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THE WORKS  
OF  
ROBERT BURNS.







San Diego, Cal., 1884

*California*

"Two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old California  
 over the hole in a blue whinstone where the best of grapes  
 from his royal standard on the banks of Vanhook's river."



*The River Ayr near Montgomery Castle  
where it is joined by the Fair Water*

That sacred hour can I forget?  
Can I forget the hallowed grove  
Where by the winding Ayr we met  
To live one day of parting love





SCOTTISH LIBERAL CLUB.

THE WORKS  
OF  
ROBERT BURNS



VOLUME FOURTH

*PROSE*

Edinburgh

JAMES THIN, PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY

1895



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

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- I. Stirling from Bannockburn—Site of Bruce's Standard ; engraved by William Forrest, H.R.S.A., from the original drawing by Sam Bough, R.S.A. *Frontispiece*
- II. Trysting-place of Burns and Highland Mary, 14th May 1786—the junction of Faile Water with the River Ayr, engraved by William Forrest, H.R.S.A., from the original drawing by Sam Bough, R.S.A. *To face Frontispiece.*
- III. Map of the Ayrshire Homes and Haunts of Burns from Whitsunday 1777 to Whitsunday 1788. *To face page 1.*
- IV. Fac-simile of the earliest known Letter of Burns, from the original MS. in the possession of John Adam, Esq., Greenock. *To face page 27*



## PREFACE TO CORRESPONDENCE, ETC.

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A FEW words of preface may be expected from the Editor in entering upon the second division of his twofold undertaking, as announced in the Prospectus to this "Library Edition of Burns." The complete writings of the author were to be presented in six volumes—one half of these to contain his Poems and Songs, arranged according to date of composition; and the remaining three volumes to comprise his Letters and other Prose productions, similarly arranged. These twin-sections, it was promised, would exhibit the bard as his own biographer, giving two parallel recitals of the shifting drama of his life—the one, in poetry and song, and the other, in his own powerful prose. The favourable notices by the public press, of the volumes already issued, encourage the hope that the execution of branch second of this undertaking will be no less appreciated.

Dr Currie, taking a hint from Boswell's *Johnson*, hazarded the "experiment" of engaging the public interest by committing to the press about one hundred and twenty letters of Burns—"the recent and unpremeditated effusions of a man of genius." The result was

not disappointing ; for, despite some depreciatory criticism from high quarters, the public verdict in their favour is nearly as strong as its estimation of the author's poetry. From the correspondence as surely as from the verse of Burns, proceeds a vivid reflex of the writer's mind and character ; and scarcely is it a figure of speech to rank both of these as a portion of his autobiography. All indeed that seems to be wanting in the materials requisite to make these prose volumes as interesting as Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, is a reliable record of the *vivâ voce* utterances of Burns. Thankful as the poet's admirers are for the valuable reminiscences of his personal friends, Dugald Stewart, Josiah Walker, and others, well qualified to note and describe his characteristics, they cannot cease to regret that he was unaccompanied from day to day, and from year to year, by a James Boswell, to photograph his conversations on the spot. This want is the more to be deplored because the universal testimony of contemporary witnesses is "that the best part of Burns was not of a nature to be transmitted to posterity."

Besides the notes in these volumes, which aim at illustrating the author's text, connecting links of narrative and comment are introduced to preserve the biographic chain of incidents in his varied career. Accordingly, it is considered that a formal Memoir of the poet can be dispensed with as an accompaniment to this Edition ; more especially as Professor Nichol's forthcoming Essay on the literary position

of Burns among the Immortals, and on the philosophy of his writings, will compensate for any oversight or imperfection in the Editor's handling of his great subject. Neither is it reckoned necessary that the latter should here expatiate on the difficulties he had to face in effecting what little he has done that may be pronounced new and acceptable in this Edition. He would, at the same time, be justified in doing so ; for (to parody the closing words of the preceding paragraph) the best part of his labours is not of a nature to be discerned by ordinary readers. This piece of egotism may be explained by simply quoting what Boswell had to say for himself in similar circumstances :—

“*20th April, 1791*—Let me observe, as a specimen of my trouble, that I have sometimes been obliged to run half over London in order to fix a date correctly ; which, when I had accomplished, I well knew would obtain me no praise, though a failure would have been to my discredit. And after all, hard as it may be, I shall not be surprised if omissions or mistakes be pointed out with invidious severity.”

