaration apparently, issued eastward on their way to Dumbarton. The extravagant escapade which followed must therefore have occurred between the east gate of Arden and the west gate of Cameron House, most probably at the sharp turn of the road where it leaves the loch, at what was once the old Italian villa of Belretiro—where thorn trees and quickest hedges, if we remember rightly, used to be plentiful and rough enough.—See notes on "Kerry Miniature"—Appendix.

(5.) Rev. James Oliphant, formerly of Kilmarnock, and of the strictest sect there, was translated to Dumbarton in 1773, in face of much angry opposition—the objectors having employed a man to traverse the streets of the burgh selling "The whole works of Rev. James Oliphant, presentee to this parish, for the small charge of twopence." Mr. Oliphant had already received a by no means pleasant recognition from Burns in his poem of the "Ordination"—hence those anathemas on the Fast-day! It was Oliphant's turn at reprisals, and there is every reason to believe that by his influence the honour just conferred on Burns by the magistrates was cancelled—no trace of it being found in the records of the burgh. For fuller details of this strange proceeding, see *Reminiscences*, Original, Part II., "Dumbarton"—Appendix.

For certain local information in the two last notes we are indebted to Irving's *History of Dumbartonshire*, and to the courteous assistance of John Denny, Esq., Town-Clerk of Dumbarton, in examining the records. Of Dr. Grierson we have hitherto learned nothing; or of the other parties more conspicuously mentioned in the narrative—although a little additional time, we have no doubt, would enable us to trace them all.]

## North Highland Tour.

WILLIAM INGLIS, ESQUIRE,  
INVERNESS.

DEAR SIR,

THE gentleman by whom this will be delivered to you is Mr. Burns of Airshire, who goes on an excursion to the North personally unacquainted, excepting in so far as his elegant and simple poems may have caught your attention. To men of such liberal and disinterested feelings as I know the citizens of Inverness to be, little seemed necessary as recommendatory of the Bard of Nature. Yet I thought it unworthy of me to permit him to migrate without mentioning him to you as my friend, and consigning him to you for that civility and attention which distinguishes you among all ranks of *migrants*. I offer my best respects to Mrs. Inglis, and am always, dear Sir, your most obedt. servt.,

WILL. DUNBAR.\*

EDIN., 24th Augt., 1787.

## To William Inglis, Esquire.

INVERNESS.

MR. BURNS presents his most respectful compliments to Mr. Inglis—would have waited on him with the inclosed, but is jaded to death with the fatigue of to-day's journey—won't leave Inverness till Thursday morning.

*Etiles Hotel, Tuesday evening.*

\* [The gentleman to whom this note of introduction is addressed was Provost Inglis of Inverness, by whom our Author was hospitably entertained on the Wednesday evening, on returning from his visit to the Fall of Fyers. The writer of the note was William Dunbar, Esq., W.S., "Colonel of the Crochallan Corps." From original in possession of George Manners, Esq., Croydon.]



## Manuscripts in British Museum.

Our readers will find a reference to these under the head of Gossr, in Appendix ; and, knowing that no edition of our Author's works could be complete without consulting those documents, but despairing of being able to do this at a sufficiently early date to embody the result in its proper place, we made the reference above noted as distant as possible. By the most courteous attention of our accomplished correspondent, Robert Carruthers, Esq., of the *Inverness Courier*, this difficulty has in a great measure been obviated, and many of the variations and corrections required have already been incorporated in the text. The most important of these will be found in the supplementary letters to James Johnson, p. 130; in the letter to the Provost and Town Council of Dumfries, p. 199; and in some notes to the autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, p. 75.

The variations thus obtained are, upon the whole, not extremely important; but they are all deserving of attention. "What a grief it is," says Mr. Carruthers, writing to us on this subject, "that out of the 78 lots of the Pickering Collection of Burns's MSS., only 10 should have been purchased by the Museum! Some of the best went to America. The late Alexander Hastie's bequest to the Museum has added some pieces of interest," &c. Of the variations deserving more particular notice, and that did not reach us in time to be placed in the text, the following are subjoined :—

### AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LETTER

#### To Dr. Moore. [p. 76.]

[Burns himself, according to Currie, corrected this autobiographical letter, and the corrected copy was used for the press; but the greater part of the alterations seem to Mr. Carruthers to be in the style of the Doctor himself: very likely. The following passage, for example, from the original, as compared with Currie's text reproduced in our own—p. 76, c. 2, near foot—shows a difference both of terms and substance in Burns's favour, and frees him from all grounds of censure as to mis-statements of fact, implied against him, as it appears, in Mr. Chambers's edition.]

