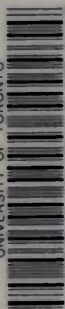
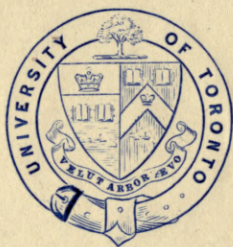


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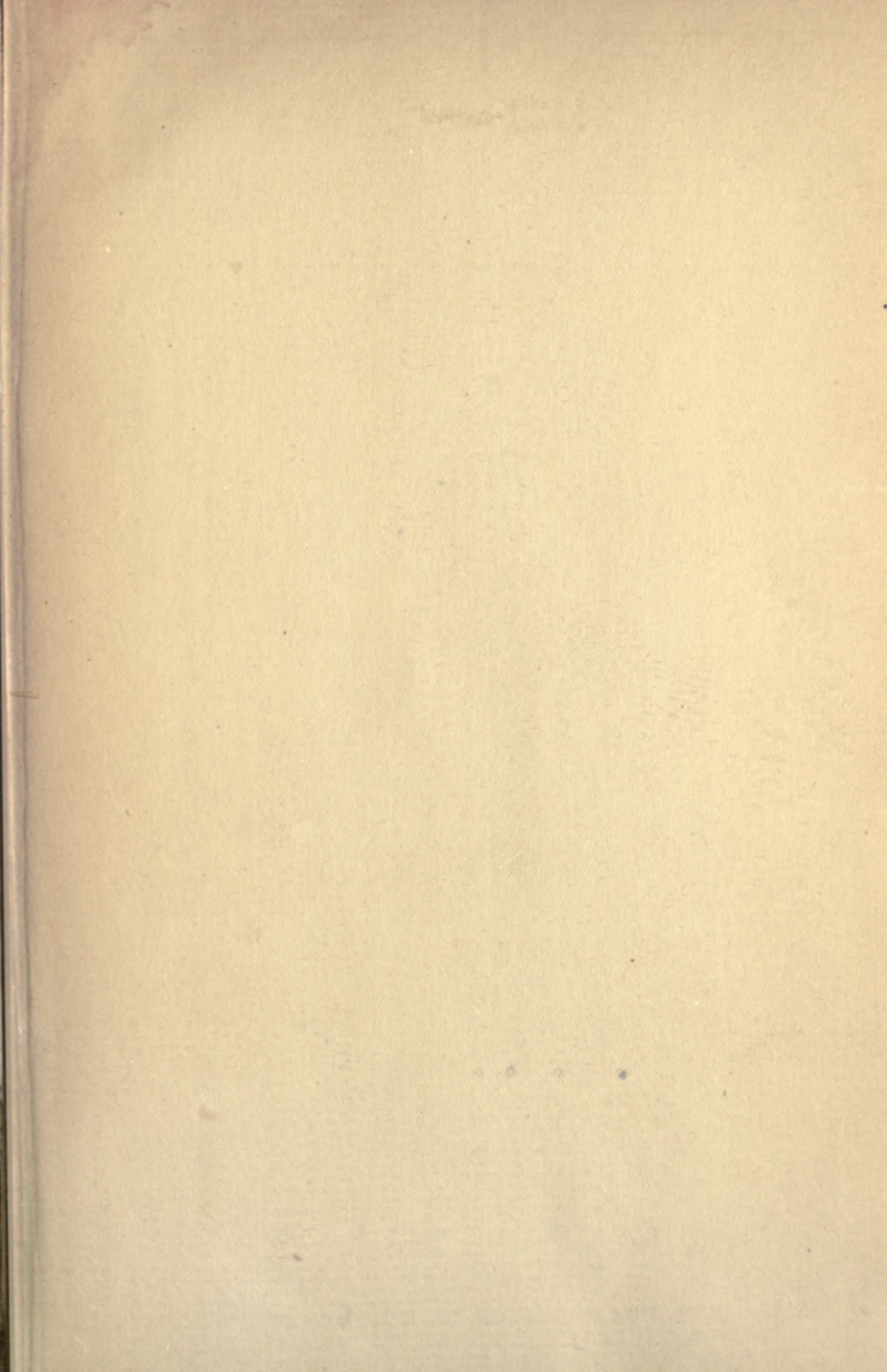


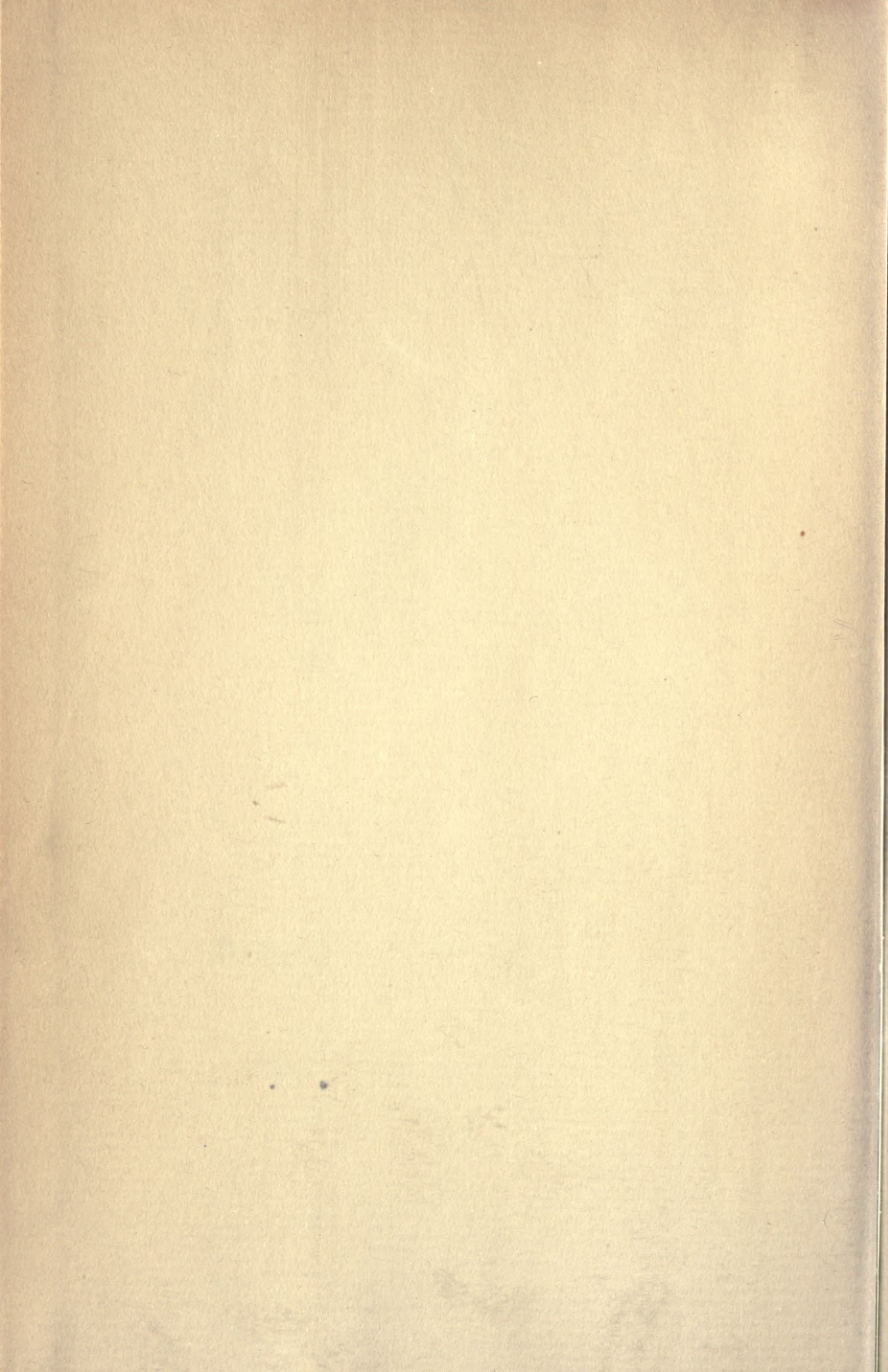
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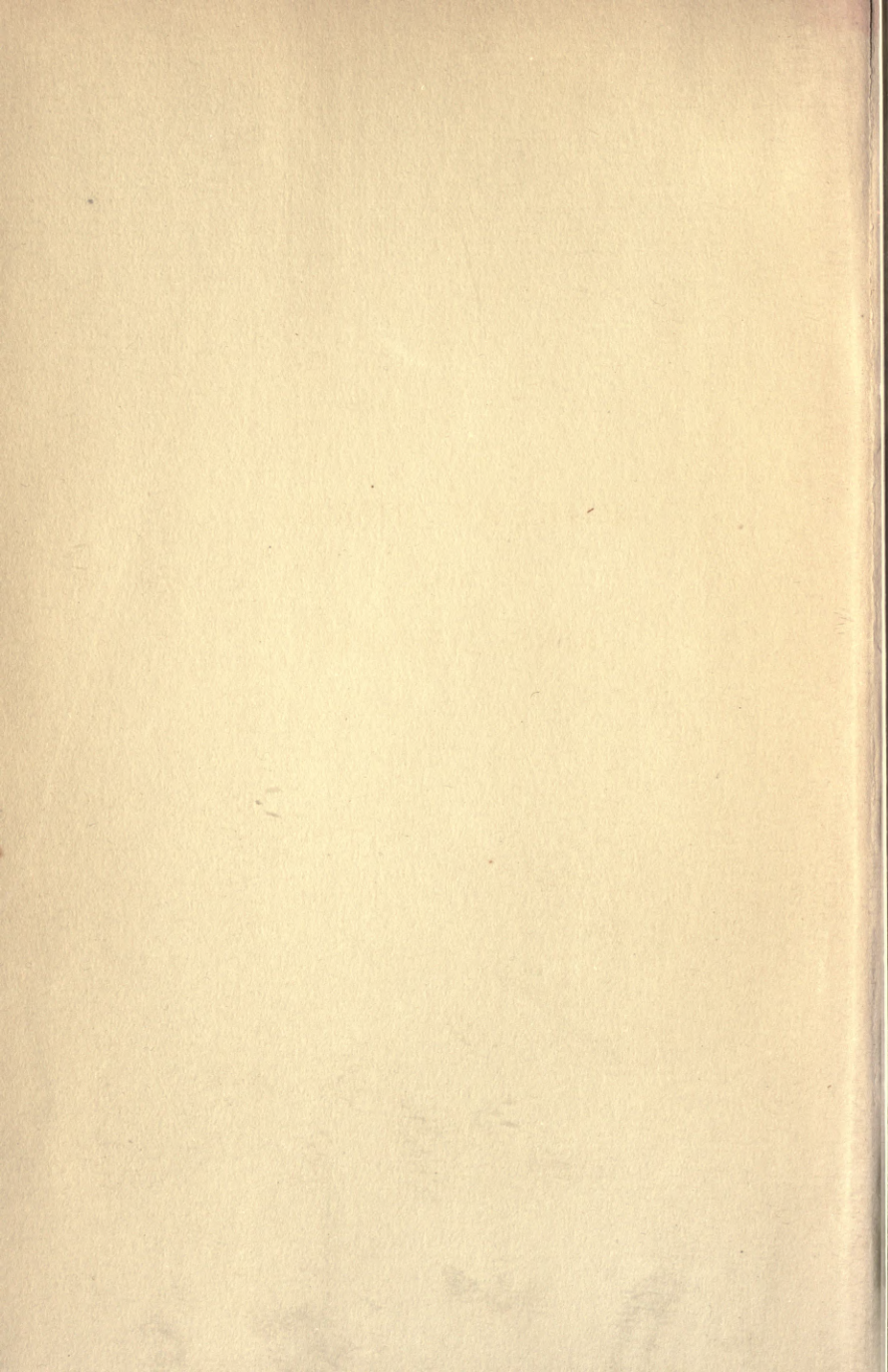














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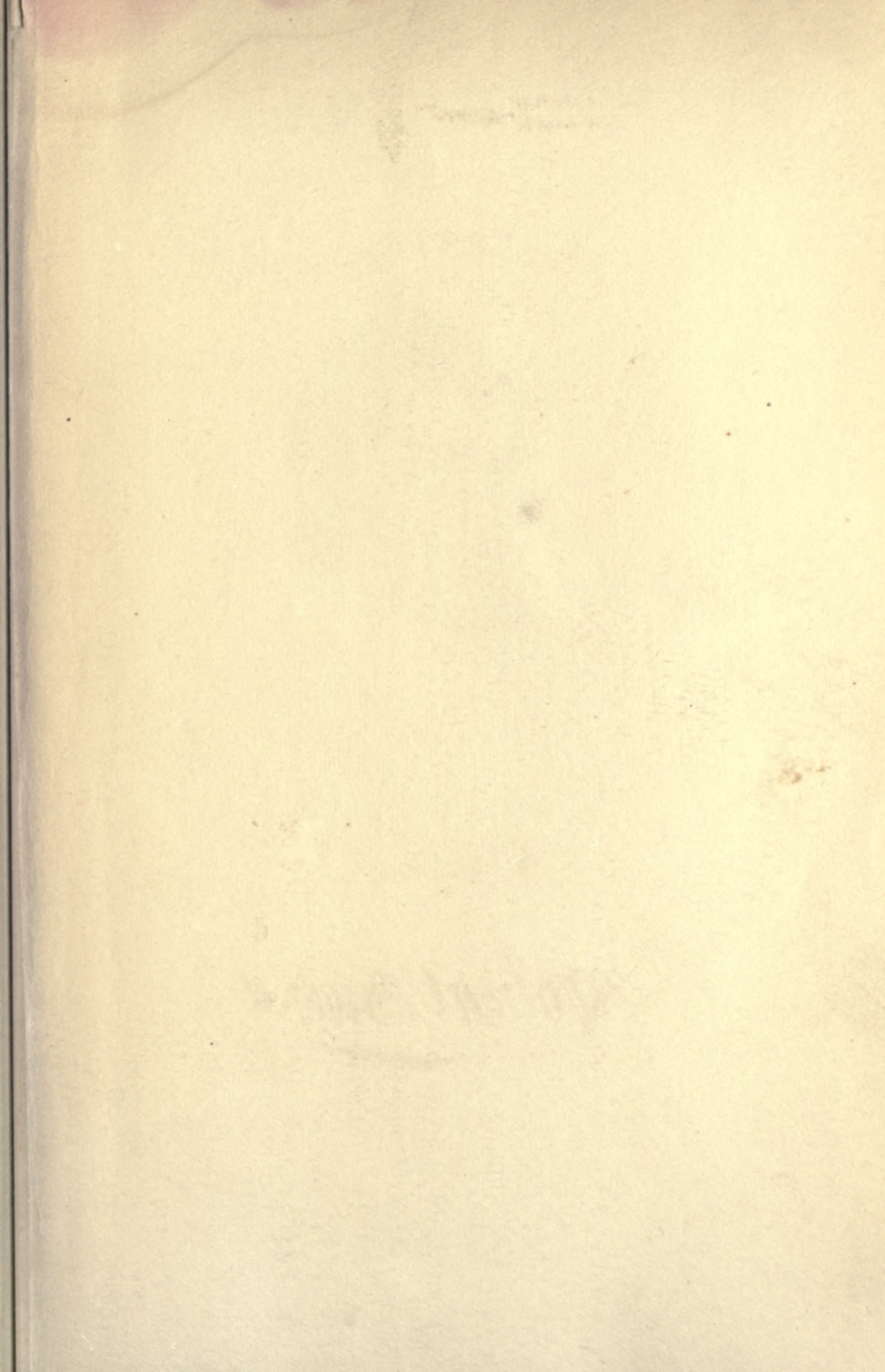
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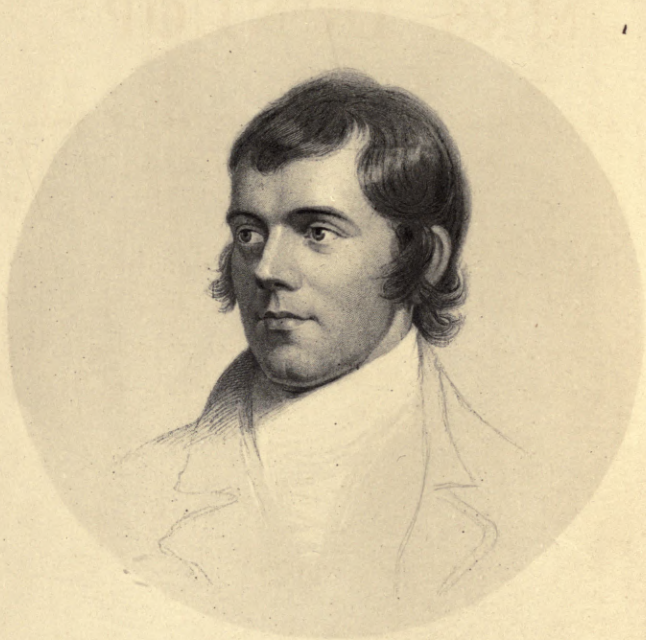
MRS. DUNLOP

ROBERT J. JONES

MRS. J. J. JONES







*Robert Burns*

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ROBERT BURNS

AND

MRS. DUNLOP

CORRESPONDENCE NOW PUBLISHED IN FULL  
FOR THE FIRST TIME

WITH ELUCIDATIONS BY

WILLIAM WALLACE

EDITOR OF ROBERT CHAMBERS'S 'LIFE AND WORKS  
OF ROBERT BURNS'

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK

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## Preface

THESE volumes contain ninety-six letters that passed, in the course of their ten years' friendship, between Burns and Mrs. Dunlop. Currie, in his *Works of Robert Burns* (1800), printed thirty-nine letters of Burns to Mrs. Dunlop; Cromek, in his *Reliques*, printed three more; and Scott-Douglas, in his *Works of Robert Burns* (1877), added a fourth from a MS. of Mr. Locker-Lampson's. The Lochryan MSS., now in the possession of Mr. R. B. Adam, of Buffalo, N. Y., contain thirty-eight more original holograph letters and parts of letters from the poet to Mrs. Dunlop, together with MSS. of several of the Poems, and ninety-seven letters from Mrs. Dunlop to Burns. The whole of these, old and new, have been reproduced here with the utmost possible correctness; the few *lacunae* ascertained and conjectured are indicated. Four of the letters printed by Currie have been collated with the original MSS. in the collection of Mr. Adam, and the emendations and additions thence derived are of particular interest, both in themselves and as illustrations of Currie's editorial method.

The Burns letters in the Lochryan (Adam) collection are the surplus of the selection made for



Currie's use by Mrs. Dunlop and Gilbert Burns from the MSS. which the lady had in her possession at the poet's death. It is unnecessary here to do more than refer to the story of the bargain she struck with those who had charge of Burns's affairs. Comparison of the number of letters she wrote to the poet with the number he wrote to her further discredits the popular tradition as to her jocular repurchase of every one of her own with one of the poet's. And while the Lochryan MSS. proper throw no light on this subject, one at least of the four MSS. of Mr. Adam's referred to above confirms Gilbert's statement that the selection was made by Mrs. Dunlop and himself. These four are the originals of the letters of 12th February 1788, 1st January 1789, 4th March 1789, and 6th December 1792. That of 4th March 1789 is docketed "May be printed" in Mrs. Dunlop's hand. The fact that the docket on that of 12th February 1788, referred to in the text, is in a hand which is neither Mrs. Dunlop's nor Gilbert's, suggests that they had an assistant in the work of selection.

The Lochryan MSS., now published for the first time, were in all probability never seen by Currie. Manifestly none of them has ever been handled by either editor or printer. They are all in a state of beautiful preservation, and include at least as fine specimens of the poet's handwriting as any that have seen the light in the original or reproduction. Besides the letters there are in the collection

holograph MSS. of "Tam o' Shanter," the first draft of "Passion's Cry," "The Chevalier's Lament," "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn," "On Reading in a Newspaper the Death of J. M'Leod, Esq., brother to Miss T. M'Leod, a particular friend of the Author's," "On Scaring some Water-fowl on Loch Turit," "O Love will venture in where it darena weel be seen," and two dubious originals, "On a Tear," and "The Tears I shed must ever fall."

Mrs. Dunlop kept the Lochryan MSS. at Dunlop till her death, when she left the estate of Lochryan and the MSS. to her grandson, General Sir John Wallace, from whom the documents descended to his son and heir, the next possessor of Lochryan, who left them by will to his youngest brother, the present Colonel F. J. Wallace, from whom they were recently acquired by Mr. Adam. They have thus been continuously in the hands of the Dunlop-Wallace family during the past century. Colonel Wallace states that to the best of his knowledge they have been kept in a box in the safe-room at Lochryan for the last fifty years.

The interweaving of this new material with the old makes the Correspondence of Burns and Mrs. Dunlop almost unique in its completeness. A careful search after possible *lacunae* has discovered no more than four places where it can be definitely stated that a letter of Burns is missing, and of the gross sum of Mrs. Dunlop's it appears that Burns

had lost or destroyed only nine — a circumstance which must have wiped out the memory of the many proofs the lady had received that he did not always read her communications with the most respectful care, and at the same time must have deepened the remorse she felt for her neglect of the poet during the last eighteen months of his life.

Students of Burns will be interested, in the first place, to know what light the Lochryan MSS. throw on the cause of that unhappy episode in the poet's life. The point is fully discussed in the text (vol. ii. p. 289, etc.), but it may be said generally that a broad view of the complete Correspondence, now possible for the first time, strongly favours the theory that Mrs. Dunlop's failure to answer Burns's letters of 1795 and 1796 was due to inadvertence rather than to any offence he could, consciously or unconsciously, have given her, and that if pique influenced her — that is to say, if her silence was caused by his failure to answer promptly the last letter she sent him from London in January of 1795 — his previous negligence had afforded her at least a pretext for the severe punishment she inflicted. A glance at the table of dates (*infra*) will show which of the two had the better reason, on the whole, to reproach the other with neglect.

The new matter is otherwise remarkably rich in fresh biographical details, in illustration not only of the relations between the two friends, but also of the poet's character, walk, and conversation, and in



material for study of the text of numerous poems. It reveals the fact that it was at least within the bounds of possibility that Burns might have been a military officer, and alternatively a professor in the University of Edinburgh, and that Adam Smith, who has not hitherto been known to have taken much interest in him, conceived at a very early date the idea of making him a Salt Officer in the Customs service at a salary of £30 a year. Burns certainly dallied with the notion of taking a stand of colours, and uncommon pains were taken by Mrs. Dunlop and Dr. Moore to procure for him the nomination to the Chair of Agriculture in Edinburgh, which was founded in 1787. Much that is new is brought out as to his connection with the Excise; for example, the fact that he aimed from the first at a Port-Officership with its superior emoluments, the probable date of his initiation into his profession, Corbet's services to him, and so forth.

There has hitherto been no evidence that Burns was so deeply indebted to Mrs. Dunlop in a pecuniary sense as his brother Gilbert alleged. In the new letters there is proof that she sent him an occasional gift of a £5 note. The sum of these could not have amounted to a great deal. It is of more interest to note the poet's attitude to this kindly habit of his not very wealthy friend. At first he was deeply offended, and he was, of course, never exactly comfortable under the beneficence of his correspondent;

but he reasoned himself into toleration in several characteristic epistles. She treated him all along as a social equal and an intellectual superior; that circumstance alone sufficed to put any offensive interpretation of her practice out of the question. The new light upon the subject confirms — if confirmation were necessary — the view that her gifts of money were presents in exactly the same kind as his gifts of books and cognac to her, and in no sense dictated by charity or the notion that he required at any time pecuniary assistance.

Mrs. Dunlop, as will be seen, was a fearless critic of Burns. Almost the first subject she exploited in the correspondence was the "undecent" blots she discovered and wished removed in the Kilmarnock edition. He treated her remonstrances on that head and her literary criticisms generally with scant respect. There is very much in these pages illustrative of that well-known saying of his to Mrs. Dunlop — "You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel." His Fescennine excursions he defended in a manner characteristically human. "You may guess," he said, "that the convivial hours of men have their mysteries of wit and mirth, and I hold it a piece of contemptible baseness to detail the sallies of thoughtless merriment, or the orgies of accidental intoxication to the ear of cool sobriety or female delicacy."

Burns's "religion of the heart" is expounded anew in several of the Lochryan letters with warm



eloquence. What could be choicer in this line than his consolatory epistle of 9th July 1790?

Thomson says finely —

Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds  
And offices of life — to life itself —  
And all its transient joys sit loose.

And yet, like many other fine sayings, it has, I fear, more of philosophy than human nature in it. Poor David's pathetic cry of grief is much more the language of man: "O Absalom! My son! My son!" *A world to Come!* is the only genuine balm for an agonising heart, torn to pieces in the wrench of parting for ever (to mortal view) with friends, inmates of the bosom and dear to the soul!

A letter assigned conjecturally to Miss Rachel Dunlop as recipient contains an even more remarkable and interesting protest against original sin.

The value of the Lochryan MSS. for textual and critical purposes is very great; it has been to some extent used for these purposes, but a closer study of the documents has revealed several not unimportant errors in the deductions recently drawn. The dates of quite a number of poems and letters have had to be altered in the light of the Correspondence as here completed. Note, in particular, the establishment of the right date of the "New Year's Day Address" to Mrs. Dunlop (1789 instead of 1790), and the clearing up of the mystery of the date and place of composition of the last of the Ellisland letters, which has yet hitherto seemed to be also



one of the first of the Dumfries ones. There are here earlier versions than any hitherto known of various poems, new facts about the building up of "The Poet's Progress," and a valuable contribution to the controversy about "Passion's Cry."

There is a notable contribution to Burns apologetics in the fact confirmed by Mrs. Dunlop's letters of the time, that Mrs. Burns spent part of the summer of 1790—the year of the Anne Park episode—in Ayrshire.

The new Burns letters in the text are exact copies of the originals, spelling and punctuation being adhered to with all but literal precision. Whole letters and parts of letters not previously published are distinguished by a line running down the left side of the letterpress. The text of the four old letters, of which the MSS. are in the Adam collection, has been made to agree with the originals, and for the rest of the old letters the best available revisions have been utilised. Mrs. Dunlop's letters have not been reproduced with quite the same exactitude. Her actual misspellings have been corrected, but an attempt has been made to retain such so-called misspellings as were current at the time, such as "an wound," which affords a graphic illustration of the current pronunciation. She did not punctuate, and that defect has been supplied. Addresses of letters are indicated by *Ad.* prefixed at the margin; where the superscription is "To Mrs. Dunlop" or "To Burns," no authentic address has

been found. Those marked "franked by Kerr" were addressed by the secretary to the Post Office, whose whole-hearted admiration of Burns procured him so frequently the privilege of receiving his letters without the heavy tax of fourpence for a "single" and eightpence for a "double." The numerous notes, as well as the connecting and explanatory narrative, are printed in large type for convenience of reference, and because they are in the great majority of cases comments on the letters which they elucidate.

Mrs. Dunlop's letters to Burns, now published for the first time, are almost as essential as his own to a right understanding of the period of his life — the last decade — which they cover. She was a very different woman from Mrs. Maclehose; her portrait suggests capacity and strength of will rather than a tendency to Werterism. But she was in her way as much of a sentimentalist. There are almost innumerable and very pathetic indications in her Correspondence — which is of all the more value that it was never intended for publication — that she regarded the advent of a letter from him as an event of supreme importance. She was in agony when, for some unforeseen reason, he failed to answer her. She studied and commented on every line that he sent her. She was willing to write three letters to his one; and yet she took the most modest view of her own part in the Correspondence. "I deceive myself most egregiously," she says with a sigh and

yet almost with a touch of old-fashioned coquetry, "if you would not be melancholy for at least two hours after my demise, whose Correspondence has been to me a varied scene of hope and delight, and an intercourse of that mixture between amusement and esteem to which I believed I was wholly superannuated." Her letters to Burns must be read as carefully as Clarinda's, for though there is absent from them the fascination of a hopeless passion, her almost motherly anxiety concerned itself equally with his character and with his reputation, took stock of every scrap of his verse, and of every action of his life. Thus it is quite impossible to understand Burns's defiant declaration so variously criticised, that he was a stranger alike to jealousy and to infidelity, until one has read the remarkable and mercilessly plain-spoken letter from Mrs. Dunlop which called that assertion forth—the letter in which she warns him against thinking lightly of his wife because she had "succumbed" to him before marriage. It is equally impossible to understand the letter of Burns, now published for the first time, in which he almost grandiloquently but effectually disposes in advance of the modern theory that he was "an inspired faun" and "a lewd peasant of genius," without reading the letter in which Mrs. Dunlop, also anticipating certain modern criticism, writes, "A gentleman told me with a grave face the other day that you certainly were a sad wretch, that your works were immoral and infamous, that you lam-



pooned the clergy and laughed at the ridiculous parts of religion, and he was told you were a scandalous free-liver in every sense of the word." In addition, Mrs. Dunlop's letters, in equal measure with the new ones from him to her, throw a flood of light upon various events in his life, upon his desperate struggle with farming difficulties in Ellisland, upon his start as an exciseman, upon the earnest desire of his Ayrshire friends, who were evidently not of the insincere or fair-weather order, to secure for him an academic or other position worthy of him.

The relation between Burns and Mrs. Dunlop is probably unique in literary history. She was not to him what Madame de Warens was to Rousseau or what "the divine Emily" was to Voltaire, or what Charlotte von Stein was to Goethe. She did not inspire him to literary exertion as Lady Hesketh inspired Cowper, although she had some ambition that way. Her own view of the relationship she wished to establish is indeed given in one of the earliest of her letters, "I have been told Voltaire read all his manuscripts to an old woman and printed nothing but what she approved. I wish you would name me to her office." Although Burns did not appoint her to the "office," she appointed herself. In her letters she appears, as has already been said, as his constant and sometimes even ruthless critic. Occasionally "broad" in speech with the "breadth" of her century, she was fiercely conservative in all matters of morality, and even of

"impropriety" in phraseology. Often her literary criticism is sadly and even ludicrously inept, as in what she says about "The Twa Dogs," and in her suggestion that Burns should imitate the "chaste" Thomson. There is reason to believe that Burns resented, and was even deeply offended at, her strictures upon "Tam o' Shanter," which are indeed provokingly wooden. But occasionally she seems to anticipate the verdict of posterity. Thus when her correspondent sent her a copy of that "infusion of gall, wormwood, and aquafortis," his terrible "Ode to the memory of Mrs. Oswald of Auchincruive," she asked him good-naturedly, "Are you not a sad wicked creature to send a poor old wife straight to the Devil, because she gave you a ride in a cold night?" Very many readers of the Ode during the past hundred years must have wished for an opportunity of putting the same question. On another point which has recently been raised afresh by the representation of Burns as an enemy of "the Kirk" her common-sense enabled her to take the right side. When he was attacked in her presence as an assailant of religion, she pointed out that his satires were really directed at persons who were "too black for his ink, low beneath his pen." But "I begged to appeal to the lines left in Mr. Lawrie's manse as proof positive that the clergy were not attacked in a collective body." It must be allowed, however, that Mrs. Dunlop is much more successful as a critic of conduct than of poetry. The advices she gives

Burns are those of a mother to a grown-up son whose powers she takes pride in, but whose passions she is afraid of. She encourages him in domesticity. After she has an opportunity of seeing Jean she is warm in praise of his choice. But she fears the "temptations" of life in the excise. She gives as an argument in favour of his candidature for the Professorship of Agriculture in Edinburgh University that a "grave member of the College would not be so often the prey of jolly Bacchus as an exciseman."

Mrs. Dunlop was not a blue-stocking. Her spelling, as has been seen, was not perfect, but in her day, as Thackeray has said, "people as soon thought of doing their own washing as their own spelling." But she knew her Bible and her Burns, her Thomson and her Shenstone, her Richardson and her Fielding. She had at least a superficial acquaintance with the more popular Continental literature of her time, and on the whole was probably more cultured and had a keener interest in literature than most Scottish and English gentlewomen in the end of last century. She wrote indifferent verses and sent them to Burns. She did not place too much stress on these exercises; on the contrary, "I wonder at the ease (impudence anybody else would call it) with which I scribble all my nonsense to you as a child would scratch mathematical schemes to Sir Isaac Newton." I have thought it therefore advisable, and indeed only fair to her memory, to give general indications of her "schemes," but not to print them in full. When



one reads her letters indeed, one is surprised that she had time or heart for literary concerns at all. She appears in them as a woman of many cares and sorrows, and in the beginning of the Correspondence, at all events, of not a few mortifications. These she pours with Richardsonian precision, and occasionally with Richardsonian prolixity, into the sympathetic ear of Burns. Sometimes she bursts unconsciously into poetry much more genuine than her set efforts, as when, writing from Loudon Castle where her son-in-law lies dead, and two daughters are prostrate, she puts an Iliad of misery and anxiety in the nutshell of "'T is for light sorrows women weep." On the whole, it may be doubted if Burns ever met a kinder or wiser woman than Mrs. Dunlop; the respect for her which found expression in the agony of his last days was well founded. It may be that she "deserted" him during these days, that instead of telling him of reports she may have heard to his detriment, as she had been in the habit of doing, and giving him an opportunity of vindicating his character, she believed them without examination. On this point, as has been said, the Correspondence throws little light. But there is some reason to believe that when the "calm afternoon of life" for which Mrs. Dunlop sighed, came to her, she cherished a peculiar affection for the man of genius whose greatness, in common with her generation, she but imperfectly understood, who, "spirit fierce and bold" though he was, gave her consolation in

her hour of affliction and wounded pride, of whom — such was her view of her own position as “honoured patron” — she wrote, “I declare, upon soul and conscience, that I regard it as a singular honour and happiness, nay, one of those upon which I have ever valued myself most, that *you* think my health or me worth being interested in, or preferring a warm request to be informed about.”

I am greatly indebted to Miss Agnes E. A. Wallace, Laggray, Row, for granting me permission to reproduce the portrait, taken at the age of seventeen, of her great-grandmother, Mrs. Dunlop, which is her property. I have also to express my thanks to the numerous gentlemen who have assisted me while preparing this volume for publication — in particular to J. A. A. Wallace, Esq., of Lochryan, and to Colonel F. J. Wallace of Arrandale, Ayr, for freely and fully supplying me with details of family history; to Major Dalrymple Hay for giving particulars of the history of Dunlop House and estate; and to Provost Mackay, Mr. David Sneddon, Mr. Duncan M’Naught, and Mr. George Dunlop of Kilmarnock, and Mr. William Rattray, Dunlop, for innumerable services. For invaluable and enthusiastic co-operation in the work of arrangement, research, and revision, I cannot be too grateful to my friend Mr. James Davidson.

WILLIAM WALLACE.

GLASGOW, *January* 1898.





# Introduction

## MRS. DUNLOP AND HER FAMILY

IN the baptismal register of Ayr there is the following entry: "Frances Anna Wallace, lawful daughter to Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, advocate, and Dame Eleanora Agnew, his lady, was born April 16th, 1730, baptized Wednesday the 22nd of the same month by Mr. John Hunter privately."

Mrs. Dunlop was very proud of her pedigree and of her connection by blood with the Liberator of Scotland; and she was encouraged in her pride by Burns. But she was not, strictly speaking, a "descendant" of the patriot, though she could claim direct descent from the founder of the Wallace family, Richard the Welshman, who accompanied the Norman Walter Fitzalan, founder of the House of Stuart, from Oswestry on the Welsh Border into Scotland, at the time when David I. was bent on anglicising his country, and invited Southrons, both barons and priests, to aid him in the work. Adam Wallace of Riccarton (Richardton, the home of Richard) was in the middle of the twelfth century regarded as the head of his house.<sup>1</sup> He had two

<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. O. Mitchell, the distinguished Glasgow antiquary, has given it as his view—on which I express no opinion—that the present head of the Wallace family is Mr. H. R. Wallace of Cloncaird, Ayrshire, as being "undoubted representative by unbroken

sons, of whom the younger, Malcolm, became the father of Sir William Wallace of Elderslie. The elder, Sir Richard, was ancestor of Mrs. Dunlop. He married Lady Helen Bruce, daughter of the Earl of Carrick, so that Mrs. Dunlop could claim kinship with both of Scotland's heroes. John of Richardton, grandson of Sir Richard and Lady Helen, married Dame Margaret, only daughter and heiress of Sir James Lindsay of Craigie. It was arranged on the occasion of this marriage that the family should for all time bear the title of Craigie. The Wallaces of Craigie intermarried with the best families in Scotland — Douglasses, Maxwells, Kennedys, Rutherfords, Johnstones, Campbells, and Cunninghams. The baronetcy came in with Sir Hew, last but three of the Wallaces of Craigie. He was succeeded by his cousin Sir Thomas, an eminent lawyer, who attained to the position of Lord-Justice Clerk. Two sons of the latter, William and Thomas, were successively holders of the estate and title. Sir Thomas married Eleanor, only daughter and heiress of Colonel Andrew Agnew of Lochryan, Wigtownshire. They had two children, Thomas who predeceased his father, dying in 1756, at the age of twenty-seven — he was a Guardsman, and his sister told Burns that he was buried in Westminster Abbey — and Frances Anna male descent of the John Wallace who was owner of Elderslie in 1390." Of the Lochryan family he says that they, "springing from an elder brother of the John Wallace of Elderslie of 1390, undoubtedly represent the Riccartons of whom the Elderslies were cadets, but they are not Wallaces, but Dunlops of Dunlop, and if they had had an unquestioned male descent from Richard the Welshman, it is not clear how the representation of the stem would have given them the representation of the branch."

who became Mrs. Dunlop. She was thus twenty-first in descent from Richard the Welshman.

Frances Anna Wallace married in 1748 John Dunlop of Dunlop<sup>1</sup> (17th of that ilk), the representative of an Ayrshire family, almost as old as her own. "Gulielmus de Dunlop" appears in a notarial copy of an inquest in the charter chest of the burgh of Irvine in 1260. A Neil Fitz-Robert de Dunlap signed the Ragman Roll in 1296. We hear of a John de Dunlop in 1407 who was probably father of Alexander Dunlop of Hunthall, "whose son was John Dunlop of that ilk, who begot Robert Dunlop of Hartland, whose daughter married Hugh Maxwell of Auldhouse soon after 1500." In the seventeenth century most of the Dunlops were warm supporters of the Presbyterian cause; most of the Wallaces, on the other hand, were partisans of the House of Stuart. In 1684 John Dunlop succeeded in getting part of his lands converted into the free barony of Dunlop.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to an exceptionally well accredited family tradition they made a runaway match from Dunskey House, the property of the Hunter-Blair family near Portpatrick, where they happened to meet.

<sup>2</sup> The lands of Dunlop, in the district of Cuninghame, Ayrshire, were held continuously by the family of that name from 1260 to 1843, when they were sold by the Trustees of the late Sir John Dunlop, Baronet, to Thomas Dunlop Douglas, a wealthy Glasgow merchant, and a descendant of the Garnkirk branch of the Dunlops of Dunlop. The castle or mansion-house of Dunlop, occupied by Mrs. Frances Anna Dunlop, the correspondent of Robert Burns, was entirely removed by Sir John Dunlop when, in 1835, he began the erection, on the same site, of the present magnificent mansion of the Tudor order of architecture. The old residence included a square tower of unknown antiquity, with additions built at various periods, one of the more modern portions bearing the date 1599. It was partially fortified in the spirit of ancient times, but was nevertheless possessed of great accommodation and contained several elegant apartments. A



Francis, the father of Mrs. Dunlop's husband, was one of the Scottish gentlemen summoned in 1707 to witness the "deposition" of the Scottish regalia in Edinburgh Castle. He seems to have, in 1748, resigned his estate to his son John, who was born in 1707.

Mrs. Dunlop appears to have lived happily with her elderly husband. In 1761 she fell heiress on her mother's death to the estate of Lochryan, and sixteen years later, on the death of her father, who had married, *en secondes nocés*, Antonia Dunlop, a sister of his son-in-law, Craigie also would have become her property, if it had not previously been transferred to her eldest son, Thomas. But in 1784 her son was compelled to sell Craigie,<sup>1</sup> the ancestral but deeply

sketch of it, made in 1830, by Mrs. Dunlop's granddaughter, Frances Dunlop, afterwards the wife of Alexander E. Monteith, Esq., Sheriff of Fifeshire, has been preserved, and, by the courtesy of J. A. Gemmill, Esq., Ottawa, Canada, appears in this work, at page 38, vol. i. Dunlop House was pleasantly situated in the centre of gently undulating "policies," on the bank of a little rivulet called Clerkland Burn, a mile from the village of Dunlop, and about three miles from Stewarton, which was the post town in Mrs. Dunlop's days, and where Burns paid occasional visits to his unfortunate "Uncle Robert." Mr. Douglas completed the mansion begun by Sir John Dunlop who died in 1869, leaving the estate in life rent to his wife's nephew, Thomas Dunlop Cunningham Graham, with remainder in fee to his grand-niece, Ellen Douglas, eldest daughter of Robert Hathorn Johnston-Stewart of Physgill and Glasserton, Wigtonshire. In 1873 she married James Francis, eldest son of Admiral Right Hon. Sir John Dalrymple Hay, Baronet, K.C.B.; and since the death of Cunningham Graham in 1884, Mr. and Mrs. Dalrymple Hay have resided at Dunlop House.

<sup>1</sup> Burns, in his "Vision," has a stanza on the Wallaces:—

His country's saviour, mark him well!  
Bold Riccartoun's heroic swell,  
And he who fighting glorious fell  
In high command;  
And he whom ruthless fates expel  
His native land.

encumbered estate of the Wallaces, to Mr. William Campbell, in the hands of whose descendants it still remains.<sup>1</sup> Her husband died on 5th June 1785. This loss was followed by "a long and severe illness, which reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression." It was at this time that she read "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and resolved on making the acquaintance of its author. Thus at the time the Correspondence opens Mrs. Dunlop was suffering an accumulation of distresses. She re-

Burns himself explains that the references in the first four lines are to Sir William Wallace, his cousin Adam Wallace of Richardton or Riccarton, and Sir John Wallace of Craigie, whose gallantry contributed most materially to the defeat of the English at the Battle of Sark in 1448. He gives no explanation of the last two lines. In a paper on "The Wallaces of Elderslie," read by Dr. J. O. Mitchell before the Glasgow Archæological Society on 17th March 1884, they are thus referred to: "The reference undoubtedly is to Sir Thomas Dunlop Wallace. When Burns wrote the lines, the judicial sale of Craigie was recent, and the unfortunate heir of the Wallaces, stripped by 'ruthless fates' of the last of the old acres, had abandoned 'his native land' and retired to England." This view is no doubt quite correct. It is extremely probable, to say the least, that Sir Thomas Dunlop Wallace spent some time in England before settling in Edinburgh.

<sup>1</sup> "The old ruinous Castle of Craigie," as Mrs. Dunlop pathetically terms it in the Correspondence, which was the home of the Craigie Wallaces from 1370 to 1588, stands on a gentle eminence and within grounds of two acres in extent, about four miles from Kilmarnock. The ruins consist of two gables, ramparts and vaults; a stone in one of the walls bears the armorial escutcheon of the families of Wallace and Lindsay. The original castle must have been a strong fortress, as there are abundant evidences that, besides being protected by the usual tower and moat, it was guarded by morasses and ditches at every quarter whence attack could come. Newton Castle, situated in Wallacetown, a suburb of Ayr, and separated from it by the river, was the home of the Wallaces after the destruction of Craigie Castle by fire. But it was rendered uninhabitable by a storm in 1701. Sir Thomas Wallace, Mrs. Dunlop's father, built a mansion in the neighbourhood, to which he gave the name of Craigie House. This was sold with the estates in 1783.

tained Lochryan, but lived at Dunlop House with her fourth son, Andrew, "the Major" of the Letters, who extended his hospitality also to most of his unmarried sisters. She spent a good deal of time during the years with which we have to deal in East Lothian with her son John "the Captain," first at his house in Haddington, and afterwards at his farm of Morham Mains. Then when her daughter Susan got married to Mr. Henri, the French refugee, and leased Loudon Castle in Ayrshire, she was an occasional guest there, and was once nurse to a whole sick household. She moved in "the best set" in the county of Ayr, and had connections, shared apparently by her son Andrew, with some of the most prosperous merchants in Glasgow. She had at least one bond with Edinburgh in her step-mother Lady Wallace, who had a house there, and appears to have kept Susan Dunlop as a companion before Henri appeared on the scene. Her letters, however, afford few glimpses of the personages or social activities of the time. Though she had not passed her sixtieth year, she had voluntarily gone into semi-retirement for reasons already noted, to which has in all likelihood to be added her estrangement from her eldest son. She was absorbed in her family, in books, and in Burns.

Mrs. Dunlop survived Burns nineteen years, dying on 24th May 1815. According to one of her biographers her testament-dative was given up to the Commissary of Glasgow by her daughter, Mrs. Robert Glasgow of Mount-Greenan, and registered 10th August 1816, her movable estate being sworn under £800.



As most of Mrs. Dunlop's children are mentioned in her Correspondence with Burns, it is necessary to give some account of them here.

John and Frances Dunlop had seven sons and six daughters. Francis, the eldest of the family, born 7th August 1749, died in infancy. Thomas, the second son, born 18th September 1750, assumed the name of Wallace and the baronetcy of Craigie. By a family arrangement made in 1774, he became proprietor of Craigie, but, as has been said, it had to be sold nine years later. Sir Thomas lived in Edinburgh for the most part, and had the reputation of being a buck. Along with the Duke of Hamilton he founded in 1777 the Hunters' Club, which was the nucleus of the more celebrated Caledonian Hunt, established in the following year. In September 1772 he married Eglintoune, youngest daughter of Sir William Maxwell, Bart., of Monreith, and sister of the more famous Jean, Duchess of Gordon. (It was she who, according to an Edinburgh legend, used to be sent from Lady Maxwell's town-house to fetch water for tea from the Fountain Well, and when the future Duchess of Gordon was caught riding a sow in the High Street, it was the future Lady Wallace that was found aiding her in her escapade by thumping the animal with a stick.) It appears from the Correspondence that she and her mother-in-law did not pull well together, that indeed they came to a violent breach. Lady Wallace cut a rather notorious figure in Scottish society in the end of the eighteenth century. As Sir William Fraser puts it, she indulged a literary taste, and was

noted for her smart and humorous sallies. Another writer says she had "more wit than delicacy," which was a common enough twist in those days, and "was a favourite in the literary circles adorned by Hume, Adam Smith, and John Home." She wrote two dramas, *The Ton, or the Follies of Fashion*, and *The Whim*, a comedy in three acts. The former was acted in April 1788 at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, but did not meet with approval, and an attempt to reintroduce it failed. The latter was disallowed by the Lord Chancellor on account of certain political allusions; it was printed at Margate in 1795. The sole surviving son of Sir Thomas and Lady Wallace<sup>1</sup> was John Alexander Agnew Wallace. He figures as "Sandy Wallace" in the Correspondence, and was a favourite of Mrs. Dunlop's, though she had no dealings with his parents. Born in 1775, he entered the army in 1787, and is said to have taken part in three general engagements before he was fifteen years of age. We meet him in the Correspondence as *aide-de-camp* to his maternal uncle, Lieutenant-Colonel Maxwell, who had a command under Cornwallis in the campaigns against Tippoo Sultaun of Mysore. He afterwards served under Sir Ralph Abercromby in Egypt, and commanded the 88th Regiment, the Connaught Rangers, in the Peninsular War. He was made a K.C.B., and rose to the rank of General in 1851. He married in 1829 Janet, daughter of Mr. William Rodger, a magistrate of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Dunlop Wallace who, after the death of his first wife, married a second time in France, died in 1837.

Glasgow. By her he had a family of five sons and one daughter. He succeeded to Lochryan on the death of Mrs. Dunlop. He himself died in 1857. John Alexander Agnew Wallace, Esq., the present proprietor of Lochryan, is his grandson.

Alexander, the third of Mrs. Dunlop's sons, died young. Andrew, the fourth, "the Major" of the Correspondence, succeeded to the estate of Dunlop in accordance with a disposition executed by his father. He entered the army and served in the American War. At the time of the Correspondence he was living, presumably on half-pay, at Dunlop House and looking after his estate. He raised and commanded the Ayrshire Fencible Cavalry, received the rank of brigadier-general, and died unmarried in 1804. He was succeeded in Dunlop by his brother James (the fifth son), who also adopted the military profession and saw service in the American War. Sir John Moore, as the Correspondence shows, was a fellow-officer with him in the 82nd Regiment, which was raised by the Duke of Hamilton. In 1787 he himself raised men for a company of the 77th Regiment which Sir Robert Abercromby took out to India in the following year. Like his nephew, he appears in the Correspondence as taking part in the Mysore Wars. He afterwards commanded a brigade under Wellington in the Peninsula, and became major-general in 1810. He retired from the army in 1812 and represented the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright from 1813 to 1816. His eldest son John was also a soldier and a politician. He served in the Grenadier Guards,



and for a time represented the county of Ayr in Parliament. In 1835 he entirely rebuilt Dunlop House. Five years later, he was created a baronet. Dying the following year, he was succeeded by his son Sir James Dunlop, who was also a soldier like his father and grandfather, and took part in the Crimean War. He died unmarried in 1858, and the Dunlop baronetcy became extinct.

John, the sixth son of Mrs. Dunlop, also entered the army, but retired early on half-pay. He married his cousin, Frances Magdalene Dunlop, by whom he had a family of seven sons and four daughters. At the opening of the Correspondence he had acquired from the Dalrymple family the farm of Morham Mains (now Morham Muir) in East Lothian, and having bought up the lease of the sitting tenant, was building a new house on the farm with a view to cultivating it himself. Mrs. Dunlop visited "the Captain" first at Haddington, where he lived while this house was building, and afterwards at Morham, whither she was summoned by her daughter-in-law at her many confinements. Gilbert Burns at a subsequent period acted as the "manager" of Captain Dunlop's farm for a few years. It may be noted in contradiction to one of the numerous loose statements that have been made regarding this connection between John Dunlop and Gilbert Burns (such as that it was on account of the sale of Morham that Gilbert removed to Grant's Braes and undertook the management of the Blantyre Estate), that in the roll of freeholders of the county of Haddington for the year

1804, there appears the name of "John Dunlop of Morham for the lands of Morham Mains and two fields called Ploughfields."

Of Anthony, the seventh son, Burns, in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop dated 10th April 1790, writes that he was possessed of "a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul which are of no use, only absolutely disqualifying for the truly important business of making a man's way into life." In all accounts of the Dunlop family, Anthony figures as an officer in the Navy. The references to him in the Correspondence indicate that the earlier portion of his life, at all events, was spent in the merchant service, and it is improbable that he ever entered the Navy. In 1803 he married Ann Cunningham, daughter of the Collector of Customs in Irvine. After a time he settled in the Isle of Man as a tenant farmer, and ultimately bought a small estate, to which, in honour of his family, he gave the name of Ellerslie. Late in life, however, he found himself hopelessly in debt and embarrassed by litigation. On the morning of 29th June 1828, he committed suicide in an Edinburgh hotel.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The sad story of Anthony Dunlop was fully told for the first time by the Rev. Richard Simpson, Dunscore, Dumfriesshire, in an article on "Ellerslie in Man" which he contributed to the *Glasgow Herald* of October 16, 1897. Mr. Simpson's narrative is based on unpublished notes written by Mr. James Grierson of Dalgone, a Dumfriesshire antiquary and intimate friend of Anthony Dunlop. One of his notes runs thus: "Anthony Dunlop went to sea in his thirteenth year, 1787, and saw various service in the East Indies and had not been very fortunate." This confirms the impression created by the Correspondence.

Of Mrs. Dunlop's six daughters, Agnes Eleanor, the eldest, married Joseph Elias Perochon, a French royalist whom the Revolution drove to London. There he flourished for a time as a merchant, but, his eyesight failing, he retired from business and settled at Castlebank, Dumfries. Mrs. Perochon showed great kindness to Burns's widow. Out of gratitude Jean gave her for sepulture the spot in St. Michael's Churchyard where Burns was first buried. There Mrs. Perochon, who died on 10th October 1825, lies buried. Susan, the second daughter, married in 1789 James Henri of Bernaldean, also a refugee, and a landed proprietor in France. He rented Loudoun Castle and resided there till his death on 22nd June 1790. Mrs. Henri gave birth to a child on 15th November of the same year. This "sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love" succeeded to his father's estate in France. The third daughter Margaret died in infancy. Frances, the fourth daughter, married in 1777 a Wigtownshire proprietor, Robert Vans Agnew of Sheuchan and Barnbarroch. The present owner of these estates and representative of this branch of Mrs. Dunlop's descendants is Captain John Vans Agnew, of the Indian Staff Corps. Rachel, the fifth, married Robert Glasgow of Mount-Greenan, and, through an only daughter, is represented at the present day by the Robertson-Glasgows of Mount-Greenan. Keith, the youngest, Burns's "blooming Keith," died unmarried in 1858.



# Chronology of Letters

## VOLUME ONE

B. — letters from Burns to Mrs. Dunlop. D. — letters from Mrs. Dunlop to Burns. \* letters entirely new. † letters partly new. — date unascertained. ——— letters missing.

B.	D.	B.	D.
1786.	_____	1788.	
Nov. 15†.	_____	Jan. —*.	
_____		Feb. 12†.	
	Dec. 30.	March 7.	Feb. 30.
1787.			March 14.
Jan. 15.	Jan. 9.	" 26*.	" —.
March 22†.	Feb. 26.	" 31*.	April 16.
	March 29.	April 28.	
April 15.	April 14.	May 4.	May —.
	" 29.	" 27, 29†.	June 4.
" 30.	May 21.	June 13 (14).	" 16, 17.
July 30 or 31*.	July 30.		" 24.
	Sep. 9.	July 10.	July 22.
Nov. 17 (?).	Nov. 15.	Aug. 2.	Aug. 9.
	Dec. 25.	" 16.	
1788.		" 21*.	
Jan. 21.	Jan. —.		" —.

## xxxiv Burns-Dunlop Correspondence

B.	D.	B.	D.
1788.		1789.	
<hr/>		Feb. 23*.	
Sep. 27.	Sep. 12.	March 4.	March 18.
	Oct. 1.	" 25*.	April 1.
	" 9.	April 3*.	
Oct. 23, 26*.	" 21.	" 21*.	April 23, May 3.
" 29*.	Nov. 5.	May 4.	May 20.
Nov. 13.	" 13.	June 21†.	June 27.
	" 24.	July 7, 8*.	June 27, July 13.
Dec. 17.	Dec. 3.	" 17*.	Aug. 1.
	" 24.	Aug. 19*.	" 20, 24.
1789.		Sep. 6.	Sep. 6.
Jan. 1.	Jan. 1.	" 20.	
" —*.	" 22.		
Feb. 5*.	" 24.		
	Feb. 10, 17.		



# Correspondence

BETWEEN

## Robert Burns and Mrs. Dunlop



"OF all the friendships," says Gilbert Burns, "which Robert acquired in Ayrshire and elsewhere, none seemed more agreeable to him than that of Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, nor any which has been more uniformly and constantly exerted in behalf of him and his family, of which, were it proper, I could give many instances. Robert was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs. Dunlop had heard of him. About the time of my brother's publishing in Kilmarnock, she had been afflicted with a long and severe illness, which had reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression. In this situation, a copy of the printed *Poems* was laid on her table by a friend, and happening to open on 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' she read it over with the greatest pleasure and surprise; the poet's description of the simple cottagers operating on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, expelling the demon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted inward harmony and satisfaction. Mrs. Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossgiel, distant fifteen or sixteen



miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half a dozen copies of his *Poems*, if he had them to spare, and begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop House as soon as convenient. This was the beginning of a correspondence which ended only with the poet's life. (Nearly) the last use he made of his pen was writing a short letter to this lady a few days before his death."

The following letter, of which the last paragraph is now printed for the first time from the poet's manuscript, is unquestionably the earliest of Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, written in reply to the "express" mentioned by Gilbert. The exact date, the 15th of November, is also now fixed for the first time, and throws back for a day or two the precise period of the poet's resolution to go to Edinburgh. (See *Chambers*, 1896 edition, vol. i. p. 444.)

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP at Dunlop House.

(With a parcel.)

MADAM, — I am truly sorry I was not at home yesterday when I was so much honored with your order for my copies, and incomparably more so by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the Sons of Parnassus ; nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor Bard dances with rapture when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honor him with their approbation.

Wallace's history where these lines occur—

"Hye to the Deeglen wood when it was late  
To make a silent and a safe retreat—"

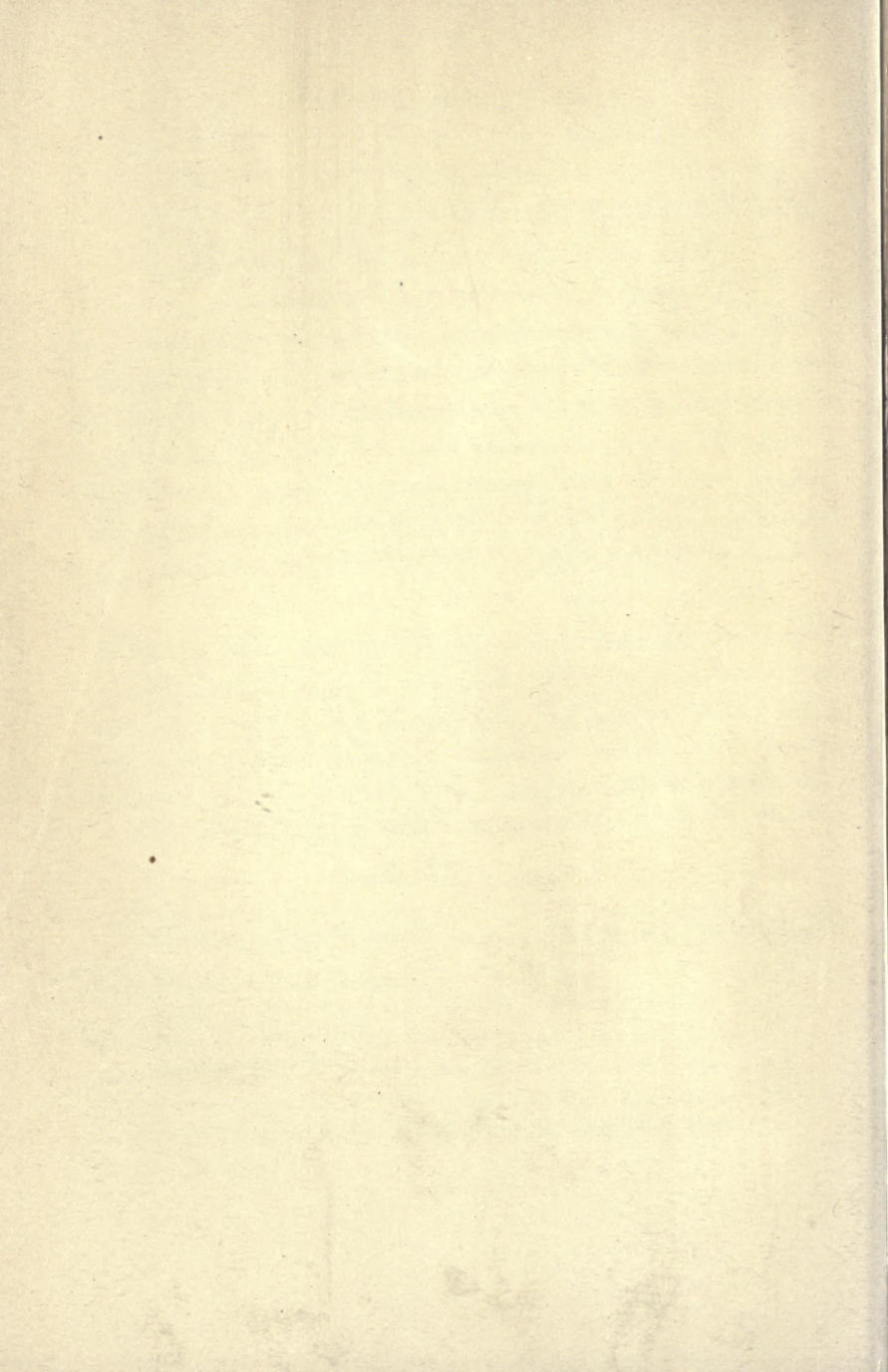
I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day of the week in my power, and walked half a dozen miles to pay my respects to the Deeglen wood with as much devout enthusiasm as ever Pilgrim did to Loreto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic Countryman to have sheltered, I recollect (for even then I was a Rhymist) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him equal to his merits. —

I have only been able to find you five copies: they are all I can command. — I am thinking to go to Edinburgh in a week or two at farthest, to throw off a second impression of my book; but on my return, I shall certainly do my self the honor to wait on you, and thank you in person for the obliging notice you have been pleased to take of

Madam,

Misoged 15<sup>th</sup> Nov: 1798

your much indebted  
and very humble serv<sup>t</sup>  
Robert Burns





Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, Madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly, than by noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor, the SAVIOUR OF HIS COUNTRY —

Great patriot hero ! ill-requited Chief !