A very considerable number of hitherto unpublished Letters of Burns, together with completed versions of many that before were only partially printed,\* will be

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\* In justice to Dr Currie, who has been blamed for suppressing and even altering passages in the letters of Burns (which are in this edition restored wherever possible), let us record here his own explanation, in his preface to the volume of the bard's correspondence :—“Of the following letters, a considerable number were transmitted for publication, by the individuals to whom they are addressed ; but very few of them have been printed entire. It will easily be believed, that in a series of letters, written without the least view to publication, various passages were found unfit for the press, from different considerations. It will also be readily supposed that our poet, writing nearly at the same time, and under the same feelings to different individuals, would sometimes fall into the same train of senti-

found in these volumes. They would have been even richer in this respect, had some close custodiers of the manuscripts of Burns come forward with them as liberally as those gentlemen have done whose favours are gratefully acknowledged in the notes to their respective contributions. The fifth volume of this work will open with the amatory correspondence betwixt our poet and Mrs M'Lehose of Edinburgh, under the assumed signatures "Sylvander and Clarinda." That episode in the life of Burns (begun in whim, and exhausted within four months) will be kept apart from his ordinary transactions, and the

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ment and forms of expression. To avoid, therefore, the tediousness of such repetitions, it has been found necessary to mutilate many of the individual letters, and sometimes to excise parts of great delicacy. In printing this volume, the editor has found some corrections of grammar necessary; but these have been very few, and such as may be supposed to occur in the careless effusions, even of literary characters, who have not been in the habit of carrying their compositions to the press. These corrections have never been extended to any habitual modes of expression of the poet, even where his phraseology may seem to violate the delicacies of taste, or the idiom of our language, which he wrote in general with great accuracy. Some difference will indeed be found in this respect in his earlier, and in his later compositions; and this volume will exhibit the progress of his style, as well as the history of his mind."

The above explanations seem very satisfactory, but Dr Currie often exceeded his own definition of the liberties taken with the author's text. Currie's version of the Autobiographical Letter to Dr Moore is a notable instance of frequent violation of the sense, as well as modes of expression, found in the original document, which fortunately has been preserved. Then, as to his having mutilated letters by excising passages of great delicacy, rather than weary his readers with the tediousness of the author's repetitions—who, in the present day, does not covet those soporifics from the pen of Burns, which Dr Currie consigned to limbo? Some of those rejected passages are here brought to light, and we anticipate a satisfactory effect from their publication. Much chronological perplexity, and many petty points of controversy, would have been avoided, had the early editors of Burns been less squeamish about wounding imaginary delicacy, or hurting the author's reputation, by printing his letters with less abridgement.



letters on both sides will be printed entire, with the dates carefully rectified. For some hitherto unpublished portions of that correspondence, and for the use of several of the original manuscripts, together with an exquisite silhouette portrait of "Clarinda" (now being engraved for this work), our readers are indebted to the kind consideration of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq., Edinburgh.

In thus referring to extraneous aid in furtherance of his efforts, it is the Editor's melancholy duty to record here the name of the late Robert Carruthers, Esq., LL.D., of the *Inverness Courier*. To that gentleman's loving familiarity with the subject-matter of these volumes, and to his scholarly hints ungrudgingly volunteered, this Edition is greatly beholden. In the closing volumes, the Editor will aim to pursue the direction which that veteran would have approved, had he survived to see the conclusion of the work.

WM. SCOTT DOUGLAS.

EDINBURGH, 18th June 1878.