A LETTER from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes, by rousing my poetic ambition. The doctor belonged to a set of critics for whose applause I had not even dared to hope. His idea that I would meet with every encouragement for a second edition fired me so much that away I posted to Edinburgh, &c.

[Chambers, taking Currie's edition, as other editors have also done, for granted as correct, observes that "Blacklock said nothing of Edinburgh,"—which is true. But the reader will observe that Burns makes no such allegation in the Doctor's name, the allegation to that effect being by Currie, on supposition, and not by Burns.—Compare *Chambers*, vol. I., p. 312.]

#### (2.) To Lady M. M. Constable. [p. 56.]

[In this letter, *Mrs.* Miller should be *Mr.* Miller: and after the words "unfortunate Mary" the following appears in the original :—]

I enclose your ladyship a poetic compliment I lately paid to the memory of our greatly-injured lovely Scottish Queen.

I have the honor to be, my Lady, your Ladyship's highly-obliged and ever-devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

*Ellisland, near Dumfries, 25th April, 1791.*

[With respect to the date of this letter there seems to have been some confusion. It has hitherto been dated as on the 11th of April. The probability is that our editions hitherto have been from a rough draught with that date, and without the concluding passage above quoted. When the letter was copied out and finished, it would be dated on a later day accordingly. Lady Winifred, with whose fine title and hereditary distinction we are accustomed to associate many romantic ideas, is described by Sir Walter Scott in a letter to Lockhart, as "that singular old curmudgeon" to whom Burns played "high Jacobite."]

#### (9.) To Mrs. Riddel. [p. 61.]

[Concluding paragraph stands thus in British Museum copy :—]

When Anacharsis' Travels come to hand, which Mrs. Riddel mentioned as her gift to the public library, Mr. B. will thank her for a reading of it previous to her sending it to the library, as it is a book Mr. B. has never seen, and he wishes to have a longer perusal than the regulations of the library allow.

[Could this have been a rough draught by Burns, or was the printed version "dressed up?"—*Carruthers*. A rough draught, as in many other instances, we have no doubt.]

#### To Miss Fontenelle. [p. 58.]

[Letter to this lady begins otherwise, thus :—]

ENCLOSED is the Address, such as it is, and may it be a prologue to an overflowing house. If all the town put together have half the ardour for your success and welfare of my individual wishes, my prayer will most certainly be granted.

[Burns evidently re-wrote the letter to Miss Fontenelle: the copy with the above opening was warmer in expression. It belonged to Charles Mathews.—*Carruthers*.]

#### (40.) To Mr. Thomson. [p. 94.]

[Before last paragraph the following appears in original :—]

So much for an idle farrago of a gossiping letter. Do you know a droll Scots song, more famous for its humour than its delicacy, called "The Grey Goose and the Glede?" Mr. Clarke says that the tune is positively an old chant of the Romish church, which corroborates the old tradition that at the Reformation the Reformers burlesqued much of the old church music with setting them to [lewd] verses. As a further proof, the common name for this song is "Cumnock Psalms."

[In the last paragraph—]

Dr. Maxwell—the identical Maxwell whom Burke mentioned in the House of Commons—was the physician who seemingly, &c.

[Why this paragraph should have been mutilated by editors, we cannot imagine.]

#### (4.) To James Johnson. [p. 104.]

[In Chambers's edition of this letter—compare our own edition, p. 80, and Chambers's, as reproduced by us, p. 104—the following paragraph should be inserted at the asterisks placed by Mr. Chambers near the end.]

I do not, my dear Sir, wish you to do this; and I beg you will not hint it to Mr. Clarke. If we do it all, I will break it to him myself.

[This most characteristic paragraph, so strangely omitted by Mr. Chambers, confirms, in a remarkable way, our own conjecture with respect to the whole of this letter, and more particularly with respect to this very reference of our Author's to the debt.—Compare note by us on the subject, p. 104, c. 2.]