The first books I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, were the *Lives* of Hannibal, and Sir William Wallace. For several of my earlier years, I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious, but unfortunate story. In those boyish days, I remember in particular, being much struck with that part of Wallace's history where these lines occur —

Syne to the Leglen wood<sup>1</sup> when it was late  
To make a silent and a safe retreat.

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day of the week in my power, and walked half a dozen miles to pay my respects to the "Leglen wood" with as much devout enthusiasm as ever Pilgrim did to Loretto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic Countryman to have sheltered, I recollect (for even then I was a Rhymer) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him equal to his merits.

I have only been able to find you five copies: they are all I can command. I am thinking to go to Edinburgh in a week or two at farthest, to throw off a second Impression of my book; but on my return, I shall certainly do myself the honor to wait on you, and thank you in person for the oblidging notice you have been pleased to take of, Madam, your much indebted and very humble servt.

ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1786.

(1) Leglen Wood is on the banks of the Ayr, near Auchencruive. It was from Mount Oliphant that Burns as a boy had walked to Leglen Wood.

Burns did not visit Dunlop at this time. He set out for Edinburgh on the 27th of November. On the 14th December Creech advertised the new edition, and Burns straightway sent copies of the subscription-sheet to his friends.

Here occurs the first break in the correspondence. Mrs. Dunlop must have replied to Burns's letter of the 15th; his answer, received by her on the 30th, must have been written on the 22nd or 23rd December, having been, as she says, a week on the road. Neither of those letters, so far as is known, is extant.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS, care of Mr. Creech,  
Bookseller, Cross, Edr.

DUNLOP, 30th Dec. 1786.

SIR, — I have only this moment yours, and at the same moment the inclosed from Dr. Moore,<sup>1</sup> now of London, to whom I had sent a copy of your Poems as the most acceptable present I could make to that person whose taste I valued most and from whose friendship I have reaped most instruction as well as infinite pleasure. His literary knowledge, his fame as an author, his activity in befriending that merit of which his own mind is formed to feel the full force — all led me to believe I could not do so kind a thing to Mr. Burns as by introducing him to Mr. Moore, whose keen passions must at once admire the poet, esteem the moralist, and wish to be usefull to the author.



I am perfectly sensible 't is not fair to shew a private letter from a friend, nor ought I perhaps to have done it now had I been able with any propriety otherwise to convey the ideas it contains, and with which I really wished you acquainted. The lady he mentions, Miss Williams, has a very general acquaintance, and has been, I believe, obliged to Mr. Moore's introduction for part of the patronage she has met among the first people in Britain; even her praise will add ornament to merit far superiour to her own.

In the sequestered situation where I am placed, whatever my inclination, I am far distant from the power of being usefull to any one, so that I fear the half sheet you do me the honour to send me is but so much lost; however I shall try.

Meanwhile I would be glad to know whether you write the Dr., or call, as he desires, upon his son, Major John Moore,<sup>2</sup> now at the Palace of Hamilton; also that you would favour me with a copy of the song you celebrate so much in your book, where I would fain object to one word which I am glad to discover is not your own. I can wish you to catch no one thing from Thomson, unless it were the resolution with which he plucked up every one of those luxuriant weeds that will be rising in too rich a soil, and from which I would be glad to see you wholly exempt. But the word I allude to is *unhappy*.<sup>3</sup> When applied to Wallace it seems to me unsuited to the *patriot Hero* or the *patriot Bard*, and I flatter myself you feel it so. You will tell me "unhappy" only means "unsuccessful," but I confess myself hurt by the least dubiety of expression in one whose own ideas are clear and determinate, and whose language is so singularly nervous and beautiful. Besides,



at a time when every inducement seems too weak to support public virtue, it might not be amiss to impress an idea upon our countrymen of the immediate advantage resulting from it —

Sure He who deigns to guide, inspire and guard  
The patriot Hero and the patriot Bard  
Makes heartfelt happiness their first reward.

Coila tells you this of the second, and I dare venture to believe it of the first. If it is an error, 't is one I should wish all my sons to cherish, as I'm afraid Heaven is a distant prospect for short-sighted mortals, who need a nearer goal to animate them in an unfashionable race, and a poem may light as many to it as a preaching.

Charm'd with the beauties of a matchless line,  
I deem the spirit equally divine  
That leads to virtue by celestial lays,  
Or by immortal valour merits praise.

Though much I fear

Where Indian gold and English manners reign,  
Wallace might fight and Burns may write in vain.

I address this to the care of Mr. Creech, to whom I shall return the names and number of copies wanted by me or my friends, so you need not attend to any former letter any of my family has wrote about them. You had better send Mr. Moore the proposal by the direction he gives, which will save postage, his son being a member of Parliament. I got the books you sent me and the letter, for which receive my thanks, and my money shall be payable on sight. But pray tell me, did you write nothing in the Leglen Wood that I may be favoured with a sight of when you come west? Or when will that be? If you drop me a line, direct it for

"Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, by Stewarton." Yours was a week on the way from being sent to Ayr. I hope that will create no risque of my being too late of returning my report to Mr. Creech. I should much regret disappointing those friends who have trusted to my securing them so great a pleasure. I am truly sorry I did not see you before you went to town, where I dread will be lost the Rural Bard produced in Ayrshire. You say no body is so sensible to praise as the Sons of Parnassus. If so, I fear you have got too strong a doze of it even for the most callous constitution, and all mankind are unco [pretty] weak and little to be trusted when all around are conspiring to spoil them and blow up their vanity—a passion which, while it debases the man, can never exalt the Poet, in whom the world are still more interested. You see you were not mistaken in thinking I really wished to serve the Rustic Bard, and to preserve him an honour to my country.—I am, Sir, your most humble servt. FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) Dr. John Moore, whose connection with Burns is well known. He was of the family of Mure of Rowallan; studied at Glasgow and Paris, served as a surgeon in the army, and practised in Glasgow. From 1772 to 1778 he travelled on the Continent with Douglas, eighth Duke of Hamilton, and was now settled in London cultivating letters. He wrote *Zeluco*, a novel; *A View of Society and Manners in France*; *Edward*, a novel, etc.

(2) Dr. Moore's more famous son (his eldest), afterwards Sir John, the hero of Corunna. He travelled on the Continent with his father and the young Duke of Hamilton, entered the army in 1776,

and when his friend the Duke raised the 82nd Regiment in 1778, he was made a captain-lieutenant in it. At this date he was on half-pay and a member of Parliament, having been returned in 1784 through the Hamilton interest for the Linlithgow, Selkirk, Lanark, and Peebles group of burghs. When Mrs. Dunlop wrote he was apparently on a visit to the Duke at Hamilton.

(3) The second line of "The Cotter's Saturday Night" read in the first edition —

That stream'd thro' great, unhappy Wallace heart.

Burns defended the "improper epithet;" see *infra* his letter of the 15th January, and it was only in the 1793 edition that he altered the text to "Wallace's undaunted heart."

Postmark Jan. 15.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS, care of Mr. Creech,  
Cross, Edr.

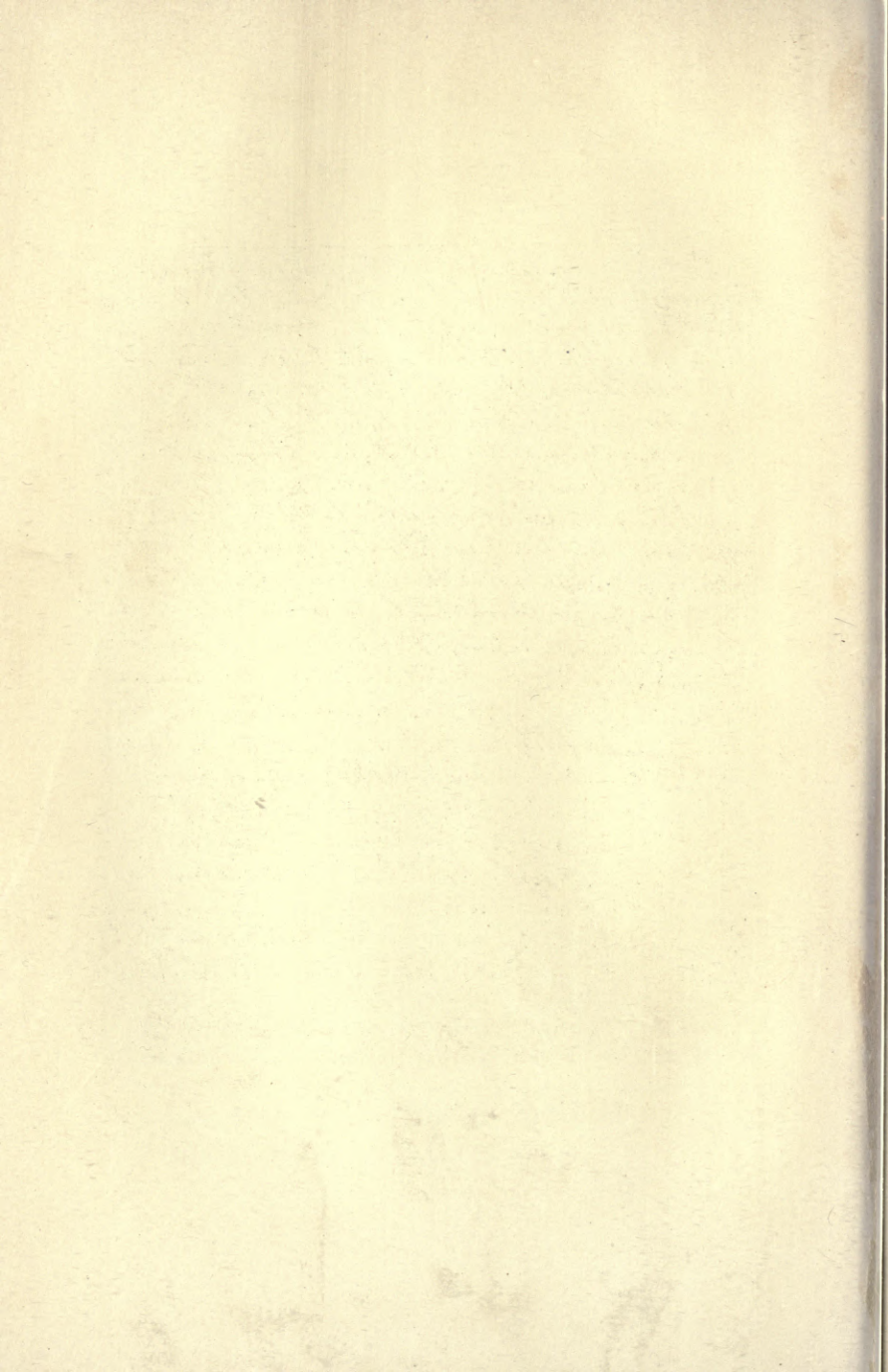
DUNLOP, 9th Jan. 1787.

SIR, — I inclose your printing proposals. I am sorry a misfortune in my own family has prevented my attending to your interest as I think so much poetick merit deserves. I have always found the book only needed to be seen to be admired and subscribed for, but a sister's<sup>1</sup> death prevented my shewing it but to a very few of my friends. I know a gentleman in the East Indies, commanding the artillery at Patna. Could you find a way while you are in town to get a copy sent out to him, I know he has taste to relish its beauties, and at my desire would be active to display them in the Eastern world in case you should print a future edition. Perhaps you too know him; 't is Captain Woodburn, born at Adamton Mill, by Ayr.



in Britain and care more to Nature than to his Acquaintance with half the Courts in Europe, so that you would reject his proffered correspondence. meantime be so good as keep the Editors of his Works in you and don't mention them as it would be disobliging both Lord Byron and him and thereby hurting your self as well as me for shewing them that it shall not be my fault if you don't know what is said of you I mean of your writings I heard your lines repeated last day I perused them over relusing them a direct to you and put the day a wrapper round the inclosed letter which I find you for not french but be so good as pull off the cover before you deliver it I dare say you would be shocked at an expression of the Doctors where he says he had taught many to admire your Poem; but he only means having as a Scots man taught the English to read them which I wish for the sake of your Fame had been rendered less necessary by an enlarged Glossary that part is really defective. — I find you are too busy to answer my Questions but no matter I am glad of it as I hope you are better employed every day doing honors to our country do you reprint the word I desire it will make me very happy that you forget it while your Edition is in the press. Adieu M<sup>r</sup> Burns. D<sup>r</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Burns.

MRS. DUNLOP TO BURNS, 9<sup>TH</sup> JAN<sup>Y</sup> 1787.





I hope you have wrote Mr. Moore. I again send you his letter to let you know how much he is in earnest your admirer, and I never knew any man so keen to serve those he takes a fancy to, and very few have so much in their power. But what will perhaps tempt you more than self-respecting views, he is one of the cleverest men in Britain, and owes more to nature than to his acquaintance with half the courts in Europe; so that few would reject his proffered correspondence. Meantime be so good as keep these letters of his till I see you, and don't mention them, as it would be disobliging both Lord Eglinton<sup>2</sup> and him, and thereby hurting yourself as well as me for shewing them. But it shall not be my fault if you don't know what is said of you — I mean of your writings. I heard some lines repeated last day; I scrawled them over, believing them addressed to you, and put them as a wrapper round the inclosed subscription, which I send you for Mr. Creech. But be so good as pull off the cover before you deliver it. I daresay you would be shocked at an expression of the Doctor's, where he says he had taught many to admire your Poems, but he only means having, as a Scotsman, taught the English to read them, which I wish for the sake of your fame had been rendered less necessary by an enlarged glossary; that part is really defective. I find you are too busy to answer my questions, but no matter; I am glad of it, as I hope you are better employed every day doing honour to our country. Do you reprint the word I dislike? It will make me very happy that you forget it while next edition is in the press. — Adieu!

FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) Sister-in-law's. Mrs. Dunlop had no sister.



(2) Dr. Moore introduced the Kilmarnock edition to the notice of Archibald, eleventh Earl of Eglinton (1726-96). Probably this second letter of Dr. Moore's which Mrs. Dunlop forwarded to Burns was a copy of the doctor's letter to the Earl.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1787.

MADAM, — Yours of the 9th current, which I am this moment honor'd with, is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib. I wished to have written to Dr. Moore <sup>1</sup> before I wrote to you ; but though every day since I received yours of Dec. 30th, the idea, the wish to write to him, has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of "the sons of little men." To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have ; and to write the author of *The View of Society and Manners* a letter of sentiment — I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him tomorrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of Lord Eglinton, with ten guineas by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thomson ; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of

some of the literati here, who honor me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed any thing on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print, and the inclosed, which I will print in this edition. You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my "Vision" long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle,<sup>2</sup> of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the "Saviour of his Country," which sooner or later I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet: alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company — to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity, and crude, unpolished ideas on my head — I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice which has borne me to a height where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede perhaps as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous

affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy ; and, however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you, once for all, to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But

When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the time, when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph. . . .

Your patronising me and interesting yourself in my fame and character as a poet, I rejoice in ; it exalts me in my own idea ; and whether you can or cannot aid me in my subscription is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription-bill any charms to the heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace?

R. B.

(1) He did write on the 17th.

(2) The district of Ayrshire which embraces Ayr, Mossgiel, Lochlea, etc.

The enclosure mentioned in the preceding letter was the following stanzas from the "Vision":—

By stately tow'r, or palace fair,  
Or ruins pendent in the air,  
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,  
I could discern ;  
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,  
With features stern.



My heart did glowing transport feel,  
To see a race heroic<sup>1</sup> wheel,  
And brandish round the deep-dyed steel,  
In sturdy blows ;  
While, back-recoiling, seem'd to reel  
Their suthron foes.

His Country's Saviour,<sup>2</sup> mark him well !  
Bold Richardton's<sup>3</sup> heroic swell ;  
The chief, on Sark<sup>4</sup> who glorious fell  
In high command ;  
And he whom ruthless fates expel  
His native land.

There, where a scep'tr'd Pictish shade  
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,<sup>5</sup>  
I mark'd a martial race, pourtray'd  
In colours strong :  
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd,  
They strode along.<sup>6</sup>

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,<sup>7</sup>  
Near many a hermit-fancied cove  
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love,  
In musing mood),  
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,  
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck, reverential awe,  
The learn'd Sire and Son I saw :<sup>8</sup>  
To Nature's God, and Nature's law  
They gave their lore ;  
This, all its source and end to draw,  
That, to adore.

Brydon's brave ward<sup>9</sup> I well could spy,  
Beneath Old Scotia's smiling eye ;  
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,  
To hand him on,  
Where many a patriot-name on high  
And hero shone.

(1) The Wallaces. — *B.*

(2) William Wallace. — *B.*

(3) Adam Wallace of Richardton (Riccarton), cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence. — *B.* This Wallace, and not the great Sir William, was Mrs. Dunlop's ancestor.

(4) Wallace, Laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought in 1448. The glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant Laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action. — *B.*

(5) Coilus, King of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial place is still shown. — *B.* The mound, marked by a few trees, was opened on 29th May 1837, and two sepulchral urns were found.

(6) The Montgomeries of Coilsfield. The younger sons of the family were in the army. — *B.*

(7) Barskimming, the seat of the Lord Justice-Clerk. — *B.* Sir Thomas Miller of Glenlee, who became Lord President of the Court of Session in 1788, and died in the following year.

(8) Catrine, the seat of the late Doctor and present Professor Stewart. — *B.* Dr. Matthew Stewart (1717-85) was Professor of Mathematics in the University of Edinburgh. His son Dugald (1753-1828) succeeded his father in the Chair of Mathematics in 1775, and exchanged it ten years later for that of Moral Philosophy.

(9) Colonel Fullarton. — *B.* Colonel William Fullarton of Fullarton in Ayrshire; born 1754; educated at Edinburgh; travelled under the care of Patrick Brydone (1741-1818), author of *A Tour in Sicily and Malta*. Fullarton entered the army, raised Fullarton's Light Horse, sat in Parliament for Ayrshire from 1796 to 1803, and was subsequently Governor of Trinidad. He wrote an *Account of Agriculture in Ayrshire* and a *View of English Interests in India*.

Mrs. Dunlop here enters the lists as a critic of Burns's writings. Encouraged doubtless by the notice he had taken of her objection to the application of the epithet "unhappy" to her "ancestor," she ventured to attack him on the ground of the

impropriety of his language. She did so at first with sufficient delicacy, hinting her objections with a reserve by no means inconsistent with the freedom of speech she used with him later as to his domestic relations.

*Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Mr. Creech's, Bookseller,  
opposite the Cross, Edinburgh.*

*DUNLOP, Feb. 26th, 1787.*

SIR, — I sit down at Lady Wallace's<sup>1</sup> desire to write you for four copies more and two for another lady, which, added to the list I sent you before for Mr. Creech, makes in whole forty-five of this, and five you sent me of the first impression of your Poems — in all fifty. I beg you may take the trouble of securing them for me, and sending them as soon as printed by Gabriel Watson, carrier from Edr. to Glasgow, directed for me at Dunlop, where I still hope you will let me have the pleasure of seeing you; but should anything prevent that, I beg you may write me how and where to send your money. Indeed I am now afraid my friend Mr. Moore will rob us of you altogether by persuading you to go to London. You see I have always some fear on your account; indeed you have made me heartily ashamed of the last I express. Can you forgive any one, who, after reading your works, could entertain a suspicion so injurious to the author? Yet — I don't know how — I believe we are so used to consider poetry as fiction that I confess reading the most compleat volume ever fell in my hand in verse did not impress my mind with that esteem for the author which was the instantaneous effect of my reading your letter in prose. The sentiments were delicate, noble and well-exprest, and were particularly



address to myself. Then you so genteelly compliment me with the name of your Patroness that you half persuade me you were in earnest, and tempt me to avail myself of the right the word confers to tell you the truth with regard to your book — at least what I think so.

You ought to take off a few patches which consummate beauty has no use for, which in a polite and enlightened age are seldom wore, and which a delicate, manly mind cannot regret the want of. Forgive my saying that every undecency is below you, and sinks the voice of your fame by putting to silence your female admirers. You will one day think so yourself, and curse every allusion which forbids a modest, lovely girl receiving as the most acceptable present a young lover could make her Burns's poems. Would not your heart feel delight in believing the bright fire of your genius a more favourable light for discovering the mutual kindling eye than the moon's wan, unwarming beam? But this is a pleasure you proclude yourself by a few ill-chosen lines. A lady dare not acknowledge acquaintance with any beauty which the world must know she has met in bad company, and unless you pare off these fringes, when once novelty and fashion cease to sanctify your name, no woman under fifty will pronounce it, and by that time you will not care whether she does or not; but I hope you have already made this sacrifice to the young Graces.

When I read the Epitaph of the best Bard ever adorned my country, I do it without regret, since his confession graces his tombstone, and I, having full faith in his resurrection, trust he shall rise again freed from those

thoughtless follies laid him low  
And stain'd his name.

Nor would I have this purely owing to prudent, cautious self-controul, but to the refinement of his latter state. Once more forgive me. Your glory became mine from the moment you declared yourself the historian of my race. Henceforward I shall blush for every impropriety you utter, and drop a tear on every blot that can stain your paper. Formerly I would only have turned the leaf and lost the remembrance of the only fault amid innumerable pleasures and instructions, more delightfully blended by you from the 87th to the 181st page than ever I met them anywhere else. There are incomparable touches through the whole, but in that compass they are uniformly sublime, tenderly affecting or chearfully amusing beyond expression, and uninterrupted by anything malice itself could cavil at. Even the striking beauties in the rest of the book have hardly power to draw one out of that enchanting circle, at least till it is perfectly imprinted on the memory. Indeed should I take a ramble to the Holy Fair, visit J. L., take leave of the Masons, read the inimitable Epitaph of the Bard,<sup>2</sup> and stop a moment wherever genuine beauty demanded notice, there would be no getting home again in the compass of a letter, nor should I leave room for a question which, though I have no right to ask, I am much interested in. Have your friends been able to point out any future plan for you ; or, as Pope said, shall Homer provide for his children ; or, if so, in what line would you wish it ? I suspect a military one, though without any other reason but the red berries you add to the beautiful garland of the tenth Muse,<sup>3</sup> who, like the tenth wave of her seas, overtops all the rest that went before her. You have already told us "Cash your pouches wad na bide in." This makes it doubly needful for you to form a wish, and communicate it to some one

that could assist its completion, as there is no time they would find it so easie as when the world are in the eager eve of expectation. Just before the longed-for publication, or at the moment it is first seen and in every mouth, would be the time some active friend might drop some useful hint to forward any favourite scheme which you thought could make you happy. Perhaps Mr. Moore might be that lucky friend. He is in the scene of fortune, and no one would have more pleasure in setting a scaffold to build yours, or more address in knowing where or how to place it. Should an opportunity offer, at least, his good sense, knowledge of the world, and enthusiastick fondness for genius, will make him a good adviser. He is much pleased with your correspondence, and will, as well as I, like you the better for thinking of propping up an old tree which once o'ershadowed the plain just when the earth shaken from its roots makes others fly its fall, but as it has frequently threatened this before, I don't yet doubt with your help it may still flourish a thousand years longer. At any rate your good inclination does you honour, and gives me pleasure to suppose what such a genius may make of such a subject, as I am proud to say my forefathers have provided for the bards and historians of Scotland. I meant to return my thanks, which, as you like it better, shall rhyme,<sup>4</sup> and probably not be worth the groat they will cost you in postage; but no matter. Only, I beg you may receive and treat it as the private letter of a friend by keeping it to yourself. I ought to have told you that numbers at London are learning Scots to read your book, but they don't like your Address to the King, and say it will hurt the sale of the rest. Of this I am no judge. I can only say there is no piece in the whole I would vote to leave out, tho' several



where I would draw my pen over lines, or spill the ink-glass over a verse, from the esteem which, though I have never had the pleasure of his acquaintance, I nevertheless entertain for the author, and the interested wish that the pen which celebrates my chief should be unspotted as well as superexcellent. Adieu. Forgive the length of this, and believe me, Sir, your obliged humble sert. FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) The Dowager Lady Wallace of Craigie, Mrs. Dunlop's stepmother.

(2) "The Holy Fair," "Epistles to J. Lapraik," "The Farewell," and "A Bard's Epitaph."

(3) "Coila" of "The Vision."

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs  
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows.

"And wear thou *this*" — she solemn said,  
And bound the holly round my head;  
The polish'd leaves and berries red  
Did rustling play.

(4) Verses enclosed on separate sheet beginning —

TO ROBT. BURNS.

To you, kind Bard, my warmest thanks I send,  
My country's poet and her saviour's friend.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop, Stewarton.

EDINBURGH, *March 22nd*, 1787.

MADAM, — I read your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, *I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom*; now I am distinguished, patronised, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more

than to any man, does me the honor of giving me his strictures ; his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects ; there I can give you no light. It is all

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

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride ; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia ; to sit on the fields of her battles ; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers ; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honored abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts : I have dallied long enough with life ; 't is time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for ; and some other bosom-ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence or folly, he may be excusable ; nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues may half sanctify a heedless character ; but where God and nature have entrusted the welfare of others to his care ; where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear ; that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship ; with that sum I intend, so far



as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry: being bred to labour, secures me independence, and the muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only, enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country, and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honored madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom.

ROBT. BURNS.

*P.S.*<sup>1</sup> — I have to-day corrected the last proof sheet of my poems, and have now only the glossary and subscribers' names to print. Printing this last is much against my will, but some of my friends whom I do not chuse to thwart will have it so. I have both a second and third Edition going on, as the second was begun with too small a number of copies. The whole I have printed is three thousand. Would the profits of that afford it, with rapture I would take your hint of a military life, as the most congenial to my feelings and situation of any other, but, "what is wanting cannot be numbered."

R. B.

(1) This postscript is a "find" of twofold value. It reveals the fact that Burns seriously thought of a military career, as Mrs. Dunlop suggested in the previous letter, and might have tried for a commission if the profits of the Edinburgh edition had been



larger. Secondly, this P.S. confirms the theory that the existence of two separate impressions of the Edinburgh edition, known respectively as the "Stinking" and the "Skinking" (from the spelling of a word in "To a Haggis"), is owing to the fact that the demand much exceeded the supply first printed, and that the types had to be "set up" again; whence arose the variations of the "Stinking" impression, some of them Burns's own corrections, some the printer's vagaries.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS,  
care of Mr. Creech, Bookseller,  
opposite the Cross, Edinburgh.

DUNLOP, 29th March 1787.

SIR, — I have read over yours with as much study and attention as if the plan had been for myself instead of you, and every time I look it over I more and more approve the ideas it contains. Yet I fear like the women you have only exprest your judgment in the letter and your inclination in the postscript, and see plainly that the Muse's garland did not deceive me. Indeed in your particular situation a military line wears several attractions, not wholly to be slighted, but which would be much too dearly purchased by laying out your all for an ensigncy which, when you had it, could not make you happy, placed in a rank you could difficultly support, unable to assist a mother or a friend with your purse, or comfort them with your presence, harassed and tost about, torn from those you loved, and condemned to a slavish dependence, a subaltern obedience to the capricious orders of petulant, ignorant boys, who, though your inferiours in everything valuable, would despise talents they had not knowledge to discover or taste to relish, and pretend to overlook you were your hair worse drest or your hat worse

cocked than their own. Indeed, should any of the nobles of the land present you with a pair of colours, the case would be very different, but I hope and trust you will never think of buying into the army, unless you can command at least £250 more than the £400 which is the regulated price. I am sure I am right in this, and, if I saw you, could convince you by a thousand reasons. At any rate the pomp of war is more for poetry than practice, and although warriors may be heroes, peace soldiers are mostly powdered monks. So you see, if it will not do, I comfort you like the tod with the sour plums.<sup>1</sup>

Now as to what you mention of the farm, I do think it the most manly, spirited, independent scheme you can form. Rural scenes, domestick duties, our native manners and our early friends are the rational charm of life, and amid these the Muses and Graces must delight to dwell, but may not even this rob Ayrshire of her native Bard? I am sorry to say so, but I have been told farms are to be found more improvable in Orkney or the North Highlands than in the Low Country, and rented cheaper. Of this you could be informed by Mr. Balfour, the writer, at whose house you were, and who, as well as his father-in-law, admire you much, and would be happy to give you every information you could desire. Yet if (as I hope) no interest can bribe you from your native plains, where we would sometimes have a chance of seeing you, there is possibly as good to be found on the estates of Loudoun, Miss Scot's, Commodore Stewart, and many more who would certainly give you at least a preference on equal terms to what others might offer, and I hope you will not fix elsewhere without coming west and looking at these. Besides, if we must lose you, there might be other plans talked over, either for

home or abroad. Indeed, first when your Book reached Edr., Mr. Smith,<sup>2</sup> Commissioner of the Customs, suggested a thing which he thought might be procured, and which he said was just what he would have wished for himself had he been in narrow circumstances — being a Salt Officer. Their income is from £30 to £40, their duty easie, independent, and free from that odium or oppression attached to the Excise. He has through life been a friend to unfriended merit, has great fame in the world as an author, both his *Theory of Moral Sentiment* and *Wealth of Nations* being much applauded. He was one of those first held forth your name forcibly to the public at Edr. when very few had seen your Book, and my son told me was the person he heard take the most interest in your future prospects, wishing to procure you leizure to write, which he said was all you wanted to insure your figure and fortune. He lately complained that he had asked it, but could not get a sight of you. Here I think you have been wrong, as well as in printing names, to accumulate expense and hurt yourself, without serving any body. Indeed I should think the accumulation monstrous. I hoped the cost would not have exceeded two shillings a volume.

I have a favour to beg of you that you will deliver the inclosed out of your own hand with my compts. to Mr. Smith, and at same time thank him for the good will he exprest towards you. Excuse my giving you this trouble. I would not had I not believed him one of the best, and found him one of the most agreeable men in the world, so much that thirty years has not effaced the remembrance of the two first days I past with him before I knew who he was, and before travel, high company, and high affluence, had given that *fion* [Fr. = finishing touch] to his character



it must now possess. Besides I am interested in the business I wrote about. Should this Salt plan, mentioned before the world's opinion could be known, still have wherewithal to please you, you may introduce it, and beg Mr. Smith would be so good as instruct you in the proper forms of application, and where they should be made, and let me know, that I may see if I could be of any use, though never so little. But you must not throw away on me the flattering title of Patroness, fit to decorate a duchess, for tho' nobody can wish genius better, my wings have been sore clipt, and are too weak and short to shelter this now unprotected brood Nature has committed to my charge. I am far too little conversant in the world to matron the Muses with due splendor and propriety such as their luster and yours would demand to introduce you favourably to the public—I mean for your interest; your fame wants no help, nor I any bribe to my vanity to inspire the highest admiration of the poems and the highest esteem for their author. Nor shall I leave anything untried I can think of to help your plans forward, if you let me know them, well knowing

That though the wished-for end's denied,  
Yet while the busy means are ply'd,  
They bring their own reward.

Lord Glencairn's conduct to you would raise my opinion of him had it not been, like my stature, many years ago come to its pitch. Yet I wish he may not bear too tender a hand in pruning your bays. By the by, I perhaps mistake where you met Mr. Balfour, but he is married to a sister's daughter of Dr. Moore's, and I am sure you have seen him either at home, or I think with Mr. Draper. I thank you for the care of my book, but have not yet got it.

Adieu. I daresay you are tired of my pen, but I can honestly say nothing has afforded me so much pleasure for five years last past as yours, and that I am on that account, Sir, your much obliged and obedient humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) The Fox (*Scot. tod*) and the Grapes.

(2) It is an entire revelation that Adam Smith, the author of *The Wealth of Nations*, took so much interest in Burns as even to suggest that he might become a salt officer in the service of the Customs at a commencing salary of £35 a year. In the winter 1786-87 he was dangerously ill, and immediately on recovery went to London to consult John Hunter.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS, at Mr. Creech's, Bookseller,  
opposite the Cross, Edinburgh.

14th April 1787.

DR. SIR,—I received lately the book and head<sup>1</sup> you were so good as send, and which I accept with pride and pleasure as an evidence of attention from one on whose remembrance I set the highest value. Every time I look at it will more excite my wish to deserve the esteem of the giver, an acquisition from which, had we lived nearly in the same age of the world, I might have reaped much satisfaction and advantage, but to which the circumstance of being a stranger is perhaps at present my strongest claim, except you admit that of truly relishing the expression of your pen, and pouring forth my unavailing wishes for every good that can crown the head or heart by which it is directed.

I read your advertisement with anxious impatience to see what you *have* and what you *have not* printed, but



before that can be satisfied, must trouble you with a great deal of business to transact for me. You will say a Bard is unfit for business, and ought not to be teased with it, but I rather believe a genius like yours will have pleasure in doing for a friend what they would perhaps neglect for themselves, and I hope you allow me a place in your list, at least till you discover some reason to exclude me. What I am now to beg is that you will receive from Mr. Creech and pay for 45 volumes I wrote you formerly about, and dispose of them as follows : —

Send to London, addrest to Dr. Moore, Clifford Street, Burlington Gardens, to the care of P. Cadell, Bookseller in the Strand, 5 copies, one of them marked for Miss Williams.

To Glasgow, by Gabriel Watson, carrier for that place, who is to be heard of in the Grass Market, and leaves town twice a week, 12 copies (addrest to John Campbell,<sup>2</sup> Esqr. of Clathick, Glasgow).

6 for Mr. George Macintosh,<sup>3</sup> Merchant, Glasgow.

Please write on these two last parcels “to be payed to Robt. Duncan, carrier from Dunlop, who will call for the money.”

Send also by the same Gabriel Watson, directed for me at Dunlop, to the care of Robt. Duncan, carrier for Dunlop, 21 copies. (These are for Mrs. Steuart, Mrs. Cunningham, Lady Wallace and my own family, as marked in the list I sent you.)

And send by a porter 1 copy addrest for Miss Fanny Dunlop,<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Balfour’s Boarding School, Carrubber’s Close, Edr.

I inclose you £15 for this purpose, and in acknowledgment of your sending me the last numbers of your first edition. I wish I could add a cypher to it, and I should



still be in your debt. Withdraw the subscription-paper from Mr. Creech, and send it with the books, and should the two gentlemen in Glasgow have got theirs already, keep the price of them till you and I meet. This much for business. Drop me a line by post, saying whether you will execute it as soon as this reaches you, and whether you got my last, which I am sure you would think a great inconsistency. However, your mention of your mother really altered my ideas considerably of that line in which I formerly believed you might have been happy, and made me sorry I had mentioned it. Have you seen Mr. Smith, or how do you like him? Perhaps the world has spoilt him. I never saw him since he went abroad with the Duke of Buccleugh a great many years ago, when I think he would have pleased any body. Adieu. I am ashamed to write you so stupid a letter, but what is to be looked for from one who has spee'l'd [climbed] five and forty a dozen years ago, and knows "the tears all and fears all of dire-declining age" ? Once more farewell.

FRAN. DUNLOP.

(1) Probably an impression of the Beugo engraving prefixed to the Edinburgh edition.

(2) A leading Glasgow citizen, merchant, banker, Dean of Guild, original member of the Chamber of Commerce.

(3) A prominent merchant and tanner; concerned with the better-known David Dale in bringing to Scotland Papillon, the Frenchman who introduced Turkey-red dyeing.

(4) Probably Frances Magdalene, Mrs. Dunlop's niece, who married John Dunlop, her son.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1787.

MADAM, — There is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broken open your letter, but

Rude am I in speech,  
And therefore little shall I grace my cause  
In speaking for myself; <sup>1</sup>

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart, and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest, sense of your goodness.

I come abroad in print, for certain, on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only, by the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for Dr. Moore's and Miss Williams's copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place, but that we can settle when I have the honor of waiting on you.

Dr. Smith was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him.

R. B.

(1) Shakespeare's *Othello*, act i. scene 3.

The new edition came out on the 21st, and Mrs. Dunlop's copies were apparently despatched to her post-haste. But, alas! the "few patches" which, in her letter of 26th February, she had, with sufficient delicacy, suggested that he should "take off," were allowed to remain, and the Patroness was highly offended.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Mr. Creech's, Bookseller,  
opposite the Cross, Edinburgh.

DUNLOP, 29th April 1787.

To say your bardship's in the wrong  
My skill may weel be doubted,  
But facts are chieils that winna ding,  
An' downa be disputed.

I see you have a will of your own as well as any woman, and perhaps, like us, not always a great deal can be said for its being a goodwill, and I from self-conceit perhaps am apt to believe you had better taken a letter of mine as all your own on the present occasion. I indeed cannot help flattering myself that, had you reposed the same implicit trust in me, I should have made better use of it than your noble friend has done. At least I'm sure I would have made more, and to convince you that you would have acted more free from error by strict conformity to female rule, I shall only mention one instance as the only one still in your power to rectify, and therefore the only one worth pointing out to your knowledge, where, by following literally the path I pointed, you would have been right instead of wrong. The four copies I desired you to send here were subscribed for by my father's widow, who is now in my house, and still expects them. The lady<sup>1</sup> to whom you gave four is no subscriber, was once my son's wife, but has done my family the honour to renounce all connection with us by a legal and public deed, so that I (at least) can no longer consider her as Lady Wallace, or consent to her pocketing her predecessor's right to these volumes for which I sent my friend's money and begged your care.

I have got your letter and parcel not ten minutes, but already run over all the new and the old too, to see what



you had and still more what you had not printed, and though I admire some things and like others, yet

While with truth and pleasure I commend,  
I blame with all the candour of a friend

truly interested in your fame. Yet I will not trouble you with a single remark. You have rebuked my "friendly advice," and to cold criticism I am wholly inadequate. You have, I suppose, read Dr. Moore's Travels. You will find there that the French commend their King for those virtues they wish him to possess. I don't know how this may do with monarchs, but I believe it does not answer infallibly with every poet. I had fixed a certain hope (of I will not tell you what) on your reappearance in the world, but hope is with me a compass seldom true. Yet I found something that put it in my head to read my Bible, and it just opened at the parable of the man who, when he had washed and purified his house, took unto him seven spirits worse than himself, and, behold! the second state of that man was worse than the first. I do not know why I repeat this, for I am quite out of humour at the moment, and had rather scold than string texts, durst I assume that liberty, or vent my spleen on one who has so elegantly contributed to my pleasure at a time when my soul was not enough alive to have relished aught but the most exquisite entertainment. I in your Bill of Fare found a finely varied feast. To-day my stomach is strong enough to be delighted with a Haggis, but does not like all the *entre-mets* with which it is accompanied. Forgive my saying so; 't is no affront to Edina, Roslin Castle, the introductive verses to the Bridges or their conclusion, the Winter Night, etc. etc.; but I grudge the honour of your name to half-felt or local merit, and wish all such consigned to your poor

shadow Campbell,<sup>2</sup> shoemaker in Kilmarnock, should he not get on in the Church. Adieu! Accept my best wishes for your prosperity in whatever line whim, judgment, or fortune may throw you, being with sincerity, worth all the courtly phrase of fashionable politeness, Sir, your admirer and obliged humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns was at this time so little advanced in intimacy with the Dunlop family that he confused the Lady Wallace for whom Mrs. Dunlop had ordered four copies of the new edition, and who was the widow of the late baronet of Craigie, with the dashing young Lady Wallace whom he met in Edinburgh, the wife of Mrs. Dunlop's second son, Thomas, the self-styled baronet. There was no love lost between Mrs. Dunlop and her "fast" daughter-in-law, and the mistake the poet made in sending to the latter the copies ordered for the dowager no doubt aggravated the offence he had committed in disregarding his patroness's advice in respect of bowdlerising.

(2) Born at Kilmarnock, *circa* 1761. Published in 1787, through Wilson (of the Burns Kilmarnock edition), *Poems on Several Occasions*, and became pastor of a Burgher congregation at Stockbridge, near Dunbar.

EXTRACT.

EDINBURGH, 30th April 1787.

. . . Your criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who pos-



essed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being, either in prose or verse.

I set as little by . . . (kings?), lords, clergy, critics, etc., as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by and by: illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, madam, that some of my own favorite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my "Dream," which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in four weeks, or less, to have the honor of appearing at Dunlop, in its defence, in person.

ROBT. BURNS.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS,  
Mr. Creech's, Bookseller, opposite  
the Cross, Edinburgh.

Mr. Creech and his address crossed out, and "care of Mr. Ainslie" written in; then that crossed out, and "to be left at the Post-Office, Dumfries," written in. At the top of the letter is added: "Returned from Dunse."

DUNLOP, 21st May 1787.

SIR, — I have this moment yours with the books. I indeed received it with singular pleasure, and sincerely thank you, not so much even for saying you mean to see me, as for letting me see that people of the best hearts and first abilities can write as peevishly as myself, and perhaps as little know wherefore they do so. For certainly, whatever cause I had to be out of humour when I wrote you last, you have none to be chagrined at a world that have hitherto done you ample justice. Even should you meet abuse, the more the better. Nothing does authors so much good, as everybody agrees with Pope that

Envy will merit like its shade pursue,  
And like the shadow prove the substance true.



Nor is it in the power of spleen to destroy the fame attendant on works which must please while sensibility or taste inhabit the earth, and our language is understood in any corner of the world. So long as an author you must be valued, esteemed and cared by the men, I fancy you were conscious your vanity could not bear praise from the ladies, and therefore determined to shut their mouths entirely, in which you may perhaps succeed too well.

You may think my writing just now superfluous, but I am sensible I must appear from my last rather capricious, and a real desire not to forfeit esteem I set much value upon leads me to explain in some measure the "moving why" I was displeased, for indeed it was not my loyalty nor your Address to the King was at bottom. 'Twas a sort of indignity to my sex which I had warmly wished you to omit. You say you will flatter no created being. I am sure you have not flattered me, though it was greatly in your power. On the contrary you severely mortified me, nor did I ever in my life feel more degraded in my own eye than by the utter contempt you have shown for those hints which it cost me a great deal to give, and which I now heartily wish I had let alone. Friendly advice when wholly overlooked makes one feel themselves mean, officious, and in the present case indelicate; and I fretted at you because I was discontented with myself. Then I had another reason. I pleased my Scotch pride with thinking I could hold up your volume to an English, nay to the most polite Frenchman, and defied his nation to teach their best instructed, most polished nobleman to equal a Scots peasant in genius, sentiment, purity of expression. Think what an exquisite pleasure you might have afforded me at the small expense of half a dozen blots, or rather half that number, cast over

what your own good sense must acknowledge to be improprieties, only excusable in a Kilmarnock edition of the dawnings of authors debarred the converse of the world and content with wit in her very worst attire, before her face was washed, because the author had never seen her drest. But how shall I excuse to myself (for I sincerely wish to do it) a repetition of the old and an addition of new indecencies to which you set your face and my name, and which you print after so long a residence in the polite world, and, what is worse, after writing letters that bespeak an enlarged mind susceptible of the most delicate ideas and brightened with superiour acquirements, which in your situation reflect a tenfold luster on their owner? 'T was this interested me so much in your interest and your fame as to speak out where a woman ought perhaps to have been silent. I never criticized *two* words in your work from any other motive, and I fear your obstinacy will hurt yourself still more than it does me, tho' I assure you that is more than you can believe, for it has annihilated a scheme I was very fond of trying for your advantage, and in which I flattered myself I should have been able to engage a number of ladies so respectable that I durst not now offend them with the mention of your name. I have tormented myself, convinced as I am that yours are not errors of ignorance, guessing why you were so tenacious of them. Was it a perversion of taste or a corruption of heart made you stick so fast to what was so unjustifiable? You answer all my doubts in one word; it is that you have chosen an uncommon model for your sentiments. I confess it is with all its faults a noble one, and I believe few can help forgiving Satan that pride which prevents his either retracting or confessing his guilt in consideration of that bitter remorse

which wrings his great spirit with all the agonies of useless contrition — a feeling I shall not grudge you a little of for suspecting me of so pitiful a thought as to wish your sacrificing one honest sentiment of your soul to lord or lady, man, woman, or child, or even giving up a *Dream* to party spirit. However, I am glad you have imagined I blamed the “*Dream*,” since you resolve to appear in its defence. Now you see I have been buffeting you all this while to excuse myself for my bad humour. You will say ’t is an odd apology to repeat a fault and make it worse, but I do this in imitation of you. I shall likewise in perfect sincerity of heart adopt a courtly phrase I dislike from you, being wholly in earnest when I say I have the honor to be, Sir, your much indebted, humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Why did you leave out the beautiful motto prefixt to your first volume? I would have put it under your head had I been allowed the honour of a vote. I have been told Voltaire read all his manuscripts to an old woman, and printed nothing but what she approved. I wish you would name me to her office. I am quite qualified after being thirty-eight years a wife and the mother of two-and-twenty. And I will claim no wages but the liberty of burning what I don’t like, or at least hiding it for six months, when, if at the end of that time, you were still extravagantly attached to it, I would be tempted to believe there was uncommon merit, though I had never discovered it, in anything able to fix the unconstant mind of man so long, besides that my own would perhaps be changed much sooner. By the by, don’t you think Ayrshire has great merit, and that they print with superiour taste and propriety



at Kilmarnock? For instance, unless it was meant to illustrate a fact more suited to the metropolis, is not there more dignity in exalting the *Supreme Power* in capitals than in degrading the words to mean italicks, not to mention my *Davie* or my *Jean* and a thousand other instances? Even the great Ben Lomond sinks to a molehill when taken to town and put into the press. I trust, however, the great soul of the Bard, like that of the hero you are studying, shall always retain the faculty of expanding itself to its original elevation on getting clear out of Pandemonium, even supposing it has been a little deprest by the crowd and confinement of the city. Now, allow me to ask, is "Legislation placed beneath the monarch's feet,"<sup>1</sup> a sentiment, or a literal description of the situation of the Throne in the Parliament House during the reign of the Stuarts? because, if the first, I am glad you did not write it till you went to Edr.; if the last, it seems to me beautifully taken the advantage of to strengthen a contrast every heart not steeled by prejudice, I think, must feel, and which you have hit off very pathetically. Farewell. I forgot to tell you that you had inspired a shoemaker [Campbell] at Kilmarnock, if not with the capability, at least with the idea of becoming poet. This to *vanity*, but it will be welcome intelligence to *benevolence* that you had put the public in so good humour that they gave a poor creature fourty pound to put him to school, for, I think, blacking paper. I would have given more for blacking shoes, had he made me a pair of good ones, than I would for his poem, though there is much goodness in it, as there may also be hereafter in his sermons. If they are decreed to save souls, you will have part in the merit, but it will go no length in settling my accompt. Adieu. I won't rob you of another

groat while you stay in town, so forgive this long scrawl if ever you read this length, which I half doubt. Is your whole impression disposed of? A gentleman asked me last day if I thought he could get a few copies. I told him I did not know, but I should ask and tell him.

While they abuse me I will force them to esteem me with all my faults. J. J. Rousseau, I think, says this.

(1) Where once, beneath a monarch's feet,  
Sat Legislation's sov'reign pow'rs.

*Address to Edinburgh.*

In May Burns toured in the south, as the numerous addresses on the foregoing letter show. He reached Mauchline on his "*éclatant* return" on 9th June, and thereafter saw Mrs. Dunlop for the first time and became intimate with her circle.

In a previous letter Mrs. Dunlop wrote: "I meant to return my thanks, which, as you like it better, shall rhyme, and probably not be worth the groat they will cost you in postage; but no matter." Rhyme she did accordingly. And now, having met the poet face to face, she must needs relate in rhyme the incidents and impressions of that long-expected, wished-for visit. Her lines are very interesting as a rough picture, with a touch of caricature, and a tinge of satire, of the poet's appearance and manner. Disturbed by a rumor that the poet had been "seized with a fever," she added a short letter in prose and sent it off in haste by one of her servants; a proceeding which called forth the characteristic letter in reply, now first published.



DUNLOP HOUSE.

IN THE TIME OF MRS. FRANCES ANNA DUNLOP.





## TO ROBT. BURNS.

This world's a farce, and all things show it;  
I thought so once, but now I know it.

Gay.

Five months of expectation past,  
The long-wish'd hour arrived at last.  
A face popt in just at the door,  
The welcome head had come before.  
Genius and humour sparkle in the eyes,  
Frank independence native ease supplis.  
Good sense and manly spirit mark the air,  
And mirth and obstinacy too were there.  
A peering glance sarcastic wit confest,  
The milk of human kindness fill'd the breast.  
While pride and parts the features thus controul,  
Good-nature lurk'd an inmate of the soul.  
So the green nut's sweet, milky juice comprest  
In a hard shell and acid husk is drest.  
Surpris'd my heart went pitter patter,  
I could not think what was the matter.  
Can this be Burns? It is, I'm sure;  
None else could look so like John Moore.  
Besides, ilk circumstance declare  
The author of *The Holy Fair*.  
A thousand questions straight I plan,  
Some of the Muse, some of the Man,  
All friendly chat, not table talk,  
But destin'd for an evening walk.  
Could I like you with ease rehearse  
Each passing thought in polished verse;  
Or, where the couplet would not close,  
Borrow your soul-commanding prose,  
I'd paint the horrors of that day,  
When you were cross, and would not stay;  
My words with so much art I'd pack,  
As soon should win the poet back.  
But my crow-quill wants strength to tell

What joy was murder'd when you bade farewell.  
'T was then in haste each ask'd by turns  
What every other thought of Burns.  
Some sigh with disappointed air  
To see the Bard so fat and fair;  
Think sentiment should make sad havock  
Both on the flesh and in the stomach.  
Not Cassius' meagre plight of yore  
E'er vext great Cæsar half so sore;  
Whilst others miss'd the waked loof,  
And found in that an ample proof  
That, uninspired by Coila's look,  
He's college-bred, and rhyming by the book,  
Without his plough turns up his mice,  
Nor goes to church to look for lice.  
Or if some critic seek a fuller,  
His chamber'd daisey's lost her colour.  
Some mark, misled by fashion's call,  
You'd share with few the rights of all;  
Would stretch out farms beyond their bounds,  
And plant sub-tyrants in our bounds.  
Some wish the man would mend his Greek,  
And only like Longinus speak.  
It was not so that Heathen wrot,  
When he old Genesis would quote.  
Nor would he e'er made Jesus shine  
With Bishop Geddes in a line,  
Since tane with Edinbrugh's whinstane hearts,  
He grows soon sick of country parts.

Now goes the cook to warn for dinner  
"Faith, lads" (quoth she), "as I'm a sinner,  
Yon chiel gade in wi' spurs and boots  
Is daft Rob Burns that prents and shoots,  
Does nought but cast about quire clashes,  
And rant and rin and chase the lasses."  
Sine wrights and masons ane and a'  
Wi' hurry lap down frae the wa'.  
"Losh, keep's, is't him? What like's his horse?  
I'm sure his book's no worth a curse.



Trow ye there's siller in his purse?  
Siller! A poet never had a groat.  
But faith! We'll look his muckle coat.  
Gosh guide's! See, witch and fairy tales he reads;  
I doubt he's papist too, and counts his beads."  
"Hout! sic a lee," says Nelly, "ne'er was seen;  
Dear man, can ye no read the *Faery Queen*?"  
By this the horse was standing ready,  
The Bard bade farewell to the Lady.  
They looked by the stable end,  
To keek and glow'r and no be ken'd.  
Then out the mistress cast an ee  
To look what fairlies she could see.  
In Ayr she'd served to mend her breeding,  
Doctors and Dukes und Bailie Lemon;  
In polished Barr the mistress born,  
Displays gentility in scorn.  
"Giff that be Burns, he may hae lear,  
But faith! I'm sure he has nae mair.  
He's brought his havins frae the plough,  
Ne'er touch'd his hat, nor made a bow;  
Lap on his horse, and pu'd his coat thegither,  
Clash'd to the Major, 's gin he'd been his brother.  
He may write books, but by his gate,  
Has little sense and vera great conceit."  
Thus jibes and jeers ran helter-skelter,  
And neither man nor horse find shelter.  
But peevish spleen before to-morrow  
Gave place to sober, serious sorrow  
That he who knew to please us all  
Should find his pleasure here so small.  
Yes, Burns! to you those envied powers belong,  
That rouse the Passions with resistless song;  
That lead the laugh in Pleasure's roar;  
Deep Sorrow's darkest dells explore;  
Share Summer's sweetness with the busy bee,  
Or cling like hoar-frost to the leafless tree.  
Come, gentle Bard! in me that plant survey,  
Whose roots are wither'd and whose leaves decay.

Opprest with grief, and lost to hope,  
 I seek that hill's once pleasing top,  
 Where youth and joy took many a round,  
 Where every spot prov'd pleasure ground.  
 Distant and sad the scene appears,  
 Now view'd thro' heart-corroding tears.  
 Tho' stretch'd around those hills and plain,  
 Where Love and Nature fixt my reign;  
 No hill now owns paternal sway,  
 No more those fields my love obey.  
 True, they as bright a verdure boast,  
 But, Oh! to me their charms are lost!  
 With friends and fortune, all takes wing  
 And Time's sharp scythe has cropt my Spring;  
 His frown has froze my curd'ling blood  
 And fixt my spirits in Death's stagnant flood.  
 Nature's vast landscape floats before my mind,  
 Nor leaves one pleasing, cheering trace behind.

. . . . .

TO BURNS.

30th July 1787.

DEAR SIR, — As I sat amusing myself scribbling the above, I was told you were seized with a fever. Tho' I hope this is not true, I could not forbear sending the bearer to ask for you, to assure you of my best wishes for your health and happiness. At same time, if my scrawl can amuse you in sickness or in health, if it can afford you a moment's pleasure to see how much your writings give me, it is at your service. But remember, at yours alone, for I know the world would not forgive me attempting to tack two lines together, nor even accept my want of success as any apology.

My daughter, who was taken ill the morning I saw you, has been in an alarming situation ever since. Yet that did not make me forget that you had half promised to come



back again. I hope you will not forget it yourself; at any rate shall be glad to hear you were so well as to put it in your power. Lady Wallace, my son, and Major Moore join me in compts. to you. — Believe me, with great esteem, Sir, your most humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

[*July 30 or 31 1787.*]

I am sure, madam, you have most effectually surprized me this morning. Send your servt. twenty miles to enquire for me!!! By all the towering flights of Pride; 't was doing me an honor so far beyond my wildest expectation that for half a second the shadow of a Doubt eclipsed my belief, whether you might perhaps mean to burlesque me. I have indeed been ailing, but your verses have given my spirits a fillip for one day. Without any poetic licence, I assure you upon the honor of plain, unfettered, truth-delivering Prose, they are excellent. I have a long letter<sup>1</sup> to Dr. Moore just ready to put into the Post Office. It is on a subject you have done me the honor to interest yourself in, so if you dare face twenty pages of an epistle, a reading of it is at your service. I don't doubt but you will laugh at me; I know you will; and I insist on your taking that amusement at my expence, solely by yourself. I am not bound to contribute at so dear a rate to the diversion of the rest of the family. I have no copy of Dr. Moore's letter, I mean the one I send him, so this you read must go to post. If you can contrive no better way, I shall call for it myself to-morrow; as I am going for Edinburgh by way of Paisley and Glasgow, to-morrow morning.



My most respectful compliments to Lady Wallace, Miss Logan,<sup>2</sup> who I heard at Ayr t' other day is at Dunlop, The Major and all your good family. — I have the honor to be, with the highest respect and most sincere gratitude, Madam, your much obliged very humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This was the famous "Autobiography," of which Mrs. Dunlop preserved a copy, now in Mr. Adam's possession.

(2) The "sentimental sister Susie" of the poet's friend, Major Logan, of Ayr.

On the 7th August Burns arrived in Edinburgh. On the 25th he set out on his northern tour, and on the 16th September he returned to Edinburgh. The following letter from Mrs. Dunlop would be awaiting his arrival: —

*Ad.* To Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Moss-gill,  
near Mauchline.

DUNLOP, 9th Sept. 1787.

DR. SIR, — I read your manuscript [Autobiography] with more pleasure than Richardson or Fielding could have afforded me. I had drawn to myself a character of the author, and was interested to find a confirmation of my own system, or materials to form a new one. I changed my mind at every line, and jump't about in my opinion, like the Vision of Babouc in the review of Persepolis.<sup>1</sup> You said I would laugh at you, but you know me not. I am more akin to the crying than the laughing philosopher. I was truly interested as well as much amused, and my feelings, tho' strongly marked, were of the tragic comic kind, but

never for one moment indifferent enough to become a farce. Your Emilius is still more engaging than Rousseau's, and you lead him on through even a more extraordinary path.