## INTRODUCTORY.

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### THE LETTERS OF BURNS, AND WHAT THE CRITICS HAVE SAID ABOUT THEM.

REFERENCE has been made in the Preface to some depreciatory criticism which the style of Burns's prose has provoked, and it may be well that the reader, in entering upon this department of the author's writings, should know the worst as well as the best of what has been said of them by the professed arbiters of taste in literature.

He began at a very early period to practise prose composition. At the age of sixteen he engaged several of his Kirkoswald schoolfellows to keep up a literary correspondence with him:—"I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the compositions of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity." In his Tarbolton days, he "picqued himself on his abilities at a *billet-doux*;" and to the last he shewed a high appreciation of his own epistolary productions. In November 1787 he promised Mrs Dunlop that he "would sit down some hour of inspiration, and write her a letter, at least worth twa groats;" and in the month following he forwarded to Solicitor-General Dundas a poem on the Lord President's death—"the verses were far from being in my best manner, but I enclosed them in a letter which, however, *was* in my very best manner." Finally, he transcribed, in his most careful holograph, into a bound quarto volume of 103 pages, for his friend Mr Riddell, twenty-eight of his more important letters, with a view to their preservation.

Francis Jeffrey, the eminent Edinburgh Reviewer, whose censure of Burns's prose style has been considered over-severe, thus wrote to a friend in 1800, after perusing Dr Currie's second volume of Burns:—"His whole correspondence, although infected now and then with a silly affectation of sentiment, and some common-places of adulation, gives me a higher opinion, both of his refinement and real modesty of character, than anything he had formerly published." A few years after this utterance, Jeffrey thus expressed himself in reviewing Crome's *Reliques of Burns*,—"The prose works of Burns consist almost entirely of his letters. They bear, as well as his poetry, the seal and impress of his genius; but they contain much more bad taste, and are written with far more apparent labour. His poetry was all primarily from feeling, and only secondarily from ambition. His letters seem to have been all composed as exercises, and for display. There are few of them written with simplicity or plainness; and, though natural enough as to sentiment, they are generally very strained and elaborate in the expression. A very great proportion of them too, relate neither to facts nor feelings peculiarly connected with the author or his correspondent; but are made up of general declamation, moral reflections, and vague discussions—all evidently composed for the sake of effect, and frequently introduced with long complaints of having nothing to say, and of the necessity and difficulty of letter-writing."

In a strain somewhat milder wrote Sir Walter Scott in the *Quarterly*,—"The letters of Burns, although containing passages of great eloquence, bear occasionally strong marks of affectation, with a tincture of pedantry rather foreign to the Bard's character and education. They are written in various tones of feeling and moods of mind, in some instances exhibiting all the force of the writer's talents; in others, only valuable because they bear his signature."

Professor Dugald Stewart also was inclined to question Burns's taste in prose writing, and deplored that he preferred the quaintness, with the point and antithesis, of Junius, to the quiet humour and chaste simplicity of Addison and Franklin. "The influence of that taste," he remarked, "is very perceptible in his own letters, although their great and various excellences render some of them scarcely less objects of wonder than his poetical

productions. The late Dr Robertson used to say that, considering his education, the former seemed to him the more extraordinary of the two."

Professor Walker's opinion of Burns's letters is very discriminating and highly favourable, and he thus combats the objections of the reviewers:—"Before we estimate the merit of any single letter, we should know the character of both correspondents, and the measure of their intimacy; Burns could diversify his style with great address to suit the taste of each correspondent; and when he occasionally swells into declamation, or stiffens into pedantry, it is for the amusement of an individual whom he knows it will amuse, and this should not be mistaken for the style which he thought most proper for the public. The letter to his father, for whom he had a deep veneration, and of whose applause he was no doubt desirous, is written with care, but with no exuberance. It is grave, pious, and gloomy, like the mind of the person who was to receive it. In his correspondence with Dr Blair, Professor Stewart, Mr Graham of Fintry, and others, his style has a respectful propriety, and a regulated vigour, which shew a just conception of what became himself, and suited his relation with the persons whom he addressed. He writes to Mr Nicol in a vein of strong and ironical extravagance, congenial to the manner, and adapted to the taste, of his friend. To his female correspondents, without exception, he is lively, and sometimes romantic, and a skilful critic may perceive his pen under the influence of that tenderness for the feminine character, which was a component part of his nature. In short, through the whole collection we see various shades of gravity or care, or of sportive pomp and intentional affectation, according to the familiarity subsisting between the writer and the person for whose exclusive perusal he wrote. These letters are on the whole a valuable offering to the public; they are curious as evidences of his genius, and interesting as keys to his character, and can scarcely fail to command the admiration of all who do not measure their merits by an unfair standard."