Your alchymy is sure of wond'rous kind,  
That thus could form the manners and the mind;  
Draw polish'd learning from a smuggling club,  
And black contagion from bright virtue's rub.

And a sore rub it was you got from your incomparable West Indian [Richard Brown] — an irrecoverable one too. You say "Here he hurt me," but seem little aware how much. Indeed he rubbed off the finest polish conferred on the human soul by the hand of the great Creator, and which once tarnished no art can ever again burnish. He extended your ideas, taught you to quit gold for tinsel, to explode those native sensations of the honest peasant which once imparted to your own breast and conveyed to another bliss, which all the pride of wealth, fame, or knowledge can never equal or compensate. He made you from that moment a less happy being, and a less estimable man, reduced you to a level with those gentry you were born to soar above, by changing your sweetest pleasures and most rational pursuit into a trivial amusement, debasing serious attachment into affected foppery and modish gallantry unworthy of any steady return. Shall a man dare to lament if his mistress imbibe his own sentiments, and feel it as unimportant to meet or part as he does? Here indeed the cottage leaves the palace far behind, and while you were straining every nerve in chase of improvement, you unfortunately run full cry on the back scent, and lost the man in quest of the gentleman. But I need say no more. If virtue is her own reward, by this you know vice is likewise sometimes her own

punishment. Don't you hear the confidences of rustic innocence with inexpressible envy and bitter regret? At what price would you not repurchase the first feelings of your heart, that delicate fine ether of the soul which, once evaporated, can never be regained, and which you have been at pains endeavouring to dissipate, tho' I have a strong notion it is by nature so strongly blended with your vital spirits that you will never be able to get quite clear of it. But I am afraid there is another blessing of your early days will not stick so fast—that *idiot piety* you appear to despise because it is the piety of a child. Remember, my dear sir, where we are told that of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. There is a sweet enthusiasm which seems reserved for women and children as the tenderest pledge of heavenly love. I am sure I most sincerely pity the man who has too much sense for it; I will not positively say it can secure us everlasting joys above, but certes it is calculated to soothe sorrow and gild the wings of hope while we are here below. It is twin sister to a warm heart and a keen temper, the inseparable companion of a lively imagination, and therefore I hope still inherent in your breast, whence if it should ever be drove away, your verses will never again rise to that sublimity to which they have hitherto attained. Nothing else could have inspired a man to write "A Winter Dirge" at seventeen, if it is possible to believe any one ever could compose it at that age, which I own I have hardly faith for, spite of every allowance I can make for the misfortunes of a beloved and dying parent ripening the mind of a dutiful and affectionate son, for that son's being a prodigy himself, etc. etc. etc. If it is a truism (*sic*) do confirm it, and if you wish me to write you any more tell me the names of the Capt. of the West Indiaman and of



the man whom the money of the Begums<sup>2</sup> could not corrupt, but by this I daresay you have compared my letters so often as to be tired of the task, and to think of me as our Mrs. (?) said of you, that I have little sense and very great conceit to put a comparison so disadvantageous for myself in your power after I knew it would be made. But I am like the sensitive plant or a cobweb on the wall, which something flies across and hurts every moment, and since you have encouraged me to scribble rhyme or reason just as they come uppermost, I have found a great relief from doing it, and both my health and spirits are gainers, notwithstanding circumstances went against their changing to that hand, for since I saw you I have had a daughter almost drown'd, a grandchild [a little Vans Agnew] dead in France, and have got home my two married *children*, and for all this have been so well as to wonder at myself were not all my capacity for wondering taken up elsewhere wondering at *you*.

I have a strong desire to see the lines you wrote on Miss Alexander.<sup>3</sup> How shall I tempt you to show me them? Will it prevail that I send you a sight of some I wrote one day as I happened to walk by the road-side where some palm-boughs were growing which I had pulled a twig from and meant to send by a friend I am very fond of to a very young and very beautiful sister of hers, from whom I had that moment got a verse-letter? You will justly say "What a poor exchange are your scrawls for my lines!" but consider, you show yours to all the world; I show mine only to you, and keep no copy of what is never meant to be wrote twice, nor would I presume to ask those lines but that you told me they were not to be printed, tho' they had merit. Now, I own I admire the lady's

self-denial more than yours, which is not wholly void of ill-nature, whereas hers is probably only cold prudence dictated by some wise relation, and not perfectly congenial with her own feelings, which I daresay would have been gratified by your gaining applause from the world on so favourite a theme as herself. Yet I mean not to detract from the lady's modest merit—I never saw her. Only, as she is handsome, is a woman, and has two nabob brothers, I think it probable she has some vanity, and Voltaire, tho' very persuasive, cannot convince me that the probable *never* happens.

You express yourself uneasie in having lived hitherto without an aim. You have certainly now a noble one before you to secure easie independence and immortal fame, both which I flatter myself stand clearly within your stretch, if past success, sanguine hope, and dissipated company don't make you indolent, alter your original character, or strengthen that hypochondriac tint which has, you say, already tinged your constitution, and which, where it once enters, requires every exertion both of body and mind to throw it off, especially with one accustomed to an active life in their early years. I would be happy to know you were engaged in some more extensive work than any you have yet attempted; because I think it would be more interesting to yourself and more pleasing to the world, would give a more permanent stability to your fame, and show that your genius was not a transient flash of bright lightning, but the steady radiance of the meridian sun in his most unclouded splendor. After striking out so singular a path as you have already done, I am persuaded there is nothing to which with earnest application you may not be equal. Detached pieces, however remarkable, leave on the

mind only a passing impression like "the memory of the stranger that tarrieth but one night," whereas an epic work, as being considered the utmost height of human excellency, is never to be forgotten by the latest ages, but will add luster to Ayrshire, and glorify her Bard to the end of time itself if he succeed. If he fail, he falls where numbers have fallen before him; the attempt brings no disgrace, but yields great pleasure and amusement, and may even, should it not fill all the writer's ideas, be productive of very considerable profit to the author, to the bookseller, and to the readers. I am sure I have reason to say so, nor can I ever repay the debt I owe you since your writings soothed my mind and fixed my attention when nothing else could. If ever I feel happy again, I shall certainly thank you, for I do think your "Ruin" and "Despondency" first opened the way for returning peace to my mind, while my subsequent reading what dropt from your pen added to the pleasure of seeing you, and the permission of glancing over the Doctor's letter has awakened the strongest ambition to be honour'd with your friendship. I flatter myself nobody ever held a higher place in his, and I can trace a great similitude in character as well as face, allowing for thirty years' start in the world before you. The doctor and I are within six months of each other, and were friends half a dozen years before you saw the light—I do not mean of the Muses, but of Apollo himself. It was even some years before that period he brought me his bride that I might join their hands before the priest. When they lost their children 'twas me shared and dried their mutual tears. I esteem her above all the women I ever knew, and like her almost as much as I do her husband. While they were in Scotland we lived in the



happiest intercourse. It sweetens the very hope of heaven to think we shall there renew it. Don't you recognize her and I in one of his letters from Geneva<sup>4</sup> among the rocks of the Meillerie? And you will meet me again where he mentions a present one lady had sent another of a picture of the Virgin Mary. You bid me read his letter by myself lest you should be laugh'd at. You men never think of anything but yourselves. Do you think I should have been wholly insensible to the laugh against myself for reading it at all? I assure you I run no risque of showing it.

What an unmerciful letter I have wrote ! I have a good mind to work a purse or a case to put it in as an atonement for the trespass on your time, and to show you the ladies are not so curst with want of work as you think them. On the contrary, you may remember some lines I once sent you wrote on yourself. The author of these was actually spinning a pair of stockings during their composition, as I can bear witness. Now, I am going to ask a favour. Never come here again if you resolve to come in when the table is cover'd and be tired of us all by dinner is done, for I would as soon ask you to come and visit me in my seat at church, or to make one of these court calls now in fashion, that just convince one people have no pleasure in seeing them. — Farewell. — Your obliged and obedient humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Voltaire's *Le Monde comme le va : Vision de Babouc*.

(2) A misreading of the phrase in the Autobiography: "One, whose heart I am sure not even the 'Munny Begum's' scenes have tainted;" said by Gilbert to have been the eldest son of Dr. Malcolm,

of Ayr, a boy friend of the poet's who served as an officer in India.

(3) Wilhelmina Alexander, heroine of the song "The Lass o' Ballochmyle." She ignored Burns's request for permission to include the song in the Edinburgh edition, and he bitterly resented the slight.

(4) Moore's *View of Society and Manners in France*, etc.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS, to the care of William Kerr, Esq.,  
General Surveyor of the Post-Office, Edinburgh.

DUNLOP, 15th Nov. 1787.

DR. SIR, — Hearing you are at Edr.<sup>1</sup> I send (to the care of a worthy young man, Mr. Kerr, one of the principal men about the Post-Office, and son to a great friend of mine, whose character was not less original than your own) a packet I got from Dr. Moore yesterday for you. I take this method for two reasons: that I may know if it come to hand, and that it may be post free being bulky; otherways I should not have wrote you at present. However, since the pen is in my hand, I cannot omit telling you our friend the Dr. has been the means of getting one of my sons [James] appointed to a Company in one of the new Regts. for India. I wish I had your genius that I might thank him as I ought. By the by, I am told you think no friend you have would take two hours' trouble to make your fortune. Is this sentiment the offspring of modest diffidence, small penetration, or ingratitude? For sure I am it is fraught with terrible injustice. Adieu. —  
Your most obediently, FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns visited Harvieston and the two Ochter-tyres in October, and returned to Edinburgh on the

20th, taking up his abode at 2 (now 30) St. James's Square, with his friend Cruikshank, a High School master (*d.* 1795).

Dr. MOORE to ROBERT BURNS.

CLIFFORD ST., 8th Nov. 1787.

DEAR SIR, — At the time your very interesting letter came to my hands I was involved in a business that gave me a great deal of trouble. This, with the rumour of war which then prevailed, and the efforts I was obliged to make to get my son the Lieut. in the Navy [see *postea*, vol. ii. p. 127], placed in a proper situation, prevented my answering you immediately. I now assure you that the account you give of yourself and the admirable manner in which

You run it through even from your boyish days  
To the very moment that you kindly tell it,

afforded me much pleasure.

Your moving accident in the harvest field  
With her whose voice thrill'd *like th' Æolian Harp*,  
Your hairbreadth 'scapes in *th' imminent deadly breach*,  
The process raised by holy cannibals  
Who such devour as follow Nature's law,  
Your wild and headstrong rage for matrimony,  
Your redemption thence, whereof by parcels  
I had something heard, but not distinctively —

all were highly interesting to me, and augment the advantageous opinion I had formed of you on seeing your first publication.

In your letter you hint at your scarcity of English. I am far from thinking that this is the case. On the contrary I am convinced you already possess that language in an uncommon degree, and with a little attention you will become entirely master of it. In several of your poems



there is a striking richness and variety of expression — for which reason I hope you will use it in most of your future productions. If there actually existed a language called the Scotch language, which had a grammar, and which was used by the best writers of Scotland, I should perhaps prefer it to the English. But unfortunately there is no such thing. The Scotch is as provincial a dialect of the English as the Somersetshire or Yorkshire. And therefore no serious work can be written in it to advantage, altho' it must be owned in works of humour and *naïveté* it sometimes gives additional force and beauty. Some of your humorous poems have gained by it, and it gives a fresh charm to the beautiful simplicity of some of your songs.

I hope you will plan out some work of importance and suitable to your genius, which you will polish at leisure and in the returns of fancy, and do not waste your fire on incidental subjects or the effusions of gratitude on receiving small marks of attention from the great or small vulgar.

I heard you was at one great castle<sup>1</sup> in the W. Highlands. Whatever the place might, I can hardly suspect the inhabitants would inspire you with much to admire. Their minds are prosaic and grovelling; the Muses have no charm in the eyes of either; tho' one is a person of much mildness of character and integrity.

I will be much obliged to you when you have leisure to fulfil your promise of sending me *the ideas you picked up in your pilgrimage thro' the Highlands and your early rhimes.*

I think you should employ your leisure in collecting and polishing a sufficient number to form another volume, but the principal part should be new, and for this I would have

you to reflect very attentively to choose right subjects ; for much depends on this. You have greatly distinguished yourself from common rhymers by drawing your imagery directly from Nature, and avoiding hackneyed phrases and borrowed allusions. This you will always have pride and good sense to continue. With the reputation you have justly acquired I make no doubt of your being able to get a considerable sum for a second volume, whether you publish by subscription, or sell the copy at once to a bookseller. I shall be most ready to afford you my best assistance and advice on that or any other occasion in which I may have it in my power to be of use to you. But you must consider now that you have a reputation to lose, and therefore you will certainly not be rash in offering any new work to the public till it has lain a considerable time by you, and been often subjected to consideration. If you think of any particular subject, I wish you would let me know. I'll freely give you my opinion, which you will afterwards follow or not as you please ; in neither case will you in the smallest degree disoblige me.

Perhaps you may come to London with your new work. If you do, I will be happy to see you, and all my family are in the same way of thinking. Adieu, my dear Burns. — Believe me, with much regard, your friend and servt.

J. MOORE.

Direct under cover to Major J. Moore, M.P.,  
Clifford St., Burlington Gardens, London.

At Miss Williams's<sup>2</sup> desire I send you a copy of some lines I wrote to her lately when she was at Southampton. She said she wished to send you her picture drawn by me. The truth, however, is they are all exaggeration, for she is remarkably pretty ; but on her being a little out of humour



at my laughing at her nose, and chin, and stooping, which she expressed in a letter, I wrote, in answer, the enclosed.

I confess I have said — but pray do not pout —  
 That your chin is too fond of yr aquiline snout,  
 Like the world dispos'd from inferiours to fly,  
 It always looks up to the features on high.  
 That I said of your back, and I still must say so,  
 It resembles the back of an Indian canoe:  
 What was strait as an arrow, you 've bent like a bow.  
 I must own too I hinted your waddling walk  
 Was much like a parrot's — and sometimes yr talk.  
 Yet these observations as plainly you 'll view,  
 Tho' they glance at your person, don't touch upon *you*;  
 For *you* never can think — you're too much refined —  
 That your body is *you* — you's entirely your mind.  
 And when yr sweet genius so gracefully flows,  
 In melodious verse or poetical prose,  
 Who thinks of your chin or the turn of yr toes?  
 For you, my dear Helen, have proved by your works  
 That women have souls, in the teeth of the Turks.  
 Your person and face in the hands of those  
 Who think upon nought but the care of their bodies  
 It is true would be ranked for beauty and air  
 In a pretty high class of the graceful and fair,  
 And would doubtless attract from the thoughtless and gay  
 A more pointed regard to yr fabrick of clay,  
 But all those you will treat with scorn eternal  
 Who sigh for the shell and taste not the kernel.

(1) This may be an allusion to the poet's mysterious Highland tour of June 1787, but more probably the castle referred to is Gordon Castle — Dr. Moore may not have been strong in Scotch geography — and the "inhabitants" the Duke and Duchess of Gordon.

(2) Helen Maria Williams, poetess and novelist; born in London 1762, settled in Paris in 1790, and



imprisoned as a partisan of the Gironde; in her later political writings condemned the Revolution. Her works include *Julia*, a novel; a translation of *Paul and Virginia*; several books on France; and poems, including *Edwin and Elfrida* and *The Slave Trade*.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MADAM, — I will bear the reproaches of my conscience respecting this letter no longer. I was indebted to you some time ago for a kind, long letter (your letters the longer the better), and again the other day I heard from you, enclosing a very friendly letter from Dr. Moore. I thought with myself, in the height of my gratitude and pride, of my remark that I would sit down some hour of inspiration and write you a letter at least worth twa groats; consequently you would have been a great gainer, as you are so benevolent as to bestow your epistolary correspondence on me (I am sure) without the least idea of being paid *in kind*.

When you talk of correspondence and friendship to me, Madam, you do me too much honor; but, as I shall soon be at my wonted leisure and rural occupation, if any remark on what I have read or seen, or any new rhyme I may twist, that is worth while — if such a letter, Madam, can give a person of your rank, information, and abilities any entertainment, you shall have it with all my heart and soul.

It requires no common exercise of good sense and philosophy in persons of elevated rank to keep a friendship properly alive with one much their inferior. External, things totally extraneous of the man, steal upon the hearts and judgments of almost, if not altogether, all mankind;

nor do I know more than one instance of a man who fully and truly regards "all the world as a stage, and all the men and women merely players," and who (the dancing-school bow excepted) only values these players — the *dramatis personæ*, who build cities, and who rear hedges; who govern provinces, or superintend flocks — merely as they *act their parts*. For the honor of Ayrshire, this man is Professor Dugald Stewart of Catrine. To him I might perhaps add another instance, a popish bishop, Geddes;<sup>1</sup> but I have outraged that gloomy, fiery Presbyterianism enough already, though I don't spit in her lugubrious face by telling her that the first (*i. e.* the best) Cleric character I ever saw was a Roman Catholic.

I ever could ill endure those surly cubs of "chaos and old night" — those ghostly beasts of prey who foul the hallowed ground of Religion with their nocturnal prowlings; but if the prosecution which I hear the Erebean fanatics are projecting against my learned and truly worthy friend, Dr. M'Gill,<sup>2</sup> goes on, I shall keep no measure with the savages, but fly at them with the *faucons* of Ridicule, or run them down with the bloodhounds of Satire, as lawful game, wherever I start them.

I expect to leave Edinr. in eight or ten days, and shall certainly do myself the honor of calling at Dunlop House as I return to Ayrshire. — I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

EDINR., 4th Nov.<sup>3</sup> 1787.

(1) A native of Banffshire; from 1779 to 1797 coadjutor to the vicar-apostolic of the lowland district of Scotland. An Edinburgh friend of Burns's, he procured subscriptions for the second edition from

the Scots College at Valladolid and other Roman Catholic seminaries.

(2) Rev. Dr. M'Gill, of Ayr, the Dr. Mac of "The Kirk's Alarm;" prosecuted for heresy (1789-90) on account of his *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*.

(3) Obviously misdated, as it refers to Mrs. Dunlop's letters of 4th September and 15th November and Dr. Moore's of 8th November. It must have been written on a very early day after the 15th November, as Mrs. Dunlop, in hers of 25th December, refers to it as dating six weeks back.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS, at Mr. Cruickshank's,  
St. James's Square.

DUNLOP, 25th Decr. 1787.

DEAR SIR, — You say 't is an exertion of philosophy to keep alive an intercourse with our inferiours. I dare say you must frequently have found it so; for my part I have never had an opportunity of putting it to the trial, as I never remember to have wrote three letters following to any one person, where business did not oblige me to it, in the whole course of my life; excepting where the consciousness of a decided superiority against me was the very motive which guided my pen, and made me assiduously cultivate a correspondence where I felt myself a gainer. The notice of those who possess solid judgment, shining talents, or superlative goodness of heart, has always been the first ambition and the truest pleasure of my life, although, the late Lord Eglinton<sup>1</sup> excepted, I never met these in an eminent degree in the very first rank of my acquaintance. Neither is that train of information which



makes a man's ideas at once pleasing and instructive, peculiar to high life. On the contrary I have now seen letters from different Ayrshire peasants, which by being address to me, flattered my self-love more than it could have been by the receipt of as many from any peer I have now the honour of knowing. The most estimable, and I may add the most useful of my friends, have set out in life very hardly; but yet I have had the happiness to see the world confess, and fortune reward their merit. Two particularly, who at the beginning of our acquaintance could not command five pounds between them, I have seen masters of £12,000 or £15,000 apiece, without any assistance but their own talent, and it gives me inconceivable pleasure to reflect that I was able twenty years ago to discern those talents through the mist in which they were then involved. One of these gentlemen was then a poet. I sent him your book t' other day, and wrot on a blank leaf the following lines, from which you may trace the date of our acquaintance:—

To you, who in your idle boyish days  
 Sported with Echo round Parnassus base,  
 Bound classic evergreens around her brows,  
 Or plaited myrtles where now laurel grows;  
 From Europe's coasts to India's shores I send  
 Those songs, that charm your country and your friend;  
 From Coila's plains, your lov'd, your natal scene,  
 With Burns I greet my Davie and his Jean.

. . . . .

You see I don't keep my rhymes till they be worth while; so don't be a miser of yours. I receive with grateful joy your promise of writing, since you give it with your heart. I was afraid you might have been of the opinion of some people that private letters exhaust an author's genius. Now, when yours flows so high as to wash the sands of

Pactolus, by reaching the public, don't waste it on me; but should ever your spirits flag too much for the crowd, yet feel relaxation in breathing the effusions of the moment where every scrap of yours will be valued, indulge me with those gleanings which shall be the solace of my solitary hours, my secret heart's exulting boast; but no fund of vanity for you, no increase of fame, for no eye will see them but my own. If you chuse to sacrifice now and then your time to me on these terms, I will be truly grateful, and you will enjoy your dearest mead "a friend's esteem and praise," though perhaps you could not on the face of the earth pick up a more useless friend in every respect than I must always be, now that I have lost those dear and respectable connections that formerly used to adopt, dignify, and patronise every partiality of mine. I wish you had known my father, that you might have honoured Ayrshire still more, and not thought Professor Stewart the only Phoenix of the age. I am sure he at least deserved to rival him in the instance of just discernment you mention, for which I will ever love and revere his memory. Your character of the Bishop delights me. I am proud of my son Andrew for being so fond of him since I read your last, for I convince myself yours is honest unbiased approbation; and that makes me keen to gain it for myself.

I hope the clergy will not meddle with Mr. M'Gill, that you may not meddle with them. This is not the age of priestcraft that calls for opposition. Those that deserve it are too mean game for genius to hurt, and the satire too local for sale; it would be a subject would bring you less profit, and me less pleasure, than many a one Nature I am sure will point to you, or you are not the man I take you



for, and I would be very sorry to think I was mistaken where I believe so much esteem justly due.

I am afraid Edr. has monopolised your whole time, or you calculate like Daniel by weeks of years when you are to leave it; 't is already six weeks of our vulgar arithmetic since you said you would be west in ten days, and no news of you yet. You say you like rhyme and long letters. This ought, I'm sure, to please, if you know yourself and tell truth when you say so. The season reminds me of expressing those good wishes which I can honestly say are not confined to the holidays, but attend you all the year round. May the fire of fancy warm every winter of your life as it has done the past, and fate realise as many of imagination's dreams as are necessary to make you happy, and allow me to add an interested wish for myself, that you may always find pleasure in letting me know what you are doing and how the world goes with you. But never mention rank or fortune. Don't think of these unless it is to remember your own advantages in both. In family, as in everything else, who would not rather be the Alpha as the Omega? In fortune are not those most happy to whom her smile is least necessary and her frown least dreadful? At any rate I assure you I neither enjoy nor possess her superfluities, and were you enabled to draw a comparison fairly with regard to the staging of that scene, you would not find your own lot in life, when laid in the scale with many the world set much weight on, kick the beam as you perhaps imagine it does. At all events to us who, like Pharamond's friend Eginhart,<sup>2</sup> are to go through the world without expectations from one another, those accidents signify nothing, and therefore ought not to deprive either party of what portion of goodwill the other thinks they



merit, nor seclude that freedom of the pen which enlivens our pleasures and above all soothes our misfortunes.

When to the wrongs of fate half reconciled  
Misfortune's lightened *eye* can wander wild,  
And disappointment in a *letter's* bounds  
Find balm to soothe her bitter rankling wounds.

You see where I am. The poet's beautiful expression makes me sicken of my own tepid stuff; so I shall bid you adieu, lest it have the same effect upon you, if you have had patience to get this length, in which case accept the thanks of your humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Alexander, tenth Earl, shot dead by Mungo Campbell, exciseman, in 1769.

(2) Probably La Calprenède's novel, *Faramond* (1661).

After at least one postponement Burns had arranged to leave Edinburgh at the beginning of December, when an accident, caused by a drunken coachman, laid him up for several weeks. The Clarinda episode intervened, and it was only on the 23rd of February that he reached Mossgiel. The first of the two following letters was written in a fit of depression due to physical pain, a return of his old nervous ailment, and the uncertainty of his prospects, for in January he was still pressing Creech for a settlement of accounts. The tone of the second was doubtless influenced by the high pitch of emotional exaltation to which the poet had been wrought up by his intercourse with Mrs. Maclehose.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 21st *January* 1788.

After six weeks' confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission: for I would not *take in* any poor ignorant wretch by *selling out*. Lately I was a sixpenny private, and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign, a starving cadet: a little more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this; for though I do want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which will be, I suppose, about the middle of next week, I leave Edinburgh, and soon after I shall pay my grateful duty at Dunlop House.

R. B.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS.

[*January*, 1788.]

I had yours only this day. I am truly vexed to see your train of ideas at present. I would read my old grandmother's moulded household-book forty times over, and get every recipe by heart, could it furnish one salve for an wounded spirit as effectual as I met myself in your first publication; but I fear you have drove away the only friend could supply that cordial; that childish *idiot*, the companion of your *early days*, nor will you ever be as happy again unless you are able to recall that discarded friend, unknown in the polite circle, and cherish her like a beloved

wife, never to be divorced from your bosom. But this, I fear, is impossible ; 't is here we have the advantage of you. A weak mind, if it takes a wrong bias, it meets another more strong than itself, whose arguments can bend it back to its original rectitude, and make it ashamed of its error. A masculine spirit, once warped by passion or folly, sticks to the wrong with a noble obstinacy, seldom exercised for the right, of which he has often learned to be ashamed. I fear I must not mention piety to you, now that you are quarrelled and abuse her with bad names. I am afraid this salt of the soul, when it has lost its savour, cannot again be salted, and I am sure, if it is cast out and trodden under foot, nothing in this world can supply its place. Besides her other qualities the poor idiot is the very best sick-nurse on earth. How she would have cheared your last six horrid weeks, had you not so inhumanly banished her with reproaches from your presence. I really pity you shut up alone with cruelty and remorse, putting arms in the hand of the dark assassin, not only to murder poor poverty, but wickedly to stifle her weak cry. I don't know how to comfort you under the pressure of such terrible guilt but by recommending you to the Jesuits, not for extreme unction, as I trust yours is no death-bed repentance. Let me send you my only purse, and the only guinea it ever contained, that you may go to your favourite bishop and buy absolution, drink the dredgey<sup>1</sup> of the miserable victim, or say mass *against* her resurrection. I hope this will set me too a step on my way to heaven, should I once in my life have contributed to make two souls happy, but I hope after all you will take care what coachman brings you home. Above all don't let the devil drive, as it is alledged you sometimes do. We are told you are in prison<sup>2</sup> for writing not only



Jacobite but blackguard verses against the King. Perhaps it had been as well so. Pain is a hard jailer, and a prison might have saved you a crutch. But forgive me, dear Burns, and don't think I mean to insult by laughing at your low spirits. Nothing is farther from my thoughts. I would only divert a melancholy which, by breathing itself in a pun, persuades me it may be trifled with and palliated without being so irritated as to become incurable. Yet the whims that strike the sick are so unaccountable that I confess I stand in awe of yours. Don't be angry at my sending you this trifle. Remember, you began it yourself by sending me your own head. It is a maxim in higher life that a present should always be of something quite useless. I did not like to seem ungrateful, and I could think of nothing apparently more useless to you than a purse. I therefore made one, and having heard somebody remark it was unlucky to get an empty one, wrap it up with the single note it happened at the moment to contain. Should this offend you, cast it from you by the first opportunity, and cast with it every propensity to misunderstand the goodwill of your friends for the future.

When you write elegy I would wish it on my chief or your friend — in short on some great, some rare subject such as occurs more seldom than the great Jubilee. 'Tis hardly credible two<sup>3</sup> in one year should employ without degrading the first pen of a country. Both were good men, men of worth, dear to their friends, nor unnoted by their country; yet 'tis piteous, 'tis wondrous piteous if both were worthy your song, and both are gone almost together.

I don't admire the word "bleaky."<sup>4</sup> To me diminutives have only beauty when they are used as endearments; in all other cases they betray a poverty of language, which is

obliged to borrow a syllable. Now, this is convicting innocence itself when such an accusation is established against you, who have words at will — more expressive ones too than anybody else. I hope you will come this way that you may defend this word properly in person, if you have aught to say for it. If not, give it up with a good grace. Yet, spite of the cold weather, I would not give a sixpence to see you if you only come to fetch fire as you did before. But I beg, if anything prevent you, that you will let me hear how you are, as I shall really be interested in your health and happiness, and impatient to learn the return of both. May all your woes henceforth be feigned ones, and vanish as fast as they can black your paper, for that itself is sometimes a cure, and I am sure I should think the more of myself as long as I lived if you could find it so in writing me. I shall send this to my friend Mr. Kerr, since he has found you out, which is more than I should have been able to do without his help. Adieu. I will be sorry if you are limped off before this reach you.

Admit those dear companions of your youth —  
 Warm unwarpt Piety and simple Truth ;  
 Those humble handmaids plac'd around your bed  
 Bar out Remorse, and bind the aching head.

(1) Dredgey, from *dirge*, liquor drunk (*more Scottish*) at funerals.

(2) Burns tradition has no trace of this extraordinary rumour.

(3) The elegies on Sir David Hunter Blair and Lord President Dundas were products of this year.

(4) The word occurs in the first line of the poem "On the Death of Lord President Dundas."

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

The much-respected Patroness of my early Muse certainly deserved a better return from me than to let her excellent, her kind letter remain so long unanswered. Your elegant epistle, Madam, and your very handsome present, as handsomely delivered, struck me so much, that I immediately made a private vow to give you a few verses on the subject; or at least, write you such a Post-sheet as would be a pennyworth at sixpence. I have failed in both. Some important business respecting my future days, and the miserable dunning and plaguing of Creech, has busied me till I am good for nothing. Your criticisms and observations on the President's Elegy are just. I am sick of writing where my bosom is not strongly interested. Tell me what you think of the following? There the *bosom* was perhaps a little *interested*.

Clarinda, Mistress of my soul,<sup>1</sup>  
 The measur'd time is run!  
 The wretch beneath the dreary Pole  
 So marks his latest sun.

To what dark cave of frozen night  
 Shall poor Sylvander hie?  
 Depriv'd of thee, his life and light,  
 The sun of all his joy!

We part — but by these precious drops  
 That fill thy lovely eyes!  
 No other light shall guide my steps  
 Till thy bright beams arise.

She, the fair Sun of all her Sex,  
 Has blest my glorious day:  
 And shall a glimmering Planet fix  
 My worship to its ray?



Mr. Schetky, the celebrated Musician, has done these lines the honor of setting them to music. The following is a *jeu d'esprit* of t' other day, on a despairing Lover carrying me to see his Dulcinea.

Anna, thy charms my bosom fire,<sup>2</sup>  
 And press my soul with care;  
 But ah, how bootless to admire,  
 When fated to despair!

Yet, in thy presence, lovely Fair,  
 To hope may be forgiven;  
 For sure 't were impious to despair,  
 So much in sight of Heaven!

(1) These verses were written to Mrs. Maclehose just before Burns left Edinburgh. They were published by both Johnson and Thomson.

(2) The despairing lover was Alexander Cunningham. The lady married another man, and Burns sent the verses to the London *Star*, in which they were published on 18th April 1789. Schetky was a German (born at Darmstadt, 1740), settled as a teacher of music in Edinburgh.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
 Dunlop-house, Stewarton.

EDINBURGH, 12th February 1788.

[Mutilated half-sheet.]

I don't know whether I have not, sometime or other, sent you my Epigram on Elphinstone's translation of, and commentaries on Martial, the famous Latin Poet:—

TO MR. E.

O thou, whom Poesy abhors;  
 Whom Prose has turned out of doors!  
 Heardst thou yon groan? proceed no further!<sup>1</sup>  
 'T was laurell'd Martial calling Murther!

I leave Edinburgh on Saturday morning. If my horse meet me at Glasgow, I will probably do myself the honor of calling at Dunlop-house.

Some things, my revered Patroness, in your late letters hurt me : not that *you say them*, but that you *mistake me*. Religion, my honored Madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependance, but my dearest enjoyment. I have indeed been the luckless victim of wayward Follies ; but, alas ! I have ever been "more fool than knave." A Mathematician without Religion is a probable character ; an irreligious Poet, is a Monster.

I have been lately at Lady Wallace's, and was delighted to find Miss Dunlop [probably Susan] a daughter of the Mother ; I shall call there again ere I leave town. — I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged, humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

This letter is docketed in the MS. "good — fit for publication," but only the second paragraph, with the words "my revered Patroness" omitted, was published by Currie and subsequent biographers and editors. James Elphinston (1721–1809), a native of Edinburgh, kept a boarding-school at Kensington, and was a friend of Samuel Johnson. His *The Epigrams of M. Val. Martial, in twelve books, with a Comment, by James Elphinston*, was a quarto published in London in 1782. Burns wrote this quatrain — so he told Mrs. Maclehose in a letter of 14th January of this year — in a copy of the book which he glanced at in a merchant's (Creech's) shop in Edinburgh. This volume is now the property of Mr.

Robert Munro, Ibrox, Glasgow. For Lady Wallace's house, see *postea*, p. 155.

Burns left Edinburgh on the 18th of February for Glasgow, where he stayed overnight, and met his friend Richard Brown. On the following day he proceeded to Paisley, and thence to Dunlop House, where he spent two days. A day or two after, probably on the 25th, he went to Ellisland to spy out the land, and returned to Mossgiel on the 2nd or 3rd of March.

*Ad. Mr. ROB'T BURNS.*

DUNLOP, 30th Feby. 1788.

Trusting to your aversion for the foppish follies fashion fetched from France, I flattered myself we should have had the pleasure of seeing you at breakfast, and that you would also have despised a French leave. I had a vision ready for your morning entertainment, but when William told you had been gone two hours, it wholly escaped me in the surprise and disappointment, except four lines, which I shall send you as a specimen that you may not break your heart for the loss of the rest of it. Methought I saw

From smuggling cells the friend of honour rise  
Borne on her shield in triumph through th' Excise,  
High raised above on fame and glory's wings  
And in low fellowship of gold with kings.  
. . . . .

I cannot send for your books without returning thanks for the loan. I was once going to have sent you a little novel of the late Duke of Orleans [the Regent], not for its merit, for I have not language to read it myself, but that you might have amused yourself investigating the ladders



by which great men mount into the public favour, which would often, I daresay, be found much too short for lesser men even to reach their own approbation. The name of it is *Accajie and Zerphile*. Let me know if you have never seen it, or the *Ikon Basilike* of King Charles. I can lend you both, but would rather give as send them. Besides, when you find a convenient time to get this length, you will see Coila,<sup>1</sup> who is much grown in grace and stature since she appeared last to you here, and has been the close occupation of the lady ever since. Now, since I have mentioned French, I will send you an attempt of mine in that tongue sent one day to one of my boys who wanted a pair of globes from me along with them : —

Une mere pour plaire a ses enfants  
 Rumage la terre pour la viande ;  
 Bon bon j'ecrach entre les dents  
 De les petit hereux gourmands.  
 Un spectacles pour le folatre,  
 Pour les brave un mock combatre,  
 Pour la mienne je suis la commandeuse  
 D'un entretien plus doux ;  
 Pouvez-vous vous defendre  
 De l'orquil quand je rendre  
 Dans vos main cette grand transfere  
 De tout les cieux et toute la terre.

You will not think I stand in great fear of your critizism when I venture to show you such trifles, but I am just doing as I would be done by. Another communication too I would beg, which is to know if this country is to be deprived of her native Bard, or where you expect will be your destination. I hear there is a book come out against you, but I have not seen it. Perhaps you may say with Solomon (*sic*), "Oh that mine adversary had wrote a book!"

I wrot a very pretty farewell in the fear you were about to leave us, but I will not let you see it in revenge for a sarcasm you threw at me last day. Indeed I don't like sharp wit, and would as soon try the edge of my penknife on the throat of my friend as my metal against anybody that wished me well. This is not your way of thinking, however, or I had certainly been safe, spite of the refined skill you say I possess in Indian tortures, for you must be sensible I did not mean to exercise that art against you, so needed not have avenged yourself five or six hours after so bitterly as you did. Adieu. — Believe me still, with very great esteem, your obliged, humble servt. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop's daughter Rachel was painting a sketch of Coila.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MOSSGIEL, 7th March 1788.<sup>1</sup>

MADAM, — The last paragraph in yours of the 30th February affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with the little wit I have, I do confess; but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm a great deal worse than I do the devil; at least as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honored friend, who cannot appear in any light but you are sure of being respectable — you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or if you chuse to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem



of all ; but God help us who are wits or witlings by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported !

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila. I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honor, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet of his muse Scota, from which, by the bye, I took the idea of Coila ('t is a poem of Beattie's in the Scots dialect,<sup>2</sup> which perhaps you have never seen) :

Ye shak your head, but, o' my fegs,	shake, by my faith
Ye 've set auld Scota on her legs :	
Lang had she lien wi' buffs and flegs,	endured, blows, kicks
Bombaz'd and dizzie,	stupefied
Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,	
Waes me, poor hizzie !	

(1) Burns wrote other three letters on this date — one to Mrs. Maclehose, one to Robert Muir, and the third to Richard Brown.

(2) "To Mr. Alexander Ross, at Lochlee, author of 'The Fortunate Shepherdess and other Poems in the Broad Scotch Dialect.'"

On the 14th, the date of Mrs. Dunlop's next letter, Burns was again in Edinburgh. On the 13th, as he wrote to Miss Chalmers, he "compleated a bargain with Mr. Miller of Dalswinton for the farm of Ellisland."

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Mr. Crouch's,<sup>1</sup> Master of the Gramer School, Edinburgh.

14th March 1788.

DR. SIR, — The Saturday after you left this I sent for and got the books. I have been so busy sewing for my little (expected) grandchild that I have hardly been able



to steal a moment to spend with the Fairies. However delightful Spenser's imagination, he is often so very outray and extravagant it becomes disgusting, and often in the finest descriptions some ridiculous circumstance spoils the whole. As, for instance, how do you like the *well* and the *tree* in the battle of St. George and the Dragon? One might have overlooked the one, but it is impossible to keep your temper with both. At least I'm sure I wished poor George had been let sleep both nights quietly abed like other people, since he could be no better disposed of. But I have given you my thoughts on this subject apart, instead of the Vision you ask, which, like your own, "fled like a passing thought," but not "in light away;" on the contrary into impenetrable darkness, from whence it can no more be retrieved. You embarrass me by your kind present of Gray to Keith.<sup>2</sup> It has always been a rule of mine, transmitted me by my father, not to allow any of my girls to accept any present while under my direction. Yet Nature in the formation of a poet seems to understand an exception to general rules, and if you insist on it, I think in this particular instance I must follow her example, but it would be more agreeable to me would you consent to her only keeping the leaf she likes best, and returning the rest, which you cannot value the less for having been a while in the possession of a young lady to whom your favourable introduction has so much recommended the author that I daresay in a few days she will be able to repeat the whole work, and I am sure will never forget to whom she was indebted for it. Coila will be finished in two days longer, and I flatter myself you will have pleasure in beholding her charms, but Rachel says it is impossible she should please you, even should she be able to succeed with others,

for she must look so much worse than when you saw her last by the ingle low [chimney flame] that you will be quite shocked at the change. Nor has she a hope that either her colours or fancy can reach the delicate rouge of poetic painting by the masterly hand that arrayed her for visiting at the auld clay biggin. However, spite of this despair, she has done her very best not to disgrace her subject, and I beg you may come and pass judgment as you come out. Indeed, 'twas to entreat this favour I trouble you with a letter, as I am all impatience to hear the sequel of your business before either you or I leave the country. I believed before I read your last that your good sense had conquered my prejudices, and, as Jenny says in *The Gentle Shepherd*,<sup>3</sup> forced me to quit the field, but although I had wished a piece bit off the tongue that I feared had left a thorn in my neighbour's heart, the moment I seized the idea you threw out of remaining uncertainty I felt an animating joy at it that proved how much I still unwittingly retained my former opinion. Indeed, if you will believe me, it was five minutes before I ever once recollected that the farm was not in Ayrshire. This, indeed, when it occurred, was a cruel danger, a sad postscript to the flattering line which so pleasingly reminds me of a promise I never could have the audacity to make of continuing to write you. Take my honest word; I consider your correspondence as an acquisition for which mine can make no return, as a commerce in which I alone am the gainer; the sight of your hand gives me inexpressible pleasure, and will even do so should it be armed with the Gunter's scale.<sup>4</sup> For all I said there are minds capable of sanctifying any profession. Nay, who ever read *Tom Jones* but felt that there are even reasons that vindicate a man's

embracing that of a highwayman, and where he seems to ennoble it. Yet how should I be enchanted with this charming farm were it but in our own country! But in all events I fear we lose you.

Farewell the friend endowed with heavenly song,  
Whose gentle manners grace the rural throng,  
The patriot Bard whose independent ease  
And native dignity must always please;  
Bold chalk'd by Nature when she sketch'd her plan,  
Strong mark'd to shine distinguish'd in the van.

. . . . .

I think it was Charles the Fifth who, about to hang a bishop, previously knelt for his blessing, then wrot the Pope that he revered the monk and only executed the man.

Should you prolong your stay in town, or not come this way, I beg a single line whenever the lot is cast in your business. Besides, I will be a little concerned to know if my wanderer reach you safe, for, as you will remark, I am no Jacobite; I would not like to give room to the narrow-minded to believe I was one. I likewise wish to ask you a question about your sister. Your hurry, I believe, made you forget about John Woodburn,<sup>5</sup> and I am afraid my son may be sailed before I can get his letters. I should be sorry to miss a possible chance of serving so worthy a man as you speak him to be, or not to make myself happy in telling and his brother in hearing his worth so well vouched for. Adieu. Yet you see I am resolved not to bid you farewell; indeed I should lose too much by it.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) It has not been known hitherto where Burns stayed during this short visit to Edinburgh. Nothing is known of Crouch.



- (2) Mrs. Dunlop's youngest daughter.
- (3) Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*.
- (4) A mensuration chain, 66 feet long, with 100 links.

(5) Mrs. Dunlop's youngest and favourite son, Anthony, was about to sail for the East, and it had apparently been arranged that he should take out letters to Captain Woodburn (see *ante*, p. 8) from a brother whom Burns knew and of whom he thought highly.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

AYR, 26th March 1788.

"Speak, sister, is the deed done?"

"Long ago, long ago, long ago;

Above twelve glasses since have run."

I have at last, my honored Friend, entered in the list of Country farmers. I returned from Edinburgh on Saturday last, with my tack [lease] in my pocket; and since that time, I assure you, cares and business have occupied my every moment. I have talked fondly of magnanimous resolution and persevering firmness, but every Declaimer talks of them: I wish to prove my claim to them by exertion. I have given up all literary correspondence, all conversation, all reading (prose-reading) that is of the evapourating, dissipating kind. My favorite quotation now, for I always have one, is from Young —

On Reason build Resolve;  
That column of true majesty in Man.

I know you will be pleased with this; but were you as weak as most of the family of the Muses, you would be more

pleased with what I am going to tell you. I was one day, last time I was in Edinburgh, with Mr. M'Kenzie, the glorious Man of Feeling; and among other things, I read him such of your pieces as I thought proper, such of them as were quite general (they were the two I got from you when I last had the honor of being your guest) and he passed the highest encomiums on them. He warmly begged leave to read them to Mrs. M'Kenzie, whose judgement he very deservedly highly values, and she admired them so much that she anxiously wished a copy; but this I positively declined. If I had the pieces about me, I would mention to you the most admired lines.

My letters, for some time to come, will be miserable scraps, and will not be worth half a glance except to such as you who honor me so much in interesting yourself in all that concerns me.

My most respectful compliments to all your family; the kind Tutoress of my friend Coila, deserves my particular acknowledgements. The happiest night by much, of all I spent last in Edinburgh was one at Lady Wallace's. — I have the honor to be, Madam, your ever grateful humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS, at Mossgill,  
near Mauchlin.

DUNLOP [*end of March 1788*].

DR. SIR, — I had heard of your transaction about the farm before I was favoured with your letter. Indeed, I was afraid you had been going to give me up, among your literary correspondents, which would have vexed me very much, as I can honestly assure you it exalts me in my own esteem to believe you find anything in my letters worth your while to purchase at the expense of writing me again, while yours

are to me an interesting and delightful amusement which I would in vain attempt to equal elsewhere.

I congratulate you on the step you have taken. I am sure it renders you truly estimable and respectable, and I trust, with the steady perseverance so manly a character seems to insure, will make you independent and happy in the possession of an easy competence, and as much leisure amid rural scenes as, with what you have now seen of the world, will enable you to write as you could never have hoped to do in the former line purposed for your pursuit, nor in the City of Edr. itself, in any situation into which you might have been thrust by your friends. I hope you will not neglect the farm so far as to make you poor, and I trust your cultivation of the Muses shall one day make you rich, for, if ever you are so, I daresay, like the silk-worm, you must spin it out of yourself rather than gather it up from Mr. Miller's ground, which, however, may form a succedaneum in the meantime, and foster up patience till something else is got ready. I observe it is only prose reading you determine to renounce; allow me therefore to recommend a few poetic friends as an evening solace in your retirement. Sorry I am it must be so distant a one as almost precludes all hope of seeing you hereafter: yet let me beg a parting visit at least, before you leave Ayrshire for life, an event I look forward to with extreme regret. If you can come here any time before Sunday come eight day, and pass a day or two conveniently for yourself, you will see Coila, I hope, such as you would wish her, and you will see me, to whom your visit will be a most acceptable compliment. But should this not be in your power, I shall dine at Mount by Kilmarnock with the old Major<sup>1</sup> on Sunday after next to bid him adieu before I set out for



the east country, and I will take the liberty to invite you to make one of the party which chance may assemble there at that time. I shall in driving through Kilmarnock leave at Wilson's <sup>2</sup> for you Pope's *Homer*, Dryden's *Virgil*, and Hoole's *Tasso*, which I beg leave to present as agreeable remembrances of myself, that you may sometimes when far away at sight of them think of writing me. The last is my greatest favourite, but I have not been able to procure a clean copy of it, nor in pocket volumes as I would have wished, so that it might have gone with you to the field, or wherever you went. Indeed you are very much mistaken if you believe I am pleased at your rehearsal to Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie. Their applause was a thing in course, and only compliment to you at any rate. As Mr. Wilkie says to the Duke of Argyll, your own approbation is just enough for me in the rhyming way, and I never desire to aspire at any other. As for censure, "What you applauded Envy durst not blame," so that I am not even flattered by this praise, and your reading anything I write to other people may prevent my prattling with the careless pleasure I have formerly done to your indulgent eye, for which I write the following lines, meaning them for the first leaf of Tasso's "Jerusalem" —

In Bourbon's Isle a far-famed garden lies,  
Cloth'd with each growth the varied world supplies;

. . . . .

Pleased I select the moss rose of the West;  
Proud see your hand Old Scota's breast adorn  
With this fair flourish of her native thorn.

. . . . .

It will really disappoint me grievously if you don't come here, or at least to the Major's. Both I should like best,

but will prefer either to neither. Besides that you will, I am sure, like to see Coila, at which the lady is still close at work. Remember you promised me your address to the wild ducks.<sup>3</sup> Might I beg you would let me look at the tragedy you told me you had once schemed. I will be a very hard critic on anything on that subject, but I don't think you need be afraid to show me the verses on Miss Alexander. I really wish much to see them. How your compliments are sometimes lost, and how I envied one of them! If ever my picture is painted on earth, it shall be in the character of Old Scotia calling Fame to hand on my poor little Sandie Wallace<sup>4</sup> to the top of the old ruinous Castle of Craigie, but I am glad my paper is done since I have got there; 't is a miserable key for me to write on. Adieu. I send compts. from all; "*Cela va sans dire*," and I always forget to write them.— Believe me, with great affection, your obliged and obedient humble sert.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Perhaps Major Alexander Dunlop, her brother-in-law, who commanded the Enniskillens at Carthagen.

(2) Wilson was the printer of the Kilmarnock edition.

(3) "On Scaring some Water-Fowl in Loch Turit." A holograph MS. in the Lochryan collection.

(4) John Alexander Agnew Wallace, her grandson, second son and successor of Sir Thomas. The old lady cherished a dream of the restoration of her paternal estate to the family.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

MAUCHLINE, 31st March 1788.

I am truly sorry to tell you, Madam, that I fear it will not be in my power to meet you at the Mount on Sunday. To come to Dunlop is impracticable; but I would earnestly wish, and will try to meet you at the old Major's.

If you go on, Madam, in the same style of complimenting me on the pleasure my correspondence gives you, you will bar my pen altogether.

Now that I am often "craz'd with care," my letters will be

Like a twice-told tale,  
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man. . . .

I claim the kind promise of your correspondence as a privilege, as an honor; and am never better pleased than when I see a letter from you, wrote out till there is hardly blank paper enough to close it.

The Poems I promised you, I must confess debt and crave days. Till Whitsunday I shall be immersed in business, partly my own, and partly on account of some near and dear friends, that I will not have a spare moment.

I will not speak a word about your present of the books. Your kindness has already exhausted my every various expression of gratitude; and for this last instance, I am determined to be silent till I tax my invention for something new to say on the subject.

I much fear I will not be able to meet you on Sunday, but I'll try. — I have the honor to be, most gratefully, Madam, your obliged, humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

Burns had now settled in Ayrshire to learn the duties of an exciseman, the order for which was issued



by the Board of Excise to an officer at Tarbolton on 31st March. His intention was to finish his pupilage before entering on his farm on 25th May.

Mrs. Dunlop about this time proceeded to Haddington to stay with her son (Captain John) and his wife, who resided there till their home at Morham Mains was ready for occupation.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Mosegill, near Mauchline.

HADDINGTON, 16th *Apr.* 1788.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twenty-first April 1788.]

DR. SIR, — I was sorry your business prevented your coming to pass two or three days at our house, where all the family are so truly sensible to your merit, and happy in your company, but most sensibly mortified at your not wishing to make a stretch to dine at the Mount, on a day when business could not intervene, and when I had let you know I was to be of the party, and you could have no doubt how much your being another would to me have increased the pleasure of the visit. Nay, when I had told you it was a farewell one, and that I was leaving our side of the country for a time that left me no prospect of finding you in Ayrshire at my return, I'm sure it would have been a very great inconvenience indeed that would have made me decline the pleasure of passing perhaps the last day fortune would ever throw in my power with a friend, who I knew sincerely wished it, and who omitted no occasion of telling me so: but I don't know if that is the right way of going to work with you men, who are generally most negligent in your attentions where you already know they are very much valued. But I need say no more. I am now at fourscore miles distance, probably never to be nearer you again, and

I will indulge myself in believing you have repented what you can no longer help. It's the only time I ever wished an uneasie idea to come across you, but for once I would be gratified by knowing, as you say yourself, that conscience had blackguarded you and spit in your face for not behaving more kindly to me than you did in this instance. However, as my goodwill is founded on my admiration and esteem of your sentiments and writings, although gratitude must have greatly increast it, neglect cannot diminish, much less erase it; nor shall the wound given my pride prevent my professing myself as warmly your friend as ever, tho' you have checkt that vanity which might have been flattered by believing you in some degree mine. I met the other day coming here from Edr. a young man who seemed so fond of you that I was sorry to part from him; he told me some of your correspondents, and dwelt on every circumstance in which you were interested with apparent delight that shortened the road much to me; I don't know, but I suspect, his name was Ainslie.<sup>1</sup> I daresay, however, you know him, and I should suppose he knows you too, better than you will allow me to do, if you always are as ready to let slip the times that might improve our acquaintance, or let you know I was not worthy of the honour of yours — a secret I am half afraid you have already discovered, or you would not have preferred Mr. Auld to me, that Sunday when I wished you to desert church, and charitably come where you would have been able to contribute both to the happiness and improvement of your neighbours. Besides, you did not know what trouble I took for your entertainment. Coila sat on my lap all the journey hooped in glass, and a very tender charge she was, I assure you, and one I grudge taking when I found it was to no purpose.

I fretted at her company all the way home again, and on Tuesday set off for this place, where in all probability I may be kept till after midsummer. Meanwhile I would not have disturbed your hurry of business with this intrusion, had I not been afraid, if you left Ayrshire before my return, I should never have it in my power to write you again, as not knowing your future address, or whether your whole family removed along with you, and prevented my even sending a line to your brother's care after you were gone. It's a strange reason, but a very natural one, I believe, for a man. You say your pen will be stopt by my expressing the pleasure I have in your correspondence. This will indeed be very cross, but cannot prevent my pleasing myself by frequently writing you, even should I never send my scrawls your length. You told me you liked rhyme. I felt that when you wrot I liked it too, and so I fell a-chiming words; just like an ugly woman who sees a new cap look well on a beauty, and forgets but what it should become her too, nor can even a sight of herself in the glass remove her error, but she exhibits a view of her cap and her folly to others, as I have done of my water-gruel lays to you, till I doubt you are sick of both them and I. Yet as I am living in a farmer's house, that very circumstance recalls you to my mind, and adds fervour to my wishes that it may ever prove a scene of inspiration and happiness, unrepining ease and independence to you, as well as to those with whom I inhabit at present. Should it turn out the seat of disappointment and regret to either you or them, I'm sure neither the one nor the other guess how much it would break in upon my tranquillity to know the melancholy truth, though I should still like that confidence which allowed me to participate even the bitter cup allotted for my friends.



But let me not anticipate what I hope is not in fate ; but rather fill my paper, since you like it blackened all over, with rhymes suggested by reading some poetry very full of pompous machinery, and supposing you had presented it to some of your fair friends to whom you seem inclinable to introduce the poetic merit of others as well as your own.

With flaming fancy and in florid stile  
 When wit address the beauties of our Isle  
 And art was taxt with elegance to tell  
 What virtue most all others could excell :

. . . . .

I shall also transcribe a letter I wrot the other day to a friend of mine who, I believe partly to provoke me, said there had been no poet in the British dominions since Pope, nor would ever be another ; that poesy was at a poor pitch, the Muse of England a milkmaid, Ireland a cook, and Scotland a plowman, and concluded by running down the productions of the two pens he thought I took most interest in, yours and Moore's Travels. I was not pleased, and it was thus I told it : —

To you Dr. K . . . y I point these lays  
 Howe'er Dan Pope has huckster'd all your praise,  
 Sure though your friend should write a sacred book,  
 You'd rank it with the milkmaid or the cook ;  
 For with the plowman I dare not compare  
 Th' unrivalled glory of the Shire of Air.

. . . . .

If you find leisure or inclination to write me, address for me at Haddington, and if you wish me to write, send me your address in future.

You see I have, according to custom, scrawled over my paper. You will hardly believe I am a negligent correspondent to all the world, and my very best friends find

great fault with me on this score. I suspect you would be glad I gave them more and you less of my ink, but I wish you would take revenge in kind, and study what you say as little as I do. If you write with as good will, it can cost you nothing. I hope you got the books safe, and find pleasure in reading them. I shall be glad to have your comments on them and me too, if you please, if you will just say only what you think, instead of thinking what you shall say. I expect this will cost you nothing but the trouble of reading, which to a man of business no doubt will be very dear postage, perhaps more than you will ever pay. Should you never get down this length, you cannot guess how sincerely I am, dr. sir, your much obliged friend and humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I have your *Faery Queen* here. I don't know how I shall contrive to get her returned; you must instruct me. I never read her with pleasure before. I think you have taught me to understand Spenser, and I thank you for that and all the superiour poetic pleasures for which I am your debtor. Adieu.

(1) In all probability Robert Ainslie, the lawyer's apprentice, with whom Burns had become intimate in Edinburgh in the spring of 1787.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 28th April 1788.

MADAM, — Your powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the

offer of the Excise business without solicitation; and as it costs me only six weeks' attendance for instruction, to entitle me to commission, which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed; I thought five and thirty pounds a year was no bad *dernier ressort* for a poor poet, if fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

For this reason, I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whitsunday. Still, madam, I prepared with the sincerest pleasure to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night to set out on Sunday; but for some nights preceding I had slept in an apartment where the force of the winds and the rains was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the windows, walls, etc. In consequence I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a bad cold.

You see, madam, the truth of the French maxim, *Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vrai-semblable*; your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence, which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life. . . .

Your books have delighted me: Virgil, Dryden, and Tasso were all equally strangers to me; but of this more at large in my next.

R. B.

The above letter is of the same date as that in which Burns made the first mention (to James Smith) of his acknowledgment of Jean Armour as



his wife. It is possible that the marriage had at least as much to do with his failure to meet Mrs. Dunlop at the Mount as the cold which laid him up at Mossgiel (note the allusion to "near and dear friends" in his letter of 31st March). From motives which are explained below (p. 95), he breathed no word of the momentous step he had taken in any of his letters of the subsequent month to Mrs. Dunlop.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 4th May 1788.

MADAM, — Dryden's *Virgil* has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the *Georgics* are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is indeed a species of writing entirely new to me, and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation; but alas! when I read the *Georgics*, and then survey my own powers, 't is like the idea of a Shetland pony drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter to start for the plate. I own I am disappointed in the *Æneid*. Faultless correctness may please, and does highly please, the lettered critic; but to that awful character I have not the most distant pretensions. I do not know whether I do not hazard my pretensions to be a critic of any kind, when I say that I think Virgil, in many instances, a *servile* copier of Homer. If I had the *Odyssey* by me, I could parallel many passages where Virgil has evidently copied, but by no means improved, Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing of this owing to the translators; for, from every thing I have seen of Dryden, I think him in genius and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough

to form an opinion: in some future letter you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most. R. B.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS.

HADDINGTON, *May 1788.*

DR. SIR, — I believe you have sent me your cold in your letter, for I have had it pretty severely for some days past. I indeed in some degree deserved this at your hand from the unsympathizing manner in which I received the intelligence of your illness, for I will honestly confess I have very seldom been so much pleased to hear of any body's good health as I was to read your sickness under your hand, especially as I looked on your writing as a proof of your recovery. Your giving me two letters for one is to me perfect conviction that you have some little pleasure in mine. I shall therefore henceforth dispense with apologies, and gratify my own vanity by implicitly believing, when you don't see me or let me hear from you, that it is a mutual disappointment to both. I am sure it will always be at least so to one.

Yes, Burns, when others court the painter's aid,  
Or bid the torch reflect the profile shade,  
The light is shifted and the object plac'd  
To shape the image to the wearer's taste;  
My pen oft draws a picture of the mind,  
Th' unstudy'd present to your trust consign'd.

I believe the critics of all ages have agreed with you as to the *Georgics* of Virgil. I don't know if I guess right, but I should suspect the translators would have suited better had Pope and Dryden exchanged authors. Dryden has infinite force and fire, but something indelicate and,



I imagine, unfitted for the measured strain of the *Æneid* and the polite Augustan Court. Yet, unless you feel what I mean, which is possibly all a chimera, I don't know how to express it myself, but I think Mr. M'Kenzie could describe it better. Meantime you will not be pleased with Tasso neither if you dislike the imitation of Homer, which none of the Epic poets have ever yet, I believe, ventured to shun, but on the contrary all dragged servilely in his wake — at least all them I have ever seen or heard any account of. I have been told the Italian Ariosto has struck out a path for himself, but I cannot read him in the original, and I don't know if he is translated into English.

Tell me your opinion of the following lines,<sup>1</sup> I mean your idea of the capacity of their writer to please the publick in some novel or miscellaneous productions. He is fallen from affluence to penury with a very large family, for whom he is wholly unsuited to make any effort in any other line. I once gave him my advice to write. He expatiated on the difficulties, and ran down the attempts of several of my favourites to illustrate his theory. I wrot him a few lines which I sent you in my last letter, and to which this is his reply, of which I cannot be supposed a judge after the flummery with which it sets out, especially as I believe his great partiality to me makes whatever he says half earnest, and unaccountable whim guides all his partialities. But I have not left room for the lines, so must inclose them, begging you may return them to me here. I admire your criticizims, and the more that you call them unlettered, though I can hardly believe them so; but I must still more approve the very great prudence and good sense you have shown in regard to



your commission, these not being generally the predominate features that characterize the favourites of the Muses, or the *forte* of those whose warm affections and keen passions give energy to poetic expression. It therefore gives me double pleasure to commend where I could have entertained most dubiety of your superiority. Adieu. My inclosed poet has a wife and about a dozen poor children.

F. D.

(1) The lines have not been preserved, nor is the author's name known.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
at Mr. Dunlop's, Haddington.

MAUCHLINE, 27th May 1788.

MADAM, — I have been torturing my Philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind Partiality of yours, which, unlike every other of my Patronesses and Patrons in upper life, has followed me in my return to my native shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret in the fleeting hours of my late will-o'-wisp appearance that, "Here I had no continuing city;" and, but for the material consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendor put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through Life — Insignificance and Poverty.

It is so common with Poets, when their Patrons try their hand at a Rhyme, to cry up the Honble. or Rt. Honble. performance as Matchless, Divine, etc., that I am afraid to open my mouth respecting your poetic extempores that you occasionally favor me with: I will only say, you cannot oblige me more than sending them me. For my own

part, I have extensive rhyming Projects in my head, but at present cannot for my soul tag a stanza.

29th.

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the Importance that the GREAT bestow on their trifles and small matters in family affairs, compared with the same, the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon, I had the honor to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fireside, where the homely planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures who, tho' in appearance, Partakers, and equally noble Partakers of the same Nature with Madame; yet are from time to time, their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts, sold for months and years, anxious Drudges, sweating, weary slaves, not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but the caprices of the IMPORTANT FEW. We talk'd of the insignificant Creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and Rascality, did some of the poor devils the honor to commend them. But, light be turf upon his breast who taught — "Reverence Thyself!" We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly Bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in air in the wantonness of his pride.

I return you the Poem with my thanks for the perusal. Alas, Madam! the very ingenious author deserves a better

friend than the Press. I feel most truly for him ; but no writing in this our day will take, except very transcendent excellence indeed, or Novelty.

I have often had it in my head to write to you in my miscellaneous way, a paragraph or sheet now and then as the spirit moves me ; but with all my loyalty for his most sacred and most sapient Majesty, George III., by the grace of God, REX, I hate and abhor his exorbitant Postages.

My old direction — at Mauchline, will find me. — I have the honor to be most gratefully, Madam, your humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

Do let me know when my brother Farmer's [Captain Dunlop's] family increases.

R. B.

*Ad. MR. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House.*

[30th May 1788.]

SIR, — I mentioned to your Mother in a letter I wrote her yesterday, which is the third or fourth I have wrote her to Haddington, that my Philosophy was gravelled to account for that Partiality from the house of Dunlop of which I have the honor to be so much the Object. Do you know that except from your Mother and the good family, my existence or non-existence is now of as little importance to that Great World I lately left, as the satellites of the Georgium Sidus is to a parcel of your Ditchers. I foresaw this from the beginning. Ambition could not form a higher wish than to be wedded to Novelty ; but I retired to my shades with a little comfortable pride and a few comfortable pounds ; and even there I enjoy the peculiar happiness of Mrs. Dunlop's friendship and correspondence, a happiness I shall ever gratefully prize next to the dearest



ties that wind about my heart, so, in my Ploughman Compliment, I bid the World GUDE SPEED !

Your Mother never hinted at the report of my late change in life, and I did not know how to tell her. I am afraid that perhaps she will not entirely enter into the motives of my conduct, so I have kept aloof from the affair altogether. I saw, Sir, that I had a once, and still much-lov'd fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands; and I could not dally with such a matter. Pride and seeming justice like true murderous King's Advocates talked much of injuries and wrongs; but Generosity, Humanity, and Forgiveness were such irresistible Counsel for the poor Pannel, that a Jury of old Attachments and new Endearments brought in a verdict — NOT GUILTY !

I shall be at Glasgow in the middle of next week, and if I find you at home,<sup>1</sup> I shall certainly take the opportunity of assuring you *in propria persona* how much I have the honor to be, Sir, your ever grateful hum. servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

MAUCHLINE, Saturday morn.

(1) At Dunlop, which lies between Mauchline and Glasgow.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Mosgill,  
near Mauchline.

HADDINGTON, 4th June 1788.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Fifth June 1788.]

I don't remember whether it is Solomon or Lord Chesterfield that says "Go to the ant and learn wisdom." Instead of torturing your philosophy for the solution of an easy question, let me refer you to the Mouse or the Mountain Daisey, to the Cotter or the Farmer's Auld Mare, to things animate and things inanimate.

O Nature all thy shews and forms  
To feeling, pensive hearts have charms;  
Whether the Summer kindly warms,  
    Wi' life and light,  
Or Winter howls in gusty storms,  
    The long dark night!

Yet trust me, of all her shews the most pleasantly interesting is the mind that marks the rest, and whose language, like a fine cut seal, imprints them on the soul with the most beautiful, clear, soft and lasting impressions. 'Tis here, as in a glass, we expect to meet the fairest reflection of all God's works, nay even to read our own thoughts to double advantage, when we happen to meet them better arrayed than ever they could have left home, and in the best company good sense, taste, or information can place around them. Is not such a correspondence a rational delight, and does not one owe some partiality, as well as some gratitude, to whoever is willing to indulge them with so peculiar a pleasure, especially if it is done with the unconstrained freedom which nothing but friendship and esteem can ever prompt? Now, I hope I have fully explained and accounted for the tax I have wished to subject you to, and in which I am sometimes vain enough to almost believe you might yourself have some satisfaction as well as me, since you have had the patience to read and the good nature to say you were pleased with receiving the scratches I have hitherto exposed to your eye, wholly to indulge myself, and try to draw you to retaliation. Just at the moment when I begun to hope I had succeeded, a circumstance staggers my faith. I am told in a letter that you have been a month married. I am unwilling to believe so important an era of your life has past, and you have considered me as so very little concerned in what

concerned you most as never to give me the most distant hint of your wishing such a change or of its accomplishment, while I have had the favour of hearing two three times of you during that interim. Allow me, however, married or unmarried, to wish you joy, which I assure you I do most sincerely in every situation in which yourself or Providence can put you. Don't, I beg you, check the inclination, should it ever seize you, of writing a miscellaneous page to me, spite of all the kings of Europe. It is true George Rex has provoked me so far, had it been female to curse any man or thing, I could have sometimes anathematized the postages, which have made me drop several correspondences in my time, and had I not sometimes been able, or at least believed I had been able, to get a sheet conveyed now and then gratis to you, I should frequently have been ashamed to make you pay for so many. But since I came here, I persuaded myself you had not ; do tell me if I am mistaken. For my paying, don't mind that. It is true my children have and are intitled to my income ; their happiness is all my end and aim in life, and their advantage my honour and my duty. To this I sacrifice what many would account the necessaries of life. The letters of a very few friends are my sole personal pleasure and expense. I don't grudge it myself, and no one else ought to grudge it for me. I require neither fine gown nor splend did carpet, nor could know to value them like your acquaintance, from whom I covet nothing except your visit, which I shrewdly suspect I would have held in juster estimation than she was capable of, though I could not equal her generosity in giving so largely to the poor in the distribution of stupidity or rascality, where I have a far meaner opinion of their claims than she and you discerned for. But every



one has their own hobby-horse in this world. The honest woman, looking with self-complacence at the carpet, drawing up her head, blest herself in being unlike those poor publicans, and canters on as proud as a peacock. "Hiegh-up," says you, helping her on, but, turning to me, tips the wink with a sneer, half mirth, half malice. But suppress, if you please, the later half; it is below a man to be angry at a child for being happy with his drum, and proud how loud he can beat and deaf you with its noise. Poor infant! his faculties are satisfied; so shall yours in the wide round of time be thankful their circle is more extensive, and you shall find imployment walking it over when the parchment of his drum-head is fairly beat out. Then will you be dozing with old Homer till fame beat the *reveille* and set you at work again — I would fain know upon what plan, if you dare trust me, but don't if you are reluctant. I would not inroach upon your confidence, tho' nobody would enjoy it more were it a voluntary gift. You say you cannot tag a stanza. I am sympathetically out of tune too, which I daresay you are glad of, and no one else will be sensible of the misfortune. I hope your voice will soon recover. I should truly regret your being deprived of so great a pleasure, and from which I expect to see yourself and the world draw so much profit. Besides, should I continue my original dumb fit, which I think highly probable, your notes will amuse me much more agreeably than my own, and I would not willingly be deprived of so charming a succedaneum. This hard word puts me in mind to ask you the meaning of one I met in Lady Mary Wortley Montague's Letters (a book well worth your reading, as she is esteemed the first female scribe in Britain, perhaps in the world). The word was

a sheep newly *raddled*. I have no dictionary, nor nobody near me wiser than myself. I will be proud to have you for an instructor, if you will do me that favour. I fear you have not liked Tasso. Tell me why, yet do not instruct me there, for there is a joy in approving from the heart I would not like to be informed out of by my own or a better judgment. Yet, although I would be sorry you did not like my favourite, I have no objection to hearing every fault you will deign to point out in him, for, if I may judge by myself, to criticize a poet is a sign of finding him well worth notice, and I do not insist that my dead favourites should be held quite perfect, though I may sometimes receive but awkwardly ill-natured animadversions on the living. I believe there is a letter for you from my Anthony lying at Lady Wallace's, unless she sent it to Wilson by the Kilmarnock carrier. Poor fellow! He is not sailed yet from Europe, nor my grandson arrived. I will write you when he does, if I can know that this costs you nothing, but at this distance the charge far outgoes the profit. Yet admire my economy, both in the size of my sheet, and the smallness of my type. Pray, copy me here, where alone I pretend to excell. Your hand, though characteristically original, like its owner, is extravagantly large, and a perfect luxury which I have thrown in the Atlantic Ocean ever since I had so many sons on the farther side of it, when I first adopted a crow quill, since reserved for my friends, and therefore, whenever I have one, always sacred to you from, dear sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

John and his wife offer compts. with me. When you get to Edr., if you should not recover what, as a Free Mason,

you must this day suffer for your loyalty to your Grand Master so much as to be able to do it sooner; for I really long for your answer, should it be only yes or no to a question which I believe, though I have not asked, but which you must surely guess. Adieu.

Burns went to reside at Ellisland on 13th June. As the farm buildings had to be reconstructed, he left his wife and child at Mauchline, and while building operations were going on, lived himself in a hut about half a mile below the farm, under the shadow of the tower of the Isle.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP, at Mr. Dunlop's,  
Haddington.

ELLISLAND, 13<sup>th</sup> (14<sup>th</sup>) June 1788.

Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,  
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;  
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,  
And drags at each remove a lengthening chain. — GOLDSMITH.

This is the second day, my honored friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old, smoky *Spence* [apartment]; far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except *Jenny Geddes*, the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares and novel plans hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, consequently the dreary objects seem larger than the life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind.



The valiant, in himself what can he suffer?  
Or what need he regard his *single* woes? etc.

Your surmise, madam, is just: I am, indeed, a husband. . . .

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved female literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements, but as I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter, and there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery. . . .

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than common handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never read a page but "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament," nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding.

TO BURNS.

HADDINGTON, 16th June 1788.

SIR, — 'Tis indulging myself in an agreeable manner to sit down and write what comes uppermost, and direct the sheet to one whose every line I receive with delight, were it only to proceed from the single remembrance of its being the produce of that pen which has formerly obliged the world, and more especially myself, more than I can express. Nothing can henceforward fall from an author whose native ideas have once very forcibly struck our imagination, that will be read with indifference independent of its real merit. Cease then to say your portion in life must be poverty and insignificance. As to the first, I shall not presume to foretell, although I think the supposition very improbable.

For the other, I aver it is utterly impossible, if Britain is not overrun by something worse than Goths and Vandals. I think you above affectation of any kind, so that I am afraid some temporary depression of spirits has suggested this injustice to yourself and others that could lead you for a single moment to conceive the possibility of your being overlooked by any one whose esteem you could value or wish to cultivate. I wish I could help to eradicate such an error from your mind for ever, and teach you to respect *yourself* more than to give harbour to so degrading a suspicion. I am sure female fancy itself could never invent a more improbable poetic fiction than you have done in broaching such an out-of-the-world notion. Belisarius blind and begging is a joke to it; Rousseau, indeed, poor man! became an idiot; so did Swift; yet no future event could rob either of their former fame. This was the treasure of the soul. Besides, as Alexander the Great said, the only thing in this world we can never lose is what we have given away to our friends. Now, the ideas a poet has put on paper are ever his; they are given generously to his friends and foes; the world must enjoy them; if they once had merit they can never lose it; if his genius rises, it confers a brighter luster on the past; if it falls, the twilight of his day is forgotten, but cannot obscure his meridian glory. The man who has once added honour to his name will feel himself borne up by that name ever after; yet our name cannot convey our nature; I wish to God it did, since I was once a Wallace. But, alas! no. You have a namesake here — a wright [carpenter]; he has made money, gained respect, and is a great man in his way. He told last day he had payed ten guineas for a cow; 'twas observed much might be drawn here by selling



milk. "Yes," replies this philanthropist; "I sold it for some days, but I was not able to endure the sight of so many miserable wretches as came to buy, and now I order it to be given to the hogs." This much for the living. My contemplations have been among the dead. The Church is a fine ruin, and the tombs are diversified. One stone is thus inscribed:—

Here lies, I want room to say what,  
Think what a woman should be: she was that.

The Minister wrote below with a bit of chalk—

A woman should be wife and mother,  
She was neither one nor t' other.

Another epitaph is thus:—

O Death, how absolute thy sway,  
When thou commandest we must obey;  
'T is vain in mighty strength to trust,  
For strong thou crumblest into dust.

Is not this an Irishism? I would transcribe some more of them were it not that I have some hope I may one day read them or point them to your perusal on the spot. I too had the chalk in my hand, and wrot spontaneously on a pillar of a falling arch by which I stood, forgetting but what I was at home, scribbling to you:—

O Time! O Death! destructive pair. Nor life nor stone thou knowest to spare.  
Church, men, and monuments, that here consume, cry Vain is Vanity; thy very tomb . . .

17th, 12 at Night.

I wrote the above yesterday; the handwriting is a true emblem of the writer's mind. I have slept since, but, what is perhaps worse, have waked again; therefore will



endeavour to forget the churchyard and all its powers over me so far as to write legibly. I have walked up a very high hill above the town ; it is a glorious landscape. I wished for your pen to describe it and the inconceivable wildness of the spot just by the summit, which commands so vast a variety of objects rather than a great extent of space. Coming down the hill, I took a letter of yours out of my pocket ; it enclosed a fragment of a poem you once sent me. You called it a sin-offering [see App., vol. ii. p. 306] ; perhaps it should have been also a burnt-offering ; yet I should have regretted it had, for I confess I thought it an incense of a sweet-smelling savour. But, auricular confession being no part of our creed, perhaps it is a sin to say so. If it is, I know you will readily pronounce my pardon in the words of the Church ; if not, I shall write them more humbly as a prayer "Your sins be forgiven you," and this may answer for both ; or, should all the world thrust themselves in, I would only say Amen the more heartily. Yet, indeed I have committed a very heavy trespass on this very paper, for which conscience just now stares me in the face. This was in the mention I have made of Mr. Burns, the wright. While I am sitting writing I hear the company talking of him. They are telling that since he got money his father's affairs have gone to ruin, and his prosperity never knew the happiness his son's unwearied attentions have heaped upon his decline ; besides which, he has been a father to his brothers and sisters. Let me retract and cry out, "O Burns, live for ever !" And every time I think upon thy honoured name, let it be for a bridle upon my malevolent tongue, and a rebuke to my rash heart. Let me henceforward learn not to judge lest I be judged, and it will not be the first moral lesson thy name hath taught me, and

which I shall practise with the more pleasure for thy sake. Adieu. It is midnight ; the candle dies out before me. I know not where you are or how or when you may see this. Besides, I believe you don't read my scrawls, or forget the one end before you get at the other, for you have never told me the meaning of *raddle*, whether you were married or a batchelor, or whether you paid for my letters or got them gratis ; whether you were coming to Edin now at all or when ; and if you would come here and see me, as I believe my stay will be much longer than I had thought for—perhaps still two or three months. Now, I won't send you another scrape of a pen, good, bad, or indifferent, till you give a categorical reply to every one of these queries in order.

FINIS.

The letter which follows is of particular interest in so far as it furnishes the *motif* for Burns's famous declaration—"To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger," which, as will be seen, was written in answer to some very sagacious and very plainly expressed forebodings of Mrs. Dunlop's.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Mauchline.

24th June 1788.

[Franked by Kerr : Glasgow, Fifth July 1788.]

DR. BURNS,—I have yours telling me of your marriage—the only circumstance I had been told before, and almost the only one you mention of an occurrence where I sincerely wish to be acquainted with every particular that can influence your future happiness or figure in the world. Your picture of the character and disposition ought to

make a rational man happy, if fairly drawn, and properly accompany'd, but much depends on the man as well as on the poor female, from whom you men generally require all, and to whom a great many of you give nothing. I sit down, as the phrase is, to give you joy. Were fate in my disposal, Heaven knows the words would not be ill chosen, but as matters stand, I must correct the expression, and confine myself to the sincerest wishes that the phantom may never elude your grasp, but smile upon every moment of your life and realize what "youthful poets fancy in their dreams." Meanwhile, I wish you had told me a thousand things to direct my dreams with regard to the scene your last opens for my friend, and which must to one of your exquisite sensibility prove unbounded bliss or misery. I wish to take no information from the world. They are generally prejudiced, and more with regard to you than others; but I would fain ask you if you can forgive me questions that are prompted by goodwill, but may, I fear, seem encroaching and impertinent. Literary merit is superfluous, often hurtful, and hardly ever useful to our sex. In your wife there is one quality I must wish added to those you enumerate, which is activity and capacity in the domestic life. In that line to which a large lease ties you, without these I fear you should never take possession of that, but trust entirely to that commission which I had hitherto regarded as only a forlorn hope, having built a fine fairy fabrick on the serenity and dignity of that rural scene from whence I expect to see your lucubrations issue to light and bring home a plenteous crop of money and applause to your humble independent dwelling. Indeed, if Mrs. Burns possess that household mettle which a great many very valuable women in other respects are deficient in, I still think this



your plan, and will still hope to see it crowned with success, tho' I am sensible your marriage will lose you a number of your former adherents. Whether your wife was or is only now become the mother of your children — [is] a point in which I anxiously wish myself to be satisfied. I feel all the indelicacy of my doing so ; yet cannot help putting the question. I believe all your motives of action are noble and generous, but would be glad to exchange surmise for certainty, and to be able to assure others of what I make no doubt of myself. Tell me, therefore, I beg you, what prevented your marriage long ago, and on what side the demurs came that are now removed ; for I hope the mutual interest of both and the advantage of the little ones. O Burns ! since I have so far overleapt decorum as touch upon this subject, let me go one step further, and tell you where I tremble for your peace. You say there is a heavy atmosphere about your soul that shews painful objects larger than the life. You have tryed your influence and found it too powerful with a young innocent girl, who sacrificed everything valuable to convince you of her affection. Set a guard over your heart, lest the jaundiced eye of jealousy should one day view this proof through that magnifying medium, and blast that confidence in your wife which she so implicitly reposed in you, and which is the only bond of conjugal tranquillity. Take my word for it, time and possession does not more loosen the fondness of most men than it rivets that of most women, especially if they are living a retired, industrious life, and employed in the care of children with whom they share a husband's tender attachment and assiduous attentions. To please him is the aim of every wife and reward of every anxiety and toil. Besides, you ought to do justice to yourself, and be convinced

there is little chance of your losing by comparison in any rank, and none of being equalled in your own. Yet, if report has not done you great injury, you have indulged in a freedom of life that poisons a man's mind for a husband, by leading him to measure his ideas of every woman by the standard of the very worst among whom he has connected himself. Should this be your case, the extreme sensibility of your nature, the very qualities that suit one most to receive or confer happiness, would irritate the slightest dubiety, an ambiguous look or word, into a ferment that nothing would ever be able to allay; and you would become as superiour in wretchedness as you have already shewed yourself in poetic merit, and I believe are in real worth and goodness of heart. If you have hitherto wandered in the devious paths of pleasure, 't is now time to strike into the straight road, for no truth is more uncontrovertible, than that matrimonial infidelity in even the most wealthy man hurts his family's interest, but in narrow circumstances leads to unavoidable ruin. You lie open to more temptation this way than most other men, by a more extensive familiarity with more distant ranks in life, and this will be encreast by many circumstances should you quit the farm for the Excise, which I somehow fear you will do. That is a life of more idleness, more dissipation and riot, less innocence or principle, and one's time is in general spent in worse, meaner, and more degrading as well as more corrupting company. But forgive me; this is Sunday night, and I have been preaching, and I dread you will think on a very strange-chosen text. Yet it is just what I think, and so you shall have it for better for worse, like a wife, and may God bless you with both! I had wrot the other sheet last week, but knew not what to do with it till

I heard from you. What terrible change do I feel [in] this correspondence within this few days. 'Tis become like writing to the East Indies. Letters may lie so long before you can see or answer them. Could I have foreseen that in a few months you would be married and banished Ayrshire, I had never wrot you at all. You will ask me who would have been the loser by that. I own I would: yet you may remember I once told you I had given over writing to Capt. Woodburn [see page 8] because I believed he was quite happy. I most sincerely wish I may soon have the same reason to drop you too, though I doubt it will never be in my power without extreme reluctance to hold my tongue or pen where I have learnt to please myself so oft with both. I am quite happy you liked Coila so well, and greatly flattered that the faults you found were those I had pointed to before, but the lady was not so willing to trust my skill as yours. For me she made no alteration, but looked on yours as the voice of inspiration and obey'd it accordingly, not believing herself intitled like Joseph or Daniel to know a vision better than he that saw it, though setting her own skill against mine who could only guess at it. I had a great wish to have sent you a fiddle as a marriage present suited to promote harmony in your household, and bring you in tune after this stupid harangue, but I want ear to chuse and knowledge how to get anything to this remote abode of yours, even a letter, and I have no pleasure in writing when I cannot guess when to look for an answer. I have this moment a letter from Anthony; he is at Brussels, where he says he hears "you have got on shackles. Don't I think you must be like all our great geniuses a little crackt? Spite of which he sincerely wishes you happy." Now, I am up with you for your idea of any of my family



deserving to be lampooned, especially as you will not know whether to believe an article from the *Brussels Gazette* or not. Farewell! I am sorry you can only count me so *far off* a friend, spite of which I ever am, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient, humble sert., and I beg leave to assure you your nearest relation or warmest friend cannot esteem you more or wish you happier than does

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

The Capt. and his wife offer compts.

Kerr did not despatch the preceding letter (from Glasgow) till 5th July. On the 5th Burns passed through the ordeal of confirmation of his irregular marriage. He seems to have thereafter made another flying visit to his farm in Nithsdale, and to have returned to Mauchline before the 10th, when he wrote to Mrs. Dunlop in reply to hers of the 24th June.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 10th July<sup>1</sup> 1788.

MY MUCH HONORED FRIEND,—Yours of the 24th June is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend — my wife, waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may perhaps be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost me nothing

except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

Mrs. Burns, madam, is the identical woman. . . . When she first found herself "as women wish to be who love their lords," as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and their house, but on my rumoured West Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail 'till I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my *éclatant* return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned, out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her 'till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery were in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger: My preservative from the first is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honor, and her attachment to me; my antidote against the last is my long and deep-rooted affection for her. I can easily *fancy* a more agreeable companion for my journey of life, but, upon my honor, I have never *seen* the individual instance. In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress; and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business. The Muses must not be offended when I tell them, the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas*; but I assure them their ladyships will ever come next in place. Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female

partner, for life, who could have entered into my favourite studies, relished my favourite authors, etc., without probably entailing on me, at the same time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the other blessed boarding-school acquirements, which (*pardonnez moi, Madame*) are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be-gentry. You are right, that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number.

I like your way in your churchyard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, *in progression*, by me, to send you when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind [folio], is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dissocial, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence.

R. B.

(1) This letter has hitherto been dated August, and it was obviously so superscribed by the poet, but it is clearly that to which Mrs. Dunlop refers in hers of 22nd July, with the jocular postscript, "How fast time flies when a man is married!"



TO BURNS.

HADDINGTON, 22nd July [1788].

[Yours was Agt. ; how fast time  
flies when a man is married !]

DR. SIR, — I had yours yesterday, and would be truly pleased with and vain of myself could anything from my hand make another as happy as I felt myself at sight of the large sheet and the flattering idea which you suggest that you have another advancing on its way to succeed it, and will now and then favour me with a progressive remembrance of the miscellaneous kind, which from you will always be *something new* — the name of the very last book I have read, and some parts of which I would have liked very much to have had you read with me, as I was much more than commonly pleased with them alone, spite of rather too marked an endeavour to appear eccentric. You don't tell me what stay you make in Ayrshire. I dare not wish it long, now that I fear your interest ought to fix you elsewhere, for you know the old adage that "A rolling stone gathers no fog" [moss], and your nest seems as it would require to be fast fogged if the birds continue to hatch thus quick in braces.<sup>1</sup> Children are said to be blessings. May my friends always find them so ! When they are not so they are surely the bitterest vexation our hearts can know. Alas ! I have felt the poisonous sting, and I think this must have been the hurt that Gavin Douglas says "Ten years in Lemnos Isle made Philoctetes skirle." It could not have been worth while to do it so long for any other wound, but of this I trust you shall never be a judge. God forbid you should ! I am persuaded you deserve to be happy, and I hope Providence shall think so too. Yet sorry I am to think the scene of it

must be so far from where I have the least chance to witness it. However, I must have some shift fallen upon at least to be present with you upon paper at Ellisland. You would have valued my letter far more had it reached you in that distant, solitary abode than when it dropt in amid the circle of your friends at Mossgiel, where you were perfectly well without it, and I even suppose every faculty of your soul so wholly employed by domestic joy and conscious rectitude that I wonder you even thought of answering me at all. Believe I feel the favour and am grateful, but, oh Burns! do you remember what Hume<sup>2</sup> makes Lady Randolph say: — "Wretch that I am, at every happy mother I repine." Yes, the tenderness of your mention of the return to an absent wife makes my eyes flow and my heart wring. It recalls too forcibly scenes never, ah! never to return to me. I weep over the joy of my friend, but they are not tears of envy. Yet this is the weakest part of my whole soul. 'Tis here I have really felt sorrow unalloyed by hope, and, as you say, not a wish to gild the gloom unless like you I change my state, which I trust shall never happen in this world, as it certainly would be for the worse to my family and fame, and so could never be to the better for my happiness, spite of my maxim which you laughed so much at, that a woman is always a helpless waif and unprotected single, and like unsticked [unstaked] pease bladed [fouled] with every blast — of very little comfort to herself, or consequence to others. Heaven knows how different I felt the world while I met it my father's daughter or my husband's wife. Yet I ought not to complain. The world owes me nought. I never liked it at its best, but dearly well I have liked a few friends in it, and most kindly they have repaid my

affection with double interest. Would to God this may be my liferent annuity as far as yet remains of it, and the rest restored in reversion hereafter. My children support me nobly, and 't is thus I hope to be surrounded above, where even a prodigal can add joy to the Father's feast, nor could less than heavenly joy compensate the anxious vigils of a Father's broken heart. Our Father which art in heaven, Thy will be done ! Of thirteen thou hast given me, three Thou hast already appointed their parent's harbingers above. If Thy wisdom sees fit to demand a tithe of those that remain, shall I dare murmur at the destination of that Power who has blest me in so many, and shall I not gratefully acknowledge that my Andrew himself has been to me better than seven sons? My girls, too, have been to me all I could wish, only that they have not yet been well married, which I must still say I think the true end of a woman's creation. I suppose you are not to be in Edinburgh now, since you don't say so. I am sorry for it, as I must be tied still here, or at Morhame, the name of my son's farm, according to the indolence or expedition of your namesake, who is the undertaker for his house, and ought to have had it ready three months ago. But the delay in the business I came on makes me more uneasie. I wish to God it were well over ! Yet half your wealth there will content me, but even for that I must still wait a great while, at least all next month. I am sure your wife should not be jealous of the Muses. These good old maiden aunts have already showed their kindness to her offspring, and I hope have yet much in store for them, if Creech or some other such young fellow don't insidiously purloin their presents. They have, too, for once appeared in the good-natured light of marriage-making, a very



singular one for elderly single ladies, but indeed in their connection with you all has been extraordinary. Nor do I know how sufficiently to thank them for having introduced to my acquaintance the most original character I shall perhaps ever have an opportunity of admiring. Allow me to say you seem to build resolve on something superiour still to reason, and support the majesty of man on columns of nobler elevation than the fairest Corinthian order. You have already built yourself like Absolom a pillar, tho' not for the same reason he did, and I cannot help transcribing the inscription Lady Dundonald applied to Commissioner Rhodes, in case you never heard it : —

The mausoleum and the bust-room fall and crumble into dust;  
My faithful memory shall be a living monument for thee.

I had a letter the other day from my poor Anthony. He says he is afraid when you speak of him you only mean an oblique compliment through him to me, for he wrot you three months ago, but you never had *time* to write him. These are his words and way of marking them. Poor fellow! He has met a very great disappointment just now, in which I heartily share with him. Indeed, I did not think I could have been so much interested in any thing whatever. I have been reading Montrose's Memoirs to put it out of my head. I wish I had something of yours. No writer ever yet stole so sweetly on my attention as some of your pieces have already done, and surely the influence ought to increase in the same ratio with my esteem and sincere good wishes for their writer. I'm sure I am glad to think you are happy; yet I believe that very idea bursts a strong connection fancy had formed while I believed you wretched, disappointed, and your mind a void

like my own. Misery expects from misery sympathy and indulgence in her capricious, wayward moods, which she knows prosperity and ease forever disclaim. Thus, tho' I never was more pleased with you than I am at this moment, I feel a restraint hitherto unknown in expressing myself, and I am afraid you will be worse pleased with this letter than any I ever wrot you. Yet should it be so, I can no way help it, for this is, as well as the rest, the real image of myself at the instant of drawing it, and if anything in the picture is still favoured with your partiality, you will have pleasure in now and then drawing a melancholy note from the inclosed fiddle in remembrance of me. But, as it is only in a questionable shape just now, and may be transmogrified as much as you please, only honour it with your friendly acceptance, and tune it up to whatever is most in character of your friend or in unison with yourself, always considering that, as the gift of a friend is the reverse of every sacrifice to vanity, it ought to be consecrated either to use or pleasure allennerly [only]. Meanwhile, forgive my taking this liberty of offering a trifle in the only way I have it in my power. 'Tis a Scots superstition to believe a bargain always turns out much the better for being followed with a luckpenny. I'm sure nobody wishes more sincerely that Mrs. Burns and you may never be worse pleased with yours than at present. I therefore could not forgive myself had I omitted that part which, by the custom of all times and nations, friends are authorised to take in order not to hurt the future fortune of their newly shackled neighbours, friends, or acquaintances in all ranks and degrees of life, and which is regarded as a pledge of future goodwill to the contracted pair. So, your displeasure being less tremendous than my

own, I have ventured, even at the risk of it, to send you a £5 card from the Thistle Bank. I am wrong, as Lord Bankton<sup>3</sup> said when his fourth wife mist one napkin of a dozen fine ones in a parcel. "My dr., when my last wife was buried, I forgot to draw it out in putting her corpse into the coffin. I shall behave better next time." Farewell. The only extraordinary thing I have met since I wrot you last was having much obliged a man who had never spoke to me for an hour. At last he broke out in an eager exclamation: "O madam, if you but saw the dead men's bones on Gladsmure!<sup>4</sup> They are just five inches below the ground, and their teeth is like the very driven snow." Forasmuch as you are a poet, I do not think you can form any idea of the pleasure I felt in this address, or the reasons from whence it sprung, nor have I paper to tell you. Only, the poor fellow was young, handsome, dying of a consumption, and losing a leg in a white swelling. This was a stage-coach adventure. I never saw him before or since. Write me soon, and oblige, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and humble sert.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) On 3rd March 1788 Jean Armour gave birth to twin daughters, who survived only a short time.

(2) John Home's (pronounced Hume) tragedy, *Douglas*.

(3) William M'Douall, a Lord of Session, author of an *Institute of the Law of Scotland*.

(4) The battle of Prestonpans, when Prince Charles Edward defeated General Sir John Cope in 1745, is called alternatively Gladsmuir, having been fought in the East Lothian parish of that name.



TO MRS. DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 2nd August 1788.

HONORED MADAM, — Your kind letter welcomed me yesternight to Ayrshire. I am, indeed, seriously angry with you at the *quantum* of your *luckpenny* ; but vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write you from Nithsdale, and give you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportunity of calling at a post-office once in a fortnight. I am six miles from Dumfries, am scarcely ever in it myself, and, as yet, have little acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Besides, I am now very busy on my farm, building a dwelling-house ; as at present I am almost an evangelical man in Nithsdale, for I have scarce "where to lay my head."

There are some passages in your last that brought tears to my eyes. "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith." The repository of these "sorrows of the heart" is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum* ; and 't is only a chosen friend, and that too at particular, sacred times, who dares enter into them.

Heav'n oft tears the bosom-chords  
That nature finest strung.

You will excuse this quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject further, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage belonging to a gentleman in my Nithsdale neighbourhood. They are almost the only favors the muses have conferred on me in that country.

Thou whom Chance may hither lead,<sup>1</sup>  
Be thou clad in russet weed,  
Be thou deckt in silken stole,  
Grave these maxims on thy soul.

Life is but a Day at most ;  
 Sprung from Night — in Darkness lost :  
 Hope not Sunshine every hour,  
 Fear not clouds will ever lour.  
 Happiness is but a name,  
 Make Content and Ease thy aim.  
 Ambition is a meteor-gleam ;  
 Fame a restless, idle dream ;  
 Pleasures, insects on the wing  
 Round Peace, the tenderest flower of Spring ;  
 Those that sip the dew alone,  
 Make the Butterflies thy own ;  
 Those that would the bloom devour,  
 Crush the Locusts, save the Flower.  
 For the Future be prepar'd,  
 Guard, where'er thou can'st guard ;  
 But thy Utmost duly done,  
 Welcome what thou can'st not shun.  
 Follies past, give thou to air ;  
 Make their Consequence thy care.  
 Keep the name of Man in mind,  
 And dishonour not thy kind.  
 Reverence, with lowly heart,  
 Him whose wondrous Work thou art ;  
 Keep His Goodness still in view,  
 Thy trust, and thy example too.  
 Stranger, go ! Heaven be thy guide !  
 Quod the Beads-mane of Nithe-side.

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following were the production of yesterday, as I jogged through the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intend inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my excise hopes depend, Mr. Graham of Fintry ; one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, but I will dare to say it, of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts, "unhousel'd, unanointed, unaneal'd."

Pity the tuneful muses' helpless train ;<sup>2</sup>  
 Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main :  
 The world were blest, did bliss on them depend ;  
 Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend !"  
 The little fate bestows they share as soon ;  
 Unlike sage, proverb'd wisdom's hard-wrung boon.  
 Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son  
 Who life and wisdom at one race begun ;  
 Who feel by reason, and who give by rule ;  
 Instinct 's a brute and sentiment a fool !  
 Who make poor "will do " wait upon "I should ;"  
 We own they 're prudent, but who owns they 're good ?

Ye wise ones, hence ! ye hurt the social eye ;  
 God's image rudely etched on base alloy !  
 But come ——

Here the Muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow ! You vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell ! R. B.

(1) This is the first version of the verses "Written in Friar's Carse Hermitage," that which was inscribed on a window-pane in the Hermitage, and entered in the Edinburgh Commonplace Book.

(2) These lines were incorporated in the "First Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq."

[To Miss RACHEL DUNLOP.]

MAUCHLINE, 2d August<sup>1</sup> 1788.

MADAM, — I was in Nithsdale when your kind present and kinder letter came to Mauchline, so did not see it till yesternight that I came here.



I am in perpetual warfare with that doctrine of our reverend priesthood, that "we are born into this world bond-slaves of iniquity and heirs of perdition, wholly inclined to that which is evil, and wholly disinclined to that which is good, untill by a kind of spiritual filtration or rectifying process called effectual Calling," etc., the whole business is reversed, and our connections above and below completely change place. I believe in my conscience that the case is just quite contrary. We come into this world with a heart and disposition to do good for it, untill by dashing a large mixture of base alloy called prudence *alias* selfishness, the too precious metal of the soul is brought down to the black-guard sterling of ordinary currency. This, I take it, is the reason why we of the Barbarian sex, who are so much called out to act on that profligate stage the World, come so far short of your gentler kind who bear on much richer materials an equally more elegant impression and image of infinite purity, goodness, and truth. As I am a married man, neither my knowledge of facts or impartial testimony can be doubted; and while I can produce your kind correspondence with the poet, or in general while I can name Mrs. Dunlop with all her daughters I can be at no loss for corroborative evidence.

Mrs. B. begs me to return to you her most gratefull thanks for your elegant little work the Cap. She says she will be hard pushed indeed for family linens if she do not make your cap grace the head of her hindmost child, tho' she should have a score. I rejoice in Coila's progress to perfection, tho' you have awaked my curiosity much to pay her my grateful respects again; but when that curiosity will be gratified heaven knows. — I have the honor to be, madam,  
your obt. hbl. servant, (Signed) ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This letter exists in the Lochryan MSS. in the form of what purports to be a copy of an original Burns letter, with at the end the initials J. A. M. or W., and the docket in another hand, "A letter of Robt. Burns the Poet to Mrs. Dunlop." If it is correctly dated, it cannot have been addressed to Mrs. Dunlop, seeing that the authenticity of the letter to her of the same date (see p. 119) is not disputed; and the reference to Coila, if not also the allusion to the transition stage between Ayrshire and Ellisland, fix it down to the year 1788. We have ventured to assign the letter—which is obviously genuine Burns—to Rachel Dunlop, who, living with her brother at Dunlop, was likely to have heard of the poet's marriage from the Major at least as soon as her mother, and might well have sent a congratulatory letter with a cap for Mrs. Burns, at the same time reporting progress on her interminable picture of Coila. The allusion in the text to "Mrs. Dunlop with all her daughters," combined with the preservation of the copy at Lochryan, makes it certain that the letter was addressed to one of the family.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBT. BURNS, at Moss-gill,  
near Mauchline.

MORHAME MAINS,<sup>1</sup> 9th *Agt.* 1788.

DR. SIR, — You will not grudge to pay for one letter from me rather than believe me forgetful of your goodness to me, which must appear were I not to put you to that expense, and catch the few days of your abode in Ayrshire to tell

you that owing to the absence of Mr. Kerr it will not be in my power to write again for some weeks ; so much I stand in awe of Mr. Pitt. Never an advice came better timed than yours to "welcome what we cannot shun," and I endeavour to follow it to my utmost, as I do all your moral lessons in sickness and in health, still praying for the prosperity of my teacher. But since I wrote you last I have been sadly tost about ; first a fever, which left me lame of one foot ; and now I am but just able to limp about in the jaundice, in which situation I last night left Haddington to come here, where amid sickness, hurry, and confusion, the sight of green fields around me, your letter in my pocket, and the kindness of my young friends is a great comfort. Nor does your Muse ever spread her wing in vain for me. Still, I will hope some chance unseen by us may once more fix her eyrie near me, for I own I cannot unmoved resign *our* beadsman to Nithside. I am surprised and sorry you have not got Anthony's letter, which I am sure came safe to Edr., and I believe was accompany'd with a book. I am sure there was something along with it, but I fear my daughter Susie has been careless to whom they were sent. I wrote her that if they went to Wilson at Kilmarnock you would get them. It will be charity to write me, be it rhyme or reason, as the saying is, while I am thus confined. You see I can hardly hold the pen, but don't mention my illness ; 't is a secret I shall keep from my family at home for their happiness, as I am also assured there is no danger now. Direct to me at Morhame Mains, near Haddington, and should you finish your address to the man I at present envy most [Mr. Graham], do send it me. I cannot now point out all I admire in the things you sent me last. You are angry at the quantum of my luckpenny. Upon my soul so



am I too, though for perhaps different causes. Adieu, dear sir, your sincerely obliged, obedient, humble sert.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) John Dunlop had now entered into possession of his new farm-house at Morham.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 16th August 1788.

I am in a fine disposition, my honored friend, to send you an elegaic epistle ; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian.

Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn ?<sup>1</sup>

Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky ?

or, in the more homely poetry of the *Psalms of David in Metre*,

Why art thou [then] cast down, my soul ?

What should discourage thee ?

My increasing cares in this, as yet, strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children :—I could indulge these [reflections], nay, they press for indulgence, 'till my humour would ferment into the most acid vinegar of chagrin that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down to write to you ; as I declare upon my soul I always find *that* the most sovereign balm under Heaven for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr. Miller's<sup>2</sup> to dinner, [for] the first time since I had been his tenant. My reception was quite to my mind; from the lady of the house quite flattering. I believe in my conscience that she respects me more on account of my marrying a woman in circumstances somewhat similar to her own, when she commenced Mrs. Miller. See what it is to be rich! I was going to add, and to be great, but to be rich is to be great. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage, as a professional man, was expected: I for once went agonising over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, Independence of spirit and Integrity of soul! In the course of conversation, Johnson's *Musical Museum*, a collection of Scots songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning "Raving winds around her blowing."<sup>8</sup> The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words: "mine, madam—they are indeed my very best verses": *sacré Dieu*; she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well, "King's caff is better than ither folk's corn." I was going to make a New Testament quotation about "casting pearls," but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste; a proof, if the subject needed, that these said two qualities, so useful and ornamental to human nature, are by no means inseparably of the family of Gules, Purpure, Argent, Or, etc.

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favored by partial Heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours, and



prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days, whose thoughts, whose independence, whose peace, nay, whose very gratification and enjoyments are sacrificed and sold to these few bloated minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scots ballad called *The life and age of man*,<sup>4</sup> beginning thus —

'T was in the sixteenth hunder year  
Of God and fifty-three,  
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,  
As writings testifie.

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time his most voluptuous enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The life and age of man*.

It is this way of thinking, it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor, miserable children of men. If it is a mere phantom existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

What truth on earth so precious as the lie?

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophisings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with Heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life? No: to find them in



their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear madam, you are now *more* than pleased with the *length* of my letters. I return to Ayrshire, middle of next week; and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest. I am really afraid you will wish me to return to my post-sheet again. I have the honor to be most sincerely and gratefully, Madam, your humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Free quotation of the commencement of Shennstone's Twentieth Elegy.

(2) At Dalswinton House.

(3) Burns's song with that title in the second volume of the *Museum*.

(4) *The Life and Age of Man* was a popular chap-book.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
at Moreham Mains, by Haddington.

MAUCHLINE, 21st August 1788.

I came to Ayrshire yesternight, my much-esteemed friend, and found your very alarming letter waiting me. My father used to say, that in his whole life, whatever he was fondly set on, almost always failed him. I am afraid it is all the heritage he has left me. Since my Ambition dared to hope for your correspondence and friendship, the enthusiasm of Attachment has grown on me, till the enjoyment of your friendship is entwisted with my very enjoyment of Life; and your last letter has given me a

thousand terrors. I shall be here for ten days, and I conjure you to write me ever so short a scrap to inform me if you are getting rid of that ugly Distemper. To quit this disagreeable subject; the following is the first Compliment I have paid the Nith, and was the work of an hour as I jogged up his banks yesterday morning. The idea is a young gentleman perhaps going abroad. I do not affirm it has merit: the fact is, an author is by no means a competent judge of his own composition; at least till the heyday of Novelty evaporate.

The Thames flows proudly to the sea,  
 Where royal cities stately stand;  
 But sweeter flows the Nith, to me,  
 Where Cummins<sup>1</sup> ance had high command:  
 When shall I see that distant Land,  
 That winding Stream I love sae dear!  
 Must cruel Fortune's adverse hand,  
 For ever, ever keep me here!

Fair spread, O Nith, thy flowery dales,  
 Where rove the flocks amang the broom;  
 And richly wave thy fruitful vales,  
 Surrounded by the hawthorns' bloom:  
 Tho' wandering now must be my doom,  
 Far from thy bony banks and braes;  
 There may my latest hours consume,  
 With those my friends of early days!

You would know an Ayrshire lad, Sandy Bell, who made a Jamaica fortune, and died some time ago. A William Miller,<sup>2</sup> formerly a Mason, now a Merchant in this place, married a sister-german of Bell's for the sake of a £500 her brother had left her. A sister of Miller's, who was then Tenant of my heart for the time being, huffed my Bardship in the pride of her new connection; and I, in the

heat of my resentment resolved to burlesque the whole business, and began as follows : —

### THE MAUCHLINE WEDDING<sup>3</sup>

#### I

When Eighty-five was seven month auld,	
And wearing thro' the aught,	eighth
When rotting rains and Boreas bauld	
Gied farmer-folks a faught ;	gave, fight
Ae morning quondam Mason Will,	
Now Merchant Master Miller,	
Gaed down to meet wi' Nansie Bell	went
And her Jamaica siller,	money
To wed, that day.	

#### 2

The rising sun o'er Blacksideen <sup>4</sup>	
Was just appearing fairly,	
When Nell and Bess <sup>5</sup> get up to dress,	
Seven lang half hours o'er early!	too
Now presses clink and drawers jink,	
For linnens and for laces ;	
But modest Muses only <i>think</i>	
What ladies' underdress is,	
On sic a day.	such

#### 3

But we 'll suppose the stays are lac'd,	
And bony bosom steekit ;	hid
Tho', thro' the lawn — but guess the rest —	
An Angel scarce durst keekit :	peeped
Then stockins fine, o' silken twine,	
Wi' cany care are drawn up ;	prudent
And garten'd tight whare mortal wight	

As I never wrote it down, my recollection does not entirely serve me.



4

But now the gown, wi' rustling sound,  
 Its silken <sup>6</sup> pomp displays;  
 Sure there's nae sin in being vain  
 O' siccan bony claes! such  
 Sae jimp the waist, the tail sae vast —  
 Trouth, they were bony Birdies!  
 O Mither Eve, ye wad been grave  
 To see their ample hurdies haunches  
 Sae large that day! ! !

5

Then Sandy <sup>7</sup> wi's red jacket bra'  
 Comes, whip — jee — woa! about,  
 And in he gets the bony twa —  
 Lord send them safely out!  
 And auld John <sup>8</sup> Trot wi' sober phiz  
 As braid and bra's a Bailie, fine  
 His shouters and his Sunday's giz wig  
 Wi' powther and wi' ulzie oil  
 Weel smear'd that day.

Against my Muse had come thus far, Miss Bess and I were once more in unison, so I thought no more of the Piece. Tho' the folks are rather uppish, they are such as I did not chuse to expose, so I think this is about the second time I ever scrawled it.

I wish these trifles may find you in a disposition to relish it.  
 Adieu! Heaven send you more exhilarating moments than I fear you at present enjoy! ROBT. BURNS.

(1) My landlord, Mr. Miller, is building a house by the banks of the Nith, just on the ruins of the Cummin's Castle. — R. B.

This is the first draft of the song "The Banks of Nith," which makes No. 295 of Johnson, vol. 3. Numerous alterations were made in the text before it was sent to Johnson.

- (2) William Miller, a Mauchline friend of Burns.  
 (3) This squib was first published from this MS. in the *Centenary* edition, 1896.

- (4) A hill. — R. B.  
 (5) Miller's two sisters. — R. B. Both were "Mauchline Belles."  
 (6) The ladies' first silk gowns, got for the occasion. — R. B.  
 (7) Driver of the post-chaise. — R. B.  
 (8) M——'s father. — R. B.

Ad. MR. ROBT. BURNS, Moss-gill,  
 near Mauchline.

MORHAM MAINS.

[Postmarked 28 Aug. 1788.]

DR. BURNS, — I have had both your kind letters and you insist in so very obliging a manner to hear from me that, although I am ashamed to pick your pocket to fill King George's private purse, I cannot omit writing. To disappoint the expectations of a friend is always contrary to my principle, and on this occasion quite contrary to my inclination. There is in your correspondence a certain *je ne sais quoi* that secures you against the most overpowering insolence of your friends; at least I find it so. In short, yours are the letters of a poet, breathed from the heart of a Christian, and transcribed by the hand of a man who writes strong full text, and there is no mood in which I do not find them delightful, even when they are querulous and inconsistent — for instance when you come from *Cummin's Castle* in the sulks, and fall a-proving that sense and taste are not inseparable from family, because possessed by a lady evidently of the family of Or or at least Argent by inoculation. I am glad for the sake of matrimony and my friend that when you wrote that letter you were far from Ayrshire and your wife; for indeed you have been as crusty as an old bachelor. Your ink is all gall, nor was it you, but poor Mrs. M.

that should have used the sacred quotation of the swine, for they not only trod her pearls under foot but turned and rent her. I wish I could see some confidential letter of yours where you speak of me and my impromptus, of which nobody ever heard or saw so many. But at least mine have never been praised where yours were neglected ; so I shall stand free of envy, and, like many a one in the world, sleep safe in my insignificancy, and stand by you like a mole-hill at the foot of Traprain.<sup>1</sup> Indeed I began to fear your fire was gone out, and you were going to light up a new one of turpentine and the marine, and a very unodoriferous flame and dangerous to its neighbours, as I once experienced in attending a course of experiments in Natural Philosophy. The operator told us on mixing the three coldest liquids in the world there would arise a sudden flame, and we would be convinced of the propriety of this being his last experiment. Instantly a blaze of liquid fire pouring over the table on every side, accompanied by the most suffocating exhalation, made every one run out of the room as fast as possible. Next day I had the honour to be where Lord Stair was long expected. At length he appeared, and apologized for his absence that, having only one silk vest and small cloths, he had been obliged to wait till my lady had darned the holes burnt in them at yesterday's exhibition. Now, I should be more afraid still of the caustic of your double-distilled vinegar should it come across me at any time. However, you may allege I have not been shy of provoking it at present, but I trust 't is already mollified by the sweet smiles of innocence and the endearments of love, amidst which you are now placed ; and besides, my sickness claims compassion. Meanwhile, I beg you don't change your paper, unless it be to get double foolscap,<sup>2</sup> for



I should rejoice your sheet were as large as a winnow-cloth.  
But to my health.

So pleased with your pen,  
Of your friendship so vain,  
Not toothache nor jaundice  
Shall make me complain.

Yet I will not allow you to call it an ugly distemper. Remember, Madam Pompadour says, "A woman's last sigh is more for her looks than her life." Besides, yellow is the royal colour in China, where it is the most envied distinction to be allowed to wear it. 'Tis the beauty of the topaz and the glory of the Sienna marble, the most esteemed and costly modern decoration; so that, should I die here, I would make an inimitable fine statue for the farmyard at Morhame Mains; spite of which I endeavour to recover the original tint at the expense of tarter emetic every other day, and as yet without much success. My gown, instead of buttoning as before, pins over a handbreadth, but I am not very bad, since you see I can laugh both at my own distress and that of my friends. And if you can allow your poetical fancy to represent a sick lady living on white wine and sour milk, and walking from six to ten or twelve miles every day, as I really do, you will not find me an object of great compassion. Indeed the malady does not prey upon my mind; so I esteem it a very great trifle. It was far otherwise when the fever was coming on, and I wrot you in the mournful mood, as I suppose by your reply; for indeed I recollect nothing of what I said then. It will put me half in the vapours again when I consider your next must be far from Ayrshire, in the nest of my foes. The Menteiths only betrayed Wallace's life; the Cummins<sup>s</sup> murdered his fame, and I hate their very remembrance. Nor can I endure

you should call yourself the Bard of the Nith. I even read with regret the wish, though offered under another character, of ending one's days on those distant banks, did not the next line show you thought upon Auld Hermit Ayr at the moment fancy threw those numbers into rhyme. I would have sent you some Lothian lines my butter-milk had cast up, but the paper will not hold them, and they are not worth paying still more for. I wish you may not have a third couple befor our little one arrive. Farewell! I won't write you again till Willie Kerr comes home, and Lord knows where he is, however, or when he will return. I am vext to think I have not the least chance of being at home till after you must be long gone. I think in all human probability we shall never meet more. That is my fate, I think, with all my friends, and nobody is worse of making new ones. Yet hitherto every tenant of my heart, short or long, seems to have sat on a liferent lease — I mean my friends; ladies don't tell about their loves. I hope you have the promise of a good crop. I wish you be attentive enough for a farmer. My son has never been one night from his own house since he carried home his wife, and he says he finds his affairs require all that and more, were it possible for him to give it. May Providence guide your paths, and crown them with health, wealth, and prosperity, is the wish of, Dr. Sir, your obliged friend and humble sert.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) A conspicuous conical hill in Prestonkirk parish, East Lothian.

(2) Burns's last letter was written on foolscap — all previous ones having been on post.

(3) Dalswinton, the property of Burns's landlord,

formerly belonged to the family of the Comyns, lords of Badenoch (see *antea*, p. 131). Wallace was betrayed to the English by Sir John Menteith. The Comyn whom Bruce slew for alleged treachery is charged with betraying Wallace and the cause of independence at the battle of Falkirk (1298), by deserting the patriot chief, along with other Norman-Scotch nobles, at a critical moment.

A letter which Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop between that last printed and that which follows is missing. In it he must have transcribed the full text of the "First Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintry," of which he had sent her the "first crude thoughts" only in his letter of 2nd August. In her next Mrs. Dunlop criticises the "Epistle" in detail. This and the following letters were addressed by Kerr of the Post-Office to care of Burns's friend John M'Murdo, who soon after this date appears in the poet's correspondence as Chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry at Drumlanrig, but must have been resident at this period at Carse, in some capacity or other. Scott Douglas says M'Murdo was introduced to Burns by Captain Riddel of Friar's Carse.

*Ad.* MR. ROBT. BURNS, at Ellisland,  
care of Mr. John M'Murdo, Carse,  
Dunscore, by Dumfries.

MORHAME MAINS, 12th Sept. 1788.

DR. BURNS, — I never received a compliment my heart more sweetly relished than when you tell me you found



writing me a relief to that corroding gloom which sometimes obscures the brightest minds, and makes those most unhappy who deserve least to be so. As Rousseau says, "Have I not known George Keith, and shall I complain of fate?" Shall I for a moment be enabled to reflect that the man whose works have soothed the darkest moments of my soul has told me that in writing to me his cast off one cloud, and got nearer that serenity with which one naturally wishes genius ever blest, and to which I would pray you might never be a stranger, were it not that a variety of sensations is, I doubt, necessary to preserve the genuine character of both the man and the muse. I think Scripture says it is good for us to be afflicted. Experience tells me it has oft been good for me, and I remember, before I knew you, I suspected prosperity might hurt you, and, if you remember, told you so in the first lines I ventured to address to you. Since, I own, I have not believed a harsh regimen so needful for your temperament, and were providence to entrust me with the administration of things, should hardly confine you to it so oft as perhaps adverse fortune may do, since I really esteem you so much as to believe indulgence would not make a spoilt child of you, and, whatever you may think, I assure you I think this is the very pinnacle of greatness in man, and far o'er-matching the boast of fortitude in misfortune. Yet I wish you had a little more of a sanguine disposition, and did not imagine every cloud portended a storm, or every thunder-storm a bad harvest. Yet, did not these chimeras come across you, they could not be dissipated by sitting down to write me, and so I had lost one of the sweetest ideas of my life, one that I could not purchase with any price, and for which gold could give me no equivalent. I incline to

exclaim like Rousseau — has not my correspondence once proved comfortable to Burns, and shall I ever again be tempted to think I have lived in vain, or say, why was my thread spun out to 58 years? As to my health, I must tell you I have drank two pounds of hemp seed boiled in small beer, and am greatly better ; so you see I am not so crabbed as when I wrot last, and abused you so grossly that I expected you were to lampoon me instead of giving me so good-humour'd a reply, in which, however, I am not wholly sure you have followed nature. I daresay you had a little resentment, and thought at least a lady ought to have kept within the bounds of good breeding ; and so I certainly would had I not been convinced it was sometimes better for both my friend and myself to be laught at than to be tret seriously when we are seized with poetical-tragi-comic forebodings. Now, before I criticise your poetry, I must tell you a secret, but don't breathe it to the air as yet. I have had one of my wishes granted since you heard from me last ; yet "the Gods have in some measure curst Pamela with her prayers." I have a daughter<sup>1</sup> married, but married to a native of a foreign land, possibly lost to me forever, and a match which is just a cast of the die whether 't is a great one or one that will not afford bread. The man I never saw. He cannot speak my tongue, nor I his ; yet he is well spoke of ; they are fond of each other, and I trust in my God shall be happy, when I shall be permitted to view them from a superiour situation, after I have bid adieu to all this mortal coil, and am placed where I hope it will make a part of my bliss to behold or perhaps superintend that of my children and my friends. Perhaps, Burns, I may sometimes be employed as your Coila or guardian angel. How would you like to have the tables so turned upon you, and

be reduced to write under my poor inspiration? I fear you would once more repeat "My pen I here fling to the door," but I leave myself no room to give you my sentiments on your verses, far less to send you mine, as I promised in my last, since this must be only a single, and even then a sixpenny letter. But I hope Kerr will be returned against I write you again, and then I shall scribble more at my ease and less to your loss, as I may then do it gratis.