Mr Lockhart adopts the views of Walker. "In a word," he wrote, "whatever of grossness of thought, or rant, extravagance, and fustian in expression may be found in his correspondence, ought, I cannot doubt, to be mainly ascribed to his desire of

accommodating himself, for the moment, to the habits and taste of certain buckish tradesmen of Edinburgh, and other suchlike persons, whom he numbered among his associates and friends. That he should have condescended to any such compliance, may be regretted ; but, in most cases, it would probably be quite unjust to push our censure further than this."

Carlyle, in his review of Lockhart's work, says,—“ We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. Certain of his letters, however, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. . . . But even with regard to these letters of Burns, it is but fair to state that he had two excuses. Burns, though for the most part he writes with singular force and even gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events, we should remember that these faults, even in his letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His letters to Mrs Dunlop are uniformly excellent."

Dr Hately Waddell, in his "Critical Edition of the Life and Works of Burns" (1869),\* compares him as a letter-writer to Annibal Caro, a famed Italian author of the 16th century, but gives the preference to the Scot. He also places Burns before Cowper and Byron, in that department of literature. In contrasting Caro and Cowper with Burns, he observes, that "in their treatment of trifles, the two former systematically make much of their difficulty before beginning, and forewarn you they have nothing to say; while Burns says nothing of difficulties at

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\* Vol. ii. 136-138.

all, and yet leaves an admirable letter, out of nothing, in your hands." Lord Byron's correspondence (he admits) "exhibits some of the finest specimens of epistolary composition in the language; but the monotony of selfish complaint without cause, petulant aspersion of his fellow-creatures, inexcusable accumulation of oaths, and occasional use of slang, which disfigure it, are faults that must offend the most partial reader. Page after page of sneering, of wilful swearing, or of petty scandal, with scarcely the relief of a single tear, or the sunshine of a single smile, is overwhelming at once to taste and patience. In variety of topic there is nothing in him at all like Burns, and in appropriate diversity of style—on this, or on that theme, as it occurs—there is but little approach to him. In Burns we have sometimes an oath, and sometimes indecorum; but sympathy and sincerity always, and slang never."

We shall close these critical extracts with "the very latest out" on this subject. It is the *ex cathedra* deliverance of a very volatile Frenchman, H. A. Taine, whose "History of English Literature" has been recently imported to this country by the medium of translation:—"Burns spoke and wrote, without premeditation, with a mixture of all styles, familiar and terrible, hiding emotion under a joke, tender and jeering in the same place, setting tap-room trivialities side by side with the high language of poetry. . . . He laboured to attain a great epistolary style, and brought ridicule on himself by imitating in his letters the men of the academy and the court. He wrote to his lady-loves with choice phrases, full of periods as pedantic as those of Dr Johnson. Certainly we dare hardly quote them. Take the following as an example:

'O Clarinda, shall we not meet in a state—some yet unknown state of being, where the lavish hand of Plenty shall minister to the highest wish of Benevolence, and where the chill north-wind of Prudence shall never blow over the flowery field of Enjoyment?'

Burns, like Beranger, who called himself the poet of the people, had not always the courage to remain *himself*, but must be occasionally slipping into a court dress. Burns, the Scotch rustic, avoided in conversation all expressions of rusticity, and was pleased to show himself as well bred as fashionable folk.