I hope and believe your lines must please the man to whom they are address, and although in some degree a parody of Pope, there is great variety of finely fancied epithets thrown through the whole, and sufficient novelty to attract a man of taste; the *lead* and *buoy* are well hung on, and though I would have wished you less hard on the poor knights and squires, I admire much the *flowing phosphorus* and *lumpish dough* and *unyielding mass*, and most of all the *flashing Aurora Borealis*. Then the materials, creation, and character of the poet, are all in my opinion well conducted; honest Nature's compunction and twisting the woodbine round the *generous truly great* is a strong, nervous, elegantly-turned compliment, which must dart through a sensible soul worthy of the noble praise it conveys. The first and last couplets of the next sentence I think peculiarly beautiful, and the *hardwrung boon* feelingly expressive. As for your ideas of the goodness of the poetic heart, I think my own were in unison when I found in

That breast where genius flamed refin'd,  
The lighthouse steer'd for by our storm-beat kind.

The contrast that follows is striking to every mind a little deficient in the treasure of worldly wisdom, and finely illustrated by Moore in his story of Mr. B. I daresay



too most of us, like him, have found our most valued friends in this class. At least I am sure I should never covet any of the rudely-etched medals on base metal, those vile caricatures of the Supreme Being. As to the next lines, my very soul would thrill with envy in reading them, were they not address to the Graham, a name which every Wallace to the end of the world ought to revere. May Fintry feel and deserve the warm address *Friend of my Life*, etc. etc. I could not wish him a warmer blessing were he the great Sir John [Wallace] himself. To the end all I can say of it is to repeat your own words of Anton's<sup>2</sup> picture, "'Tis yourself, the very soul of the man" — that soul which I could never have investigate with half the delight I have done had it never more the horny fist and piebald jacket which first attracted my curiosity, and still convinces me of all the superiority it required to shine through such an uncouth disguise. Apropos to disguise, this jaundice has made my skin so yellow and thick and uncouth that I always remind myself of Dryden's tale of Guiseard in his leathern frock. But I must not dismiss your verses without remarking that I am not pleased with the word *WHERE* beginning the last line but one, and would wish you to substitute in its place either *With* or *There*, as with either of these the sentence would conclude which to me at present seems imperfect, and leaves you in expectation of something yet to follow between and *Finis*. But perhaps this is only some confusion of grammar in my brain, instead of a fault in your arrangement of words, where interesting ideas might in some degree jostle them out of their place in your head and consequently in your poem. My young landlady will still, I think, go about all the harvest, which with us is not unfavourable; so I shall

end with Cunningham the Stewarton robber's conclusion to his father, when he acquainted him he was next day to be hanged — "hoping these few lines will find you in the same condition" — I mean as to the harvest not the hanging. Now, pray tell me where you are to go at the end of three weeks, as my letters are too precious ventures to be set adrift at random, and if I knew a kinder farewell than a Roman one, I would try to find room for it. What do you think of a Scots "God bless you and your friends," among which

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) This must have been Mrs. Dunlop's second daughter, Susan, who married James Henri of Bernaldean. The marriage has hitherto been dated in 1789, but this letter fixes the date for certain in 1788.

(2) A pet name for Anthony Dunlop.

Burns has used the back of this letter for a jotting.

Fields	1st	.	.	.	.	51 thraves
"	2	.	.	.	.	75 thraves
Mosshill	.	.	.	.	.	54 Do.
Stookhill	.	.	.	.	.	110 Do.
Above bar	.	.	.	.	.	44 Do.
Corner	.	.	.	.	.	17 Do.
Croft	.	.	.	.	.	55 Do.
Houseback	.	.	.	.	.	79 Do.
Holmhead	.	.	.	.	.	60 Do.

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To Mrs. DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 27th Sept. 1788.

I have received twins, Dear Madam, more than once, but scarcely ever with more pleasure than when I received

yours of the 12th inst. To make myself understood: I had wrote to Mr. Graham, inclosing my Poem addressed to him, and the same post which favoured me with yours, brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he received mine; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was most polite or kind.

Your Criticisms, my honored Benefactress, are truly the work of a friend. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed, caterpillar critic; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude the *pro* and *con* of an Author's merits; they are the judicious observations of animated Friendship, selecting the beauties of the Piece.

I have just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning (for between my wife and my farm is just 46 miles) by three o'clock. As I jogged along in the dark, I was taken with a Poetic-fit as follows —

MRS. FERGUSSON OF CRAIGDARROCH'S LAMENTATION FOR THE DEATH OF HER SON<sup>1</sup>

*An uncommonly promising youth of eighteen or nineteen  
years of age*

Fate gave the word, the arrow sped  
And pierced my Darling's heart,  
And with him all the joys are fled  
Life can to me impart!

By cruel hands the Sapling drops,  
In dust dishonored laid:  
So fell the pride of all my hopes,  
My age's future shade.



The mother-linnet in the brake  
Bewails her ravished young ;  
So I, for my lost Darling's sake,  
Lament the liveday long.

Death, oft I've fear'd thy fatal blow,  
Now, fond, I bare my breast ;  
Oh, do thou kindly lay me low  
With him I love, at rest !

You will not send me your Poetic-rambles, but, you see, I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your Impromptus give me double pleasure : what falls from your Pen can neither be unentertaining in itself, nor indifferent to me.

The one fault you found, is just ; but I cannot please myself in an emendation.

What a life of solitude is the life of a Parent ! You interested me much in your young Couple. I suppose it is not any of the ladies I have seen.

I would not take my folio for this epistle, and now I repent it. I am so jaded with my dirty long journey that I was afraid to drawl into the essence of dulness with any thing larger than a quarto, and so I must leave out another rhyme of this morning's manufacture.

I'll pay the sapientipotent George most chearfully to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire. — I have the honor to be, Dear Madam, your much obliged, and most respectful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) James Fergusson, Esq., younger of Craigdarroch, son of the victor in the contest for the Maxwellton Whistle ; the youth died on 19th November 1787. This "Lamentation" was sent also to another patroness of the poet, Mrs. General Alexander Stewart of

Afton, on the death of her only son, Alexander Gordon Stewart, who died, aged sixteen, at a military academy at Strasburg, on 5th December 1787.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS, at Ellisland,  
care of Mr. John M' Murdo, Carse,  
Dunscore, Dumfries.

MORHAME MAINS, 1st Oct. 1788.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Third October 1788.]

DR. SIR, — The three weeks you mentioned being at home<sup>1</sup> are past, and I fear I may miss the mark in writing you now, as you told me the same address would only answer that time. Yet, as ill luck has oft thwarted me before now, I will for once hope good chance may befriend me, and have kept you longer than you intended to catch this flying sheet, which sets out on a random search as soon as I heard Kerr was returned. If ever I keep a register of time, I shall surely mark the month of August with a white stone. Indeed it has been the most eventful of my life; but not for that do I note it at present, but that on that memorable month are dated four of your letters — a happiness in which I shall I hope hereafter rejoice to see poor August have rivals. 'Twas in that blessed month you told me you found writing to me the best salve for an wounded spirit. The poor Levite [*sic*] who lay wounded on the roadside was not more solaced by the wine and oil of the Samaritan than my spirit was by reading that line in your letter; for I had the vanity to take it for a literal fact. I have thought Sept. of a dreary length since you have been silent. Yet I ought to please myself that your spirit has during that space felt hale and hearty, since you had not recourse to the cordial of whose efficacy I feel



more proud than the Queen ought to do of her throne. Indeed, it must be confessed I have much more cause. The sovereign ambition of my soul from my earliest remembrance has been to share and soothe the affliction of those I esteemed and liked, but the very superlative delight one can figure to themselves in my opinion must be in fancying to ourselves that those we even *admire* voluntarily fly to an intercourse with us, in the confidential trust that it will prove consolatory. Now, this is the only hope that never deceives us. No one ever sat down to write in this faith but what found it could really remove *mountains* of woe. How oft in writing you disjointed scraps of prose and verse have I felt, as it were, the very heart change within me.

And as dark shades fly o'er th' uneven ground,  
Black clouds grow lighter in their airy round.

But whilst I experienced this relief in being allowed to address the first poet of my age or country, in pouring forth the effusions of the moment before the gentlest sensibility that ever displayed itself in the flowing harmony of verse, never did I dare harbour an idea that the person to whom I looked up aloft from the lowest base of the hill would stoop from the summits of Parnassus, from the holy heights of inspiration, to squander that ink upon me which half the world were gaping for. Nor could I have hoped that, when my eyes would no longer serve me to pick a thorn from your finger without spectacles, you should be able to discover anything in my character to draw a sting from your mind, or help to sweeten the bitter cup of human care. I'm sure if ever in any moment or manner my being in this world has contributed to make you easier, I



cannot express how much your telling me so has made me happier.

Dear Burns, will you allow me to ask, is "Each pleasure riches give" <sup>2</sup> a proper English expression? Were it not yours, I should not think it was perfectly correct, but would rather have approv'd "Each pleasure wealth can give" as more grammatic and melodious too. Since you asked my opinion, I should be angry at myself if there were a comma I disliked, or rather that I feared any one else could dislike, that I did not point out to your notice the moment it struck my own. Perhaps you will be angry at me for doing this; 't is the weakness of great men to fret at people who find trifling faults in them or their works. I think you are above this with a friend, but I may be mistaken. If I am, I hope it is only in my grammar, not in my *friend*. There I would have my judgment fixed and unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians, for it is there alone I am sure it could not change, but for the worse. Meantime, I only criticise the line, not the sentiment. I must tell you a little incident in confirmation of the parts the world allow you for relishing the sweets of affluence. One day your works were the subject of discourse. I had not then seen so many proofs that the author's taste soar'd above these pleasures gold can buy, and, all curiosity, asked if any of the company knew or had ever seen him. "Yes," says one gentleman, "I was once accidentally two days with him." "And," cries I, "what kind of man is he in company? What did you think of him?" "I don't know," says he, "what he might have been once, but they have quite spoilt him now at Edr. If ever he was good for anything, he is the damndest bundle of self-conceit and insolence I ever saw."

"Insolence," says I, surprised; "for self-conceit I can readily forgive that, for surely he has an infinite deal to found it on; but for God's sake tell me how did he show it? What did he say or do?" "Why, he talked loud and more than came to his share. In the morning could not breakfast without confections; at dinner found nothing good enough for him, nothing but what was detestable, curst the cook, damn'd the waiters, and despised drinking port." "He had been drunk with port the night before, and ree or cropsick in the morning." "No," says he, "'twas all airs; he was quite vife, and ate a very hearty dinner." You'll allow this was a strong sketch. Had Beugo hit it off no better, I don't think I should have discovered the original by the picture, as I really had done not long before. Indeed, I could not resist rejoining, and I dare say in a manner expressive of the self-applause I really felt at the moment, "He must have had great esteem for the company I saw him in, for his behaviour was the very reverse of all that, and seemed perfectly natural and easie too." But I have forgot myself, and lost sight of the rich pleasures we set out with. Now, I own I have, I think, felt sometimes a zest in mediocrity which riches would have excluded, and I dare say so have you. Even at this moment, while I write, are you not conscious that, if you possess a coronet and a nabob fortune, you would be less sensible that my letters were real testimonies of the internal treasures Providence has given you in lieu of them? Or, were I able to serve you as I could wish, might my happiness even in that not be counterbalanced by a diminution of my present satisfaction in that disinterested goodwill which I am proud to believe you bear me? Yet I must confess, if Mr. Graham make a proper

use of his advantages, I will envy him spite of all philosophizing to the contrary.

I wrot the above two days ago. Since that I have been very busy—shall I tell you how? Yes, I will, that you may see there is no *sanctum sanctorum* in my mind (so void it is now) at which a friend may not peep, even although that very friend must remember how lately he turned the dark lanthorn upon me when his whole soul was on flame, and he hid every circumstance from me as if I had been the worst enemy he had in the world. This was a thunder-clap I can never forget, for at that instant I was just pluming myself in the superiour share I had gained of your esteem and confidence. But to my employment and motive for it—a secret which on trial I almost find incommunicable. I have a gown which was a present from my only brother. For this and forty other reasons, which you can never guess, I have had it this forty years, and wore it at least ten of that time; it was perfectly in tatters. Four days ago *quand je reçois une lettre de mon gendre inconnu*, 't'was now necessary to have a new one. I sit down to write for it, but just then got an account of the most clamant misery of a poor woman whom fate had persecuted past redemption, and whose last hope was snatched from her in a moment by the unlooked-for expiring of the only son from whom she looked for help, in her arms alone and in despair. These are the moments when gold is valuable. I threw my letter in the fire, gave ten shillings for a body to my old gown instead of sending for the new one, saved the tailor's bill, and sit down to sew it myself with a pleasure which even superseded that of writing you, and which I would not have felt could I have readily commanded £20 at the



time in ready money without borrowing — a thing I dare never trust myself to do, for I am so miserable an economist I should never be able to make up my leeway again if I did, and neither my pride nor principle admit of being in debt.

Will you be so good as tell me whose marks the different letters are in Johnson's *Museum*, which I have just got the second volume of? <sup>8</sup> Besides a number of stars and one differently shaped from all the rest, there are D., M., X., Z., R. and B., all or any of whom I would be glad to have named, if 't is not a secret you are unwilling to communicate to myself; for if you forbid me I would not mention it to anybody else. I hope you are not again in Ayrshire, and I at so great a distance still. My patience is wore out on that and several other accounts, but I believe it is predestinate you and I are never to meet more. Should it even prove so, I flatter myself our minds will frequently agree even at distance, and that we may both have pleasure in comparing and communicating our ideas to each other upon paper, if not in company. Meantime, I shall be impatient to hear whether you have been at Mr. Graham's or at Mossgiel. If the first, what were the consequences of your visit? Write me here still, for God knows when I leave this. I would complain of my long confinement were it rational to think of myself, when I consider what must be the situation of the poor girl I am with, and see with what inimitable good humour she submits to what she cannot but anxiously feel. She is a most enormous bulk indeed, and I am sure must be a very great burthen to herself, yet she never breathes a complaint. God send her safely through a state which has for some time given me very uneasie apprehensions on her account! Besides, I really

think losing his wife would be ruin to John at present. I think their life is almost the only one I ever could have coveted, and in my youngest days I believe I would have found it replete with everything which would then have been requisite to make me happy, could I have divested myself of some part of the liking I have to books and the predilection in favour of those who write, or at least like to read them, which I dare say it is as good for them that they enjoy in a more moderate degree, so as not to interfere with the farm, as I fear it may sometimes do with you. But it is no matter, since, as poor Mess John Hunter<sup>4</sup> says in one of his poetic pannels in the church wall at Ayr, speaking of charity —

Water whereon this seed is cast may yield  
A crop more plenteous than the richest field.

I hope you may forgive my quotation, if it requires any apology from the expectation of being able to realise the prediction, as I have no doubt if you could labour equally to the advantage of your family, there is no ground you could improve with such ease and pleasure to yourself as the precincts of Parnassus. I am sure there is none where I would like so well to walk round your policy.

It is this moment come into my head that as the time of the address is elapsed, you may never get this scrawl, in which case it is already too long. Perhaps you may think so, at any rate, if the weather be still bad, and the corn wet in the field, or some such rural distress putting you out of tune with yourself and of course with me, unless you resemble me in one particular, which is that of being most pleased with what you write when I am displeased and unhappy with everything else, for really the use of the poet

is not most materially to divert his graver friends. That his ludicrous pieces can do to great purpose, as I experienced at the early dressing-room ["The Mauchline Wedding"] I was lately introduced to, but the serious sublime ones bring serenity and unclouded sunshine to anguish, and even to peevish discontent — the most troublesome state of female minds, and from which they have few recourses and their friends no shelter but what they often find in contempt or indifference. Nay, more, a friendly kind letter can convey this cordial more effectually than all the poignancy of wit or melody of numbers put together for the public. In nothing is *meum* and *tuum* more distinguishable than in the difference one feels between reading the same thing and from the same person in a book or in a letter. Believe me, I prefer one of yours by post to the whole Alexandrian Library, even could I get it in English. Adieu! Health and happiness to you and yours, and may you always wish and find me your friend!

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) This is a reference to the missing letter to which Mrs. Dunlop's of the 12th September was an answer.

(2) From the "First Epistle to Robert Graham, Esq., of Fintray." Mrs. Dunlop's suggestion was not adopted.

(3) This fixes the date of publication of the second volume of Johnson's *Museum*.

(4) "D'rymple Mild's" predecessor in the first charge of Ayr parish. He was the author of, among other works, a religious drama, "The Wanderer and Traveller."



*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Mossgill, Kilmarnock.

MORHAME MAINS, *9th Octbr.* 1788.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Tenth October 1788.]

DR. BURNS, — I have been very much out of luck. The very day I heard Mr. Kerr was come home I sit down to write you, and although the time was elapsed you had pointed out for finding you at Ellisland, I flattered myself some lucky accident might have retarded your journey. In short I wished to write, not that I had anything to say, but that I hoped to tempt you to say something to me, and as you had left me quite in the dark as to where you were going, and I was very unwilling to think it would be again to Ayrshire, just while I was so far from it, I thought I would venture a sheet to Nithsdale. I did in the evening, and, as cross luck would have it, the very next morning after I dispatched my letter, which was not till two days after I should have done it, came yours of the twenty-seventh from Mauchline. Mine, I hope, will lay safe till you go home again, but you need be no ways anxious about it, as it is all a prosaic piece, and too frozen already to catch cold in keeping. I am so much obliged by your writing on your arrival, and sending me half the product of your morning's work, that I dare not reproach your little scrap of page, though the more I was pleased with having it, the more I must wish you had held by the former size. Yet it would have been quite unconscionable to wish your fatiguing yourself, just lighted from a 46 miles' dark ride, and getting into so large a circle, from whom it was almost unfair to steal the precious moments of meeting to give me your Lament, tho' indeed you would hardly have done justice to the share I take in what tends to your happiness, had you

delayed telling me of the twin-letter, from which I dare say you can hardly reap more pleasure than I do. Fortune honoured and favour'd mine much by bringing it in good company, and hereafter I shall be glad you never find cause to separate the ideas of a friend who really may and does materially serve, and one who can only wish sincerely to see another do what is beyond her own reach to perform. You say I send you none of my poetic rambles. The truth is the instrument is jogged out of tune of late, as you say, by parental solitudes, but if you 'll not be pleased but with a rhyme I must try two three lines like the wife in the song — what soe'er they be, if they jingle, that 's enough for me.

Tane up between a priest and Jean,  
 You once forgot Parnassus Queen ;  
 From you to me the Muse then fled,  
 With you still running in her head.

Now I aver this is a very pretty compliment, if you can find it out, and quite fit to come from the *Aurora of the poles*, but I am too long at telling you what a grand subject I was within a hair's-breadth of furnishing your mourning Melpomene. Nay, all the tears of the Muses would have been too few. My very soul shudders at the thought, even now when the danger is past. You say you are interested in the young couple (whose secret I therefore hope you still have and will keep till you have it from some other quarter), but figure to yourself Lady Wallace's<sup>1</sup> house burnt, which has been twice in the most imminent danger within this six weeks, and suppose the Swiss coming post to see the unextinguishable flame that has actually reduced to ashes the house next his bride's. Suppose you found Mossiel all in one conflagration on your arrival, and

the distant flame lighted your darksome way for some miles before you could reach it. You may then pen something that would have suited such a catastrophe. Yet I know not. You would still [have] had friends and acquaintances. How bitter must be misfortune to a stranger in a strange land! But this picture is too dreadful to dwell upon; it has made me sick two days already; so I bid it adieu, and will now send you some lines I wrot some time ago on being told a Mr. Anderson had just bought Clerken-ton in this neighbourhood, and was about to marry a sweet pretty girl, a Miss Finlay, born at Donmanore near Edr., and living in Haddington with a grandmother. She is a distant relation of mine, and came to see me herself, and some circumstances in which I believe Fame was mistaken, as well as in that of its being her betrothed that had bought Clerken-ton, interested me and produced the inclosed. Here I was called to see my son Andrew come to town on the news of the fire, which has been more alarming than they let me know — so very near my friends that L. W. was taken out of a window, not daring open the door lest the mob had rushed in and robbed the house, which on this account my daughter would not leave as long as it was possible to stay with safety. Yet the effort has been so much for her she has been confined to bed ever since, and so ill her brother and sister were called in from the country to see her — all which they kept quiet from me, as I could not have left John's wife, whose situation is still undetermined, and who seems to place so much on having me with her that I could not on any account tear myself away, unless she had been rich enough to have some other friend among the numerous relations living all around her who might have supply'd my place. Be not therefore surprized my hand shakes; so



does my heart ; yet my health is now pretty good, and I am much interested to hear what harvest and crop you have had this season, and how you left and found your far distant concerns. Remember I told you the Muse that inspired my rhymes was the wish to please a poet and to gain a friend, and that my aim was to pry into every cranny and corner of that soul which prompted your delightfull lays. I have done everything in my power to attain that end ; if you think me worth the trouble, shew me the house, instead of turning the dark side of the lanthorn on my friendly curiosity. Farewell.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) When James Boswell went to London the dowager Lady Wallace became the occupier of his flat in James's Court, where he in his turn had succeeded David Hume.

TO BURNS.

MORHAM MAINS, *Tuesday 21st Oct. 1788.*

DEAR SIR, — In consequence of the promise your friendship excited, I am to inform you that this has been a great week with me. It has brought me a son and a grandson. On Wednesday last, Mr. Henry, the Swiss mountaineer, arrived from London, where he had been in a fever, and found his wife, thank God ! just got out of the same condition, in which she had continued ever since the fire. I have not yet seen either of them, being wholly taken up about the young stranger and his mother, whom I now hope soon to be able to leave well and nursing her little charge. She was really ill, and I think the farmer's joy in the increase of his family was hugely diminished by his concern about and fears for his little wife. I would beg to hear from you as soon as you receive this, that I may guess whether I

can have any chance of finding you in Ayrshire at my return, which I think ought not now to be a far distant prospect. It is not mere words of course to say I will meet my friends with redoubled pleasure if you are one of the number. On the contrary, I am not sure if even the power of your own magic numbers can express the strength and sincerity of that regard and admiration which attaches me to my favourite author, and inspires the pleasure and pride I feel in having your own sanction to assume the name of, Dr. Burns, your friend and obliged humble sert. Believe me, 't is one of the greatest satisfactions I can feel to think you have a little partiality in favour of the truly grateful

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Write me here till I give you another address. I have not time for a word more. You who increase like the patriarch Jacob will despise our poor single, long-looked-for production. Lord bless you and your wife, your sons and daughters, your man and your maid servant, your ox and your ass, and all that is yours ! Amen.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Moreham Mains, Haddington.

SANQUHAR, 23rd Oct. 1788.

DEAR MADAM, — This is literally a letter *en passant*, for I write you while my horse baits, on my wonted journey. Your two kind epistles came in course ; but I shall much long for a third one, to inform me how you have recovered the horrid shock you must have felt in the dreadful catastrophe of Lady Wallace's house. My blood runs cold when I think of it !

Apropos, I breakfasted this morning at Laicht, near New Cumnock, and Mrs. Logan<sup>1</sup> asked me if I had heard that

Miss S——n D——p was married to a Dane? I replied, the information was new to me. As it is written, "that which is done in corners shall be proclaimed on the house-tops." Your last, Madam, is unanswerable. The illustrious name of Wallace and the accomplishments of Mrs. Dunlop have accustomed you so much to the superlatives of Commendation that I am afraid.

ELLISLAND, 26th Oct.

My officious Landlady interrupted me, Madam, as I was going on to tell you that my Modesty called out Murder! all the time I was reading your last. Very unlike the fate of your other letters, I have never read it but once. Though I never sit down to *answer* a letter, as our Pastoral Bards make their contending swains answer one another, or as a be-periwigged Edinr. Advocate answers his be-gowned brother, yet I cannot help thanking you particularly for the poetic compliment in your epistle the last I received but one. Now I talk of Poetry, what think you of the following character:<sup>2</sup> I mean the painting of it: —

A little, upright, pert, tart, tripping Wight,  
And still his precious Self his vast delight:  
Who loves his own smart Shadow in the streets  
Better than e'er the fairest She he meets.  
A *man of fashion* too, he made his tour,  
Learn'd, vive la bagatelle, et, vive l'amour;  
So travell'd monkies their grimace improve,  
Polish their grin, nay sigh for ladies' love.  
Much specious lore, but little understood;  
Fineering oft outshines the solid wood:  
His solid sense by inches you must tell,  
But mete his subtle cunning by the ell;  
His meddling Vanity, a busy fiend,  
Still making work his selfish craft must mend.



Another<sup>2</sup> —

. . . Crochallan came,  
 The old cock'd hat, the brown surtout the same:  
 His rising beard just bristling in his might,  
 ('T was five long nights and days to shaving-night)  
 His grisly, uncomb'd hair, wild-staring, thatch'd  
 A head, for thought profound and clear, unmatch'd:  
 Yet, tho' his caustic wit was biting rude,  
 His heart was warm, benevolent and good.

These are embryotic parts of what may, perhaps, one day be a POEM.

In Johnson's Scots *Musical Museum*, you will find my pieces, such as they are—for Heaven knows they are many of them dull enough!—signed with one or other of the letters R., B., or X. The other marked pieces are by poetic folks whom I dare say, except Dr. Blacklock, you don't know.

I may see you at Moreham mains, if you do not leave it for two or three months; as a little business of the devil's making will sometime soon, drive me to Haddington. Or if you return to Dunlop to keep your Hallowe'en, I will meet you there also; as I must be at Dunlop and Kilmaurs' cow-fairs, which happen on Hallowe'en and Hallowday—old style. I believe I shall move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale at Martinmas. I am getting the loan of a neighbouring house, till my own be ready.

Before this can reach you, my direction will be again at Mauchline.—I have the honour to be, with the highest respect, Dear Madam, your obliged and obedient humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Mrs. Logan of Laicht, on the banks of the Afton in the parish of New Cumnock. She brought Laicht to her husband at marriage, and they resided

there, and not at Mr. Logan's patrimonial estate of Knockshinnoch in the same parish. Mr. Logan was the "Afton's Laird" of "The Kirk's Alarm."

(2) These are the first drafts of the lines on Creech and Smellie respectively, which were afterwards incorporated, with emendations, in "The Poet's Progress."

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Moreham Mains, Haddington.

MAUCHLINE, 29th Oct. 1788.

I give you joy, Dear Madam, of your new grand-child. I beg you will give my sincere compliments to my brother farmer on the occasion.

I wrote you the other day from Nithsdale, but I write you whenever I have leisure; and lest I should grow tiresome with my Egotisms and rhymes, just let the reading of them wait till you too have leisure. I began a Work lately, but what that work may be I am totally ignorant. As Young says, "'Tis nonsense destin'd to be future sense." I sent you a fragment of it by my last: take the following rough sketch of the intended beginning, and let me know your opinion of the lines:—

#### THE POET'S PROGRESS<sup>1</sup>

##### AN EMBRYOTIC POEM IN THE WOMB OF FUTURITY

Thou, Nature, partial Nature, I arraign,  
Of thy caprice maternal I complain.  
The peopled fold thy kindly care have found,  
The horned bull tremendous spurns the ground:  
The lordly lion has enough, and more,  
The forest trembles at his very roar.  
Thou givest the ass his hide, the snail his shell,  
The poisonous wasp victorious guards his cell.

Thy minion Man, exulting in his powers,  
 In fields, courts, camps, by altars, bars devours.  
 Kings bear the civil, Priests the sacred blade;  
 Soldiers and hangmen murder by their trade :  
 Even silly Women have defensive arts,  
 Their eyes, their tongues, and nameless other parts.

But O thou cruel Stepmother and hard,  
 To that poor, fenceless, naked thing — a BARD!  
 A thing unteachable in worldly skill,  
 And half an idiot too, more helpless still.  
 No heels to bear him from the opening dun;  
 No claws to dig, his hated sight to shun :  
 No horns, but those by luckless Hymen worn,  
 And those, alas ! not Amalthea's horn.  
 His dart satyric, his unheeded sting;  
 And idle fancy's pinion all his wing :  
 The silly sheep that wanders, wild, astray,  
 Not more unfriended, and not more a prey.  
 Vampyre Booksellers drain him to the heart,  
 And butcher Critics cut him up by art.

Critics, appall'd I venture on the Name ;  
 Those bandits that infest the paths of Fame :  
 Bloody Dissectors, worse than ten Monroes ;  
 He cuts to teach, they mangle to expose.  
 His heart by causeless, wanton Malice wrung ;  
 By Blockheads daring even to madness stung ;  
 Torn, bleeding, tortur'd in th' unequal strife,  
 The hapless Poet flounders on thro' life :  
 Till fled each Muse that glorious once inspir'd,  
 Extinct each ray that once his bosom fir'd ;  
 Low-sunk in feeble, unprotected age,  
 Dead even resentments for his injur'd Page ;  
 He feels no more the ruthless Critic's rage !

So, by some hedge, the generous Steed deceas'd,  
 To half-starv'd, snarling Curs a dainty feast ;  
 By Toil and Famine wore to skin and bone,  
 Lies, senseless of each tugging bitch's son.



Thus far only have I proceeded, and perhaps I may never again resume the subject. I must mention one caution to you, Madam, with respect to these verses; I have a remote idea that I may one day use them as instruments of vengeance, and consequently I will hide them like a Conspirator's dagger. I mean this lest you might inadvertently mention them, or acknowledge them as your old acquaintances, should you meet with them anonymously in a Newspaper. I need not add that I allude to a certain Bookseller's connection and mine.

How do you like the following song, designed for an Air composed by a friend of mine, and which he had christened "The blue-eyed lassie":<sup>2</sup> —

I gade a waefu' gate yestreen,      went, road, last evening  
A gate, I fear, I dearly rue;  
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,  
Twa lovely een o' bony blue.

'Twas not her golden ringlets bright;  
Her lips like roses wat wi' dew;  
Her heaving bosom, lily-white,  
It was her een sae bony blue.

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyl'd,      lured  
She charm'd my soul I wist na how;  
And ay the stound, the deadly wound,      shock  
Cam frae her een sae bony blue.

But spare to speak, and spare to speed;  
She 'll aiblins listen to my vow:      maybe  
Should she refuse — I 'll lay my dead      death  
To her twa een sae bony blue.

I must have one line at least to make this new page appear with any grace, and now it is done, give me leave to subscribe myself, Dear Madam, your obliged friend and grateful humble sert.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This is the introduction to "The Poet's Progress" as printed by Mr. Scott Douglas from a holograph copy in the possession of his publisher, which he presumed to be the identical copy sent to Dugald Stewart on 20th January 1789. The two fragments transcribed in Burns's letter of the 23rd October from Sanquhar followed, and the lines beginning "O dulness" sent to Mrs. Dunlop on New Year's Day 1789 wound up the poem. Both introduction and conclusion were incorporated in the Third Epistle to Robert Graham of Fintry, and Burns never published anything under the title of "The Poet's Progress." It has to be noted that in sending the MS. to Dugald Stewart on 20th January 1789, the poet wrote: "The fragment beginning 'A little, upright, pert, tart,' etc., I have not shown to man living till I now send it to you," which we now know to have been untrue, unless he purposely excluded woman from the connotation of "man."

(2) "The Blue-eyed Lassie" was published in Johnson's third volume, set to a tune of Captain Riddel's. Thomson, who published it in his third volume, set it to the tune "The blathrie o't." The subject of the song, Jean Jaffray, daughter of the minister of Lochmaben, married a Mr. Renwick of New York, and died in 1850.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Mauchline.

*5th November '88.*

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Sixth Novemr. 1788.]

DR. SR., — I had yours on Monday, and it is now the fast or feast of Thanksgiving,<sup>1</sup> according to every one's ideas of

the import of those words and the consequences of the great event this day is set apart to commemorate. While nothing can be a stronger proof of the fallibility and contrariety of the human mind than to see the worthiest characters in Britain divided in their opinions whether we ought this day to appear before our Creator with songs of joy and gladness or with the meek sigh and sackcloth of sorrowful sinners groaning under punishment and repentance, I, as an ignorant woman, quietly acquiesce in the ways of providence, and implicitly believe what that does is best, whether rewarding or correcting. Yet I could hardly ever whip a child myself without crying, and far less see another do it. Perhaps no age or realm has ever witnessed more severe discipline than what has fallen to the share of the Stewart race. I was brought up in Revolution principles ; reflection ought to strengthen them, and I believe does, although all my affections draw forever cross. You say your heart makes you a Christian, and I doubt mine makes me at least half a Jacobite.

You tell me your modesty cried Murder ! when you read my letter. I write, when 't is to you, so much from the impulse, I had almost said the inspiration of the minute, that I cannot for my life recall what I could say to create a feeling of that kind. At least, however, I hope you did not suffer a painful death, though your modesty must certainly be more easily hurt than mine, which never yet was wounded by the honest applause of friendship. The hyperbole and superlative are called indications of a weak mind ; therefore 't is poor weak women are allowed to use them, and generally when they are in earnest, I believe, make ample use of this prerogative, and I suspect most men, when they believe us sincere, allow self-love to give an



assenting smile to this amiable female weakness exerted in their favours. Rochefoucault says —

Not to admire is all the art I know  
To make men happy and to keep them so.

I say to admire is the very thing on earth to make me happiest, and to indulge myself in expressing it with all the enthusiasm I feel, and in all the superlatives that want of expression calls into use, is a pleasure I would not forego for any one I will ever be offered in exchange. So say I, let heros and war-sloops exult in their strength, and leave me at liberty to rejoice in this folly, if it is one, nor will I take your word that I have made you uneasie by it, for I trust you have not so contemptible an opinion of me as to imagine I would set my hand to a syllable more than I thought at the time; and if I have thought too much, I suppose that is an error in judgment you would not put one on the rack to make them retract. On the contrary, I feel this, like most other errors, is always the further in the deeper.

I like several of the songs in the 2nd vol. of the *Museum*, much particularly those beginning "Tho' cruel fate," "Raving Winds," "Thickest Night." One beginning "Cold blows the Wind," and markt Z., I took for yours, and one with a T. for Thomson, author of "The Choice." But I have a particular wish to know who uses the signature of D. Will you be so good as tell me? I am promised a sight of a tragedy wrot by a farmer here. If this promise is kept, I shall tell you what I think of it. I dare not tell you what I think of the characters you sent me last for fear poor squeamish modesty should grow sick again, and you should think me void of all compassion for the *mauvaise honte*.

By the bye, ever in contradiction with myself, I was uneasie and vext at being so long without hearing from you, and tantalized and out of humour when I got your letter. Fate plays cross purposes with me of late. You and I, it seems, must go like buckets in a well. You are to be at Dunlop on Hallowday, while I am in East Lothian, and to go to Nithsdale just before I shall return to Ayrshire, which I now think must be in less than a month. And to crown the jest, you are to come to Haddington a month or two after I leave it. I could almost say as you do—"This is business of the Devil's making," but these reprobate phrases don't suit a lady. As to you, the world call you one so loudly that I am sometimes almost ashamed to attempt your defence. A gentleman told me with a grave face the other day that you certainly were a sad wretch, that your works were immoral and infamous; you lampooned the clergy, and laught at the ridiculous parts of religion, and he was told were a scandalous free liver in every sense of the word. I said I was certain he must be misinformed, and asked if he knew you. He told me he had been in your company and knew it was the case. "I beg pardon," said I, "I could not have guessed you had ever seen him, or read his book, by the character you give of either." Another of the company asked me if I knew you. I said I thought so, and would be exceedingly sorry to be convinced I did not. What did I think of your religion? That it was too exalted and sublime to have any ridiculous parts capable of being laughed at. What of that illiberal mind that could fall foul of so respectable a body of men as the clergy of Scotland? That the Scots Bard was far above it, that no man more regarded the pastors of his people when worthy of their calling, but that those he

exposed were wolves in sheep's clothing, the bane of the community, and too black for his ink, low beneath his pen. But I begged to appeal to the lines left in Mr. Laurie's manse as proof positive the clergy were not attacked in a collective body. The writers [lawyers] had in my time pensioned three men to quit practice in their calling, as their characters were too atrocious for the reputation of the profession. It would be much for the interest of some of those he celebrates that the same delicacy should take place among divines. 'T was observed I was too warm. I could not acknowledge that was possible in behalf of a character I knew, esteemed and admired, and which I thought one must renounce both taste and every amiable disposition of the human soul not to wish well to, and view with that prejudice which inclines to extenuate faults that may exist, instead of listing with malice to smother every talent and virtue, and forge blots that never could fall from either the tongue or pen that composed the "Cotter's Saturday Night." Farewell. — Your much obliged friend and humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I have seen the Dane ;<sup>2</sup> he is the gentlest savage ever was caught. He would make no figure in Goldsmith's description drawing the tiger by the tongue from his den, but you may perhaps meet him where I am sorry you cannot also meet me at the same time. We are all getting well again as fast as we can, but that is not in a great hurry. Our secret is known, but not yet declared, and my charge is ready to be honorably given off my hand here. Sure you think I am banished the county, or have forgot every duty, when you could suppose I might still be here three months. — Once more adieu !



*5th Novbr. 1788.*

John and his wife offer compts. I believe I shall go to Edr. next week. If you write me, direct to the care of William Kerr, Esq., Post Office, Edr.

(1) This day — 5th November 1788 — was the hundredth anniversary of the landing of William of Orange.

(2) M. Henri, her son-in-law to be. Mrs. Logan of Laicht had told Burns that he was a Dane.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP, care of William Kerr, Esq.,  
Post Office, Edinburgh.*

*MAUCHLINE, 13th Nov. 1788.*

MADAM, — I had the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak ; if it is so, Poets must be weaker still ; for Misses Rachel and Keith, and Miss Georgina M'Kay, with their flattering attentions and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own they did not lard me over as many a Poet does his patron or still more his Patroness, nor did they sugar me up as a Cameronian Preacher does Jesus Christ ; but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate innuendoes of Compliment that if it had not been for a lucky recollection how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked on myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the Major's friendly welcome, elegant manner and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over against the finest Quey in Ayrshire, which he made

me a present of to help and adorn my farm stock. As it was on Hallowday, I am determined, annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an Ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

The Songs in the second Vol. of the *Museum* marked D. are Dr. Blacklock's; but, as I am sorry to say they are far short of his other works, I, who only know the cyphers of them all, shall never let it be known. Those marked T. are the works of an obscure, tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler; <sup>1</sup> a mortal who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common Printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God and Solomon-the-son-of-David, yet that same unknown, drunken Mortal is author and compiler of three-fourths of Elliot's pompous *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Those marked Z. I have given to the world as old verses to their respective tunes; but in fact, of a good many of them, little more than the Chorus is ancient; tho' there is no reason for telling everybody this piece of intelligence. Next letter I write you, I shall send one or two sets of verses I intend for Johnson's third Volume.

What you mention of the thanksgiving day is inspiration from above. Is it not remarkable, odiously remarkable, that tho' manners are more civilized, and the rights of mankind better understood by an Augustan Century's improvement, yet in this very reign of heavenly Hanoverianism, and almost in this very year, an empire beyond the Atlantic has its REVOLUTION too, and for the very same maladministration and legislative misdemeanours in the illustrious and sapientipotent Family of Hanover as was complained of in the "tyrannical and bloody house of Stuart."

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop I shall take

the first conveniency to dedicate a day or, perhaps, two to you and Friendship, under the guarantee of the Major's hospitality. There will soon be threescore and ten miles of permanent distance between us ; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a festive day of "The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

—I have the honor to be, Madam, your grateful humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) James Tytler, a son of the manse, born 1747. He began life as a chemist, but ill luck, added to an inclination to literary work, obliged him to give up. He was practically editor of the second edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1777-84). His extraordinary versatility is shown by the number of his works, many of which he printed himself, having constructed a press from old material. His works include a *History of Edinburgh* and a *System of Geography* ; besides which he translated Virgil's *Eclogues*, wrote poetry, commented on the origin and antiquity of the Scottish nation, and was a voluminous contributor to the current periodical literature. He also experimented with a fire balloon with partial success, but want of means obliged him to discontinue. From this he was nicknamed "Balloon" Tytler. His political views brought him into trouble as one of the Friends of the People ; he fled to Ireland, and in 1793 was outlawed by the High Court of Justiciary. He died in 1804, at Salem, Mass. Andrew Bell was chief proprietor and publisher of



the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. C. Elliot was an Edinburgh publisher who had a share in the work.

*Ad.* Miss DUNLOP,<sup>1</sup> Dunlop House.

*Monday Morn.*

MADAM, — Tho' I am not always what Glenalvon calls "The shallow fool of coward Conscience," yet I have a something in my bosom, a kind of feeling of Propriety or Impropriety where I am the veriest coward on earth. My horrid sin of this kind against you has compleatly gagged me, that I can't write to, or approach you, were it to redeem me from perdition. If I can pluck up so much courage, I'll call at Dunlop-house on Wednesday or Thursday, perhaps at Wednesday's breakfast hour. — I have the honor to be, Madam, your most penitent humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This note, undated, is placed here conjecturally. The lady to whom it is addressed was doubtless Agnes Dunlop, who afterwards became Mrs. Perochon (see Introduction), and who was buried in the poet's grave.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Mossgill, Mauchline.

MORHAM MAINS, 13th Novbr. 1788.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Fifteenth Novr. 1788.]

DR. SIR, — I am to acknowledge the favour of two letters<sup>1</sup> from you since my last. You don't know how much I plume myself upon having credit with you to enable me to incur such a debt. Yet, while I own the claim like other bankrupts, I shall probably pay a very slight composition, but I will not, however, wish for horns to stick my

creditor or claws to dig my way out of your sight. On the contrary, I am half tempted to arraign Providence that will not allow me to rush into your honoured presence, were it not that sovereign Power has at present made me sensible things happen sometimes for the best, even when most athwart our wishes; for at this moment I must confess (what the week before I should have deem'd impossible) that I would rather see your letter than yourself. I have for some days past had a return of my former deafness, brought on, too, I think, as it was before, by uneasiness of mind. Mrs. Dunlop was one day taken ill, and I feared a fever for her. My spirits were sunk, too, by rather uneasie apprehensions about my other young people, whose situation is yet hid in night, and who, I much fear, are not so well suited as I could wish to buffet fortune in the dark; nor do I wish the world should see my fears on that head before they are removed or confirmed. 'Tis for most lovers, especially of the modern cast, a more tremendous venture to dare the gulph of matrimony than to jump down the promontory of Leucatelli, for more people can swim the ocean than can rise above the tide of vanity, whose abyss is unfathomable. I trust, however, you have no painful feeling of this truth, which has frequently cut me to the quick. But to call another cause; you ask my opinion of your works. Know, other poets do the same, and you may prepare to behold me bloated with full-blown self-conceit. I told you I expected a sight of a tragedy wrot by a farmer here. I could only obtain it on condition of passing my august verdict on its merits. This, believe me, was almost too strong a doze for all my curiosity to gulp down, for indeed I did not expect my opinion would be such as could consistently with truth and

delicacy be told. Yet I had an irresistible desire to see the work, that I might tell you what I thought of it, for really I think at heart this was my motive. I promised, and I honestly performed. "Darthula,"<sup>2</sup> Mr. Mylne of Lochhill's tragedy, gave me so much pleasure, that I asked leave to recommend you to a reading of it should you be at Haddington, and should truly be proud of myself should your ideas and mine meet on its faults and beauties; for I ventured to speak my mind of both in a letter to the gentleman who procured it for me, who told me he would send it to the author, whom I have never seen, but who, I dare say, is a worthy, good-hearted man, possess of a genius to please others and make himself happy. He does not want imagination or elevation of sentiment; his diction is plain, simple, and unaffected, without being low; his moral good and naturally deduced from his story; he introduces the chorus, which I dislike, but manages it so beautifully as to conquer my prejudices on that head, and I seriously advise you to go four miles out of your road in coming to Haddington to see what I am convinced you will think a sufficient reward for your trouble. Yet I will candidly own, it in my mind wants something I think it would have had, had it been penned by my friend. Besides, the original opulence of the author did not preclude those accidental advantages which decorate and call forth mediocrity often on terms that all the native energy of the human soul must be on the stretch to rise equal to from a less exalted ground, and to which I have perhaps never seen more than one man able to spring up at once unassisted from the pit of helpless depression. This farmer rents £1500 a year, and has married his daughter to an agreeable man with £12,000. These circumstances have made his acquaintance less



attractive to me, as they don't require such undoubted powers of character as must be displayed by the man who attains equal or superiour perfection without them. I would gladly have transcribed some lines for you, but I was trusted, and did not hold it honest even in behalf of my friend. I have not time to give a critique on your verses [pp. 159, 161] just now. Suffice to say, they deserve and can bear it. The song I think a sweet, simple little thing, quite fit for a song, but I have not light enough to sign my name, far less to say with what regard I am, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend and humble servt.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I have lighted the candle to tell you that I believe I shall be in Edr. the week after next, where I may possibly be forced to remain ten days longer, but if you are so good as write me, address to Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, care of William Kerr, Esqr., Surveyor of the General Post-Office, Edr., when I shall certainly get your letter. All happiness ever attend you and yours wherever you go, and may you meet friends everywhere as sincere as those you leave behind you. I wish you to be as much pleased with the latter as the former, or that any new acquisition should sink the value of the old. Farewell. John and his wife offer compts.

13<sup>th</sup> Novr. '88.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop must have forgotten hers of the 5th; it is unlikely that she received two letters — both missing — between the 5th and the 13th.

(2) James Mylne, farmer and poet, of Lochhill, in the parish of Morham. He died in December of

this year, and his literary remains, about which Burns was consulted, were published in 1790 under the title of *Poems, Consisting of Miscellaneous Pieces and Two Tragedies*, by the late James Mylne, at Lochhill.

TO BURNS.

MORHAM MAINS, 24th Nov. 1788.

DR. BURNS, — I have been very ill since I wrote you last. I fear my constitution sympathizes too much with G. R. [King George III.], for, eating and sleeping and looking about as well as women at threescore commonly do, I am deprived of my senses. I have been almost blind and wholly deaf for a fortnight past. I hope you shall never be so well acquainted with this state as to judge truly how much commiseration it claims. How I pity the King! —

When eye nor ear convey or light or sound,  
The famish'd mind can hardly stand her ground;  
Her gates block'd up from every aid beneath,  
The wicket scarce admits of hope or faith;  
The noblest virtues of the soul decay,  
Even meek-eyed charity is chased away;  
Poor fancy tamed strikes but unmeaning notes,  
As birds in cages swell their joyless throats.  
Where Colston's shady path 'twixt hedge-rows lay  
I chearless wand'ring stray'd the other day.  
Deep sunk in mud the shoes desert my tread;  
Close clasping boughs thick arch above my head;  
Angry heaven's dark black'ning aspect lowers;  
Chill bitter rain in tumbling torrents pours;  
Half blind, and blasted by the breath of Fate,  
Deaf to the voice that warn'd me of my state;  
Above the threat'ning thunders roll'd unheard,  
Around, red forky light'nings flash'd unfear'd;  
In languid fullness thought itself was lost,  
And too insipid even to be crost.



Now piercing wet dash'd cold through every part,  
 A friendly letter scrimply eased my heart:  
 Its kindly warmth (I think) repell'd the rain,  
 There blustering Boreas seem'd to beat in vain.  
 O'er the loved lines remembrance grateful run,  
 The poet bade me, "My best duty done,  
 Then chearful welcome what I could not shun."  
 'Tis the first duty sure that's in our power,  
 To fly each tempest of life's stormy hour.  
 To right, to left, intent I turn my eye,  
 And search if haply shelter might be nigh.  
 I spy'd where long imbower'd in lofty wood  
 The stately dome of Lennox-love<sup>1</sup> has stood;  
 Faint memory quicken'd at the gladsome view,  
 Hollows on hope a back-scent to pursue:  
 In early prime I held at school a place  
 With four young inmates of the Stuart race.  
 I thither sped; the hospitable gate  
 Spontaneous folds me from the winter's hate,  
 A gentle nymph in mildest accent spoke  
 (I heard not when the awful thunder broke):  
 Kindness can o'er the elements prevail.  
 My ear delighted caught her soothing tale.  
 "My friend, come in this sacred mansion know,  
 A secret few are ever taught below  
 (Though Cupid always like a child appears);  
 Friendship can live to more than forty years."  
 Fair Stuart's secret I to you impart,  
 And thank the friendly hand that warm'd my heart.

Spite of my internal heaviness, I have pleasure in marking  
 by what broken starts your genius bursts forth like the first  
 streams that enlighten the dawn of morn, and rather break  
 darkness as give light. I never suspected any thinking  
 being wiser than myself had formed detached lines unap-  
 propriated to any particular purpose, but while this similar-  
 ity between a wonderful man and a silly woman amuses me,  
 I am not able to judge your work; not for want of leisure,



for to read your letters is my most important business, the most pleasant and most profitable I have, but that my giddy head is unable to retain thoughts. I shall go to Edr. on Wednesday, if I am tolerably well, where I shall be glad Lady Wallace don't keep me till you are gone. My son could not oblige me more than by his kind behaviour to you, nor do I know which would flatter me most, to believe it the genuine produce of innate taste or of complacency to mine. Meanwhile, I am pleased to pronounce him deficient in neither. As I will carry this to town to be franked, if I then can fix my time for being west, I will tell it in a postscript. Adieu.

MORHAM, *Wednesday.*

Here I am still. A letter this moment tells me Lady Wallace cannot leave town this week ; so I have stole two days more of the rational delight a country farmhouse would afford me were I in a state to enjoy it. I am sure nothing in the metropolis can replace it. That you may understand the former pages of this, I must tell you in plain prose that I found in Miss Stuart of Blantyre the companion of my childhood. We met as we parted after an interval of forty-five years. She showed me my name sewed at that time in her sampler, inclosed in a heart, and amid those of her parents and seven brothers and sisters, most of whom are now dead—and so small and finely wrought that I could not perceive it without glasses. Our dialogue on this occasion was much as follows. Indeed the only poetic fiction is the thunder, for the incident of the letter was real, as it supplied the place of a wet stomacher to a very clay-cold, shivering, lifeless heart, after the only shower I have seen in this country in seven months.

- She.* Behold the pledge of Innocence and Youth ;  
 Work'd in true blue, the emblem of pure truth,  
 Your name there stands !
- I.* That little name that fills so small a space  
 Stands highly honoured midst your royal race.
- She.* Mark where it stands : my fondness fixt your part,  
 Just in the centre of my inmost heart.  
 My father, mother, brothers, sisters round ;  
 Alas ! How many strew the fatal ground !
- I.* Alas ! How vain for past events to mourn,  
 Then let us welcome what we cannot shun.  
 To her your moral, you her kindness I disclose,  
 And bless in dreams each friend of my repose.

Poor Mr. Mylne, the poet I spoke of in my last, unfortunately for me, but more so for him, was kept out of my sight by his wife and seven of his children being all in fevers. He is said to be a man of great worth, but I am told I should not like him. I cannot think how people know, for I never can guess myself who I would like beforehand, seldom tell why after.

(1) Lennoxlove—the name of the seat of the Stuarts of Blantyre, near Morham Mains.

Mr. ROBT. BURNS, Mosegill, Mauchline.

Then, Mosegill and Mauchline crossed out, and  
 "at Ellisland near Dumfries" written in.

ROSECOURT,<sup>1</sup> EDR., *Tuesday.*

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Third Decemr. 1788.]

I am now in Edr., from whence I said in the former sheet I would write and acquaint you of my motions. I cannot hope to be in Ayrshire for yet a week longer, nor dare I hope you will still be there when I come. I sin-

cerely regret this, as seeing the very few friends I like is the greatest enjoyment the world has in store for me, and it is with peculiar pleasure I think you permit me to enroll you in their number, and flatter me that you are sincere, as well as polite, when you return me the compliment. I shall see my good friend Mr. Kerr to-morrow, and commit this to his care for Mossiel, as I trust, if you are removed, your brother will have your address, a deposit with which you have forgot to favour me ; and in the meantime I shall indulge myself in scribbling whatever comes uppermost, since it will cost you nothing but the trouble of reading, which you know is in your own power to take or not, and which I allege you accordingly sometimes decline. I follow your idea of a progressive sheet, to put you in mind of it, as a plan from which I have already drawn many visions of future delight, as I am conscious your time must now be much too precious to hope you can give me much of it at once, but now and then a start of a few lines may be a relaxation to yourself, and a feast to me beyond what three courses and a dessert could afford. As to your promised visit, whenever you should hear I was come home, I must not reckon on that but as a poetic flight ; when I consider the many important affairs lie on your hand, and the many for whom all your utmost efforts are now become requisite, reason tells me it cannot, indeed ought not to be more. And I am too truly your friend to wish you even to see me at the expense of doing what you would find took you too long from the inspection of your now complicated cares, and would appear to other people as well as to yourself, when past, too great a sacrifice to be made to any friend who can be of no real use to you or your family. If I may judge by what I have seen of late, a



farmer has no time almost at liberty ; at least I have never in seven months seen my son able to afford one day's absence, seldom two hours, without finding something neglected and wrong at his return. His exertions are not called for by so many voices as yours ; if they are necessary, yours must be still more so, and I must, although 't is arguing so powerfully against myself, remind you that both you and I must and ought now to live more for our children than for ourselves : so that I dare not even wish you to come from so enormous a distance to see me with so much fatigue and loss of time to yourself as it were to come for a day from Nithsdale. Yet, should you be remaining in our county when I return, I will positively insist on your promise, and send to claim it, if you let me know by return of post that you will be found so late as the middle of next week ; for I think my time will be there and thereabouts ; but as it does not depend upon myself, I cannot be positive to a few days out or in. I would like to know who your song "Clarinda" <sup>2</sup> was addrest to, or if it was quite a *jeu d'esprit*. Pray tell me, since you despise prudence so much as sometimes to tell a woman a secret, which I was so unfaithful as to read to one man before you had warned me it was one. However, it is of small consequence, as he is little in the world, and wholly unacquainted with the travelled monkey<sup>8</sup> whose character I read, but neither named him nor the author. This was the more unfortunate as it was the only instance in which I ever used such a liberty with any production you had entrusted me with, but I really was much taken with the drawing both of it and Crochallan, and wished to see if other people would be the same. The beginning, I think likewise, has a most masterly strength and originality,

which truly marks it your own. I am only angry at these kind of masculine productions because they are, when I read them before my trifles, like a beef-steak synded [rinsed] down with water gruel, and make me sick of an amusement pleased me before. Yet, since like a child I have found pleasure in catching butterflys, why should I not just go on playing myself so innocently? Will it not even be more childish to give up the chase in a pet because your game is an ortalonque and mine only a fly?—not a gnat, but of those harmless insects that never sting myself or any one else; whereas when you fall a-satirizing, 't is as dangerous as King Henry the Fourth's bear-hunting with which they entertained the ladies of the French court, where the bears were like to hug their pursuers to death. Especially when you attack the clergy or the booksellers, they threaten you with a mortal squeeze in return, which I dread may hurt you more essentially than your sharpest sting can do them. They are like game-cocks; they fight with more than natural weapons, and strike their antagonist through the heart. Nor can any letter of mine protect it, as yours did mine in the piece I send you called "Lennoxlove: inscribed to a Friend." Pray tell me what you think of it. I think you were guilty of more than female affectation when you suppose me wanting leizure to read anything you send me. Know I would steal those precious minutes from meat, sleep, company—I'm afraid from my prayers, could I not otherways command it. But you will retaliate, and say with some shadow of reason too, that 't is all affectation I have said about your ideal visit, for had I set half the value on your time which I pretend to do, I would not have made you squander so much of it at present to so



little purpose. So I shall end this, as Bailie Simond does his dinner, with "Nothing furdur," supposing you may also use his words too, and reply "I have got satisfaction." Adieu! Write me to the care of William Kerr, Esqr., Surveyor of the General Post-Office, Edr., who will know to give it me here, or send it after me should I be gone. Dr. Sir, farewell. Write me, I beg you, for I am miserably deaf and blind, nor could powers inferior to your own give pleasure to your sincere friend,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Rose Court was a house in George Street, the first edifice built in New Edinburgh, the foundation stone having been laid in 1767. Possibly Lady Wallace removed thither after the fire in her house in James's Court.

(2) "A Farewell to Clarinda," sent to Mrs. Dunlop early in the year. See *antea*, p. 67.

(3) See Burns's letter of 23rd October, *antea*, p. 157.

Burns's wanderings between Dumfriesshire and Ayrshire now came to a close. In the first week of December he brought his wife to the banks of the Nith, lodging her temporarily in a neighbouring farm-house, as the building at Ellisland was not yet quite finished. It was a happy time for the poet, and his satisfaction with himself and the world showed itself in his writings, both prose and verse, the latter of which included about this period the "Elegy on the Year 1788," "Robin shure in Hairst," "Caledonia, a Ballad," "I hae a wife o' my ain."



## NOTE.

The following letter was first printed in the second volume of the *Works of Robert Burns*, edited by Dr. Currie, published in 1800. There, however, it was printed without the words of "Auld lang syne," but with a foot-note of reference to the different version sent by Burns to George Thomson in 1793, and given in the fourth volume of Currie's edition. This originated an inference that the same version of the song had been sent by Burns to both correspondents; and subsequent editors, improving upon that inference, printed the letter to Mrs. Dunlop in combination with the words of the song as written for Thomson. Distrust of Currie's methods kept alive a lingering suspicion that, in this case, as in numerous others, he had tampered with the original letter. Scott Douglas, editing the *Works of Robert Burns*, 1877, wrote: "The poet transcribed the song for Mrs. Dunlop in his letter, dated 17th December 1788, and it is unfortunate that Dr. Currie did not print a verbatim copy of it along with that letter, instead of simply referring his reader to the Thomson correspondence for it." Many a student of Burns, before and since, has wished that Currie had done this; and has criticised the "unfortunate" methods practised by him upon this, and upon many others of these letters.

Now that wish is gratified; for the words of "Auld lang syne," herein given, are transcribed verbatim from the original Burns manuscript, now in the possession of Mrs. J. V. L. Pruyn, Albany, N. Y. A photographic fac-simile of the document was published in *The Century Magazine* for February, 1898,

in illustration of an article by Cuyler Reynolds, entitled *The Manuscript of "Auld Lang Syne."*

The Pruyn manuscript consists of a single quarto leaf of the Burns letter, having on one side the first three verses and the chorus, and on the other side the last two verses of "Auld lang syne," the prose lines beginning "Light be the turf," and the first verse only of "My Bonie Mary"; so that both the beginning and the ending of the letter have either been lost since Currie had it, or are now in other and unknown hands.

The mistake in writing "sye" for "syne," in the fourth line of the chorus, was undoubtedly only a slip of the poet's pen. With him, as with most other writers, such slips occasionally happen; and in the hurried way in which he was often obliged to write, that is no wonder. In the copy of "Tam o' Shanter," which he wrote for Mrs. Dunlop, there are two instances of important omissions. He copied: —

They had been for weeks thegither,  
omitting the word "fu'," which gives pith to the line.  
And again, he copied: —

The Landlady grew gracious,  
leaving out "and Tam," without whose name it were doubtful upon whom she bestowed her "favors, secret, sweet and precious." Indeed, Mrs. Dunlop herself had been in doubt, for she supplies the omitted words in this way: —

The Landlady grew unco gracious.

Acknowledgment is due to Mrs. J. V. L. Pruyn, to Mr. Cuyler Reynolds, and to The Century Company, for united consent to the present use of the original Burns letter.

R. B. ADAM.

BUFFALO, N. Y., 7th March, 1898.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 17th December 1788.

MY DEAR HONORED FRIEND, — Yours, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. “Almost blind and wholly deaf” are melancholy news of human-nature; but when told of a much-loved and honored friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part and gratitude on mine began a tie which has gradually and strongly entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom; and I tremble at the omens of your late and present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But be that as it may, the heart of the man and the fancy of the poet are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better have been a rook or a magpie all at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods and picking up grubs, not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time. If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, madam, for I will make my threatenings good. I am to be at the New-year-day fair of Ayr, and by all that is sacred in the world, friend! I *will* come and see you. . . .

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old school-fellow and friend was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world! They spoil the “social offsprings



of the heart." Two veterans of the "men of the world" would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase "Auld lang syne" exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr. Kerr will save you the postage.

AULD LANG SYNE.<sup>1</sup>

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,	old
And never thought upon?	
Let's hae a waught o' Malaga,	draught
For auld lang syne.	days of long ago.

*Chorus.*

For auld lang syne, my jo,	
For auld lang syne;	
Let's hae a waught o' Malaga,	
For auld lang sye. [sic]	
And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup!	tankard
And surely I'll be mine!	
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,	
For auld lang syne.	
For auld, &c.	
We twa hae run about the braes,	
And pou't the gowans fine;	pulled
But we've wander'd mony a weary foot	
Sin auld lang syne.	
For auld, &c.	
We twa hae paidl't i' the burn	waded
Frae morning sun till dine;	dinner-time
But seas between us braid hae roar'd,	broad
Sin auld lang syne.	
For auld, &c.	
And there's a han' my trusty fiere,	friend
And gie's a han' o' thine;	hand
And we'll tak a right guidewilly waught,	draught with
For auld lang syne.	goodwill

Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment ! There is more of the fire of native genius in it than in half a dozen of modern English Bacchanalians. Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas which please me mightily.

MY BONIE MARY<sup>1</sup>

Go, fetch to me a pint o' wine,  
 And fill it in a silver tassie,                      cup  
 That I may drink, before I go,  
 A service to my bonie lassie :  
 The boat rocks at the Pier o' Leith,  
 Fu' loud the wind blows frae the Ferry,  
 The ship rides by the Berwick-Law,  
 And I maun leave my bonie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,  
 The glittering spears are rankèd ready,  
 The shouts o' war are heard afar,  
 The battle closes deep and bloody :  
 It's not the roar o' sea or shore  
 Wad make me langer wish to tarry ;  
 Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar —  
 It's leaving thee, my bonie Mary !

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Burns deliberately misled Mrs. Dunlop about the authorship of both "Auld Lang Syne" and "My Bonie Mary," just as he told Thomson that he recovered the former from an old man's singing. "Auld Lang Syne" was indeed modelled on one or other of two older songs — one, called "Old long-syne," attributed to both Sir Robert Aytoun and Francis Sempill, the other called "Auld Lang Syne,"



by Allan Ramsay. Yet the whole is, to all intents and purposes, Burns's own, and the finest stanzas, the third and fourth, are entirely original. So with regard to "My Bonie Mary," Burns writes in his notes in the *Museum* that only the first four lines were old, the rest was his own. These four lines he probably took from a homely ballad stated by Buchan to have been composed in 1636 by Alexander Leslie of Edinburgh, grandfather of Archbishop Sharp.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,

Ellisland, Dumfries. DUNLOP, 24th Decbr. 1788.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twenty-ninth Decr. 1788.]

DR. SIR, — I am quite in haste to tell you, as I sincerely think you will have pleasure in that intelligence, which to most part of the world may be very insignificant, that I am once more returned to Ayrshire, and, what is yet more, to my hearing. As to sight, the spectacles do so well now that I almost forget I have lost it. Yet, great is the loss, since it makes one less able to read the soul in the face of our friends. But at threescore one is seldom put to any trouble in that way; so they may the more readily and quietly acquiesce in those faults of the eyes which only preclude an examination of nonentities, tho', thank God! I have some good friends whose characteristic features are by nature too strongly marked for me ever, I hope, to mistake them, and in whom I always find out all and even more than I could ever have looked for when my perceptions were at the best. It is now ten days I have been here — one half of which I have passed in bed without ever having it made. Yet this I reckon well spent, not, as the country folks say, because we get a sight of our



sins in that situation, but that I found this confinement tended to remove the temporary punishment of mine by removing the deafness which is at present perfectly gone, and I cannot express the pleasure I feel in being able to share the trifles which commonly circulate around us, and which reason pretends to despise, but without which all her boasted treasures leave us wretched. You say somewhere "Man is not a happy creature," and a few days ago I would have re-echoed "nor woman neither;" but as I am one, I frequently change my mind, and when I received your great packet, found I thought differently from what I had just been doing the moment before. How kind it was to make it so large, when others would never have thought of bestowing a single line on the poor miserable who could not see to read it. Well, I believe the very weight of it sunk my sorrows before I got at the inside. You know 't is a poetic maxim of mine "Kindness can o'er the elements prevail," and I assure you it has at least in my constitution a wonderful power over every distress and disorder, both of body and mind. Were death himself to attack me, I should draw much supporting courage from the consideration that my obsequies would be engraven on the heart of a poet who, I flatter myself, would be too much concerned to write my epitaph, and might travesty Pope, and, striking his pensive bosom, say "Here is not Gay," and say so without falsehood or affectation; for I deceive myself most egregiously if you would not be melancholy for at least two hours after the first intimation of my demise. I even glory in the thought, and would not exchange it to make any human creature, even myself, happy for double the time. Is not this a noble swatch [sample] of female generosity that can so sincerely rejoice

in the distress of another ; yet, take my word on it, whatever others may pretend, we are all alike in these things, and our greatest fear ever is that our friends will be too soon comforted, not that they will grieve too tenderly. However, spite of all your pains to prepare me, I don't expect to creep into my last sleep this year yet, nor am I really shaken with illness, as my female weak way of complaining has led you to believe. On the contrary, I have spent this summer and harvest upon the whole in more health and chearful ease than I had known for several years past, and spite of a few sharp rubs of sickness now and then, have been far better in general than I had for a long while ever looked for a possibility of being in this wafe [solitary], deserted world ; for, spite of myself, I still find it so whenever I begin to be sick or serious, unless the Muse, the Bard, or the friend step kindly forward to my relief. To these I have of late been greatly indebted. The first withdraws as our society here grows more numerous ; the last cruel fortune has dragged to a woful distance, and I ought not to struggle against her, but welcome what I cannot shun as chearfully as I can, nor even look forward to Ayr Fair with those expectations which the beginning of your last gave birth to, and the end bid vanish into disappointment. And did you really read my lines half a dozen times over ? And why don't you tell me their faults ? Or are they still not worth a criticism from your hand ? I have a family of very unfortunate friends indeed, to whom fate seems to deny everything, and to whom I am therefore able to deny nothing, not even my rhymes. To them I have even left some written copies of one or two pieces, among which is this last. So, should you adopt anything of mine, you may be

already detected. But I have a better opinion of your taste than to imagine you run the least risque of making so foolish a sacrifice of your own professional fame. Indeed you have many of mine that never saw the light but to yourself, and your letting it in upon them would strike deeper against you in my mind than as a poet. I therefore look upon it as an impossibility from the friend I so highly regard. I like your first "Hermitage"<sup>1</sup> best; indeed I like it very much. The second is too gloomy, and the change indicates a fickleness I don't wish to meet. In short I am vexed to see my favourite discarded for any rival whatever, and feel for it as if it were myself rejected for some newer acquaintance. You see how much I love auld-lang-syne, and what I think due to it. I have found out a rustic poetess<sup>2</sup> whose ambition aspires to be a chambermaid or bairn's-woman [nurse], but if you are at the fair you shall know all I know about her, and see some of her works; not that I admire them except for being hers. Besides, she writes blank verse, which I don't like. Did you ever see an Ode wrot by an officer beginning "Go, little boy, to yonder tower"? I would wish to hear your opinion of it, that I may see how far it agrees with or differs from mine. You did right to send your last by a private hand, for indeed 't is a mistake that my friend Kerr would save me postage. I assure you that is a distinction he reserves for the Scots Bard alone, "who (as he told me) was the only instance ought to claim an exemption from the obligations of his duty; that to favour him could never be defrauding the publick, who were all his debtors,"<sup>3</sup> since which I have given him the trouble of all I wrot you. For those you write me I pay them with great pleasure when I cannot get them without it. Only,



don't forget the word *single*, the omission of which sometimes cost fivepence. I wish to God you instead of G. R. had as much for every word you could write. Miss M'Kay is gone. Lady Wallace, Mr. and Mrs. Henri, and my former family [are] to pass the winter and spring here ; so that we are too many people to have much society, at least of the kind I relish most, but which I very seldom find ; for, like all delicate pleasures, it is too easily broken in upon, and at my time of life a small house and a small company seem most consonant to the indolent dispositions of the mind. Even my own colony are oft too large for my shrunk-up soul, whose comprehensive faculties could be all satisfied at Morham, but are sometimes surfeited in this crowded circle. But this is a language no man can understand under thirty, and you must tire of it as I do of hearing French, which my ear cannot interpret a single word of ; unless your ideas may perhaps be as premature as they are superlative and spontaneous. Adieu.

My having left no room for a subscription on the other side is proof positive of that esteem and regard with which I am your obliged friend and humble servant,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns must have sent Mrs. Dunlop a MS. of the second version of the lines "Written in Friars' Carse Hermitage." He transcribed the first for her in his letter of the 2nd August.

(2) Janet Little (1759-1813), a poetess, known as "the Scottish Milkmaid." She entered the service of Mrs. Henri as a dairy-maid at Loudoun Castle, and published a volume of poems in 1792. She married John Richmond, a labourer, at Loudoun Castle.

(3) Kerr bore a reputation for much greater laxity in the matter of franking his friends' communications.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House.

ELLISLAND, *New-year-day Morning* 1789.

This, Dear Madam, is a morning of wishes ; and would to God that I came under the Apostle James's description : — "The effectual, fervent Prayer of a *righteous man* avail-eth much." In that case, Madam, you would welcome in a year full of blessings : everything that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery. This day ; the first Sunday of May — a breezy, blue-skyed noon sometime about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end of Autumn ; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holidays. Not like the Sacramental, executioner-face of a Kilmarnock Communion ; but to laugh or cry, be cheerful or pensive, moral or devout, according to the mood and tense of the season and myself. I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the *Spectator*, "The Vision of Mirza," a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables. "On the fifth day of the moon which, according to the custom of my fore-

fathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer," etc.

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one shall be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in Spring, among which are the mountain daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild brier-rose, the budding birk and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild, mixing cadence of a troop of grey plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poesy. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery that, like the Eolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to these proofs of those awful and important realities, a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave, these proofs that we deduct by dint of our own powers and observation. However respectable individuals in all ages have been, I have ever looked on mankind in the lump to be nothing better than a foolish, headstrong, credulous, unthinking mob; and their universal belief has ever had extremely little weight with me. Still I am a very sincere believer in the Bible; but I am drawn by the conviction of a man, not the halter of an ass.



Apropos to an ass, how do you like the following Apostrophe to Dulness, which I intend to interweave in "The Poet's Progress"?<sup>1</sup>—

O Dulness, portion of the truly blest !  
 Calm, shelter'd haven of eternal rest !  
 Thy sons ne'er madden in the fierce extremes  
 Of Fortune's polar frost or torrid beams.  
 If mantling high she fills the golden cup,  
 With sober, selfish ease they sip it up ;  
 Conscious their great success they well deserve,  
 They only wonder some folks do not starve :  
 The sage, grave hern thus, easy, picks his frog,  
 And thinks the mallard a sad, worthless dog.  
 When Disappointment snaps the thread of hope ;  
 When, through disastrous night, they darkling grope ;  
 With deaf endurance sluggishly they bear,  
 And just conclude that " Fools are Fortune's care."  
 So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,  
 Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.  
 Not so the idle Muses' madcap train,  
 Not such the workings of their moon-struck brain :  
 In equanimity they never dwell,  
 By turns in soaring Heaven or vaulted Hell.

I have sketched two or three verses to you, but as a private opportunity offers immediately, I must defer transcribing them. A servant of mine goes to Ayrshire with this, but I shall write you by post. If I am to be so happy as have it in my power to see you when I go to Ayr-fair, which I very much doubt, I will try to dine at Dunlop in the Wednesday of that week.

If it is good weather in the fair-week, I shall try my utmost ; for if I hit my aim aright, it will not be in my power in any given time again. — Farewell !      ROBT. BURNS.

(1) See *antea*, p. 159.

Ad. Mr. ROBT. BURNS,  
Ellisland, near Dumfries.

1st Jan. 1789.

DR. SIR, — This is the first day of a New Year. Let me begin it by wishing everything good to him whose genius, but yet more whose kind attentions, has conferred unnumbered obligations and pleasures on the last; whose correspondence has been to me a varied scene of hope and delight, and an intercourse of that mixture between amusement and esteem to which I believed I was become wholly superannuated. May the coming months arrive to you full fraught with all your wishes, and those wishes be what mankind's seldom are, directed to what can make your happiness most truly permanent. Your powers, my good friend, are suited, like the genial rays of the sun, to all climes and seasons; they possess a varied temperament for every soil, and I find your letters equally soothe a melancholy, rejoice a merry, or awaken a languid hour; while they please and oblige me alike at every moment, and in every mood. As for myself, in perfect health, restored to my hearing, surrounded by the numerous family about me, easie and seemingly pleased, believing those at a distance from me have likewise room to be so too; what have I more to ask at this calm evening twilight of my life but grateful sensibility to taste and acknowledge so many blessings? Yet still I own I look forward with anxious impatience to the time of Ayr-fair, and often ask myself the question if you will be there? How gladly would I pay double postage for a letter, even tho' the word *single* should not be on the back of it, that put it in my power to be no longer sceptic on so interesting an article of futurity. Were some fairy or genie to afford me three wishes, I verily believe just now the first I should form would be that this

were the Fair-day, the second, that you came to it, and the third, that you left it for your friends here ; for, believe me, though I am perfectly sensible I ought not to wish or approve of your coming from Dumfries to see us, I shall be extremely proud you can ever once imagine the visit worth the trouble of your making it from Ayr. I therefore have resolved to tell you so, though you must pay dear for the intelligence, as my friend Kerr is, I believe, gone to London, and I could not resolve to run the risque of missing the pleasure you had in speculation for me by delaying to say I would count the days betwixt in hope of its accomplishment. Besides, though this is a sort of will-o'-the-wisp idea, I cannot help at same time suggesting that I don't think it is more than twenty miles further if you go to Haddington, as you told me you must do, to come this road ; and twenty miles is not a great deal out of a poet's way to see any friends whom his fancy represents in so fair a garb as to deserve his notice in despite of both time and space, those fatal destroyers of all worldly joys. I have read your 22nd of Novbr.<sup>1</sup> Why do you tell me 't is dissimulation? 't is the emanations of a heavenly spirit, the soundest judgment and the most benevolent soul. I have long suspected no man was free from fraudulent affectation, but I must do you the justice to say that you are almost the only one creature I have ever seen have the good sense to affect something that could render them the more estimable by being real. Most of us leave nature only to assume something worse in her stead. You have certainly only put on her fairest clothing, and it sits so becomingly that I'm sure I should never have guessed it was not your own property. Shall I for the future, when I admire your sentiments, surmise to myself that the writer may be but a



wolf in sheep's clothing, or believe you in earnest wherever I would wish my friend to be so? Indeed, this is so much my native bias that I need hardly take advice on the subject, as I much doubt if it is in my power to run counter, even were I to hear an assertion from the mouth of truth herself, as you say, for I can hardly take your own word that you are not expressing exactly what you think in that paper where your principles appear to me as undisguised as your expression; your very wishes wear but a gauze veil, which needs not the lynx's eye of friendship to see through it. I wrot you some days ago by Edr., but apprehend you may not get my letter should Kerr be gone before its arrival there. I shall therefore send this the other road, and if you won't be ill pleased with me for enlarging its size, will enclose an elegy on the death of the poor man whose tragedy I formerly told you I was so well pleased with. His worth of character, his retired modesty of mind, both as a man and an author, the melancholy distress of his wife, children, niece, nephew, and servants, as well as the strangers hired to them at the time of his exit, added to the eagerness I felt to see him, and my disappointment in hearing the dismal story, unhinged my mind, and I daresay you will not find any justice done the subject; but I put it in better hands by informing you of the circumstances, so shall end by assuring you nothing will give me more pleasure than your verbal critic on this and all you have seen from

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

ON THE DEATH OF MR. MYLNE, AUTHOR OF  
"DARTHULA,"

ADDRESS TO ROBT. BURNS

Let all the tears of all the Muses flow,  
And yours and mine redouble all their woe!

Yet Grief prepares her sharpest shaft for you,  
A brother farmer, and a poet too.

. . . . .

I give you below a cherard [charade] as a specimene of elegant entertainment in high life, which I cannot even write or spell the name of:—

My first is an engine, my second a stone,  
My third is combin'd, not beauty alone,  
But what must still please man, woman, and child,  
The figure so lovely, the manner so mild.

The word — Cranstone.

(1) A missing letter, perhaps that in which the poet transcribed the second version of the lines “Written in Friars’ Carse Hermitage.”

We append here the New Year’s Day Address to Mrs. Dunlop, which has hitherto, in accordance with Currie’s date, been assigned to the beginning of 1790. In the *Centenary* edition, on the strength of Mrs. Dunlop’s acknowledgment, on 1st January 1791, of a letter, a poem, and a gilded card from Burns, it is maintained that 1791 is the correct date. The most casual reading of the Lochryan MSS. ought to have shown that the true date was 1789. On the 1st January of that year Burns wrote to Mrs. Dunlop: “I have sketched two or three verses *to* you, but as a private opportunity offers immediately, I must defer transcribing them.” On the 22nd Mrs. Dunlop acknowledged an address which “proclaims my age and infirmities by pointing out that deafness which,



thank Heaven! is at present gone." Compare the line in the poem —

Deaf as my friend, he sees them press.

It is almost superfluous to point out the other internal evidence of its date that the poem contains. But, as much has been made of the reference to a grandchild's cap that Mrs. Dunlop was making, it may be noted that the perpetuity of that occupation with her was a subject of jest with Mrs. Dunlop, and that, moreover, she had been congratulated by Burns on the birth of a grandchild at the end of October 1788. Finally, it was in 1788 that Rachel Dunlop painted her sketch of Coila, as the correspondence proves, and while it is probable that Burns conceived her as still touching it at the beginning of 1789, it is scarcely possible that he would refer to the incident in 1791, or 1790 either. An allusion in Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 6th April 1790 may be noted, and it is all but certain that the poem which Mrs. Dunlop acknowledged on 31st December 1790 (not 1st January 1791) was "Tam o' Shanter."

#### SKETCH—NEW YEAR'S DAY.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

This day, Time winds th' exhausted chain,  
To run the twelvemonths' length again :  
I see the old, bald-pated fellow,  
With ardent eyes, complexion fallow,  
Adjust the unimpair'd machine,  
To wheel the equal, dull routine.



The absent lover, minor heir,  
In vain assail him with their prayer;  
Deaf as my friend, he sees them press,  
Nor makes the hour one moment less.  
Will you (the Major's with the hounds;  
The happy tenants share his rounds;  
Coila's fair Rachel's care to-day,  
And blooming Keith's engaged with Gray)  
From housewife cares a minute borrow —  
That grandchild's cap will do to-morrow —  
And join with me a-moralizing —  
This day's propitious to be wise in.  
First, what did yesternight deliver?  
"Another year is gone for ever."  
And what is this day's strong suggestion?  
"The passing moment's all we rest on!"  
Rest on — for what? what do we here?  
Or why regard the passing year?  
Will Time, amus'd with proverb'd lore,  
Add to our date one minute more?  
A few days may — a few years must —  
Repose us in the silent dust.  
Then, is it wise to damp our bliss?  
Yes — all such reasonings are amiss!  
The voice of Nature loudly cries,  
And many a message from the skies,  
That something in us never dies:  
That on this frail, uncertain state,  
Hang matters of eternal weight:  
That future life in worlds unknown  
Must take its hue from this alone;  
Whether as heavenly glory bright,  
Or dark as Misery's woeful night.

Since, then, my honor'd first of friends,  
On this poor being all depends,  
Let us th' important *now* employ,  
And live as those who never die.  
Tho' you, with days and honors crown'd,  
Witness that filial circle round

(A sight life's sorrows to repulse,  
A sight pale Envy to convulse),  
Others now claim your chief regard;  
Yourself, you wait your bright reward.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Stewarton.*

MOSSGIEL, *Wednesday Morning.*  
[Jan. 1789.]

No ill-weather in Hay or Harvest ever gave me so chagrining a disappointment. This morning I had set apart for a visit to my honored Friend — you cannot imagine, Madam, what happiness I had promised myself; when behold, “the snows descended, and the winds blew,” and made my journey impracticable. As it will be impossible for me to wait a journeyable day, I send you this to apologise for my seeming neglect, and to acknowledge the receipt of two<sup>1</sup> kind Epistles from you, since I wrote you on New Year's Day. I had got a hundred and fifty things to say to you, which a hundred and fifty sheets of paper would not record; but I shall be in Ayrshire in the Spring, and you know with what rapture two Poetic folks will meet, amid opening daisies, budding hawthorns, and fragrant birks. Now I talk of Poetic, you must know, as I came to Sanquhar on Saturday evening — the landlord and landlady are my particular acquaintances — I had just dispatched my dinner, and was sitting in a family way over a friendly bowl, glad that my weary body and soul had found out so comfortable a place of rest — when lo! the quondam Mrs. Oswald<sup>2</sup> wheeled into the courtyard with an immense retinue, and the poor Bard is obliged, amid the shades of night, bitter frost, howling hills and icy cataracts, to goad his jaded steed twelve miles farther on to another stage.

O for a muse, not of heroic fire but satiric aquafortis, to gnaw the iron pride of unfeeling greatness! Before I reached the other stage, I composed the following, and sent it off at the first Post-office for the *Courant*:—

ODE, SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF MRS. O—  
OF A——<sup>3</sup>

Dweller in yon dungeon dark,  
Hangman of creation, mark,  
Who in widow-weeds appears,  
Laden with unhonored years?  
Noosing with care a bursting purse,  
Baited with many a deadly curse?

STROPHE

View the wither'd Beldam's face;  
Can thy keen inspection trace  
Aught of Humanity's sweet, melting grace?  
Note that eye — 't is rheum o'erflows,  
Pity's flood there never rose:  
See these hands, ne'er stretch'd to save,  
Hands that took — but never gave.  
The Great despis'd her and her wealth;  
The poor-man breath'd a curse by stealth.  
Keeper of Mammon's iron chest,  
Lo! there she goes, unpitied and unblest,  
She goes, but not to realms of everlasting rest!

ANTISTROPHE

Plunderer of armies, lift thine eyes  
(A while forbear, ye torturing fiends);  
Seest thou whose steps, unwilling, hither bends?  
No fallen angel kick'd from upper skies;  
'T is thy trusty quondam mate,  
Doom'd to share thy fiery fate  
She, tardy, hell-ward plies.



EPODE

And are they of no more avail,  
 Ten thousand glittering pounds a year?  
 In other worlds, can Mammon fail,  
 Omnipotent as he is here?  
 O bitter mockery of the pompous bier,  
 While down the wretched Vital-part is driven!  
 The cave-lodg'd Beggar, with a conscience clear,  
 Expires in rags, unknown, and goes to Heaven.

To soften the matter a little, I altered the title to Mrs. A—— of O——. I was afraid they should suspect me for the author.

I shall be impatient to hear from you. Adieu! — I am ever, Dr. Madam, your obliged friend and humble servant,  
 ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Only one is extant.

(2) Mary Ramsay, daughter of Alexander Ramsay, a Jamaica merchant, brought large estates in America and the West Indies, on her marriage, to Richard Oswald, son of the Rev. George Oswald, Dunnet, Caithness. Richard Oswald acquired great wealth as a London merchant and as an army contractor ("plunderer of armies") in the Seven Years' War. He was one of the commissioners who arranged with Franklin and his colleagues at Paris the peace between Great Britain and the United States. He purchased Auchencruive in Ayrshire, and lived there till his death in 1784.

(3) The Ode did not appear in the *Courant*; Burns sent a copy on 23rd March to Dr. Moore, with an explanation of its origin that differs only verbally from that which he gave Mrs. Dunlop. The Ode

was published in the *London Star* of 7th May without the couplet in the first strophe —

The Great despis'd her and her wealth;  
The poor man breath'd a curse by stealth.

## FRAGMENT

To BURNS.

[22nd January 1789.]

—in consequence of this horrid snow storm, which, however, has not been so dreadful as your imagination or the friends who were unwilling to part with you would represent it. They would tell you it must be impassable here, whereas on the other side the question I must inform you my son went a visiting on Wednesday, and to-day we had strangers from a distance here. I felt a kind of chagrine in seeing them, as it shewed me the road lay open, and that you might have come from Ayr (if you were there), if I had not convinced you that I did not wish it, or if you had wished it very earnestly yourself. Now, I hardly know which of these alternatives I would least like to fix upon as the cause of that absence I so much regret. It is quite tantalizing to think that you have been five times at Dunlop last year, and I have never once seen you, who, I am sure, would have set more value on the visit than all the rest put together. But thus the good things of this world are frequently shared out, and we ought, spite of all, to be thankful for our most scanty portion. You see your moral lessons are not lost upon me. Nay, I flatter myself you may improve by writing them, as well as I by reading. Meantime, I consider myself as obliged and honoured even by an address which proclaims my age and infirmities by pointing out that deafness which, thank Heaven! is at

present gone. If it must return, at least I shall hope my friend and my enemy (the only one I know of having) shall not see me on the same day. You say you will polish the New Year's Day piece. I protest against every alteration. Every address to a friend or from a friend ought to stand in the first chalk, the spontaneous effusion of the soul, uncorrected by any secondary consideration. In short, I cannot part with one word you have ever meant should be mine. Leave it to the Royal button-maker [George III.] to give his works the *fion* [Fr. = finishing touch], and act like your true master nature, who puts forth all his in pristine glory. I was got just here when I was interrupted to receive yours from Fanny Burns.<sup>1</sup> Poor thing! Her cheek glowed and her eyes sparkled as she told me she has one for me from her cousin.

Your oaten reed of sweet celestial sound  
 Makes orphan-hearts with grateful joy rebound!  
 To gen'rous love one tie points out another,  
 A mother's children, or a father's brother.

I have just been reading your infusion of gall, wormwood and aquafortis. I had been half cursing your mare myself as I found care of her had frightened you from venturing this length. I had not, however, vented much ill-nature; only wished poets had never rode in coaches and lost the use of their legs, or stood in awe of spoiling their steed, but strutted still afoot like old Homer or Ossian; when I was struck with remorse at finding myself so distanced in the race of spleen. Are you not a sad, wicked creature to send the poor old wife straight to the devil because she gave you a ride in a cold night? I am sure your wrath had great need of a cooler too, but few of us know our own necessities.



Lord help us! But what is worse than all, that it spoils a fair thought I had drest out for the door of a moving library I have in a box, and was as follows —

This little box by fortune seems design'd  
 A motley emblem of the owner's mind;  
 There folly reigns with unrelenting sway,  
 Here wit lies hid from wisdom's scorching ray.  
 Here Milton and Cervantes have their parts,  
 There Blair and Spenser charm with varied arts.  
 The holy precepts of our faith lie here;  
 Our country's love by Wallace rendered dear.  
 The Good Aurelius on this shelf shall shine  
 (O grant my God his virtues may be mine!)  
 Now Row and Mallet both adorn this cell,  
 And Burns shall here in future volumes swell.

. . . . .

I won't write you again this great while, for I am going to be very busy sewing shirts for my son, if I can for blindness. I ought to send your Spenser, but I feel loath to part with it yet. I could get you Voltaire's *Maid of Orleans*, but I have heard such a character of it that I am afraid I ought not to take it into my own hand, or reach it to yours. But of this you must judge yourself, as it is neither a letter or language I can read. Only, remember you must never say you had it from me, or if it is undecent, allow it to corrupt either your heart or your writings; or I shall never forgive myself for having any hand in gratifying a curiosity in which I do not share. I saw your favourite Mr. Adair<sup>2</sup> at Edr.; he mentioned you almost as partially as you did him to me. He is a relation of mine — I wish he were also an acquaintance. I would be glad you renewed your intercourse with him; if that could bring it about, it would really be doing me a favour, for a reason I shall probably tell you some day or other, if ever we are ordained to meet,

which I begin somewhat to doubt. I am too old and too cold for poetic raptures to be inspired either by blooming hawthorn or budding birks, nor by your account can aspire to class with the hare-brain'd heads of inspiration —

Since I in mediocrity am born to dwell,  
Can neither soar to Heaven nor dare to sink to Hell.

Apropos to birch, I, who am always very prudent for my neighbours, am more than half of opinion you should, instead of a holly garland, get a birch rod as a reward for your Ode, since it was torturing the living to be avenged of the senseless dead. Remember, this is only poetic justice, and not pronounced by me.

Curst be the line, how smooth soe'er it flow,  
That tends to make one worthy man my foe.

For, as the lines may have beauty and merit if unappropriated, I would absolve them and mercifully only punish the guilty author, whose rash flights on Pegasus are calculated to break his own neck instead of burning the innocent Ode, which, without a name or date is a moral sermon against avarice, speculation and oppression. Perhaps you may be as disinterested yourself as the Capt. of the City Guard of Edr., who cryed to the enraged mob to take his body but spare his wig. I heard a man say lately he had seen a poem of yours so grossly indelicate he was ashamed to read it alone on a brae side. Could I have believed this, I would blush to write you, or call you my acquaintance and a friend I valued. I hope, if it is the case that you have once been so far to blame, it was at least before we had ever met, and that this is one of the follies long cast to air and polished off by mine, if not by better company. Farewell! for now I'm sure you find I fatigue myself and

you writing too long. I believe Kerr is still in Scotland, but as I am not sure, will send this by my young namesake.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Burns's cousin, daughter of his uncle Robert, who died in Stewarton. The poet showed great kindness to his cousins after the old man's death (3rd January 1789), and took Fanny into his household.

(2) Dr. James M'Kittrick Adair, Burns's companion on his tour in the Devon Valley in October 1787, and husband of Charlotte Hamilton.

TO BURNS.

DUNLOP, 24<sup>th</sup> I believe of *Janry* 1789.

DR. BURNS, — It is but two days since I told you I would not write again for a great while, and lo ! here I am already with the pen in my hand. Now, should you be inclinable to complain of this breach of my promises, and reproach me with being worse than my word, I shall certainly repent the right I have given you as a friend to find fault, and wish once more to reserve the privilege politeness always allows my sex of never being in the wrong. But I will hope this is an error to which you may indulge a little partial favour ; so shall tell you from whence it proceeds. You must then know Mr. Mylne of Lochhill, who died a very few weeks ago, was a very great friend of my son John's, indeed more so than any man in East Lothian, except one other, who is also dead this last week. I had last night a melancholy letter from John, where, after telling me this double unforeseen disaster, he adds —

“ There was found in Mr. Mylne's cabinet an address to Burns, I am informed (by Mr. Carfrae<sup>1</sup>) *very capital* ; it



was inclosed in a letter, and had every appearance of being wrote just before his death with an intention of being sent to Mr. Burns. I told poor Mylne's son-in-law that you said something about an elegy. He wished much to have seen it, and expressed an earnest hope that it might be wrote perhaps by Burns. They are to send the address to me in a few days to be forwarded through your means according to the seeming desire of the deceased."

This for my son. I, finding the death of the man whose dramatic piece was still vibrating on my ear, and the dreadful fate of a family a few days before in an enviable state of health and prosperity, affect my very soul, and incline me to throw my poor ideas together upon paper, foolishly fancied you might be struck with a similar desire, and therefore said to John I might possibly be able to send him an elegy on the poet if it could be consolatory to any of his family to see one. Now, John, by repeating this, had brought me under the necessity of producing something or disappointing the fond wish of the afflicted. Should I transmit the lines I sent you, I am apprehensive they would pass for yours, and bring disgrace upon your past and distrust upon your future fame, which I could not rub off in any way but by acknowledging them myself, which is among the last expedients I would willingly be reduced to accept. Should the circumstances I formerly told you and those I now relate move the gentle spirit which I know frequently inhabits your breast, and should your compassion flow with the tenth part of the ease, strength or eloquence that accompanied a late overflow of the gall with which you embalmed the memory of a person whose name was before odious to me (from private resentment), I will much more seriously commend what will still

be in unison with my own feelings than I before blamed you for an attack which, I confess, gratified my own spleen in every line, but which I never have shewed but to my son Andrew, as I am sure it would make a loud cry against you were you pointed to as the author. I feel a great desire to see this address to you, and still more to hear if the sad story of its author touches those invisible threads that tremble over a birk-bud or a hawthorn bloom, and convey quick sensibility from their narrow base to their almighty original. Indeed, my good friend, if this produce not a few lines of heavenly song, you will disappoint me as much as it can Mr. Sherrif or Carfrae. Tho' at the same time that I do not think the last of these gentlemen devoid of taste, I own I do not build much on the approbation he bestows on, as it were, the last words of a long-known and much honoured friend, whose death would fall like a thunderclap, and must be long and warmly lamented by a whole county where he was idolized (although his genius was overlooked or uncomprehensible) for his modest, quiet, inoffensive, useful life, and honest, pious conversation, free from every arrogant, assuming air of importance or superiority, either as a farmer or a scholar, in both which points the knowing considered him as eminent, but the latter of which was probably a bright beam that only hurt eyes unaccustomed to behold its blaze when it chanced to be discover'd by his neighbours. Yet I own Mylne is to me almost the poet of creative imagination, as fate forbade my ever seeing him, but I am sure his friends must now feel in reading his last address (which I believe was suggested by my having begged leave to introduce you to him should you be in that part of the country) something similar to what I would do should I be doomed to read your last

production after your funeral, instead of looking down upon it, as I hope to do, from a more elevated station than this world can afford ; tho' even in this case there would remain a considerable distraction, as although clever, sensible men, their sensations on this occasion would follow after mine at as great a distance as my ideas humbly tread after yours where we happen to think in unison, but where my words can no more express your thoughts than the faint reflection this moment on the cold, wet surface of decaying jaundiced snow does my figure. This is Sunday. I would spend it with more pleasure in writing you than I dare suppose you can have in reading anything I ever wrote, did not the post remind me it is time to fold up my letter and give it him. Perhaps it may reach you before my last sent by little Fanny. Poor thing ! She will have a cold scramble through the snow ; so without your arm she might have had through the world. I wonder when I think of these things if the everlasting rewards of the good are as superlatively different as the gifts and inspirations which nature lends the candidates who start for them. Adieu ! — Believe me, with daily encreasing esteem, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and obliged humble sert.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Should a packet come for you, may I open it ? Tell me this, and what aim you have missed that allows you to name spring for being in Ayrshire. You see I have forgot and wrot too far to fold. Were you to pay it, I would grudge the clean paper ; yet don't save yours upon me. I assure you 't is my favourite expense, perhaps the only one where I have not sometimes been a miser — a bold confession this as you treat the character, even where most eminently



successful. But I don't know how I have pickt up courage never to stand in that awe of you most people would think you were intitled to, nor I hope have ever disoblidged by this want of deference.

(1) Mr. Carfrae, minister of Morham, who afterwards wrote Burns about the publication of Mylne's poems.

This year, which began with the New Year's Day Address to Mrs. Dunlop, is exceedingly rich in letters, both new and old, from the poet to his friend. She was truly at this time his "confidate," and he did not allow many weeks to pass without sending to Dunlop a compound of prose and verse substantial enough to satisfy the vanity of the most exacting correspondent. The letter which follows is notable not only for its poetic contents, but also for the poet's vindication — not the only one he offered to Mrs. Dunlop — of the practice of composing Fescennine verse.

*Ad. Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop.*

To be left at the Stewarton Carrier's  
quarters, Kilmarnock.

ELLISLAND, 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1789.

I have rummaged every Stationer's shop in Dumfries for a long and broad, ample and capacious, sized sheet of writing paper, just to keep by me for epistles to you, and you see, dear Madam, by this honest-looking page, that I have succeeded to a miracle. I own indeed you deserve a jolly letter. In the first place, you are no niggard that way yourself, a quality absolutely necessary in a friendly correspondence; and in the next place, you seem determined not

only to deserve my friendship such as it is, but to buy it. There is a spirit in receiving as well as in giving presents ; and I insist, Madam, that you shall give me credit for a very considerable portion of the former, as I have always accepted the many kind instances of your beneficence, without expressing or even feeling any of that pettishness of stricken pride which so many people mistake for true spirit. I am a miserable hand at your fine speeches ; and if my gratitude is to be reckoned by my expression, I shall come poorly off in the account. Your benevolent notices of my poor, little cousin, I cannot pass in silence : for your goodness where your humble servant has been the object, a chearful honest, thank you, is all I can say about it. In giving me your friendship, Madam, you have given me a solid, permanent addition to my happiness ; and we shall not quarrel about the ceremonials of it.

I have received both your letters, and on the first coming to hand, I would have written you by post ; but as it rejoices my heart to send you a packet, I have waited for the return of one of my Mauchline friends who has been with me this week, to forward it without that cursed postage.

Your story of poor Mills [Mylne] has much interested me. If it is in my power, Madam, to gratify your wishes by a little compliment, in the way of my trade, to the memory of a friend of yours, you know it will give me the highest pleasure to do it. If the epistle he has done me the honor to write me, come to your hand, open it and welcome. Still, you must make me this allowance in your commands, that if the capricious baggage, my Muse, is not propitious, I will not attempt any thing on the subject. I have had themes on my hands for years, without being able to please myself in my best efforts.

There is a small river, Afton,<sup>1</sup> that falls into Nith, near New Cumnock, which has some charming, wild, romantic scenery on its banks. I have a particular pleasure in those little pieces of poetry such as our Scots songs, etc., where the names and land-skip-features of rivers, lakes, or woodlands, that one knows, are introduced. I attempted a compliment of that kind, to Afton, as follows: I mean it for Johnson's *Musical Museum*.

Flow gently, clear Afton, among thy green braes,  
And grateful I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;  
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
Flow gently, clear Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds through the glen,  
Ye blackbirds that sing in yon wild thorny den,  
Thou green-crested plover thy screaming forbear,  
I charge you disturb not my slumbering Fair.

How lofty, clear Afton, thy neighbouring hills,  
Far-mark'd with the courses of clear-winding rills;  
There daily I wander as noon rises high,  
My flocks, and my Mary's sweet cot, in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green vallies below,  
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;  
There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,  
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,  
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides:  
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,  
As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy pure wave.

Flow gently, clear Afton, among thy green braes,  
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays,  
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
Flow gently, clear Afton, disturb not her dream.

I believe I formerly mentioned some of the following verses to you, but I have, since, altered them with a view to



interweave them in an epistle from an unfortunate lady whom you knew. Whether I may ever finish it, I do not know, but I have one or two of the principal paragraphs already by me, of which the following is one : <sup>2</sup>—

Now, maddening, wild I curse that fatal night;  
 Now bless the hour that charm'd my guilty sight.  
 In vain the laws their feeble force oppose,  
 Chain'd at his feet they groan Love's vanquish'd foes;  
 In vain Religion meets my shrinking eye;  
 I dare not combat, but I turn and fly:  
 Conscience in vain upbraids th' unhallow'd fire;  
 Love grasps her scorpions, stifled they expire:  
 Reason drops headlong from her sacred throne,  
 Thy dear idea reigns, and reigns alone;  
 Each thought intoxicated homage yields,  
 And riots wanton in forbidden fields!

By all on high, adoring mortals know!  
 By all, the conscious villain fears below!  
 By what, alas! much more my soul alarms,  
 My doubtful hopes once more to fill thy arms!  
 Even shouldst thou, false, forswear the guilty tie,  
 Thine, and thine only I must live and die!

I am very sorry that you should be informed of my supposed guilt in composing, in some midnight frolic, a stanza or two perhaps not quite proper for a clergyman's reading to a company of ladies. That I am the author of the verses alluded to in your letter, is what I much doubt. You may guess that the convivial hours of *men* have their mysteries of wit and mirth; and I hold it a piece of contemptible baseness, to detail the sallies of thoughtless merriment or the orgies of accidental intoxication, to the ear of cool sobriety or female Delicacy.

I intend setting out for Edinburgh on Monday se'en-night, and shall be there about a week. I inclose you a

piece of my prose,<sup>3</sup> which, for obvious reasons, I send you for your *sole* amusement: it is dangerous ground to tread on. A lover of Scots Drink can never forgive the late usage of our D——rs. If you honor me with a letter during my stay in town, please direct to the care of Peter Hill, Bookseller, Parliament Square. — I have the honor to be, Dear Madam, your highly obliged humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This statement, while it throws no light on the identity of the Mary of the song, settles beyond doubt the vexed question of the name-place of "Sweet Afton." The song is No. 389 in the fourth volume of Johnson's *Museum*. Note that the original epithet was "clear" not "sweet," an instance of a second thought leading the poet astray.

(2) The second version of "Passion's Cry," first sent to Clarinda (see App. B, vol. ii.), and now adapted to the case of Mrs. Maxwell Campbell of Skerrington, and supposed to be addressed by her to her paramour from the West Indies. See *Chambers*, vol. ii. p. 67; vol. iii. p. 37. 1896. Mrs. Dunlop had known Mrs. Maxwell Campbell before her fall.

(3) The "Address of the Scotch Distillers to the Right Hon. William Pitt." See *Chambers*, vol. iii. pp. 59-61.

TO BURNS.

DUNLOP, 10th Febr'y. [1789].

DR. BURNS, — I have been very busy since I wrot you last, at least busy for a lady, who, if the fairest, are certainly not the most useful part of creation. I have in the last six

weeks or thereabout made my son six holland shirts, which, blind as I am, is no small undertaking, when one considers, too, of what pleasures I have deprived myself meantime, and that while I have been painfully earning the twelve or fifteen shillings my work would have cost, I have not even indulged myself in writing a single letter to you, who are the approved correspondent of my choice, and whose letters I would not exchange for all the intellectual feast I could have gathered from the Alexandrian Library (especially as it would be mostly Greek or Latin). Do you think that petty sum, even to such a miser as I, should be an equivalent for so much self-denial? A common calculator would at once answer No ; but I have another manner of stating the account. When I work I consider myself not only as intitled to the price of my labour, but as unaccountable also for as much of my income as I should in the space of time have lost at cards or squandered in some amusement suited to my rank and circumstances, and in those decorations which vanity or custom seem to appropriate to my age and situation, and which my family would not have thought interested or selfish my turning from theirs wholly to my own use. Thus, as the reward of my industry, I reckon myself at liberty to trifle away something not exceeding a great deal what I have saved them in cash, and where the satisfaction to myself may be in some degree proper turned to the advantage I hope they will reap by my sober moderate example in the future employment of their time. Now, if my arithmetic can be trusted, I do not rate this too high at £5. My head therefore, while my hands were going, was intently employed on solving this problem, "What shall I do with this that it will please me most and longest?" I have no taste for dress ; the sum can be of no import to all



my children ; to give it to one would be like discord throwing an apple among the goddesses. To be sure, I may buy a lottery ticket, at least part of one, but alas ! I have little faith, and in truth no desire for wealth. Therefore hope will be cold and insipid and disappointment fretting in this poor, abortive South-Sea scheme. At this moment of my speculation fancy presented a vision which made me happy for a moment, although the £30,000 prize could not do so in idea for myself. I put the note into an old snuff-box, saying to myself with exultation at the discovery, "This will buy a quarter chance for my friend Burns. Should he have as little faith as I have, he will not tell me so, but will convert it into something that will please himself here. I can never be disappointed, and shall for a year to come enjoy the dear delight of knowing that there is a possibility of my having been the means of making the fortune of a man whose talents I admire, whose character I esteem, and whose friendship I flatter myself I in a considerable degree possess ; to whom my country owes much and pays little, who may henceforth celebrate still more than he has already done the fame of my forefathers, and do it the more warmly for my sake. Yes, money for once does make me happy, and nothing shall divert it from this channel, where I feel it able to pour forth a great, an innocent, and inexhaustible spring of joy, that will flow uninterrupted for twelve or fourteen months in spite of Fortune herself. Nay, should she then do as I would have her, I shall half forgive many a scurvy trick she has heretofore played me." So saying, I shut the lid, and shut it shall remain till I know my letters go so safe as may tempt me to trust this treasure of future hope to the same conveyance ; for of late I have had some doubt from

your silence which I in vain cast about to find a reason for. Sometimes I think you have not received my two last letters; sometimes I fear lest any expression or omission of mine has verified in your mind a prediction you long ago uttered that I would not have delicacy to carry on a correspondence without hurting you. If I have done so, I dare not say I would pluck out an eye or cut off a hand, but I would throw my pen in the fire, and blot out the offending particle with a tear of sincere penitence, to be again reinstated in my own forgiveness and your favour, tho', unless I have whipt myself out of it with the birch-rod you put in my way, and which female wit, which is always foolish and often ill-bred, led me to catch it when I was affecting not to be pleased with your inimitable Ode, which Churchill might have been proud of, I cannot guess why you should deprive me of a letter now and then, when you know what pains I have bestowed to draw from you that correspondence I was shunning from almost every other quarter. Make me easie on this point if you can, and don't allow me to look back with regret to Agt. last, when I heard from you four times in one month. Yet I would not be unreasonable. I would allow you to be silent in seed-time and harvest, or whenever you were better employed for Mammon or the Muses. Only, I would like you told me what you were about beforehand, or shewed me afterwards. I wrot you a long letter by Fanny Burns, and sent you a book, which I stole for that purpose half an hour before, having heard it was very scarce, and perhaps only for that reason much valued. I yesterday received the inclosed letters and poem to send you, which I take the earliest opportunity of doing. I shall make no farther comment than by saying I do think the only Scots a man ever tried

to write to me must appear a badly chosen specimen of English tragedy, and would hardly promote the interest of the family in any future publication. I have altered and transposed some lines of my Elegy on Mr. Mylne at the beginning and end thus. Ending as below:—

Let all the tears of all the Muses flow,  
 And yours and mine redouble all their woe;  
 Yet Grief reserves her sharpest shaft for you,  
 A brother-farmer and a poet too.  
 Should lightning blast the Lover's painted dome  
 And make his nuptial bed a funeral tomb,  
 Not more the shoke your bosom-chords could tear,  
 And less the loss society would bear  
 Beyond the leech's salutary skill, etc.

. . . . .  
 And Cormac greet him with a prince's love,  
 The King of Kings his words and works regard,  
 And crown his goodness with a great reward.

In this shape it will appear as a letter wrot you with the accounts of his death, and perhaps those who wish it so may flatter themselves it is not only to but by you, as it will be sent anonymous, and every one does not know hands.

You say one always writes best where the heart is really interested in the subject. Now, tell me how you like the following address to a young lady of your acquaintance, where I assure you the author was much interested.

When French Marcatchi forms our British race  
 To move in all the elegance of grace,  
 The first exertions of the youthful fair  
 Distort the figure and degrade the air.  
 The awkward jump may fill us with surprize,  
 But pours no pleasure on our sated eyes:  
 So the first efforts of the feeling brain  
 Contorts the face and raise each swelling vein;  
 Quick sensibility in hurried starts is seen,  
 A childish hoyden romping on the green;



Her kindness forward, and her anger loud,  
Her carriage rustic, and her spirit proud.  
A generous frenzy animates that soul,  
Where in-born rectitude rejects controul.  
From her bright eyes keen flashes ardent dart,  
Deep crimson dyes each motion of her heart.  
A hulkish form, with intervening shade,  
Obscures the lovely work by Nature made,  
Till passing time a magic vail prepare  
Of modest beauty's mild attractive air;  
Move to soft melody life's shifting scene,  
And mark its ever calm gentle and serene.  
When sage experience holds the bearing rein,  
That slacks the nerves to harmony again,  
Then the pure honey of the melting soul  
Throws a milk liquid lustre on the whole;  
Bids neat simplicity of dress adorn,  
And gesture modest as the blushing morn.  
Whose sweet effulgence lumid tears bedew,  
Such as soft love or pity draws from you.  
So too be yours the gentle whispering gale,  
And sweet perfumes her vernal breath exhale,  
Diffusing pleasure to each living thing  
Young, gay and chearful as the blythsome spring.  
Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,  
Shrink mildly fearful even from applause;  
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,  
And all you are, my charming girl, seem.  
Straight as the fox-glove ere her bells disclose,  
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows.  
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,  
Your form shall show some shadow of your mind.  
Your manners shall so true your soul express,  
That all shall long to know the worth they guess.  
Congenial hearts their partner shall espie,  
And ladies love the maid they must envy.

*17th Feby.*

I was just got this length when I had yours where you  
answer me as it were by anticipation. I read this over

again, and half inclined to put it in the fire; yet I remembered it was your property, and I had no right to abstract it from you. I therefore send it immediately, tho' half afraid yours has been so long on the road it may miss you. I shall let you pay for it, as I am not sure if Mr. Kerr is in town. I will even run the chance of losing you 8d. by adding a cover rather than excite curiosity by telling the public that you are in Edr.,<sup>1</sup> when perhaps you would not chuse to be honour'd with their notice. I will also send you the packets I received for you from my son John two days ago, containing Mr. Carfrae's letter and the poem with the altered lines on poor Mylne, which you may dispose of as you please, only never saying but they are your own, at least not hinting that they are mine. There was also a letter for you from John, containing, I dare say, nothing but expressions of the real goodwill he bears you, or an invitation to see him if you were in that neighbourhood. I do not send it, lest it should make this too large, and the travling charges immense, should it have to follow you to Nithsdale. Meantime, if you let me know by next post if anything prolong your stay in town so long that it could reach you there, and that Kerr is still there to take charge of a future letter for you, I will then write you all my Edr. commissions, send you John's letter and any thing else that strikes me in the head, rhyme or prose. I must undeceive you in one thing. I was not even acquainted with poor Mylne. I only read "Darthula,"<sup>2</sup> and wished to see him, but death stept between. You are the only poet good enough to allow me the name of your sincere friend,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

*Postscript.* — Yours has been a fortnight on the road. I cannot afford to save postage at such an expense again.



(1) Burns visited Edinburgh about the end of February to have a further "racking" of accounts with Creech, and, as afterwards appears (p. 233), to arrange about getting an Excise division. Mrs. Dunlop's letter of the 10th caught him there, and his reply, which follows here, is the only letter he is known to have dated from the capital during this visit.

(2) The title of Mylne's tragedy, previously noticed.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Stewarton.

EDIN. *Saturday Morning* [23rd Feb. 1789].

Your kind packet, my much esteemed friend, is just come to hand. In my hurried hours in this place I have not yet had time to peruse Mylne's verses, but I have three times o'er without interval perused your incomparable verses to your young lady. It is evident, My dear Madam, that you were deeply interested in the subject; as you have in these lines not only risen above yourself, but, upon the honor of a Man, and the skill of a Critic! you have risen above any thing of the kind done by any author now living. So soon as I return to Nithsdale, which will be in four or five days, I shall write a criticism on their merits.

I am here more unhappy than I ever experienced before in Edinburgh. I am a poor man of business, and I have got some very serious business to do; I love the social pleasures in moderation, but here I am impressed into the service of Bacchus; and I am *from home*.

But, truce with peevish, poor complaining! I will not tax your friendship with my weakness. Were it not for



hurting your feelings, I would likewise add, that I will no more be thus indebted to your beneficence ; but I checked a momentary pang of something like wounded pride, and taxed my ingenuity to assist your wishes. It oblidges me to let you into an intention of mine rather prematurely, but as it is the only way I can think of being oblidged by you, *in that manner*, I must tell it you. I hope to be a father again in about two or three months, and I had resolved and indeed had told Mrs. Burns, that the said child should be christened by the name of FRANCES DUNLOP, if a girl, or FRANCIS, etc., if a boy ; that while the child should exist, it might be a witness of a Friendship to which I owe much of the pleasurable part of my life ; a Friendship which I wish to hand down to my posterity as one of the honors of their Ancestor. Let this said Miss Frances or Mr. Francis be the object of your intended beneficence with all my soul. Perhaps in the case of a boy, you would rather wish to wait for one of your own sex, that might take the exact Name ; and as I have not the smallest doubt of being very soon able to accommodate you in that way too, I shall expect your commands sometime before the important period.

I am here just in a vortex, so must conclude with a simple heartfelt *A Dieu je vous commende !*

ROBT. BURNS.

I'll write you on my return home.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,

Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, *March 4th*, 1789.

Here am I, my honored Friend, returned safe from the Capital. To a man who has a HOME, however humble or remote ; if that HOME is like mine, the scene of Domestic

comfort; the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust.

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!

When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead, contemptible puppy, or detestable scoundrel should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim — “What merits have these wretches had, or what demerits have I had, in some state of Pre-existence, that they are ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule and the key of riches in their puny fists; and I am kicked into the world, the sport of their folly or the victim of their pride?” I have read somewhere of a monarch, in Spain I think it was, who was so out of humour with the Ptolemean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator’s council he could have saved Him a great deal of labor and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often as I have glided in humble stealth through the pomp of Princes’ Street, it has suggested itself to me as an improvement on the present Human figure, that a man in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a perspective. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his Majesty’s liege subjects in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow or making way to a Great Man, and that too, within a second of the precise spherical angle of

reverence or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, Madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one damning fault — it is by far too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice under the title of Scots Poets, that the very term, Scots Poetry, borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr. Carfrae, I shall advise him rather to try one of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances; and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the Press. What it is that occupies me so much, and perhaps oppresses my present spirits, shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the mean time, allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine, which for beauty I shall put against any as many lines in our language. I give you them, that, as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them be any real improvement.

Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws  
Shrink, mildly fearful, even from applause:  
Be all a Mother's fondest hopes can dream,  
And all you are, my charming girl, seem.  
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,  
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,  
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,  
Your form shall be the image of your mind.



Your manners shall so true your soul express,  
That all shall long to know the worth they guess;  
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,  
And even sick'ning Envy must approve.<sup>1</sup>

I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged friend and  
humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

(1) Mrs. Dunlop's "Address to a Young Lady"  
amended. See *antea*, p. 220.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,

Ellisland, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 18th March 1789.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twenty-first March 1789.]

DEAR SIR, — I cannot express the pleasure I always feel  
in discovering I am got two letters in your debt, nor do  
I know how to thank my good friend for an event so  
truly soothing to my pride. Believe me I most sincerely  
acknowledge this as amply compensating for a thousand  
mortifications it might be subjected to in my intercourse  
with those of the world I value less, and whose claims are  
built on very different foundations — different in the eyes  
of the world, and still more widely different in mine.

I knew not where to find you, in town or country, in  
peace or war, tuning your melodious reed, dropping *aqua  
fortis*, or whetting the sharp scythe of political *satire*<sup>1</sup> —  
a word my mild Muse does not even know how to spell,  
you see. I was afraid you might be so strongly sucked  
into the vortex where you were as to stay longer than you  
planned or I wished. I could not write, but often thought  
of you, and in one of those reveries which fancy sometimes  
leads me into, my pen of itself scratched the inclosed verses  
and letter, almost without knowing it; perhaps I should

have thrown both in the fire, but, as I told you formerly, "Unawed before the bard, the phantoms pass." You say I wounded your pride. I am sure I never intended to do so; nay, should I now probe that wound to the very quick, it would still be the cruel act of a friendly surgeon, who wished only to cure the patient, not torture the distemper; nay, loath would I be even it should expire under my hand, for I think in a moderate degree it is one of the best companions ever a poor man was blest or even sometimes curst with. But if you have no objection to consult Mr. Graham on the merits of this composition,<sup>2</sup> seal and send it; you have my free leave, though I am so much a stranger to your present plans that I durst not do so myself without consulting you; though your ideas of female delicacy will not be increast by my present communication, unless in this you are as truly superiour to the general run of the world as I have often esteemed you on other occasions, or, as Fate has often left you beneath your worst inferiours in fortune and in the estimation of fools. It is a cruel tax malevolence lays on talents to depreciate the moral character of those who incontestably possess them, and force one's friends, in resentment of underhand massacres, to repeat truths that speak plain enough themselves to all who are unprejudiced by malicious whisperers. Should such earwigs have crawled towards Fintry, I would like to brush them off. It was this train of thinking led me to write the inclosed, and the same motive may perhaps induce you to send it, spite of any objections pride may enter.

I delight in your fancyful cynic adieu to the metropolis, nor can any line even of yours give me more pleasure than the one that so naturally assures me of your finding home the scene of domestic comfort. You tell me you were

prest into the service of Bacchus, and I suspect you have been on actual duty when you wrot; you say so much more than usual of my poor lines. Are you not afraid to make one snail put forth her horn to a ludicrous exaltation, since self-conceit is to be the moving spring? Yet I don't know but in time your correspondence may make me a shadow of a poet, for I feel I imbibe some of your graces, particularly that noble obstinacy that led you rather to leave poor Wallace wight *unhappy* for ever than yield one syllable to my criticism. After your good example I resolve to defend my last couplet as preferable in its own place to your alteration. Perhaps yours might be more emphatical from a man to his mistress, but an old woman, speaking to her young ward, points out the single partner for life, not the vain idea of general admiration or divided love exprest in the first line, and in the last alludes in the word *envy* only to that desire of equalling by a laudable emulation or imitation the happy female we approve of. That envy whose malignity sickens at being forced to applaud is truly masculine, wholly unknown to the soul of the gentle pupil, and even only taught at second hand to the old monitress herself when time has stole away the softness of her sex. Read them a fourth time, and say, if truth will let you, that you are not then of my opinion, and if you would not think the mind more enchanting that aspired to the affection of those of her own sex who saw her please more than themselves, than hers who could rejoice in the hope of their sick'ning and pining with envy at those qualities to which they could not refuse their reluctant applause.