Twice out of three times, however, his feeling is marred by his pretentiousness."

We can only pray that the next time M. Taine sits down to study Burns, the eyes of his understanding may be opened ; so that, when he resumes his pen on the subject, his complacent utterances may not be "marred by pretentiousness."



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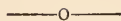


Map of the  
**PRINCIPAL PORTIONS OF AYRSHIRE**  
 AT THE CLOSE OF LAST CENTURY.

SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO ACCOMPANY THE LIBRARY EDITION OF BURNS



# PROSE WORKS.



## THE AUTHOR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THIS famed composition, in form of a letter to Dr Moore, was produced in the summer recess of 1787, betwixt the poet's first and second sojourn in the Scottish capital. As this document must necessarily form the basis of every Memoir of its author, commencing as it does with some account of his paternal ancestry, and embracing his whole career from birth to the period of his great literary ovation in Edinburgh, we here give it chronological precedence to some of his earlier writings.

The original manuscript of the autobiography—the one actually forwarded to Dr Moore—is now preserved in the British Museum.\* The author had retained a verbatim copy, perusal of which he allowed to the Duchess of Athole, to “Clarinda” and others. It soon got into a very tattered condition in passing through so many hands, and at length the poet caused it to be transcribed by an amanuensis into one of two MS. volumes of his then unpublished writings, collected for his friend Robert Riddell of Glenriddell.† Of that copy, which was revised and corrected by Burns, our publisher procured a verbatim transcript, which we have compared, and find to correspond with the original in the British Museum. Accordingly, in the following text, a complete and accurate reproduction of that important document is for the first time placed before the reader; and Dr Currie's divergences

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\* Bib. Eg. 1660.—Purchased at Mr P. Cunningham's sale, (Sotheby's) 26 Feb. 1855, lot 145.

† Now preserved in the Library of the Athenæum Club, at Liverpool.

and omissions will be apparent to any one who compares the two versions.

We are enabled, through the valuable "Notes on his Name and Family," which were privately printed by a descendant from the same ancestral stock whence our poet sprung, (the late Dr James Burnes, sometime Physician-General of the Bombay Army,) to record some genealogical details which throw light on the poet's family allusions here and elsewhere in his correspondence. The family surname was spelled BURNES, and appears to have been pronounced as a word of two syllables; for the poet's cousin and correspondent, James Burnes, writer in Montrose, (grandfather of Dr James Burnes, just referred to) during a considerable portion of his life adopted the double *s* in spelling his name, and taught the poet (contrary to his father's practice), to use the same form of signature. The immediate, as well as more remote, paternal ancestors of Burns were not in reality peasants, but yeomen or small farmers, with cherished family traditions of which they were justly proud. In Kincardineshire records, these may be pretty distinctly traced in succession through a period of nearly two hundred years prior to the era of the Ayrshire bard. We have no intention to lead our readers through a labyrinth of branching pedigree, but in presenting natal and obituary tables like the annexed, we do so in the assurance that they will greatly facilitate future reference to such matters.

The parents of our poet's paternal grandfather and namesake, Robert Burnes, were James Burnes, tenant of Bralinmuir, in the parish of Glenbervie, who died in 1743, aged 87, and Margaret Falconer, who died in 1749, aged 90. Robert, their second son,\* was married to Isabella Keith, of the family of Keith of Craig, and rented the farm of Clochnahill, in the parish of Dumotter. Of him is recorded the honourable fact that, in conjunction with some of his neighbours, he built a school-house on his farm—the first erected in the district—and shared in the expense of hiring a teacher to instruct the rising generation around.

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\* This Robert Burnes was, about A.D. 1700, one of five brothers of substantial position in the Mearns, who could shew silver utensils at their tables, with other indications of wealth unusual in that county.—*Dr Burnes's Notes*, 1851.