I dare not ask what is busying or troubling you, since you don't yet like to say. While we live in this world we must frequently share its distresses. I truly sympathise



with yours, even without knowing what they are, nor am I free from my own at this moment. Indeed the mother of a score of children can seldom want cares or crosses, either in reality or imagination. In every situation, however, I must feel your friendship and esteem inexpressibly soothing; nor can anything flatter my self-love more than the value you place on my correspondence and regard, when you intend me the name of your child in so kind and obliging a manner. Yet I must tell you you have made a miserable choice, for a sad worthless name it has proved to nineteen who have already worn it, and to whom it has never, as far as I remember, signified one single straw more than the name itself, which to be sure, as a name, might serve a Spanish guarda costa or a German prince. As I was baptized Frances Ann, and by law and custom obliged to call myself Agnew Dunlop, while vanity bids me remind you and myself I was a Wallace, yet, my dr. sir, if you know anybody the child might be the better of, it would be unjust to it, poor little innocent! to load it with so much lumber, even should there be two again to bear the weight; for you know I never deceived you from the first. We set out, like King Pharamond and his secretary, with no expectations from each other but those of speaking and hearing truth just in the first unstudied shape in which she presented herself to either pen, and I'm sure at least I have kept to the articles in always giving you the undisguised thoughts of the minute, be what they would. But to leave this; how do you like the following simile?—

The village damsels follow in a train,  
To pick the gleanings of the yellow grain;  
One maid distinguished in an azure vest  
Superiour shone, eclipsing all the rest.

Amidst the barren, spritty grass below,  
Superiour rising to superiour woe.  
So the blue hare-bell oft is singly seen  
In robe unclouded deck th' uncultur'd green!  
Sweet solitary flower by Nature cast,  
Without a leaf to shield her from the blast,  
Bent by each breath, and trembling from the knell,  
And hence by peasants term'd the Dead Man's Bell.

I am sorry to see you have wrot out your foolscap. I wish you had kept a sheet for me. I assure you 'twas greatly adapted to my taste, and I regret the change. Meanwhile, the different size of this obliges me to bid you, I dare say, what you will think no premature adieu.

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) She had made more than one attempt at the word, but really succeeded in the end.

(2) Mrs. Dunlop, who knew Graham of Fintry, one of the Commissioners of Excise, had written him on Burns's behalf, and also a set of verses, probably on the same theme.

The following letter shows that Burns had reached a state of mind almost approaching despair about his farm, long before his sweeping statement to Gilbert of January 1790, that "It is a ruinous affair on all hands." Here we have him, in March 1789, when he had not been a year in Ellisland, speaking of his farm as "a very, very hard bargain, if at all practicable." Yet, barely a couple of months before, on 3rd February, he wrote to Bishop Geddes that he had good hopes of the farm; while on 22nd January he had told Lady Betty Cunningham that he was pretty

sure that it would do well in time, though for several years it would require more assistance than his pocket could afford. But Burns had of course moods about his farm as about many other things. Otherwise the letter throws fresh light on the procedure taken by the poet in order to procure regular occupation in the Excise. Besides racking accounts with Creech on his visit to Edinburgh in February, he had interviewed Mr. Graham of Fintry with a view to appointment to a division.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1789.

DEAR MADAM, — I have this moment your kind packet of the 18<sup>th</sup>, and tho' sore tired with the labours of the day,

. . . throwing the grain  
Into the faithful bosom of the ground,

yet, as I have a boy, my herd, going for Ayrshire to-morrow morning, and who will be at Kilmarnock, I shall make him go so much farther and leave this at Dunlop.

You have a little miscalculated my feelings, my honored friend, respecting the naming of my child. To name my child after any of the Great, with a view to their future beneficence, is quite foreign to my ideas: my motive is gratitude, not selfishness. Though I may die a very poor man, yet I hope my children shall ever boast the character of their Father; and as that father has some few in the upper ranks of life to whom he is peculiarly indebted, or whom he holds peculiarly dear, he wishes his children likewise to indulge an honest pride on that account; and not only as a memento of these honors their father enjoyed,



but as an incentive to noble action, he will call his children after the names of his illustrious friends and benefactors. I intend, Madam, as first at my heart, to begin with your honored name ; and my first child shall be Frances Wallace or F. Dunlop as you please, for really I dare not venture on the whole list of your appellations.

As for Mr. Graham's letter, Madam, it is of a piece with your usual goodness, and is what I highly approve of ; only when I tell you the narrative of my situation, plans in life, etc., you will see the propriety of altering the scope of your epistle. The latter part indeed of that epistle is what in no situation I could think on : I have marked in the epistle itself, where that part begins.

You remember, Madam, I had two plans of life before me ; the Excise and farming. I thought, by the glimmering of my own prudence, the Excise was my most eligible scheme ; but all my Great friends, and particularly you, were decidedly, and therefore decided me, for farming. My master, Mr. Miller, out of real tho' mistaken benevolence, sought me industriously out, to set me this farm, as he said to give me a lease that would make me comfortable and easy. I was a stranger to [the] country, the farm and the soil, and so ventured on a bargain, that instead of being comfortable, is and will be a very, very hard bargain, if at all practicable. I am sorry to tell you this, Madam, but it is a damning truth ; though I beg, as the world think that I have got a pennyworth of a farm, you will not undeceive them. To bring myself about, I thought of getting an Excise Division in the midst of which I live, and this was what took me last to Edinburgh ; but there are in the Excise-Board certain regulations which, notwithstanding Mr. Graham's warmest exertions, baffled all my

hopes. By Mr. Creech, who has at last settled amicably and fully as fairly as could have been expected, with me, I clear about £440 or £450.<sup>1</sup> To keep my brother from ruin, and scattering my aged parent and three sisters comfortless in the world, I advanced him about £200 of that money : this you know was an indispensable affair, as their wellbeing is certainly to me the same as my own. What money rests for myself, you will guess is too little for my own stock ; but my Master allows me some money to build and inclose, and with that I could have done — if the farm would have done.

But to close this tedious epistle, and to give you something more comfortable in my views ; my brother's lease is near expiring, he may be able to live by my lease, as he can with propriety do things that I *now* can not do ; I will plant him in this farm and throw myself on the Excise at large, where I am sure of immediate and constant bread.

Let these matters lie between you and I only.

As for your writing Mr. Graham, it is what pleases me above all things ; but no plans in it if you please ; I wish him to know how I labour under a sense of his goodness, and, if you will, your thanks to him for his kindness to a man in whose welfare you have interested yourself : and if you give them a little different turn, now that you know my situation, send the verses above all things.

Now I talk of verses, I own your criticism on my emendation of your line to be just ; but one thing, Madam, has escaped your attention. " Envy," either a noun or verb, is accented on the first syllable, consequently the word cannot well close your line.

Forgive this miserable scrawl. — I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged friend and very humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

If you write Mr. Graham, his address is, George Street, Edinr. I must not seem to know any thing of the matter, so let it just go by the nearest Post-Office. R. B.

(1) This is not inconsistent with the poet's letter to Dr. Moore of 4th January, in which he said he believed he should clear about £400 some little odds, including the result of the settlement still pending, and it can be made to agree with Currie's statement that the whole profits of the edition were £500.

From the letter that follows we learn for the first time that Robert Burns might, had his inclination and the good will of a patron chimed in, have been a professor in the University of Edinburgh. Mrs. Dunlop pressed him hard to become an applicant for the new chair, the foundation of which is related below, and through her and Dr. Moore his name was brought before the patron. It does not, however, appear that the poet ever seriously thought of applying for the post. He at first doubted the feasibility of the project, and finally in July expressed his obligation to his two friends for their exertions on his behalf, but said that he knew the professorship was to him an unattainable object.

*Ad.* MR. ROBT. BURNS,  
Elliesland, Dumfries.

*1st April 1789.*

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Third April 1789.]

DR. SIR, — Your boy called here one morning before I was well out of bed. I, however, regretted not seeing him the less as Will Mure told me he was not directly returning,



and my knowing I could send my letter post-free hindered me from being very earnest about writing by him ; so I did not detain him, understanding he had some little business in the neighbourhood. Indeed I should have been vexed to think he had walked from Kilmarnock with a letter which I should have had next day by post at any rate. It was making the poor boy pay too dear for my pleasure ; yet when I saw how much it contained of your private concerns, I less grudged his walk. Assure yourself I shall not mention what you tell me, or broach any plan that can hurt you either in interest or happiness, by hinting it to any body but yourself. As for forming schemes, it is a kind of castle-building that I cannot resign, as it pleases myself and does little harm to any thing else. I am, however, truly vexed to think I have ever given my opinion where you don't find it answer either your ideas or mine. However, remember it was respectability, not wealth, was my object ; and my sentiments are still the same spite of the event. Yet I own my feeling is painful, and something similar to that of having a child die of the inoculation. I mourn both, but repent neither. Providence always sends some consolation ; where do you believe I find it at present ? Just in the very circumstance that ought to grieve me most, in the pride of knowing any opinion of mine could for a moment influence your superior judgement. I feel pleased even at the very time when I discover my advice has been unfortunate, a sure proof generosity is not the strongest point of my character, tho' 't is the first time I ever found out or suspected it was vanity. I can hardly still think it so ; I rather impute it to the pleasure of esteeming you now more than I could ever have done had you at once plunged eagerly into a profession where, although I must follow an old friend, I could

never have thought of looking for a new one. The very thing you suggest about your brother struck me before, and I one day mentioned it in the idea of instability and want of application being frequently too close companions of genius. The gentleman to whom I was speaking replied — How could I think of that? If the bargain was a good one, conferred as a personal favour, was it generous to assume a right of transferring it to one for whom it was never meant? If it was bad, 't was unjust and inhuman to throw it on a friend. I made no answer. I leave it to your animadversions to fix a proper one, as I know no mind more decisive or more manly in its determinations. Do not think I ever miscalculate your motives in any thing. I always refer them to the very best native workings of a good heart and a sound, uncorrupted understanding. If I ever under-rate them, it is for want of sublimity in myself to reach the height to which your eagle fancy may soar. I may sometimes, notwithstanding, blame, or at least differ from your way of thinking, and reprobate it as romantically disinterested, but never as sordid or mean. I am incapable of misconstruing the compliment you pay me, tho' I would even sacrifice it rather than hurt the little one, if by this resignation it might gain a better friend than it can ever hope in me. I am sorry when you bid me chuse, to quit the appellation of my husband ; yet I think the son of a Poet must be Wallace. You will remember it is long since I told you you would make that name live five hundred years longer, tho' I am sure I did not dream of this method of bringing it about, which confers an honour upon me beyond my expectation or desert, but of which I feel the full value. I cannot allow you to speak of gratitude, unless you mean on my side, who have ever been the obliged party. You have

allowed me to engross a portion of your time and attention that was material to me and to yourself by an intercourse which tended to rouse my then vacant mind, flatter my self-love, and always afford me a lively pleasure. You have indulged me in scribbling long letters, and knowing you would answer them, as if the correspondence had been as great an acquisition to you as I found it to myself; and this at a time when your more knowing friends were telling you it was a loss, and that all private letters were waste of genius and trifling ones inexcusable in those who were courted by wealth, rank, or science from every corner, and ought to be taken up with nothing but their advancement in fame or fortune. You have stuck by me spite of all these wise arguments, and placed me at the head of your list of distinguished friends in preference to so many proud pre-eminencies that you have taught me a value I never before put upon precedence. For the little while I have to live I trust I shall never be shoved out of the post of honour to which you direct my ambition. Were my lease long enough, I should fear to see you rich enough to go to London, that thick atmosphere which choaks most unprofitable regards. But I forgot that I meant to bid you read your friend Creech's advertisement in the *Edr. Courant* for proposals about a professor of Agriculture.<sup>1</sup> I would have you give this a little serious attention, since I do not believe there is a man in the kingdom who might so properly blend the theoretical and practical knowledge that plan would seem to require, and the proposal being to be sent marked with a private motto and kept secret if desired, seemed to me a tempting circumstance, should the situation on inquiry prove convenient, reputable, and such as might be held for life or dropt as one afterwards found eligible



should they please the donor, which there appeared no great risk in trying. Besides, Edina would not be so irksome when one was not from home there, nor would a grave member of the College be so oft the prey of jolly Bacchus as an Exciseman, at least against his will. But if you write for any competition which you would have unknown, don't correct a single letter with your own hand; 't is as remarkable as the awns [beard] of a barleycorn; I also ought to have told you that I lately saw your brother's landlord, the Nabob.<sup>2</sup> I said I wondered he had quit you for a tenant. He said he had kept a much better man for his purpose; your brother was a much better farmer, one he would really be sorry to lose, and who had ten times the sense of you. I don't repeat this as chit-chat, but to induce you to examine how the land lies there before you fix on the transplantation purposed. I wish to God somebody that could serve your interest thought of it half as often as I do. A poet is a Proteus which shows himself in every shape. A farmer's house, a newspaper advertisement, a book, a song, a tree, a river, or a mountain, bring you along with them to my imagination, and becomes itself more interesting from being so accompanied. I must believe you my friend, now that you tell me my faults, therefore hear them with more grateful pleasure than my praise, and since I must not quote Shakspear's *All's Well that Ends Well* in my favours, I avail myself of Broome's<sup>3</sup>—

One line for sense and one for rhyme,  
For any man's sufficient at a time.

Being convicted I plead total ignorance of English law with regard to accent and every part of grammar, nor can I claim the privileges you and others would be allowed, being no

licence as a poet.\* I must just stand condemn'd as a poacher unless you allow of this alteration in my poor tortured couplet.

Congenial minds their partner shall approve,  
Nor ladies envy her they truly love.

Adieu. I have not room for my name ; perhaps by now you have it at home in the first edition. In every one believe it that of a friend, with additions and emendations, the growth of every month of our acquaintance. Will the accommodation <sup>4</sup> stop the *Poet's Progress* ? I hope not, for I am interested in every step of his road that I have yet seen. I am less friendly to the *Epistle* of the *Unfortunate Lady*,<sup>5</sup> who writes very like a man and he no small proficient either. But my family is too large just now for me to turn critic. So in honest Erse *Dieu vous benisse !*

(1) Mr. William Johnstone Pulteney, afterwards baronet of Westerhall by succession to his brother, who had acquired the vast fortune of the Pulteney family by his marriage with the heiress of Daniel, presented to the University of Edinburgh, through the Town Council, of which Creech was a member, the sum of £1250 to endow a Chair of Agriculture. Pulteney retained the first presentation in his own hands, and appointed in the year 1790 Dr. Andrew Coventry of Shanwell, who filled the chair for a great many years. By the terms of the appointment he was taken bound to deliver "a set of Instructions or Lectures on the subject of Agriculture, respecting the nature of soils and manures; the modes of cultivation; the succession of crops; the construction of

the implements of husbandry; the best and most successful known practices; the manner of instituting experiments to ascertain the effect of any proposed practice in any soil or climate; and the best manner of introducing or training skilful labourers and country artificers, where these may be wanting."

(2) Mossiel, which the Burnses leased from Gavin Hamilton, as factor for the Earl of Loudoun, passed in 1786 into the possession of the neighbouring proprietor, Claud Alexander of Ballochmyle, father of "The Bonie Lass," who had made a fortune in India, and in the slang of the day was therefore a nabob.

(3) William Broome (1689-1745), Pope's collaborator in the translation of Homer.

Hibernian politics, O Swift! thy doom,  
And Pope's, translating ten whole years with Broome.

*Dunciad.*

(4) The final payment by Creech in connection with the 1787 edition.

(5) The sketch (see *antea*, p. 215) afterwards incorporated in "Passion's Cry."

About this time Burns commenced his connection with the recently started first London evening paper, Peter Stuart's, *The Star and Evening Advertiser*, which took from him the "Ode to the Departed Regency Bill," then the "Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald of Auchencruive," the "New Psalmody" for Kilmarnock Chapel, etc. It will be noted that from the start the poet appreciated the risk he ran in mix-



ing himself up with politics. The Regency Bill was of course introduced by Pitt, on George the Third's first attack of madness, conferring the regency on the Prince of Wales with certain restrictions which were denounced by Fox and the Prince's friends.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, *3rd April 1789.*

DEAR MADAM, — I have this moment finished the following political Squib, and I cannot resist the temptation of sending you a copy of it — the only copy indeed that I will send to any body, except perhaps anonymously to some London Newspaper. Politics is dangerous ground for me to tread on, and yet I cannot for the soul of me resist an impulse of any thing like Wit.

#### ODE TO THE DEPARTED REGENCY BILL.

Daughter of Chaos' doting years !  
Nurse of ten thousand hopes and fears !  
Whether thy airy, unsubstantial shade  
(The rites of sepulture now duly paid ;)   
Spread abroad its hideous form  
On the roaring civil-storm ;  
Deafening din, and warring rage,  
Factions wild with factions wage :  
Or under ground, deep-sunk, profound,  
Among the demons of the earth,  
With groans that make the mountains shake,  
Thou mourn thy ill-starred, blighted birth :

Or in the uncreated void,  
Where seeds of FUTURE-BEING fight,  
With lightened step thou wander wide,  
To greet thy mother ANCIENT NIGHT ;

And as each jarring, monster mass is past,  
 Fond recollect what once thou wast :  
 In manner due, beneath this sacred oak,  
 Hear, Spirit, hear! thy presence I invoke!

By a Monarch's heaven-struck fate!  
 By a disunited State!  
 By a GENEROUS PRINCE's wrongs!  
 By a Senate's war of tongues!  
 By Opposition's eager hand,  
 Grasping at an airy wand!  
 By a PREMIER's sullen pride,  
 Louring on the changing tide!  
 By dread Th-r-l-w's powers to awe,  
 Rhetoric, Blasph-my, and Law!  
     By the turbulent ocean,  
     A Nation's commotion!  
     By the harlot caresses  
     Of Borough Addresses!  
     By days few and evil!  
     Thy portion, poor devil!  
 By Power, Wealth, Show! the gods by men adored:  
 By NAMELESS POVERTY! their hell abhorred:  
     By all they hope! By all they fear!  
     HEAR! AND APPEAR!  
 Stare not on me, thou ghostly Power!  
 Nor grim with chained defiance lour!  
 No Babel-structure would I build,  
     Where, Order exiled from his regal sway,  
 Confusion may the REGENT SCEPTRE wield,  
     While all would rule — and none obey. —  
 Go! to the world of MAN relate  
 The story of thy strange, eventful fate:  
     And call presumptuous Hope to hear,  
     And bid him check his blind career;  
     And tell the sore-vexed sons of Care,  
     Never, never to despair!  
     Paint CHARLES's speed, on wings of fire,  
     The object of his fond desire

Beyond his boldest hopes at hand :  
 Paint all the triumph of the PRTL-ND-BAND ;  
 Mark, how they seem to lift th' elated voice !  
 And who are these that in their joy rejoice ?  
 Jews, Gentiles, what a motely crew !  
 Their iron tears of joy their flinty cheeks bedew ;  
 See, how unfurled their parchment ensigns fly,  
 And, PRINCIPAL and INTEREST ! all the cry. —  
 But just as hopes to warm enjoyment rise,  
 Cry, CONVALESCENCE ! and the vision flies. —  
 Then next pourtray a darkening, twilight gloom,  
 Eclipsing, sad, a gay rejoicing morn,  
 While proud AMBITION to th' untimely tomb  
 By gnashing, grim, despairing fiends is borne !  
 Paint RUIN, in the shape of high DUND —  
 Gaping with giddy terror o'er the brow :  
 In vain he struggles — the Fates behind him press,  
 And clamorous hell yawns for her prey below !  
 How fallen That, whose pride late scaled the skies !!!  
 And This, like Lucifer, no more to rise !!!

Again pronounce the powerful word :  
 See Day, triumphant from the night, restored.

Then know these truths, ye sons of men  
 (Thus end thy MORAL TALE).  
 Your darkest terrors may be vain,  
 Your brightest hopes may fail.

I have this moment an opportunity of sending this to  
 Post, so can no more — not even review the past. R. B.

In the collection of Mr. R. B. Adam of Buffalo, there is a MS. of this poem dated 17th March 1789. The Ode was published in the London *Star* of 17th April, dated Edinburgh the 7th, and signed "Agricola." Burns told Lady Harriet Don that it was "mangled in a newspaper." Probably Stuart, the



editor, struck out of the MS. sent him lines 59-62, "Jews, Gentiles," etc., modified the two preceding lines to cover the omission, and made verbal changes in lines 53 and 56. In the copy made for Captain Riddel lines 25 and 26 were omitted.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 21st April 1789.

MY HONORED FRIEND, — If you knew my present hurry of building, planning, planting, ploughing, sowing, etc. etc., you would give me great credit for this sheet-ful, if I live in leisure to fill it. Every minute has five minutes' business to do, and every crown has a twenty-shilling errand to run. I have just got a reading of some books I wanted much; and a parcel of poems, now in the current of subscription, have given me, and daily give me, a world of trouble in revising them. They are hopeless trash; but the authoress is a poor young creature whose forefathers have seen better days; for which consideration I submit to the horrid drudgery. I have over and above, the 3d vol. of the Scots Songs [*Museum*] among my hands, among which will appear some delectable pieces of my Muse's dreams.

Two mornings ago as I was, at a very early hour, sowing in the fields, I heard a shot, and presently a poor little hare limped by me, apparently very much hurt. You will easily guess, this set my humanity in tears and my indignation in arms. The following was the result, which please read to the young ladies — I believe you may include the Major, too; as whatever I have said of shooting hares, I have not spoken one irreverend word against coursing them. This is, according to your just right, the very first copy I wrote.

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE WITH  
A SHOT<sup>1</sup>

Inhuman man ! curse on thy barbarous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye !  
May never Pity soothe thee with a sigh,  
Nor ever 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, or 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 woe,  
The playful Pair croud fondly by thy side ;  
Ah, little 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.

It would truly oblige me, to have your opinion of the foregoing. I must take some other opportunity to answer the particulars of your last. I believe the Professorship you mention will be an idle project ; but whatever it may be, I, or such as I, am quite out of the question:

You are rather premature on me in expecting your name-child so soon. In about two months, I hope to tell you another story. By the way, should I have a boy, will you honor him with the appellation, or will you wait a girl? You see, I am set in for trade. I wish I had lived of Jok-tan,<sup>2</sup> in whose days, says Moses, the earth was divided.



Then, a patriarchal fellow like me might have been the father of a nation.

But even in that case I should have been a loser if I had then been denied the happiness and honor of subscribing myself, Dr. Madam, your obliged friend and humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) The draft in the letter of 4th May to Alexander Cunningham is the earliest hitherto known. Both it and the version in the text differ in several places from, and have one verse more than the poem as it was adjusted to Dr. Gregory's criticism.

(2) Joktan was of the children of Shem, and begot thirteen sons. See Gen. x. 25.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Ellisland, Dumfries.

23<sup>rd</sup> April 1789.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinburgh, Sixth May 1789.]

DR. SIR, — This is the feast or fast for the recovery of our King.<sup>1</sup> I say with all my heart — Thy will be done ! For on this subject I have no will of my own ; my very wishes are lost in immensity or buried in profound ignorance, and I am ready with the implicit faith of indifference to believe what is is best. But I am not well ; my spirits are contracted, and everything around me on too large a scale for my present enjoyment. My house is so big I can see but one end of it ; my company so numerous I can hear none of them for the noise of the rest ; my very devotion, inadequate to the occasion, embraces only a very few friends, for whom indeed my sincere good wishes never fail to arise with the dawning light, and to contribute to their accomplishment would be all the Heaven I would ask upon earth. Yet it is more than I fear will ever be granted



me, nor can I learn to be contented without it, and perform that first of all duties to fill quietly our appointed post, and never let will-o'-the-wisp wishes tempt us to repine at what we cannot better but may often mar by those indifferent efforts which jostle us out of the ranks and hurt both our cause and ourselves. This length mortified pride had made me peevish ; I expected a letter and missed it. I dare say I found much better, for I have just got yours, and will forget every thing disagreeable for that which always gives me pleasure. My soul, before as inanimate as this drizzly day, brightens to a gleam of sunshine, and, if not reason, recollection and rhyme may once more befriend me, and fill up my blank sheet as well as my void intellects, which were wholly asleep till roused by the welcome sight of your hand — the only one almost that never fails for some minutes at least to brush off the dust and cobwebs gathered round an indolent, inactive mind, good for nothing to others or itself. This were an overwhelming idea, but your friendship gives the lie to it, and tells me I am still something, since I possess what the proudest of the land in vain may envy. I shall do what few Nabobs can, feel truly happy in my wealth, without examining too curiously whether I owe it to conquest, or if it constitute the only remaining inheritance from my ancestors. The last would please my vanity ; the first gratify my self-love. Meantime I find food for both in the compliment Dr. Moore and you pay me in naming your sons for me, especially yours, where the surname makes it unequivocal, and there being no relation to prompt the distinction must make me regard it as the more peculiar mark of goodwill, and of that degree of esteem I dare not flatter myself I can ever deserve, unless by feeling the true value of it, which I beg you may give me full credit for.

I am assured the professorship is unappropriated, even in idea. It is endowed by Mr. Poultney. I wish to God he thought of both you and it as I do, and it would be yours, at least if you wish it should be so ; but perhaps you would have an aversion to it. We are subject sometimes to strange dislikes. I know a friend of yours who feels always something come over her heart like the cold fit of an ague every time she thinks of a pert Exciseman, nor is this an inexplicable matter to me, for I have a kind of antipathy myself at cats, so that there is only one of the whole race I can endure. She indeed is a fine little creature, and quite a favourite ; she cannot cry, and is the very reverse of the rest of the species. But you know it has long been said "No rule without an exception," and I must confess I have seen already more than one among Excisemen who, like modest Irishmen, were always wondered at, and almost regarded like the good Bishop of Marseilles, who had escaped all the contagion of the plague. You bid me tell you my opinion of the "Hare." It was thrice read in the circle, and more liked every time than the first. Had it been any hand but yours, I don't know if I had done it so much justice, for I don't like the measure, which to my ears feels cramp and unnatural, and prevents my following the thought smoothly. I feel as Sterne did driving hard on rough road, I think when he left Maria or the dead ass ; I don't know which, but it would do for either. The thoughts are beautifully tender, spite of your cursing as heartily as a Jewish judge when all the people said Amen. But what struck me most was "Go live the bitter little that of life remains," etc. The whole recalled the remembrance of a dead seal-fish I once saw with two young ones sucking, and I tryed to throw my fancy into the very form that I

felt murder your's, so natural it is to imitate or rather be imperceptibly led by those we admire, even where we admire them least. This was the produce :—

No agonies now rend thy bursting heart,  
Thy lifeless young fix't at the ebbing flood ;  
Cold death coagulates thy milk and blood,  
Convulsive starts no longer pangs impart.

So petrified by pride to Parian stone  
On some mock marble sculptur'd orphans show,  
Meagre and cold ! that vain parade of woe  
Swells not the heart like simple Nature's groan.

I wonder at the ease (impudence I fear any body else would call it) with which I scribble all my nonsense to you, as a child would scratch mathematical schemes to Sir Isaak Newton, had it happened to find a bit of chalk on his desk. Sir Isaak was a good man, and would have set all soon to rights again with his pocket-handkerchief ; so may you by lighting your pipe — should you ever have the toothach as I have had this month bypast — with my verses ; for remember I positively prohibit your giving them to the maid to make broaches, or any of those kind of uses that would subject me to be laughed at by any body but yourself. Meantime I wish our convicts at Botany Bay may trade to the same purpose, and get valuable commodities for their iron nails, glass beads, etc. etc., as I do when you send me your compositions in exchange — nay, not only copies, but the proof-prints new from the mint, what money can never henceforth buy, and even tell me you think these my just right. I wish from the bottom of my soul you may ever find a friend worthy of your gratitude, for it surely would be extreme when you repay me so richly for, I dare say, often trying your patience, and exhausting



it too, while I was really indulging myself more than I had it in my power to do in any other way whatever. When you read this, don't lower like the Premier o'er the "changing tide" <sup>2</sup>—a beautiful, fine image as I see it reflected in the clear mirror of my ruling star, for such I greet the new poetic constellation which may perhaps hereafter be called, like the one in the heavens, the "something Georgius" [*Georgium Sidus*], though I believe the Cuer-Carw would have been more proper; apropos to which, in some lines you saw lately I intended writing, after giving "every Stuart his due," <sup>3</sup> by way of an additional cause for doing so, this couplet—

E'er since in early youth (unknown) he trode  
With worth and learning Catrine's loved abode.

Apropos to which again I must tell you I lately met a fine young fellow, clever, well-principled, good-hearted, and proudly independent of spirit, but the world says mad, and I am not sure if they are wholly mistaken. He did something out of the common road, and I gave him your "Epitaph of a Bard" to read. He was so pleased with it I made him a present of the book. He said he was ashamed to see but one of his name among the subscriptions. "I suppose yours will grace his next publication," replied I. Says he, "I had an old grand-uncle, who told great lies, not to be believed but laughed at. He told us one day Old George was not dead nor planting cabbage at Hanover. Where was he then? 'One day,' says he, 'I was marching our Regt. (Scots Dutch) to the parade at the Hague. A fellow called me from a gin-shop. I did not chuse the men should see I could drink, but when they dismiss I returned to the little, fat, red-faced

landlord, and asked how he knew me. "Lord Arthur," says he, "don't you know George Guelph? I keep this gin-shop; it's a hundred times better than to be King; won't you give me your custome?" "Shake hands," says I; "you're a d—d honest fellow — I'll not only come myself, but I'll fetch the whole regt.'" And I," added my guest, "will not only subscribe myself, but fetch my whole clan, and a pretty numerous one they are." We had some more chat about you, and it was he told me about the professorship being unengaged, so after the company parted it run in my head, and I wrot what you shall have in another sheet as if address to Creech.

#### FRAGMENT

See these subscriptions; view the ample scroll!  
Like Death's mixt legends that contain the whole.  
What mighty hands from distant lands unfurled,  
Seem to announce him Laureate for the World!  
Sated with conquest, tired of public view,  
His independent hand now grasps the plough.

While through the records of old Time you pry,  
Ages and nations open'd to your eye;  
Great Source of Learning! I appeal to you,  
If he who holds the pen and guides the plough,  
Fir'd by ambition, sedulously aims  
To form her mind and fertilize her plains:  
Is not the man by Nature's hand design'd  
To frame her labours useful and refin'd?  
To make old Agriculture joyous smile,  
And force forth plenty from a rigid soil?  
To add strong Practice to that classic lore  
By Theory mangled in our schools before?

This is a very late spring, but spite of the cold the daisies begin to rise; yet my hopes of seeing you are not blooming. I rather almost despair of ever having that pleasure again; yet, as you once told me you meant to be in

Ayrshire about this time, it would have vexed me to leave it, which I was greatly importuned to do, two days ago, when two of my daughters went for some weeks to Edinburgh. Should you arrive, you would just find me at the old trade making another grandchild's cap. I suppose you won't, however, leave Mrs. Burns till the strangers are introduced, and she well again. You ask if I am for a son or a daughter. I shall be thankful, as the saying is, for whatever God sends, nor say, like the greedy Bishop of Bath and Wells — "Baith's best." I hear Dr. Moore is publishing a novel, but I don't know the name or nature of it. I am also told he is printing a tragedy — I mean a play — for I don't know what kind of one it is neither. A man is lost at London, at least much lost; to me it has been a fatal whirlpool, that has sucked in several of my friends who now inhabit about Westminster Abbey. But what is as bad, those who escape that are so crowded one is squeezed out of their head, tho' I ought not to say so of the Dr., who never in his life has forgot me where he could serve, though frequently when he might have pleased me much by his remembrance. Dr. Burns, if you have, as I hope you have, my happiness much at heart, just reverse this mode, for my spirit, proud and independent like your own, leads me to prefer being pleased and flattered to the most material service I could receive. Happy is it for me if this is also your way of thinking, since it is my pride that I have been hitherto enabled sometimes to please you, whereas, with all the wish in the world, it is beyond my most sanguine hope that it should ever be in my power to be of the most insignificant service to you. Every body would know your "Regency Bill" were it to appear. You cannot have a child more like the father, should you have twins every year as long as you live. I am, notwithstand-



ing the length of this, almost as busie as you, but my labours afford less pleasant variety. I might be sick-nurse in some hospital, for all my family almost are sick. I am the best myself, being only distracted with the toothache two hours every forenoon, and pretty well for the rest of the day. I dare not complain much lest they tell me 't is a common affectation in old women, who would fain pretend to have teeth after they are all gone. Farewell. May you escape this and all evils, and always honour with your regard, Dr. Sir, your obliged, humble servt. FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) Thursday, 23rd April, was appointed a day of public thanksgiving for the recovery of George the Third from the mental derangement which was the origin of the Regency Bill. This same occasion was the subject of Burns's "Stanzas of Psalmody," published in the *Star*, and beginning, "O, sing a New Song to the Lord."

(2) "Ode to the Departed Regency Bill."

(3) This cryptic allusion is to Professor Dugald Stewart.

The "New Psalm for the Chapel of Kilmarnock," which forms the first of the poetical transcripts in the following letter, was published in the *Star* on 14th May, with the date Kilmarnock, 30th April. Duncan M'Leerie was the hero of an old Kilmarnock song.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 4th May 1789.

You see, Madam, that I am returned to my folio epistles again. I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or fancy but I wish to send it to you; and if knowing and reading them gives half the pleasure to you, that communicating them to you gives to me, I am satisfied.

As I am not devoutly attached to a certain monarch, I cannot say that my heart ran any risk of bursting, on Thursday was se'ennight,<sup>1</sup> with the struggling emotions of gratitude. God forgive me for speaking evil of dignities ! but I must say that I look on the whole business as a solemn farce of flagrant mummery. The following are a few stanzas of new Psalmody for that "joyful solemnity," which I sent to a London newspaper with the date and preface following.

Kilmarnock, 25th April. Mr. Printer, — In a certain chapel, not fifty miles from the market-cross of this good town, the following stanzas of Psalmody, it is said, were composed for, and devoutly sung on the late joyful solemnity of the 23rd.

O, sing a new song to the Lord !  
 Make, all and every one  
 A joyful noise, ev'n for the King  
 His restoration.

The sons of Belial in the land  
 Did set their heads together ;  
 "Come, let us sweep them off," said they,  
 "Like an o'erflowing river."

They set their heads together, I say,  
 They set their heads together :  
 On right and left, and every hand,  
 We saw none to deliver.

Thou madest strong two chosen ones,  
 To quell the Wicked's pride :  
 The Young Man,<sup>2</sup> great in Issachar,  
 The burden-bearing tribe ;

And him, among the Princes, chief  
 In our Jerusalem,  
 The Judge<sup>3</sup> that 's mighty in Thy law,  
 The man that fears Thy name.

Yet they, even they, with all their strength,  
 Began to faint and fail ;  
 Even as two howling, rav'ning wolves  
 To dogs do turn their tail.

Th' ungodly o'er the just prevail'd,  
 For so Thou hadst appointed,  
 That Thou might'st greater glory give  
 Unto Thine own anointed.

And now Thou hast restored our State,  
 Pity our Kirk also,  
 For she by tribulations  
 Is now brought very low !

Consume that high-place, PATRONAGE,  
 From off Thy holy hill ;  
 And in Thy fury burn the book <sup>4</sup>  
 Even of that man M'Gill.

Now hear our prayer, accept our song,  
 And fight Thy chosen's battle !  
 We seek but little, Lord, from Thee,  
 Thou kens we get as little !

DUNCAN M'LEERIE.

So much for psalmody. You must know that the publisher of one of the most blasphemous party London newspapers is an acquaintance of mine, and as I am a little tinctured with Buff and Blue myself, I now and then help him to a stanza.

I gave another poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the Rt. Honble. Ch. J. Fox, Esquire ; but how long that fancy may hold, I can't say. A few of the first lines I have just rough sketched as follows : —

#### SKETCH

INSCRIBED TO CHARLES JAMES FOX, ESQ.

How Wisdom and Folly meet, mix, and unite ;  
 How Virtue and Vice blend their black and their white ;  
 How Genius, th' illustrious father of fiction,  
 Confounds rule and law, reconciles contradiction,  
 I sing. If these mortals, the critics, should bustle,  
 I care not, not I : let the critics go whistle !



But now for a Patron, whose name and whose glory  
At once may illustrate and honor my story.

Thou first of our orators, first of our wits,  
Yet whose parts and acquirements seem mere lucky hits;  
With knowledge so vast and with judgment so strong,  
No man with the half of 'em e'er went far wrong;  
With passions so potent and fancies so bright,  
No man with the half of 'em e'er could go right;  
A sorry, poor, misbegot son of the Muses,  
For using thy name, offers fifty excuses.

Good L—d, what is Man! for as simple he looks,  
Do but try to develop his hooks and his crooks!  
With his depths and his shallows, his good and his evil,  
All in all he's a problem must puzzle the devil.

On his one ruling passion Sir Pope<sup>5</sup> hugely labors,  
That, like th' old Hebrew walking-switch, eats up its neighbours.

Human Nature's his show-box — your friend, would you know him?  
Pull the string, Ruling Passion — the picture will show him.  
What pity, in rearing so beauteous a system,  
One trifling particular — Truth — should have miss'd him!  
For, spite of his fine theoretic positions,  
Mankind is a science defies definitions.

Some sort all our qualities each to its tribe,  
And think Human Nature they truly describe:  
Have you found this or t' other? there's more in the wind,  
As by one drunken fellow his comrades you'll find.  
But such is the flaw, or the depth of the plan  
In the make of that wonderful creature called Man;  
No two virtues, whatever relation they claim,  
Nor even two different shades of the same,  
Though like as was ever twin brother to brother,  
Possessing the one shall imply you've the other.

But truce with abstraction, and truce with a Muse  
Whose rhymes you'll perhaps, Sir, ne'er deign to peruse:  
Will you leave your justings, your jars, and your quarrels,  
Contending with Billy<sup>6</sup> for proud-nodding laurels?

My much-honor'd Patron, believe your poor Poet,  
 Your courage much more than your prudence, you show it;  
 In vain with Squire Billy for laurels you struggle:  
 He 'll have them by fair trade — if not, he will smuggle;  
 Not cabinets even of kings would conceal 'em,  
 He 'd up the back-stairs, and by G—— he would steal 'em!  
 Then feats like Squire Billy's, you ne'er can achieve 'em,  
 It is not, out-do him — the task is, out-thieve him!

I beg your pardon for troubling you with the enclosed to the Major's tenant before the gate; it is to request him to look me out two milk cows: one is for myself and another for Captain Riddel of Glenriddel, a very obliging neighbour of mine. John very obligingly offered to do so for me; and I will either serve myself that way or at Mauchline Fair. It happens on the 20th curt., and the Sunday preceding it I hope to have the honor of assuring you in person how sincerely I am, Madam, your highly obliged and most obedient humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) See *antea*, page 254.

(2) William Pitt.

(3) Lord Chancellor Thurlow. Pitt and Thurlow had opposed the appointment of a regent armed with all the powers of a king.

(4) Dr. William M'Gill's *Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*.

(5) Pope's *Essay on Man*.

(6) Pitt.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
 Elliesland, Dumfries.

[*Endorsed*: 20 May '89.]

[Franked by Kerr: Edinburgh, Twenty-eighth May 1789.]

DR. SIR, — I don't know how to account for it that, spite of your being part of two days here,<sup>1</sup> I never mentioned



several things I wished much to talk of, and those we did speak about in so cursory a way I might as well have let them alone. Indeed you seemed just in the same style, since what you told me of your business for your brother was one of these half-confidences which is always either too little or too much. I did not think myself at liberty to ask any question farther than you chose to communicate, especially as the rest of the company might have accidentally shared the information only meant for myself; yet you cannot believe I was wholly void of curiosity. Believe me, I wish the prosperity of all your family, wherever it can be attained without any slur on that rectitude of your own character in which your supereminence has hitherto shone even more bright than genius alone can possibly reach to. There are plans in life where the gain is so great on one side and the sacrifice so high on the other that the guilt becomes greater and the distress more lasting than robbery or even murder might occasion. No merit in a man can plead pardon for the woman who breaks over that pale which a distinction of ranks has affix in society. Unless he has made his native superiority plain to the world, it can never with propriety come under her notice. Her motives must therefore be debasing to her, and her conduct disgraceful to her friends. She must forfeit their esteem, renounce their affection, and plunge a dagger in their heart deeper than her death could do. Nor will one so little tied to the decencies of female duties probably ever make a tolerable wife in other respects, even should she be able to bend to a reduced situation, embittered by remembrance of what she has thrown away herself, and of the joy and comfort of which she has deprived those to whom her figure in life was a real and inestimable property, or perhaps



a devolved trust dearer than life itself. You observe there are many things your brother can do on a farm which you cannot now do; there are likewise many women might have married you who would become justly contemptible by marrying him, even allowing him to be, as Mr. Alexander says he is, the preferable man of the two. Many matches you might have embraced which in him would be very ungenerous, and taking a mean, unmanly advantage of folly or affection. In these cases the principle is, however, less blameable than the cool, unimpetuous accessory. For all which reasons I trust you will never be seen assistant to any plan where there is great disparity in anything but cash, unless the man has acquired *éclat* like your own, or the woman has enough to do what she pleases independent of remorse, which would require a far greater sum than the one you mentioned. But forgive me, the delicacie of your own mind must suggest all and more than I can say on this subject. Did I not think so, I could not esteem you as I do; so farewell this anticipated theme, since I am convinced wherever honour grips that will always be your border, and one which neither personal interest nor fraternal affection will be able to make you step over.

I had this moment the inclosed<sup>2</sup> from Mr. Moore, and have done you the favour of allowing you a reading of my answer, which I beg you may put a wafer in, and send to the Dr., whether you subscribe to the contents or not. My reason for letting you see it was that, if you thought of the plan, you might take any step you thought could help it forward, as no time should be lost, if indeed it is not already over, which I am somewhat apprehensive of. I intended you a long letter, but this incident led me to

address it to Mr. Moore, and my weak eyes have now made me blind. Yet I must give you a few lines more before I can bid you adieu. You heard me get a most violent attack for encouraging a man to expose himself by asking copies of nonsense he had wrot in rhyme. The accusation would have hurt me in any company, but more especially in yours. It set me in a dishonest as well as an unhospitable point of light, as unjust to a man and brutal to my guest. As you said of vindicating your conduct to those whose esteem you valued, I, who value your esteem more than perhaps anybody does mine, wish to vindicate mine to the man, the friend, and the poet, where to every eye I must have appeared blamable by the representation of a fact I could not wholly deny, but which I will try to elucidate more in my own favours by giving you the copies in question. The one was an address to a gentleman of the Weymes family, pretending to be the chief of the name, and whom the author wished to inspire with a resolution to stand for member of Parliament against a man who, he believed, had used him ill and broke his word. Whatever you say to the poetry, I don't believe you will find the arguments foolish, cold, or ill-calculated to move a vain man descended from M'Duff. The other was an epigram on reading "A Bard's Epitaph" of your acquaintance, and as follows : —

Go, manly Bard, all Nature's words are thine;  
Thou giv'st them as thou had'st them clearly from the Nine.  
Tho' Fortune (that Blind B——) has heretofor frown'd,  
Be thy intrinsic worth with all her honours crown'd.

The gentleman is (some people say) mad. He is perhaps no poet, but I aver he is no fool at least, tho' only a poor rhymers like myself. I positively assert I meant not to lead

him to expose himself by pretending to applaud what I thought ridiculous, but the conversation has so far opened my eyes to other folks' ideas that I believe I will never try crambo clink again, lest you should prove as hard a judge on me as the Major did on my poor visitor, in whom you may some time or other be more interested. Meanwhile, adieu. — Yours, with honest sincerity and friendly esteem,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Send me your Epitaph on R. Mure [Muir].

(1) This is the sole reference extant to a visit Burns must have paid to Dunlop in the summer of this year. Apparently some projected marriage of Gilbert to a lady "above his station" was discussed on the occasion, as well, perhaps, as the suggestion that Gilbert might take over the farm of Ellisland.

(2) Dr. Moore's communication probably referred to the professorship. See *antea*, p. 235.

*Ad.* MRS. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 21st June 1789.

DEAR MADAM, — Will you take the effusions, the miserable effusions, of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring? I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages.

*Monday Evening.*

I have just heard Mr. Kirkpatrick<sup>1</sup> give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord deliver me!



Religion, my honored friend, is surely a simple business, as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensible Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that He must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery and consequent outward deportment of this creature which He has made : these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and, consequently, that I am an accountable creature ; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave, must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go further, and affirm that from the sublimity, excellence and purity of His doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance*, He himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species ; therefore Jesus Christ was from God. . . .

Whatever mitigates the woes or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness ; and whatever injures society at large or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, Madam, of my creed ? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one whose good opinion I value almost to the approbation of my own mind.

Your little *dear* namesake has not yet made his appearance, but he is every day expected. I promise myself

great assistance in training up his young mind to dignity of sentiment and greatness of soul, from the honored name by which he is called. I know many would despise and more would laugh at, such a way of thinking; but with all reverence to the cold theorems of Reason, a few honest Prejudices and benevolent Prepossessions, are of the utmost consequence, and give the finishing polish to the illustrious character of Patriot, Benefactor, Father and Friend; and all the tender relations included in the endearing word, Family. What a poor, blighted, rickety breed are the Virtues and charities when they take their birth from geometrical hypothesis and mathematical demonstration! And what a vigorous Offspring are they when they owe their origin to, and are nursed with the vital blood of a heart glowing with the noble enthusiasm of Generosity, Benevolence, and Greatness of Soul! The first may do very well for those philosophers who look on the world of man as one vast ocean, and each individual as a little vortex in it whose sole business and merit is to absorb as much as it can in its own center; but the last is absolutely and essentially necessary when you would make a Leonidas, a Hannibal, an Alfred, or a Wallace.

Whether this long letter may contribute to your entertainment is what I cannot tell; but one thing I know, my own spirits are a good deal the lighter for this opportunity of assuring you how sincerely I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged friend and humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) The Rev. Joseph Kirkpatrick was minister of Dunscore (the parish in which Ellisland is situated), and Burns with his family attended Dunscore Church.

TO BURNS.

DUNLOP, *27th June 1789.*

Surrounded as I have been by disease and death, tho' my hand has been employed sewing trimmings for the coffin and the face cloth for the dead, or in making the necessary preparations for the birth of another grandchild, which birth I am not without apprehension may be attended with the loss of a daughter, whose delicate state of health wears but a dismal presage at present, yet to whom my cares are of no use, and who is now about to leave me ; my thoughts have often fled to you, and had they been placid enough to allow of my putting them on paper, would ere now have added another to the volumes you are about to receive, inscribed on the title-page "From the Author." You will judge of the situation we have been in, when I tell you we had two servants up every night, indeed sometimes three, watching the sick and the dying for above a month together ; that for ten days there was not a room in the house but one out of reach of the agonising cry of an expiring man, and in that one lay Mrs. Henri unable to speak and half frantic with pain. The poor man was my son's servant, come here from Berwick the very day before he took his bed, a stranger and forlorn ; knew no face or name around him, and was the son of a poor widow whom he had supported for eight years and now left desolate. Oh ! my friend, could I tell you this poor fellow's distress and his manly, resigned, pious, dutiful manner of clearing his thorny path to the grave, the calm serenity, mild affection, and devout dignity his mind displayed during the intervals of racking torture, or even in distraction when pain did not extort the loudest screams of unutterable anguish, it could not fail to create in your heart such emotions as might be



productive of the finest poem you ever wrot. But I will not dwell on a scene the tremors of which shook my nerves, and made me unable to write you. This accounts for my silence. But how, my dr. Sir, shall I satisfy myself in accounting for yours? In my intercourse with you I find it exemplified that there is no pleasure without pain, for you have been so good to me, and I have enjoyed it with so much grateful pleasure, that your attentions have acquired a degree of that attribute in providence which requires unremitting exertion for our preservation, and which the Psalms describe by saying "He shuts his hand we die." Believe me, when you shut your ink-glass my spirits grow much more faint than many of those who die in metaphor and song. I am seriously afflicted, and with all the anxiety of disappointed hope and jealous timidity of friendship, diffident of its own claims, set about examining if I can have drawn upon myself that deprivation in which I feel unhappy in the full ratio of that relief my mind formerly reaped from your works, and still more from the fond idea of having secured a rank in your esteem which I fear you don't find on nearer investigation I have merit to hold entire. Have I said or wrot ought to displease? Even were it so, how can I retract? My words and letters are the very pictures of my soul at the moment, and she cannot wear disguise, even should her genuine features disgust a friend; nor would that regard be flattering which was procured by carrying false colours. Yet there are instantaneous ideas pass over every mind that fleet away like the changing clouds of the sky, and, when told our friend, should possess his memory no longer than they do our own, at least not to our hurt. What confidence expresses candour should peruse; the heart treasure what it approves;

and the pen point out what it dislikes, that it may be removed as far as is possible or proper. Judge of me, dear Burns, by yourself. You would, I think, scorn to wear a false face for any one, but you would shave your beard to please your wife, or perhaps even to please me, if you thought that care could tend to put it further in your power. Trust me, I would not conceal, but really endeavour to prune away every exuberance or impropriety from my mind that could lessen your esteem, or create one disagreeable sensation in your breast. So don't punish any transient error by withdrawing a correspondence the most pleasing and indeed the only one of mere choice I now possess, and of which I assure you I feel the whole value. Do you remember you begged my pardon for enclosing a letter under my cover, and said you would never trouble me with another? Did you mean by this you would not write me again? I begin to fear you did, although I cannot guess why. I must own that, after 59 years habituated to mortification and disappointment, I should find this one of the most questionable shapes in which they ever appeared to me; but this is too terrific a specter for fancy herself to introduce. I will not, dare not think of it.

After receiving the note I had from Mr. Moore which I sent you, I wrot Mr. Creech to send me the books, and added that if he had no better conveyance he might send yours also, and I should take care you should receive them. Accordingly, two days ago, *Zeluco*<sup>1</sup> came, and with it Charlotte Smith's *Sonnets*<sup>2</sup> from herself. I used the freedom to stop them a day or two, that I might look at the last, and with a pencil have touched the lines I liked best. If you differ, your handkerchief will at once obliterate the

slight mark, but with what enhanced delight would I have read your *Spenser* had you left such indications of your partiality to better my judgment and direct my taste! I shall send it and the three above-mentioned volumes to Wilson at Kilmarnock to be forwarded to you, or to lie till called for, as you chuse to *direct* in a letter I will hope to have from you by *post*, as I sometimes persuade myself you have only delayed writing to give me the additional joy of hearing your son was born, and Mrs. Burns as well as I must ever wish the person you like best and on whom your future happiness in this world most depends.

Some days ago I happened to be in company where the conversation turned on Natural Philosophy and that equilibrium supported by the powers of nature through all the elements, from whence was a transition to the counterpoise of misery and happiness in different spheres and situations of human life, and some anecdotes about an old acquaintance of yours, from whence we had some strictures on your politicks and poetry, concluded by some regrets over a resolution you had exprest of printing nothing for fourteen years to come. This, after the company parted, produced some lines, which I shall send you, since I am a little afraid my proposal about your books has retarded your having them so soon as they might otherwise have arrived. But it is not the first time, though I wish it may be the last, when my desire to serve my friends has turned out to my disappointment and their disadvantage, as is the present case when you get my scrawl for a succedaneum, as Dr. Moore would say, for his and C. Smith's books. But, to use your own words, it shall be the last time for a great while at least that I will give you any trouble, unless you write me that you wish it. Farewell! — Yours sincerely,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.



Great and exalted above private ends,  
 Thro' Nature's laws Almighty Love extends.  
 Observe her works! she equalises all,  
 See water rise up from its deepest fall;  
 No cloud imbu'd with keen electric fire,  
 Unsharing lets a brother cloud retire.

Since writing the above I have this moment the inclosed from Mr. Moore, which I send that you may see what has past, though I am afraid the time has past. Yet, as I mentioned before, I am pleased your name has been announced to Mr. Poultney, who is really the Mæcenas of this age, and may, God willing, as the sailors say, give you a fair wind another time. Adieu!

(1) *Zeluco*, Dr. Moore's novel, was published this year.

(2) *Elegiac Sonnets and other Essays*, by Charlotte Smith (vol. i., Chichester, 1784).

The following letter, it will be noted, was begun on the same day as the preceding one, and presumably after it had been despatched to the post-office. Then, having meanwhile received the Burns letter dated Ellisland, 21st June, Mrs. Dunlop immediately began this second letter, which, being interrupted by her journey to Loudoun Castle, with her daughter, Mrs. Henri, remained unfinished till after her return to Dunlop House in July, and was not franked by Kerr, at Edinburgh, until the 17th of that month.

Ad. Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
 Elliesland, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 27th June 1789.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinburgh, Seventeenth July 1789.]

I have just, my worthy friend, received yours this moment. The value is threefold on account of its reaching me before

it could be enforced by the receipt of a long, stupid piece, I dare say it was, which I wrot you when I laboured under an apprehension of your being tired of reading my scribbles, which, however long they may be, are very short compared to the long<sup>1</sup> I think for your replies, which always afford me pleasure far superiour to what goes under the name of entertainment. An opera or masquerade ticket costs half a guinea, your letter fourpence. Were the case reversed, believe me, my choice would not in consequence be reversed too, spite of my propensity to economy, which carries me further on some roads than it does anybody else; at least a number of my friends and of my enemies think so, perhaps for very different reasons, tho' perhaps two more than all others, both for this one, namely, that none of the two know ought of the matter, my reasons and motives being often a secret even to myself—a situation to which I suppose a man of your good sense must be wholly a stranger, though amongst us ladies nothing is more common. Indeed this kind of self-ignorance is our daily bread, so that it is no wonder we so often appear whimsical and capricious to the rest of the world—a fault which, as a poet, you are bound to forgive, if not to like us the better for it. I hope you are so like a woman yourself as to have changed your mood long ago, and that this shall no longer find you in low spirits, but that the exhilarating dose of confessing yourself to me has kept you merry ever since. I can readily absolve every heterodoxy of your creed, nor is there any great room to fear ever your religion and mine should run far counter, unless upon the principle that two of a trade can never agree. I even find in your faith a charming support and auxiliary for my own, as the one is founded on solid understanding and rational induc-

tion, and the other on the spontaneous, undigested suggestions of warm affections. A man is attached by his judgement to his duty and his God ; a woman by her passions and her heart. A timid sense of her own weakness makes her soul clasp to her Creator, and to those protecting, comforting friends He has given her. Every endearing duty strengthens those ties to which she wishes to owe her happiness and safety, and from whence alone she draws her consequence in this life, or probably borrows strength to reach the reward she looks forward to in the next. Let man glory in his reason and his strength, while woman owes to her native weakness, her goodness and her *grace*, and learns to pity ills she fears to feel. Yet I confess no fear for hell has ever as yet reached me, except it was that of cherishing for a moment any wish that could seem to deserve it — for example, one such as hurts me in Charlotte Smith's *Elegy*, but I have given my thoughts of her works on the cover. Oblige me in return with yours of the Doctor. I am ashamed to think how I must have disappointed him by keeping it so long out of your power to pronounce a sentence for which he is so truly anxious, and for which I am likewise impatient, as he is now the earliest and best friend I have alive, and tryed by more than fourty winters.

13<sup>th</sup> July.

When I had wrot this far, I was interrupted. I went to Loudoun with Mrs. Henri, who is much better ; there she kept me longer than I intended, and thus my letter lay unfinished and your books unsent. I am now in earnest to make up as far as I can my lee-way in both. I have just received yours with the truly delightful *Elegy*,<sup>2</sup> in which I would have multiplied the favourite marks without omitting one. The



poet need never ask those tears of pity which would spontaneously embalm his memory and overflow his grass-grown turf, for which the sons of tenderness or of genius would forget that of Newmarket itself, and feel their losses and gains here still more interesting. You say my letter gave you pain. I hope not so much as your silence gave me. You have, however, like a true Christian, revenged yourself, and heaped coals of fire on my head by the pleasure I felt from the kindness as well as the poetry of yours, for to you I found myself indebted for both, and believed my anxiety about Mrs. Henri and her prospect of going abroad in bad health inspired the tender ideas that flow too warm from the heart to be wholly fiction. But O ! my friend, imagination does not reach the horrors of truth to the poor female who quits her native country and carries with her the sensibility of an affectionate character and the weakness of a woman. My daughter Mrs. Vans<sup>s</sup> at this moment sits over the cellar, under the floor of which she has been forced to thrust, at dead of night by stealth, the scarce cold remains of a sister and a friend she carried with her, and of a child she bore and nursed in that alien land, and never could shew to her mother, her brothers, or her sisters, and whose bones she must leave perhaps to the rage of superstition, from which she can only flatter herself to protect them by paying rent for the vault for ten years after she leaves the place, when it is believed the bodies will be consumed by time and a mixture of lime with which they are covered at the instant of hiding them from the cruelty of human (worse than) wolfs ; these only prowl for food. How can we connect the present glorious stand of France for freedom with these remaining fetters of the mind ? Are they as yet only galley-slaves, escaping and knocking down everything with their

chains in their flight, or is this the native character of man which will remain after the establishment of freedom? Tell me, you who have looked through Nature, and know all her various mazes, how long the impressions made by living under an absolute government remain on the mind, and whether the abject debasement of the lowest class, or the overbearing insolence of the very softest of the upper ones, is most disgusting. For my own part, I believe I should like an Italian lazzaretto better than a French gentleman, as pity is a feeling more congenial to my soul than indignation, which frivolity and arrogance united must unavoidably create, whereas the greatest worldly bliss I have ever tasted has lain in the admiration, esteem, and reverence inspired by a truly amiable generous mind, at once noble and tender. Where great talents are joined with interesting weaknesses and amusing whimsical varieties, sometimes even little faults themselves season the compound perfectly to my taste ; such it has sometimes been my happiness to meet or think I had met ; for if the illusion lasts, it is the same thing to me in this world, and I dare say will be set right some way or other so as not to vex me in the next. Such I have believed some of my relations, and some such I have fancied my friends, even in the dark evening of my life. If I am wrong, may Heaven and they have goodness to protract the error as long as my existence ! Forgive me, Dr. Sir, if in one instance I presume to chalk out even your path ; in every other the powers of your own mind will naturally point to what will please me far beyond the farthest suggestion of my own fancy. Yet I will freely own this one is now become perhaps more important than all the rest put together. So, pray don't neglect your *que*, though I don't even know how to spell it, and should I ever inadvertently forfeit the

place I now flatter myself by your permission with holding in your registers, don't let me discover my misfortune, since I should feel it an irretrievably great one, the very suspicion of which would distress me more than many of those disasters the world pity most. It must be some months hence before I can give you good news of Mrs. H. I expect much sooner to have yours of Mrs. Burns. May they be happy as your fondest wish. I have this moment accounts of the death of a worthy old woman, one who, I think, liked me as much as any thing on earth, and attended me inlying of 13 children. She was my grandfather's servant, my brother's infant keeper, and my tenant's wife, aged 94 or 95. My spirits are this moment laid with her in the grave, where I bless God she is at rest, for her only son, a batchelor, who has brought up and been a father to three familys of her grandchildren, and dedicate his very life to her, is thought in a consumption.

I thought to tell you of a humble poetess<sup>4</sup> who came from Ecclesfechan to be my chamber-maid on the merit of her attempting what seemed beyond her line in the way of writing or thinking. I parted with her to my daughter, thinking a child's maid, if she was fit for it, a better place than I had to offer. She was glad to go to Loudoun, because she heard you lived near it, and, as she told me, hoped to see you. Her outside promises nothing; her mind only bursts forth on paper, of which I send you a specimen in her own hand. She is industrious, and seems good-temper'd and discreet, but betrays no one indication that I could discover of ever having opened a book or tagged a rhyme; so that I hope she will not be less happy for having tryed it. Adieu. Your books go to-night to Wilson, who says he can always get them sent you easily. I take another sheet to tell you I have sent your "Faery



Queene" with the other volumes to Kilmarnock. I had it so long by me I was half unwilling to quit sight of it, though alas! it was become invisible to my optics, but yet it was the memorial of another poet as well as its author, and I regretted I had not scratched the margins as I read it, but I was not then so well acquainted with the owner as to assume that liberty with his property. Tell me what you think of Jenny Little's "Looking-Glass." The occasion on which she wrot it was to convince a young lady who doubted the authenticity of her having wrot something else she had shewed her, and asked her to write on a given subject. She said she had never done so, but, since she wished it, would try if she would give her one. She told her she had that forenoon broke a glass she was vext about, and bid her celebrate it. She did so, and a gentleman asked her on the same footing to make the acrostic on his name. These are play, not genius, and I fear you will say, like mistress like maid; and if you do, I'm even afraid the maid will have most reason to be offended with the proverb. She made another in the character of a lover on a girl she called Calista, drest in her grandmother's crimson plaid, which gave the hint for some lines and a sketch of a landskip, with which I put off an idle half-hour, and which I send you to shew you how ladies put off a rainy morning doing they don't know what, and doing it they don't know how, and then exposing the folly to those they wish most their friends as I do now. All I shall say in my own vindication is that Scripture commands us to do as we would be done by, and I literally obey when I write and assure you of the sincere esteem and regard with which I am, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble servt., and, truth bids me add, ever gratefully your friend,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Next month is August. Last August brought me four letters from the best correspondent and one of the most admired as well as esteemed men of my acquaintance. Ought I ever to hope any other month of my life shall dare pretend to rival August, 1788? I wish the Scots Bard would try what might be done in honour of the '89 which he ushered in so respectably with a New Year's gift that Swift's Stella or his own might have been vain of, especially if they had been three score like your humble servt. Are you not grateful for all this clean paper from me? I grudge it.<sup>5</sup>

(1) *Think long*, Scotticism for *eagerly desire*, with a touch of *hopelessness*.

(2) See *infra*, p. 278. Burns's of the 7th had been received.

(3) Mrs. Vans Agnew, Mrs. Dunlop's fourth daughter, who lived long abroad.

(4) Janet Little (1759-1813), "the Scottish milk-maid" poetess, was placed in charge of the dairy at Loudoun Castle, the residence of the Henris. She published a volume of poems in 1792, became the wife of John Richmond, a labourer at Loudoun Castle.

(5) The postscript was written in the centre of a quarto page, with blank or "clean" spaces on all sides of it.

The month of July 1789 has hitherto seemed almost a blank month in Burns's correspondence. The only letter of his dated in this month that has been published is that of the 31st to Mr. Graham of Fintry. We are able to present the two which follow

— of the 7th and 17th — from the Lochryan MSS. To his ordinary heavy labours the poet at this time had added the negotiations about his appointment to the Excise division in the midst of which he lived, and the studies which, under Mr. Graham's direction, he pursued in order to fit himself for his new duties.

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
Dunlop House, Stewarton.

ELLISLAND *July 7th, 1789.*

Yours of the 27th June, which came to hand yesternight, has given me more pain than any letter, one excepted, that I ever received. How could you, my ever-honored, dear Madam, ask me, whether I had given up your correspondence, and how you had offended me? Offended me! Your conduct to me, Madam, ever since I was honored with your notice, has been equally amiable as uncommon; and your Correspondence has been one of the most supreme of my sublunary enjoyments. As I mentioned to you in a letter you will by this time have received, I have since I was at Dunlop been rather hurried and out of spirits; and some parts of your late conduct has laid me under peculiar embarrassments. You had alarmed me lest that instead of the friend of your confidence, I was descending to be the creature of your bounty; for though you bestowed, not in the manner of serving me, but as if oblidging yourself; yet for the soul of me I could not help feeling something of the humiliating oppression of impotent gratitude.

*July 8th.*

I have been interrupted by the arrival of my aged Parent and my brother; and as he will convey this as far as Mauchline I shall finish my letter, though I cannot make it quite



so long as I had otherwise intended. As I have no romantic notions of independancy of spirit, I am truly obliged to you and Dr. Moore for mentioning me to Mr. Pulteney. From the manner in which God has divided the good things of this life, it is evident that He meant one part of Mankind to be the Benefactors, and the other to be the Benefacted; and as He has thrown me among this latter class I would wish to acquiesce with cheerfulness. The Professorship is, I know, to me an unattainable object, but Mr. Pulteney's character stands high as a Patron of merit, and of this, had I no other proof, you have made me believe that I have some share.

I some time ago met with the following Elegy<sup>1</sup> in MSS., for I suppose it was never printed, and as I think it has many touches of the true tender, I shall make no apology for sending it you: perhaps you have not seen it.

## ELEGY

| Strait is the spot and green the sod  
| From whence my sorrows flow,  
| And soundly sleeps the ever-dear  
| Inhabitant below.

Pardon my transport, gentle Shade,  
While o'er this turf I bow;  
Thy earthly house is circumscribed  
And solitary now.

| Not one poor stone to tell thy name,  
| Or make thy virtues known;  
| But what avails to thee, to me,  
| The sculpture of a stone?

| I'll sit me down upon this turf,  
| And wipe away this tear;  
| The chill blast passes swiftly by  
| And flits around thy bier.

Dark is the dwelling of the dead,  
And sad their house of rest ;  
Low lies the dead by Death's cold arm  
In awful fold embraced.

I saw the grim Avenger stand  
Incessant by thy side ;  
Unseen by thee, his deadly breath  
Thy lingering frame destroyed.

Pale grew the roses on thy cheek  
And withered was thy bloom,  
Till the slow poison brought thy youth  
Untimely to the tomb.

Thus wasted are the ranks of men,  
Youth, health and beauty fall ;  
The ruthless ruin spreads around  
And overwhelms us all.

Behold, where round thy narrow house  
The graves unnumbered lie ;  
The multitudes that sleep below  
Existed but to die.

Some with the tottering steps of age  
Trode down the darksome way ;  
And some in youth's lamented prime,  
Like thee, were torn away.

Yet these, however hard their fate,  
Their native earth receives,  
Amid their weeping friends they dyed  
And fill their father's graves.

From thy loved friends where first thy breath  
Was taught by Heaven to flow,  
Far, far removed, the ruthless stroke  
Surprised and laid thee low.

At the last limits of our isle,  
Washed by the western wave,

Touched by thy fate a thoughtful bard  
Sits lonely on thy grave.

Pensive he eyes, before him spread,  
The deep outstretched and vast;  
His mourning notes are borne away  
Along the rapid blast.

And while amid the silent dead  
Thy hapless fate he mourns,  
His own long sorrows freshly bleed,  
And all his grief returns.

Like thee cut off in early youth  
And flower of beauty's pride,  
His friend, his first and only joy,  
His much-loved Stella died.

Him too the stern impulse of fate  
Resistless bears along;  
And the same rapid tide shall overwhelm  
The Poet and the song.

The tear of pity which he shed  
He asks not to receive,  
Let but his poor remains be laid  
Obscurely in the grave.

His grief-worn heart with truest joy  
Shall meet the welcome shock;  
His airy harp shall lie unstrung  
And silent on the rock.

O my dear maid, my Stella, when  
Shall this sick period close,  
And lead thy solitary Bard  
To his beloved repose?

I have marked the passages that strike me most. I like to do so in every book that I read, and it will be a double pleasure in perusing the volumes you announce me, to see your favorite passages.



Poor Mrs. Henri! I shall be as impatient to hear news of her almost as I shall be of another whom I need not name. I hope that you see her situation through the exaggerating medium of fearful apprehension.

Farewell, Madam! God send good news to us all! Do me the justice to believe me when I assure you that there is scarcely any thing in life which gives me so much pleasure as that I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged friend and humble servt. ROBT. BURNS.

(1) This description of the origin of the Elegy on Stella is as mystifying as that prefixed to the transcript of the poem in the Glenriddell MS. — "The following poem is the work of some hapless son of the Muses who deserved a better fate. There is a great deal of 'The voice of Cona' in his solitary, mournful notes; and had the sentiments been clothed in Shenstone's language, they would have been no discredit even to that elegant poet. — R. B."

*Ad.* Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop,  
by Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 17th July 1789.

DEAR MADAM, — I assure you it is none of my least incentives to rhyme that it gives me an opportunity not only of acknowledging, but you are good enough to think, in some degree of repaying that hopeless debt of kindness and friendship which I so largely owe you. You know my sentiments respecting the present two great parties that divide our Scots Ecclesiastics. I do not care three farthings for Commentators and authorities. An honest, candid enquirer after truth, I revere; but illiberality and

wrangling I equally detest. You will be well acquainted with the persecutions that my worthy friend, Dr. M'Gill, is undergoing among your Divines. Several of these reverend lads, his opponents, have come thro' my hands before; but I have some thoughts of serving them up again in a different dish. I have just sketched the following ballad, and as usual I send the first rough-draught to you. I do not wish to be known in it, tho' I know, if ever it appear, I shall be suspected. If I finish it, I am thinking to throw off two or three dozen copies at a Press in Dumfries, and send them as from Edinr. to some Ayrshire folks on both sides of the question. If I should fail of rendering some of the Doctor's foes ridiculous, I shall at least gratify my resentment in his behalf. I long to hear from you, not only for your criticism on this, but for a much more important matter, to be informed of Mrs. Henri's fate and welfare. Whatever interests you, can not be indifferent to me.

#### THE KIRK'S ALARM<sup>1</sup> — A BALLAD

*Tune* — "Push about the brisk bowl"

Orthodox, Orthodox, who believe in John Knox,  
 Let me sound an alarm to your conscience;  
 There's a heretic blast has been blawn i' the west —  
 "That what is not sense must be nonsense," Orthodox,  
 "That what is not sense must be nonsense."

Doctor Mac,<sup>2</sup> Doctor Mac, ye should stretch on a rack,  
 To strike evildoers wi' terror;  
 To join FAITH and SENSE, upon any pretence,  
 Was heretic, damnable error, Doctor Mac,  
 Was heretic, damnable error.

Town of Ayr, Town of Ayr, it was rash, I declare,  
 To meddle wi' mischief a brewing;



Provost John <sup>8</sup> is still deaf to the church's relief,  
And Orator Bob <sup>4</sup> is its ruin, etc.

D'rymple mild, D'rymple mild, tho' your heart's like a child  
And your life like the new-driven snaw,  
Yet that winna save ye, old Satan must have ye,  
For preaching that three's ane and twa, etc.

Calvin's sons, Calvin's sons, seize your spiritual guns,  
Ammunition ye never can need;  
Your hearts are the stuff will be powder enough,  
And your skulls are a storehouse o' lead, etc.

Rumble John,<sup>5</sup> Rumble John, mount the steps with a groan,  
Cry the Book is wi' heresy cramm'd,  
Then lug out your ladle, deal brimstone like aidle,                      muck-water  
And roar every note o' the d—mn'd, etc.

Simper James,<sup>6</sup> Simper James, leave the fair Killie dames,  
There's a holier chase in your view!  
I'll lay on your head that the pack ye'll soon lead,  
For puppies like you there's but few, etc.

Singet Sawnie,<sup>7</sup> Singet Sawnie, are ye herding the penny,  
Unconscious what danger awaits;  
With a jump, yell and howl, alarm every soul,  
For Hannibal's just at your gates, etc.

Daddie Auld, Daddie Auld, there's a tod i' the fauld,                      fox  
A tod meikle waur than the Clerk,<sup>8</sup>  
Douglas, Heron and Co. has e'en laid you fu' low,  
But tho' ye canna bite ye may bark, etc.

Poet Willie,<sup>9</sup> Poet Willie, gie the Doctor a volley,  
Wi' your "liberty's chain" and your wit:  
O'er Pegasus' side ye ne'er laid a stride,  
Ye only stood by where he —, etc.

Jamie Goose,<sup>10</sup> Jamie Goose, ye hae made but toom roose                      empty boast  
In hunting the wicked Lieutenant,<sup>11</sup>  
But the Doctor's your mark, for the L——'s holy ark  
He has couper'd and ca'd a wrang pin in, etc.                      driven



' This is all the length I have gone.<sup>12</sup> Whether I proceed any farther is uncertain.

Captn. Grose,<sup>13</sup> the well-known author of the *Antiquities of England and Wales*, has been through Annandale, Nithsdale and Galloway, in the view of commencing another Publication, *The Antiquities of Scotland*. As he has made his headquarters with Captn. Riddel, my nearest neighbour, for these two months, I am intimately acquainted with him ; and I have never seen a man of more original observation, anecdote and remark. Thrown into the army from the Nursery, and now that he is the father of a numerous family, who are all settled in respectable situations in life, he has mingled in all societies, and knows every body. His delight is to steal thro' the country almost unknown, both as most favorable to his humour and his business. I have to the best of my recollection of the old buildings, etc., in the County, given him an Itinerary thro' Ayrshire. I have directed him among other places to Dunlop House, as an old building worthy of a place in his Collection. It would have been presumption in such a man as I, to offer an introductory letter between such folks as Captn. Grose and Major Dunlop, tho' for the honour of my native county, I could have wished that Captn. Grose had been introduced to the Dunlop family, and the Major would have been of much use to him in directing him thro' the farther corner of Cunningham, a place I little know ; however if you discover a chearful-looking grig of an old, fat fellow, the precise figure of Doctor Slop, wheeling about your avenue in his own carriage with a pencil and paper in his hand, you may conclude "Thou art the man."

Perhaps after all, I may pluck up as much impudent importance as write to the Major by him. He will go for

Ayrshire in four or five days, but I have directed him thro' Carrick and Kyle first. — I have the honour to be, Madam, your humble friend and most obedient servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) "Lament" deleted and "Alarm" written in as a second thought.

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| (2) Dr. M'Gill.  | (3) Provost Ballantine. |
| (4) Robert Aiken.  | (5) Russell.            |
| (6) M'Kindlay.   | (7) Moodie.             |
| (8) G. Hamilton, writer.   |                         |
| (9) Peebles; see a poem he published on the Revolution thanksgiving. |                         |
| (10) Young, New Cumnock.   |                         |
| (11) Lieut. Mitchel, Deleagles.                                      |                         |

Notes (2) to (11) are Burns's, written in the margins of the copy. No attempt is made here to supplement his annotations.

(12) This letter antedates the composition of "The Kirk's Alarm." Hitherto no earlier copy has been known than that which Burns sent to John Logan on 7th August, and which is complete but for one stanza. The Presbytery took action in Dr. M'Gill's case on 15th July; so the poet must have written off at a heat these eleven stanzas, which he forwarded to Mrs. Dunlop on the 17th. The complete poem contains eighteen stanzas.

(13) The "fine, fat, fodgel wight," for whose *Antiquities of Scotland* "Tam o' Shanter" was written. This is the first mention of him in Burns's correspondence.

*Ad.* MR. ROBERT BURNS,  
Elliesland, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, *1st Augt.* 1789.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinburgh, Third August 1789.]

DR. BURNS, — Where, my ever esteemed friend, shall I begin my letter? Methinks I hear the voice just set to the shrill key of satire answer “I have many a time seen you not know where to end one.” But should wit prompt this, I will not believe your judgment or inclination seconds the sally. On the contrary, you have convinced me my letters in general give you pleasure by persuading me one of them has given you pain, — an effect, I’m sure, the writer of them never meant to produce, though, as the cause was my complaint of your silence, and I have found your grief productive of repentance, I must own I for once rejoice in your sorrow and profit by your amendment. I have received two of yours since I presumed, perhaps improperly, to murmur at not hearing from you, instead of expressing my gratitude for the part of your time — a part so much more than I can deserve or return — which you had so kindly stole from the rest of the world to dedicate to me. You tell me writing to me is an incentive to rhyme. If so, ages unborn shall bless and thank my memory, for one rhyme will lead to another, and the breathings of a truly poetic soul will be often such as will soothe the anguish of the wounded spirit, and elevate the mind sunk in despondency. Even the airy bubble blown by levity as long as the eye can follow it steals us from this world’s woes, and though it instantly burst if we regard the hand it fell from, we watch the dropping of the next as eagerly as a child that looks for soap bells glittering a moment to the sun before they are forever lost in empty air. True, they did not please long; but which of our worldly enjoyments do? Besides, they cost



no trouble to the maker. 'Twas but a puff; his breath is unexhausted, and ready to blow off a thousand more as long as they can divert himself or please us children of the world. Perhaps, too, some of these brittle bells may, like brittle china, be roused off by the candle before they are broken, and bring in more, while in fashion, than a better thing could do. Time or place sometimes imprint a local value that will rise and fall quicker than the stocks, perhaps sink 100 per cent by to-morrow in the auction of wit. 'Tis hard to say how the sales run. Her cap, like that of Liberty, is sometimes plain and solid, of inestimable value; sometimes light, and hung round with bells; sometimes guarded with squibs and crackers, such as a certain friend of mine, trying on said cap t' other day, shook off with an angry toss of his head at the presbytery when they were seating themselves to furnish a drawing of the Holy Inquisition. I fear, however, they will show their noble perseverance by continuing till the last act, and giving an *auto-de-fe*, in which I wish they may allow the Dr. to get away without the Benitor [*san benito*] — I believe they call the robe they march to be burnt in, and which it would give a sacred satisfaction to the *Auld* gentleman to fit on a worthy man before he left the world, perhaps as much as he formerly felt in lighting up the *ignis fatuus* spark that misled the same court to persecute one of the first men ever adorned the priesthood through fourteen presbyteries, four or five synods, and two General Assemblies, for having once, some years before he was admitted one of the number, gone twice the figure eight at a wedding. Now, my friend, having some partiality for my female taste, asks my opinion of fancy's toys sometimes, particularly of this last cap she wore. What shall I say? Shall I satirize satire, or

hold the match to fire her future squibs? In truth, I believe I will do neither.' All I can afford is to laugh a few minutes at these King's-birthday frolicks and fireworks. I did so heartily, but, my dr. Burns, I am now in the last evenings of my life; the bright torch of your genius is perhaps the last I shall ever see lighted, and I grudge extremely to see it wasted singeing musketoes in a corner, instead of being set on a hill where it cannot be hid, and giving light to the world. Besides, I cannot help being afraid that, instead of relieving the Dr., and putting his enemies to shame, you may be blowing the horn for a new chase against one of his friends, and a man who rivals him in innocent simplicity and goodness of heart. But I need not tell you what D——r Mild is when you have painted him so strongly and in his true natural colours, as like a picture as ever was sketched by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Yet should your ballad lead the puppies full cry a heretic-hunting, you'll wish you had bit your tongue rather than given the view-hollo, and cast off a whole pack of blood-hounds against a poor little white rabbit. Should this happen, I verily think it would be the blackest sin you ever committed, and I'm sure I would sympathize with your penitential pangs, which could not fail of being very acute, were you to hurt one whom all mankind ought to love, for he loves them all, and if he sometimes scolds them in the pulpit, he means it all for their own good. As for the rest of your game, I am thankful I don't know one of them; but since they are beasts of prey, 't is fair to annoy them on their own account. Yet I have known an otter turn and lame a man for life who pursued him for his skin. And will it not be more provoking still to meet mischief where nothing is to be got but a vile guff of rank malice which

one would be glad to run out of the reach of. 'Tis strange how I go on when I set a scribbling to you — I who never almost now scribble to any one else, and have not yet mentioned what you were so good as say interested you most, the health of my poor Susan. She is better, and I would now fain hope may carry about her child the full time, and improve in strength afterwards, as the wise people about her flatter me she has no threatening symptoms remaining — a fact for which, however, I have hardly full faith ; but I dare not pry too far in futurity. We have no accounts of Anthony yet, and 't is there I feel myself most vulnerable, tho' I cannot say why. May the God of earth and ocean guard him ! His heart is the monument where my memory, I think, will be longest enshrined. There is a tenderness in his filial piety I never saw any other possess. Never can I forget the proofs I once saw of it, and if my soul anticipates that lingering look our departed spirits cast back to earth, 't is to hope I will live in his mind united to his father.

My cares are at present cruelly divided. I believe I must go a while to the east country, and that John's wife will not admit of my remaining till the last with Susan. Poor thing ! she has no friend but myself to trust to for the care of herself, her former son and a family they can in no way afford to have neglected. The other is still amongst her friends, and almost still in the bosom of her own family. I shall therefore endeavour to add my mite of comfort to those who have most need of it. Yet I will hope to hear of you and yours before I leave home, as I shall not go for a fortnight longer, nor till I have carried home Lady Wallace to Loudoun, and seen how they all go on ; so that you may write me here till I furnish you a new address, before which time I shall hope to have heard of Mrs. Burns and her child



being as well as can be expected, getting your strictures on *Zeluco*, and your telling me as much as you chuse to tell me of the plan you were engaged in when I saw you last. The news of the day here is that Col. Fullarton<sup>1</sup> is gone to Constantinople with the first recommendations ever given to any British man to serve in the Turkish Army. I think he is wrong, but his is a glorious ambition, the fault of heroes and of gods. I wish to God he had been my son, or, as the King said of General Wolff, that he had bit my eldest son and infected him with half his own enterprize of spirit, which has already commanded civil and military applause, fame, and fortune. I wonder if, like the Great Frederick, he is insensible to love. I wish he were as fond of a daughter of mine as ever you were of your Jean. Would it not be a noble conquest, worthy the blood of Wallace? Yet many a hero would make a wretched bad husband, and perhaps even he might be of that number. At least, as I shall have very little chance of him for a son-in-law, I shall comfort myself in remembering that this is no impossibility. Farewell, but I trust not a long farewell, while you possess so much of the esteem and best wishes of

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

Your fat merry grig has not appeared that I have heard of yet, but I mentioned him to Andrew, who says he knew one of the name at Gibraltar a good many years ago, and will be glad to renew the acquaintance, if it is the same, or if not, I think will not be dissatisfied to begin a new score wherever you mark the page. I am grown so blind I doubt I must give up letter-writing, or you will give up reading first, for it will soon be impossible even for myself. While you can make it out yet, let me tell you I have marked

your "Ode to Mrs A——'s Memory," "Address to the Regency Bill," last "Elegy," and "Afton Water," as worthy of immortal preservation from the press: the "Hare" I know you noted yourself, and vanity prompts my wishing you to recollect your *New Year's Day, Eighty-nine* employment without recantation. I now leave you to congratulate my worthy friend Kerr on his promotion.<sup>2</sup> I like him the better that he has taste to distinguish the Scots Bard as the only man in whose favours he exerts his priviledge of franking. I wish all the rest of the world who had the power of rewarding merit shared as much in the predilection of, Dr. Burns, your sincere friend, and obedient, humble sert.

(1) Colonel William Fullarton of Fullarton (see *antea*, p. 14), at this time forty-five years of age; "Brydone's brave ward" of the "Vision." He did not spend the rest of his life in the service of the Turkish government, for, as previously noted, he entered the British Parliament in 1796, and sat till 1803, and he was subsequently governor of Trinidad.

(2) Probably to the Secretaryship of the Post Office.

Mrs. DUNLOP of Dunlop.

N. B. Just now	} Missent to Stewarton.
at Loudon Castle	
near Kilmarnock.	
	} Postage paid at Stewarton.

ELLISLAND, 19th August 1789.

DEAR MADAM,— I had written you ere this time but for waiting the issue of two to me important events which were hanging in the wind. I mentioned to you my Excise hopes and views. I have been once more a lucky fellow in that quarter. The Excisemen's Salaries are now £50 per ann.,

and I believe the Board have been so obliging as fix me in the Division in which I live ; and I suppose I shall begin doing duty at the commencement of next month.<sup>1</sup> I shall have a large portion of country, but, what to me and my studies is no trifling matter, it is a fine romantic Country.

More luck still ! About two hours ago I welcomed home your little Godson.<sup>2</sup> He is a fine squalling fellow, with a pipe that makes the room ring. His Mother as usual.

*Zeluco* I have not thoroughly read so as to give a critique on it. To say it is an excellent performance is but echoing the opinion of the world : I shall be more particular in *my* remarks.

You will easily guess that in the present situation of my family, and in my preparations for the Excise, that I have indeed little spare time. To you, Madam, that little spare time is more chearfully devoted than to any other person or purpose.

Miss Charlotte Smith has delighted me. Her Elegy in particular is one of the first performances that I have ever seen. Your pencil has in every mark prevented mine. — I have the honor to be, Dear Madam, your obliged, grateful humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

*P. S.* — The following lines I sent Mr. Graham as my thanks for my appointment : —

<sup>3</sup> I call no goddess to inspire my strains,  
A fabled Muse may suit a Bard that feigns :  
“ Friend of my life ! ” my ardent spirit burns,  
And all the tribute of my heart returns,  
For boons accorded, goodness ever new,  
The Gift still dearer as the Giver you.

Thou Orb of Day ! Thou other Paler Light !  
And all ye many-sparkling Stars of Night !



If aught that Giver from my mind efface;  
If I that Giver's bounty e'er disgrace;  
Thou roll, to me, along your wandering spheres,  
Only to number out a villain's years!

<sup>4</sup> I lay my hand upon my swelling breast,  
And grateful would — but cannot speak the rest.

(1) Scott Douglas suggested that Burns did not commence duty as an exciseman till the beginning of November. In the new *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 96, on the strength of an entry in "List of all the Divisions, officers, expectants, etc., in Scotland as they stand at 10th October 1789," it is inferred that he entered upon his duties immediately on receiving the appointment, *i. e.* about the beginning of August. This letter shows that he expected at least to start at the beginning of September.

(2) Francis Wallace, born 18th August 1789, died 9th July 1803.

(3) This sonnet is dated in the original MS., 10th August.

(4) These two lines are not, as the editors of the *Centenary Burns* say they are, wanting in the Lochryan MS.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS,  
Elliesland, Dumfries.

DUNLOP, 20th Augt. 1789.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinburgh, Twenty-fourth August 1789.]

DR. BURNS, — Why have you not wrote me? Is this, like most of our misfortunes, my own fault? Did I not tell you I was uncertain as to my place of destination? Nay, did I not hint at some fear your letter might never reach me? Indeed, there is no part of my property for which

I would feel more anxious concern than the safety of my letters from the very few friends with whom I keep up any sort of correspondence, or rather to whom I sometimes write; for 'tis now many years since I could be said to maintain any regular intercourse by letter even with my absent children. How strange must this appear to you who I have perfectly persecuted with a correspondence, who has been haunted with my letters in whole volumes; and who, I dare say, has even felt it often an encroachment on your time to give them a cursory glance of an eye while you were thinking on something else; or, if you really favoured them with your attention, would hardly ever meet anything that could deserve or reward it; who have, nevertheless, had the goodness to write me often to flatter my self-love by the kind and obliging manner in which you did it to amuse and interest me by the communication of your ideas in verse and prose, and sometimes raise me in my own esteem by an apparent confidence you seemed to repose in me, and a certain partial regard which seemed to distinguish me more than I ought to have expected among the multitudes whom your fame had rendered emulous of your notice. Believe me, you never used the slightest expression which vanity could construe in her own favours, that I did not read with grateful delight, proud even to draw compliment itself from your pen, for even compliment indicates a desire to please; and what so pleasing as that wish in one who, without ever thinking of the matter, had hit on the way of pleasing all the world beside? I believe I have formerly told you I had an unbounded wish once in my life to have seen the King of Prussia and Dr. Oliver Goldsmith. After reading your works, I was seized with the like to know you. This was



the more particular, as at that time my mind was in so torpid a state as hardly to admit any suggestion entitled to the name of a wish ; indeed this was rather confined to an emotion of curiosity, and fully exprest in these lines —

Let me each cranny of that soul peruse  
Admire that man and wonder at that muse.

But never did I once suppose either he or his Muse in the course of their studies would make the pause required for a single comma to peruse anything I could offer to their view. I only run and cried "Holla!" to stop the passengers till I should have a full look at them. They run on, peeping a little behind as I came up, when at last, pleased or perhaps only diverted at my awkward eagerness in the chase, instead of stopping with the Irish intrepidity of the beautiful Miss Gunnings, who bid the mob gaze their fills, you, to my inexpressible satisfaction, reached me a friendly hand, and even bid your Muse herself help to raise me out of that Gulph of Despond in which my very soul was then immersed. She sprung on with reviving energy at the un-hoped-for aid, and fluttered a while like a butterfly in winter, who appears all alive and well, but that is soon over with her, and I believe with me too. A thousand anxieties at this moment tear me to pieces. Anguish rebounds upon me from beyond the Indian Ocean. I hear nothing of my dear Anton. His dog, all he had to leave behind him, is suddenly dead. Superstition is ever alive when we are unhappy. Last night his howl alarmed me for his master ; to-day his everlasting silence speaks a direful presage to my heart. I have just rent myself from poor Susan, round whom teeming sorrows crowd which I cannot disperse. The commotions of France strike at my peace, and my daughter-in-law's situation calls me to a divided duty ; I cannot say



which will be foremost. I believe neither of these ladies will be for a month yet. I shall, if no unforeseen circumstance prevent me, be with the poorest and most helpless (John's wife), but will not leave this for a fortnight yet. So, pray do write me during that time, if possible, but don't say my conduct ever hurts you, or suppose you can change your place in my friendship, unless to take a higher. I wish to God your promotion in life could keep pace with your permanent rank in my regard or goodwill. I must acknowledge you have not indeed risen without purchase, since you have given yourself frequent trouble to preserve what you owed to merit alone, and could not be robbed of without injustice. What others may despise, but what you teach me to value (my friendship), you say has added to your happiness. That makes it inestimable in my own eyes, and I will in future be, if possible, still more wary on whom I bestow it. Yet how shall I say so, since hitherto it has always been an involuntary gift, and I much doubt will always remain so, spite of every caveat reason can enter. Reason, with all her pretensions, is only human, and therefore apt to err. Those native impulses which sometimes leads our approbation, or rather choice of our most intimate friends, resembles instinct, which is somewhere called the voice of God, and therefore must be right. At least, as I have always found it productive of most happiness, both in prospect and reality, I am resolved to encourage a pleasing delusion which has never yet hurt me, but to which I have been indebted for the most enviable moments of my existence — a propensity which prompted me to cultivate your acquaintance when I was flying that of the world, and which procured a favourable reception for those scrawls with which I presumed to intrude upon you

before you had, like Ahasuerus, held out the golden scepter of kind consent with which you have now sanctioned my approach, and interested me in every thing that interests you, not only as a poet, but as a friend, to whom I consider myself as under everlasting obligations, such, indeed, as I trust in God I shall never again owe to any one; for I hope Providence will close my eyes without any future event being able to sink me in such melancholy as had overwhelmed me when chance first threw your writings in my hand, and the singularity of the *Kilmarnock* title-page induced me to investigate their merit. I found there strains like the *Tomb of Becket*, fit to awake the dead. I read, then write. My knell, which seemed ringing out, was turned into chimes, for, like *Falstaff*, you were not only moral and witty, but caused it in others; and tho' my chimes were perhaps but fools' bells, they helped to divert the child who rung them, but whose mind was unsuited to other occupations, and were generally address to you. Since I have resumed some care of my family, of which I was long incapable, I lift the pen seldomer, and my needle, or the varied concerns of those children for whom I live, oftener employs my hand and my mind, so that, were it worth your while to think of me at all, I'm apprehensive you might believe me whimsical and unsteady in cultivation of that friendship I had so eagerly solicited.

I am just returned from Loudoun. The greatness of the place, where £8000 a year more than the income of the estate had been spent, and so fine a fortune ruined; the respectability of the old Earl's<sup>1</sup> character as a landlord and master in his private capacity, that sacred shrine in which he still lives, sainted the warm, affectionate hearts of his yet remaining servants and dependant pensioners; when I add

to these the mean venality of his public political life, musing on all together as I wandered through those sweet, serpentine hermit's paths which he had consecrated to profligacy and Miss Mason, I cannot help saying within myself, What is man, or to what end is he created or endowed with so heterogeneous a mixture of vice and virtue, fervour and folly? Why did he who made hundreds happy ruin himself? Why was so connubial a mind destined for celibacy? Had the Earl only been fond of this girl, one might have exclaimed with Pope, "Health, fame, fortune, what art thou to love?" But when they follow him to London, that idea which might adorn the *fête champêtre* disappears in the crowd of demoiselles amongst whom Kate Walker's gray hairs shine a badge of constancy that in wedded life had done honor to the Scots peerage. After all, this man's benevolence of heart embalms his memory, and I weep over the alienation of property and want of lineal representatives of John, Earl of Loudoun, who provided for the posterity or declining age of every thing that had ever been about him, and eclipsed the remembrance of his successor, to whose gentle goodness you were no stranger, but whose name is never pronounced now in that place where misfortune ended his days, and has buried his former life in oblivion. Well, be it so; let former times, since it must be so, be forgotten. Let the name of Morni be forgotten, and the young men say, "Behold the father of Gaul"; when Campbells, Craufords, and Wallaces shall be passed away, in those later days perhaps some fashionable biographer shall arise who, celebrating the fame of his young hero, may set out by telling us his father's name was F. W. Burns, son to the renowned bard of that name, whose contemporary writers alledge he was a peasant in the West, but whose



works prove a degree of erudition inconsistent with that report, as it seems more probable he had been the son of some noble Scot, who, for some crime, perhaps that of fidelity to his unfortunate Kings, had forfeited his splendid situation in the world, and been driven to shelter himself in obscurity, into which he carried those brilliant acquirements that could never be hidden, but, bursting forth in the eighteenth century, dazzled the world, and, spite of the amazing revolutions which then took place in Europe and America, shared so much of their divided attention. Meanwhile the polish of western manners at that time was great, so that we find the *belles-lettres* cultivated by all stations, particularly among the female sex. In Aug. 1789 a chambermaid in Ayrshire, the early residence of the above-mentioned bard, wrote in the dialect of the country some poems, of which we have the following lines remaining. Her name was Janet Little, but critics dispute whether she had it from her father, or because her genius was believed of the dwarfish kind — a species of stature and wit then imported into Britain by the famous Count Borowastic, and from thence greatly admired and sure of making the possessor's fortune or immortalising his memory. The lines as follows : —

In Royal Anna's golden days  
 Hard was the task to gain the bays;  
 Difficult was the hill to climb;  
 Some brak a neck, some lost a limb.  
 The votries for poetic fame  
 Got off decripet, blind, and lame;  
 Except that little fellow Pope,  
 Few ever then won near the top;  
 And Homer's crutches he may thank,  
 Or down the brae he'd got a clank.  
 Addison, Thompson, Young, and Prior  
 Did mount on Pegasus without a fear,

In hopes to please a learned age;  
 But Doctor Johnson in a rage  
 Unto posterity did show  
 Their blunders fast, their beauties slow.  
 But now he's dead, ye well may ken,  
 When ilka sumph maun hae a pen,  
 And write in hamely uncouth rhymes,  
 And yet, forsooth, they please the times.  
 A plowman chiel, Rab Burns his name,  
 Pretends to write and thinks nae shame  
 To souse his sonnets on the Court;  
 And troth what's strange, they praise him for't,  
 Ev'n folk that's of the highest station  
 Ca's him the glory of our nation;  
 . . . . .

24th August '89.

I shall set out for Morham Mains, I think, about the eighth of next month at farthest, but will hope to hear from you here before that time, and that you will give me accounts of your own family, where I trust, spite of your silence, all goes well, and I may already wish you joy of the arrival of your little stranger, which my own indistinctness has, I presume, hindered me from seeing announced to. —

Dr. Sir, yours, etc. etc.,

FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) John, fourth Earl of Loudoun, took a very active part in repressing the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. He also served his country abroad, being Governor of Virginia, and in 1756 Commander-in-Chief of the forces in America. He spent a great deal in the improvement of the estate of Loudoun, particularly in planting, his specialty being willows. He was a Scotch representative Peer for the long period of forty-eight years. He died unmarried in

1782 in his seventy-seventh year, and was succeeded by his cousin, James Muir Campbell, fifth Earl, who married Miss Macleod of Raasay, sister of the Isabella of Burns's song, "Raving winds around her blowing." He shot himself on account of financial troubles in 1786. This last Earl was the landlord of the Burnses at Mossgiel, and it was at his death that the farm was sold to Alexander of Ballochmyle. He left an only daughter, afterwards referred to as the little Countess, who took the Loudoun estate and title into the Hastings family by her marriage with the first Marquis. Her great-grandson is the present Earl of Loudoun.

TO MRS. DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 6th Sept. 1789.

DEAR MADAM, — I have mentioned in my last my appointment to the Excise and the birth of little Frank, who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honorable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn<sup>1</sup> that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling Bridge.

I had some time an epistle, part poetic and part prosaic, from your poetess Miss J. Little,<sup>2</sup> a very ingenious, but modest, composition. I should have written her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country, and, I am happy to add, always to the honor of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should



sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and, except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August, struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present. . . .

Would I could write you a letter of comfort! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition that would equal the *Iliad*. Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence; a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least four thousand years, have, in some mode or other, firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but when I reflected that I was opposing the most ardent wishes and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favourite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the book of Job,

Against the day of battle and of war—

spoken of religion:

- <sup>s</sup> 'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,  
'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night:

When wealth forsakes us and when friends are few;  
 When friends are faithless or when foes pursue;  
 'Tis this that wards the blow or stills the smart,  
 Disarms affliction or repels his dart;  
 Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,  
 Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies.

I have been very busy with *Zeluco*. The doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall, however, digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. *Zeluco* is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! — *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende.*

R. B.

- (1) Fra Jop the horn he hyntyt and couth blaw  
 Sa asprely, and warned gud Jhon Wricht:  
 The rowar out he straik with gret slycht;  
 The laiff zeid down, quhen the pynnysont gais.  
 A hidwys cry amang the peple rais;  
 Bathe hors and men in to the wattir fell!

*Schir William Wallace*, book 7, lines 1180-5.

Jop (formerly Grymmysbe) was a pursuivant of Edward.

(2) It is not known if Burns replied to her letter. She afterwards visited Ellisland to obtain an interview with Burns, but failed, as the poet had broken his arm, and was confined to bed.

(3) These lines are from Verses to James Hervey on his *Meditations*, by a physician. They are usually prefixed to the *Meditations and Contemplations*.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Elliesland,  
Dumfries.

MORHAME MAINS, *6th Sept.* 1789.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Ninth Sept. 1789.]

DR. BURNS, — I told you my fears for Susan. Providence has verified the presages, but in a way I thought not of. She is well as I could dare to hope, but her child has paid the price of her redemption, and, believe me, I account it a small one, and bless that hand which has been pleased to take the innocent babe to itself, though in a way that gave me the most alarming fears for the mother's life. Just the day after I wrote you last, I got an express telling me she was delivered of a dead boy in consequence of a fright she had got by one of the horses falling down in a strong convulsion as she was airing in a carriage about ten days before. Those, my friend, are secured from such accidents who have no carriage. Let us learn to know and mark the advantages of our lot with a gratefully contented heart and a justly distinguishing eye. I had a carriage, but, having also a lame horse, could not use it to fly to my distrest child. I sent to hire, but could find none. I set out on foot to beg from Cunninghame Lienshaw one to Kilmarnock, and so got to Loudoun in time to find the child buried and the disappointed mother in all the agonies of departed hope and bodily weakness. I staid with her till the tenth day was past, when I left her pretty much recovered to the care of her grandmother and sisters, and set about preparing to set out for this, when the same post brought me your letter and one from John telling me his wife had likewise brought him a son, and begging to see me with all convenient speed. I set off on Thursday night at seven o'clock, came to Glasgow, and even there could hardly find a chaise; got one by twelve, and after spending all night on the road, arrived



here next morning, where I found all so well that I might just as well have staid quietly at home, and enjoyed the good luck these twin letters had announced, and which I hope shall long be preserved for the happiness of all concerned. One would have thought I had some presentiment of what a hurry I should be put in when I welcomed the little Wallace so long ago, for indeed I should now hardly have commanded time for his reception. Why has he no companion to cheer his journey through the dreary vale, or do you expect he is to be worth two himself that he is thus degraded by coming single? However, a sturdy boy and a stout recovering mother are sufficient to a reasonable man. It would be truly poetic to look for more. I cannot tell you the agitation your letter occasioned me; 't is the fate of your pen to express more at a stroke than others can convey in volumes, but never was it more strongly shewed than in this letter. My superannuated sight and the flutter of my spirits at the premature intelligence from East Lothian prevented my distinguishing an ornamental flourish your poetic quill had described in writing £: , which I took for a first figure. By this error my generous imagination bestowed just an additional hundred a year on my friend, and I dare honestly aver no hundred ever gave me so great pleasure. I revelled on the delightful idea, which accompanied me above an hundred miles, when an unfortunate newspaper, which explained the late agumentation, created a suspicion, and a further inspection of the letter destroyed the golden dream, and forced me to retract the pleasing error which had made me so happy. I had blest Graham with as much fervor as the old Patriarch did Jacob when he tasted the savory meat. Isaac was deceived too, yet the blessing stuck; perhaps so will mine. I sincerely wish it for your sake, who knows not

how good I am in doing so, for do you know he affronted me by wholly overlooking my letter. I could not have forgiven this, had he not proved he could not overlook what merited his notice by his attentions to you, which irrevocably secure him my best wishes, spite of the envy with which I read your pathetic address of thanks. Would I could have served you so as to have deserved such ! But, since that can never be, may he continue to deserve them, if possible doubly, on whom they are now so feelingly bestowed. I have a mind surely singularly susceptible of the passion of envy, since many and oft have been the times when the mention of your mother has excited it in my heart. I hope, however, she was not left you when the news reached you that would make her happy ; so you see, though envious, I am not malevolent. You might have told me if your brother's schemes of improvement lay in Annandale and promised success, but perhaps this is an encroaching question. If so, treat it, like Fintry, with silent contempt, and I shall, as I have done on that occasion, forget and forgive it, nay, perhaps even think it was only an act of grace and propriety. So you really admire Charlotte Smith ; so do I. I wish you admired *Zeluco* too, that I might plead favour with the author by telling him so, for I have been greatly in fault to him of late. How shall I thank you for remembering me so kindly amid all your hurry of business, while I, who am incapable of business, find it so difficult to remember the very friends that cling forever closest to my heart. Can you believe I have not wrot the Dr. since the letter I sent him by you, and which seemed wholly penned for the sake of another ; but there is a greatness of soul in that man which enables him to discover that the strongest mark of real esteem and regard is

that confidence of friendship which inclines us to interest our friends in the fate of all we ourselves approve, and believe worthy of their approbation and friendship; so that, while I wished to recommend your concerns to him, I'm sure I paid him the most acceptable compliment in my power, and I would not have had more satisfaction in it than he would have felt had it fallen in his power to serve you. The end of my paper now reminds me of bidding you farewell, and I am called to tea besides; else I would have given you some lines I wrot some days ago, along with five shillings, which I could not well present, without a wrapper. At least something, perhaps the love of scribbling, told me so, and as it was an innocent amusement, I indulged myself in what hurt nobody else. Adieu.—Be ever certain of the best wishes of      FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I shall be here a fortnight at least; so hope to hear.

*Ad.* Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Elliesland,  
Dumfries.

MORHAM MAINS, 20th Sept. 1789.

[Franked by Kerr: Edinr., Twenty-third Septr. 1789.]

MY DR. SIR,—You tell me you sympathise with a state of mind most of your sex laugh at, and wish to write me a letter of comfort. You say this with your usual strength of expression, so forcibly that the very wish seems to accomplish its end, and changes the tenour of my spirits more than I thought had been in the power of man or of, indeed, any event, unless the actual arrival of a letter from my dear Anton. Yet we are told no man knows himself; I may add nor woman neither, for my mood was become merry even before I reached your sweet consolatory verses, and I had discovered, contrary to your assertion, that religion,



though perhaps the best, is not the only sweetener of our real or dreaded afflictions. There is what the doctors call a succedaneum, and I find it in the very sight of your hand on paper, which inspires something not rhyme-proof, for it sets me often a scribbling, when I daresay you must discover I have nothing on which to found the baseless fabrick of the vision. But that is all one; it amuses me, and, as an undoubted proof of my friendship, I hope pleases you. At least, I can honestly assure you nothing you could send me that brought me conviction of yours would fail of producing the most pleasing sensation of which the human mind is capable — far beyond the pictures of Raphael, the music of Handel, or, I believe, the very poetry of any author whatever, not excepting yourself. I intended writing you last night, but happening to lift the “Cotter’s Saturday Night,” it was impossible for me to close the book without reading it, tho’ for the five hundred time. Do, I beg you, try if you can make anything now like it. I’m sure no one else I have ever seen can; but I’ll say no more of it, or I could speak of nothing else, and I have much nonsense crowding to my pen in consequence of your writing me or of your not writing poor Jenny Little, for which you give a true female reason, because doing what is right is like beating hemp. Consider, my dear friend, we ought all to be very often made beat hemp, and put for life in the correction-house, or as they name it in Holland, the for-bettering house, to oblige us to do what reason approves or good-nature demands, whether it happens to coincide with the whim of the minute or not. Heaven knows I am not practising just now, or I should rather write poor Jenny myself than employ myself preaching duties to you, which you both know and, I am con-

vinced, perform much better than ever I did or ever will do, unless Providence should wholly regenerate my nature. And if the new composition, with all its perfections, should not happen to hit the capricious fancy of some few of my former friends, I would beg and pray to resume the old woman, with all her imperfections, abating the blindness which prevents me from their converse on paper, and the deafness which diminishes the joy of meeting. But though I can hardly answer it, Lord be praised ! I can read a letter, even concluding with a French compliment, with unspeakable delight, where that very compliment breathes French freedom and English honesty or Scots kindness, which, let me acknowledge, is more congenial to my birth, and consequently dearer to my heart, than either the one or the other, notwithstanding the great novelty of the first. But now for verse, as ever since you told me how much you preferred it, I have liked rhyme and rhymers. Nay, not only so, but a friend of mine some time ago having unfortunately one day told me he hated poetry, I have never been able to do justice to the thousand good qualities he possesses ever since, but have half-hated him spite of the finest eyes in the world, and I believe one of the best hearts it contains. Were you an unmarried man, I would be ashamed to expose so much caprice, but I hope you know to value our sex with all their little amiable weaknesses, nay even consider our faults, like the spots and blemishes of a Mocha-stone, as so many beauties that increase our value. I read your Elegy and wrot : —

The tears of fair Myra, once shed in despair,  
 Now sweeten our garments and perfume our hair.  
 The tears of Golconda cast orient day,  
 Pour'd rich from the diamond's brilliant ray.

. . . . .

I read your last letter, and it mixing with something that went before it, produced as follows : —

Tell me, my friend, thy comprehensive mind,  
From high Parnassus has explor'd mankind,  
View'd every object this wide world contains,  
Through the fine medium of poetic brains ;  
Try'd every doubt cold wisdom can suggest  
By the pure fire that warms a poet's breast,  
Why instinct only to poor brutes is given.

. . . . .

I take a new sheet and shall stain it, I think, by telling you there are proposals printed for publishing Mr. Mylne's<sup>1</sup> works. Now, as I mean to send you a copy of the book in a present when published, will you allow me to honour the subscription with your name? I have only one objection, which is, the friends intend inscribing it to Henry the ninth,<sup>2</sup> who was at school with the author, who then wrote a poem addrest to him beginning with these lines.

Ode to Mr. Henry Dundas, written at the Grammar School at Dalkeith, by James Mylne, now farmer in E. Lothian : —

Wilt thou remember then a friend,  
So far beneath thee plac'd by fate?  
Away false fears that injure him!  
Hence low distrust of my desert!  
While I deserve his love, no time  
Shall wean me from my Harry's heart.  
In youth yon oak and ivy joined,  
Not equal they, yet close they grew;  
Time has their boughs so intertwin'd  
No force can them dissever now.

Mr. Dundas kept up a correspondence with the poet through life, but, as far as I can hear, never did him any favour. He has indeed promised to assist one of his sons,



and if he does, will have a better right than I would at present subscribe to for the credit of the friend or the book. Write me here, and tell me if I shall mark your name or only my own. I know they will wish yours if you don't think it can injure yourself to lend it; I shall not be longer here than two weeks, so pray write soon if you don't find it too inconvenient a sacrifice to the happiness of, Dr. Sir, your sincere friend and humble sert.,  
FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

(1) James Mylne (see *antea*, p. 226, etc.). Mrs. Dunlop was here asking permission to add Burns's name to the list of subscribers for his poems, where it actually appeared. See Mrs. Dunlop's letter of 19th October, *postea*, vol. ii. p. 7.

(2) "Henry the ninth" was Henry Dundas, treasurer of the Navy, Pitt's friend, his Grand Vizier for Scotland, who, there is reason to believe, was not well affected to Burns. See *Chambers*, vol. iii. p. 242, etc.

TO BURNS.

#### FRAGMENT

SENT WITH A CROWN TO J. L.

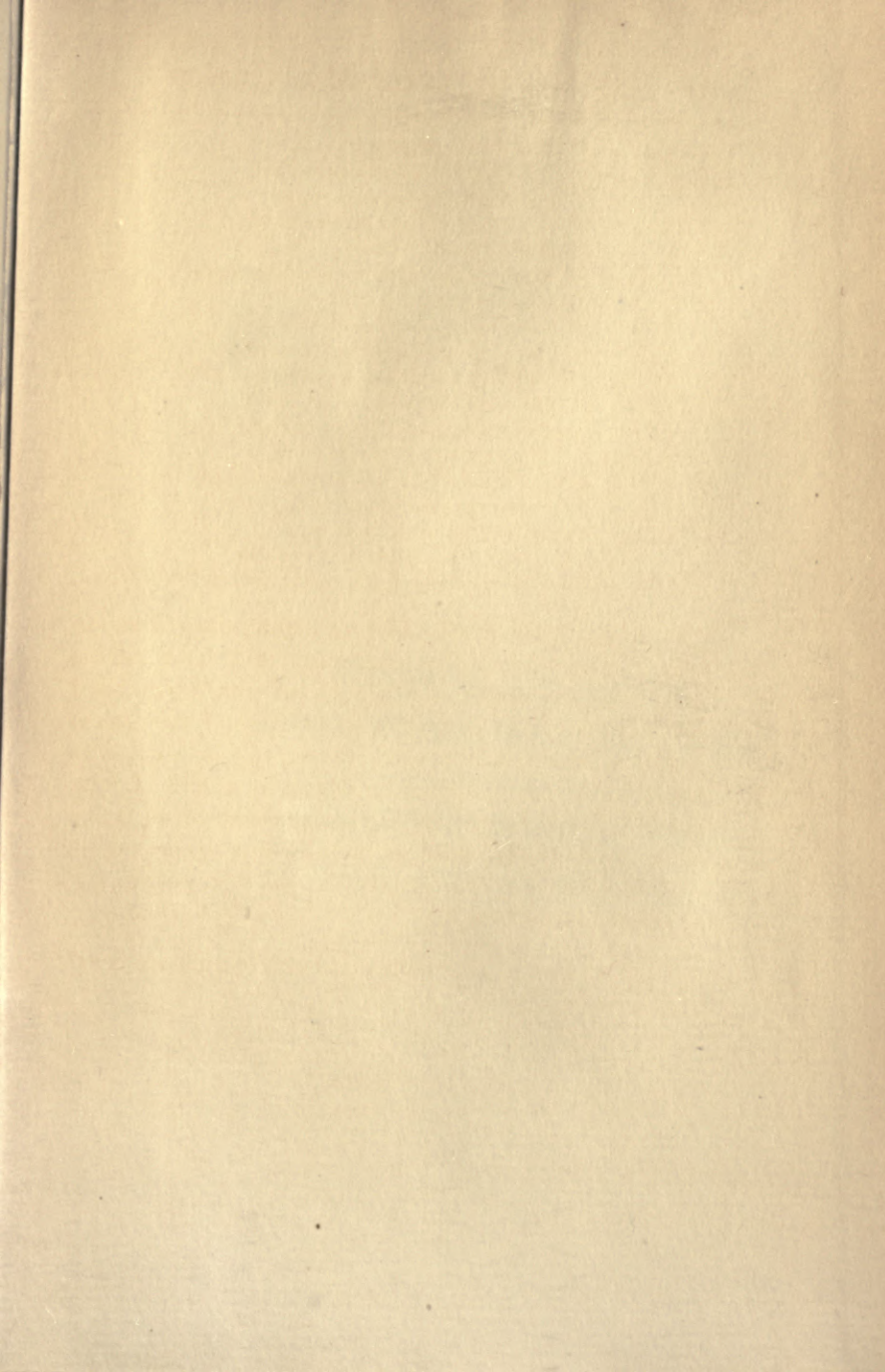
Once Fate the lots of mortals cast;  
Monarchs came first, but poets last.  
Jove called the synod of his gods  
To rectify the partial odds:  
The court was open'd by Apollo,  
"Ye powers, if my advice you'd follow,  
Since kings are cap't with crowns of gold,  
A silver crown let poets hold."  
Great Jove just then was reading Burns,  
And ev'ry god had peeped by turns;  
So for the glory of Old Ayr,  
The vote was put and carried fair.

As spokesman for the tunefull class  
Up starts a stout and strapping lass ;  
" Ye Antechristian Pagan powers,  
What paultry barb'rous favours yours,  
Ill suited to poetic brains,  
Whose treasures thousand worlds contains  
Above each mercenary craft.  
My tether-stake 's a besom shaft,  
And he who 's favour'd most by you,  
Like Trismegistus, holds a plough  
(I wish 't were better worth his hold),  
(And beat from Oswald's purest gold)."

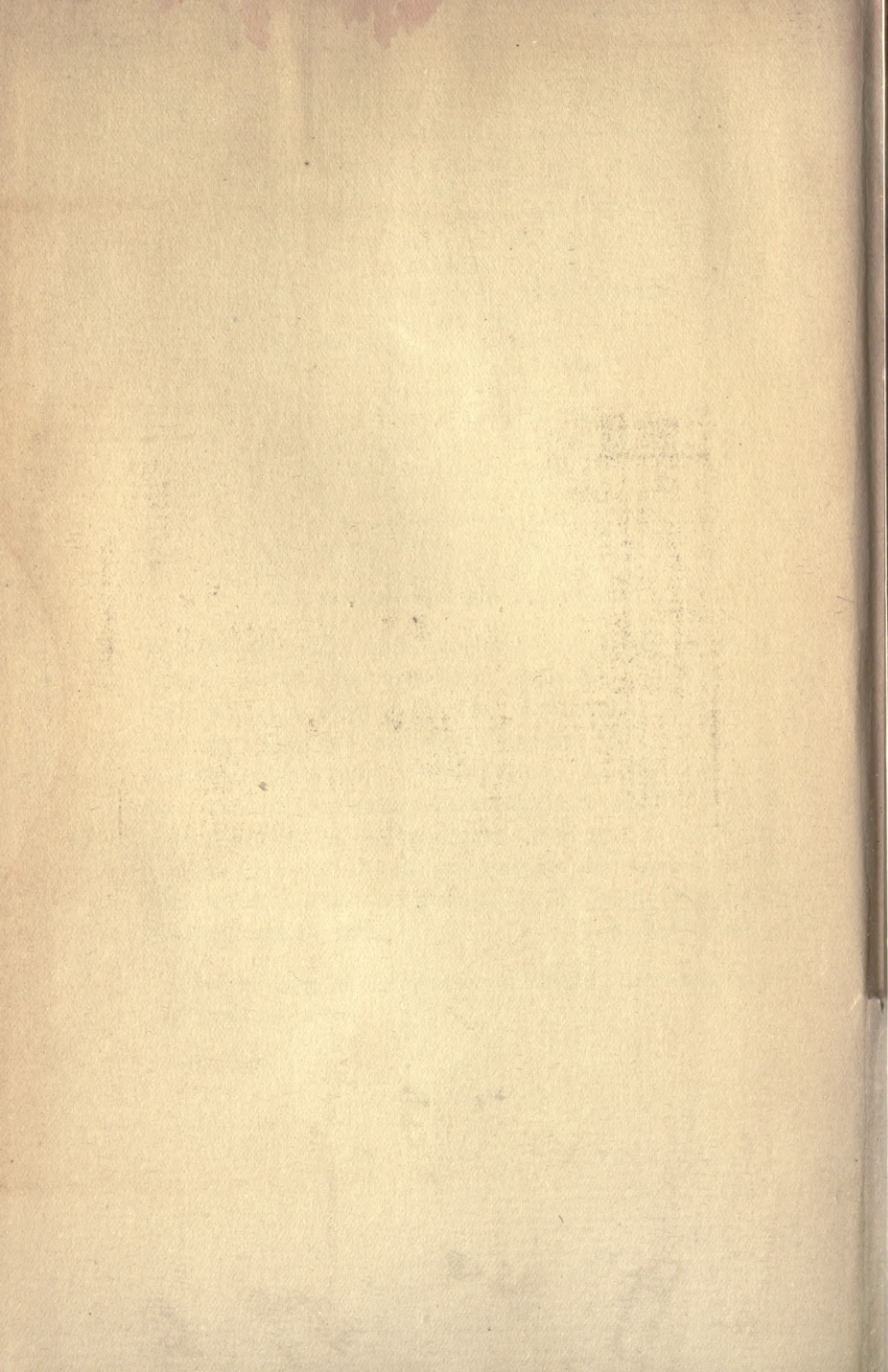
Her egis here Minerva shook,  
And loud and wisely thus she spoke :  
" Silver to age can comfort give,  
Or make a lover's passion live ;  
Of worldly things ne'er make a pother,  
Take this yourself or give 't your mother."

And do you really think Charlotte Smith's elegy so superlative? I wish I had it to read again, for I must confess I did not even think it the best of her own works, but I dare say I must not have done it justice, since you honour it with so high a place in your esteem. Or may not even your taste be sometimes a little subject to whim? I hope your friendship is that my weak claim may retain it; or shall I rather trust to your gratitude for that sincere esteem with which I must ever remain, Dr. Sir, your obliged and obedient humble sert.,  
FRAN. A. DUNLOP.

I beg to hear of the mother and child; ours are better and better hourly.







PR Burns, Robert  
4331 Robert Burns and Mrs. Dunlop  
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