ROBERT BURNES AT CLOCHNAHILL, AND ISABELLA KEITH, HIS SPOUSE,  
HAD ISSUE AS FOLLOWS :—

- |                           |  |               |
|---------------------------|--|---------------|
| 1. James, ...Born 1717.   | {Became a merchant and Town Council-<br>lor in Montrose,.....} | Died in 1761. |
| 2 Robert,... ,, 1719.     | Some time a gardener in England,.....                          | ,, 1789.      |
| 3. WILLIAM, ,, 1721.      | FATHER OF THE POET,.....                                       | ,, 1784.      |
| 4. Margaret, ,, 1723.     | Married Andrew Walker, at Crawton, ...                         |               |
| 5. Elspet, .... ,, 1725.  | Married John Caird, in Denside, .....                          |               |
| 6. Jean, ..... ,, 1727.   | {Married John Burnes, and died without<br>issue,               |               |
| 7. George,.... ,, 1729.   | Died in early life, .....                                      |               |
| 8. Isabel, ..... ,, 1730. | {Married William Brand, a dyer in}<br>Auchenblae, .....        |               |
| 9. Mary, ..... ,, 1732.   | Died unmarried, .....  |               |

In a future page, we may follow the fortunes of James Burnes, the eldest of this family ; meanwhile let us note that the second and third sons, Robert and William, were driven, through some misfortunes that overtook the household of Clochnahill, apparently in 1748,\* to travel southward in quest of employment. Robert made his way into England, and William found work in Edinburgh and its vicinity for about two years. The latter particularly mentioned in after days to his children, that he had been employed at the laying out of the Meadows on the south side of the city ; and that work was executed chiefly in 1749. In 1750, he accepted a two years' engagement as gardener to the Laird of Fairly in the parish of Dundonald, Ayrshire, from which he removed in 1752 to the banks of the Doon, where he served for sometime as gardener to Mr Crawford of Doonside. Desiring to settle in life, he took a perpetual lease of seven acres of ground in the parish of Alloway, from Dr Campbell of Ayr, with the view of commencing on his own account as a nurseryman and market-gardener. On this land, close by the roadside leading southward to the ruins of Alloway Kirk, he built with his own hands a cot-house of two apartments, to which, in December 1757, he brought home from Maybole as his bride, Agnes Brown, the mother of our author, who shall now himself take up the narrative at the point where we stop.

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\* A certificate (now possessed by Mr Gilbert Burns, Dublin), dated 9th May 1748, granted to William Burnes by three landowners in Kincardineshire, testifying that the bearer "is the son of an honest Farmer in this neighbourhood, and is a very well inclined lad himself ;" and recommending him to any Nobleman or gentleman as a fit servant according to his capabilities, affords strong presumptive evidence that William Burnes had not left his paternal roof prior to that date.

## (4) TO DR MOORE.

SIR,—For some time past I have been rambling over the country, partly on account of some little business I have to settle in various places; but of late I have been confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself.

My name has made a small noise in the country; you have done me the honor to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be at the expence of frequently being laugh'd at; for I assure you, Sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, except in the trifling affair of WISDOM, I sometimes think I resemble,—I have, I say, like him “turned my eyes to behold madness and folly,” and like him, too frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. In the very polite letter Miss Williams did me the honor to write me,\* she tells me you have got a complaint in your eyes. I pray God it may be removed; for, considering that lady and you are my common friends, you will probably employ her to read this letter; and then good-night to that esteem with which she was pleased to honor the Scotch Bard!

After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some very twitching qualms of conscience, that, perhaps, he was doing what he

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\* This lady, Helen Maria Williams, an authoress of some note in her day, will be hereafter referred to.

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ought not to do; a predicament he has more than once been in before.

I have not the most distant pretence to what the pye-coated guardians of Escutcheons call a Gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted at the Herald's Office; and, looking thro' the granary of honors, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me—

“My ancient but ignoble blood,  
Has crept thro' scoundrels since the flood.”

Gules, purple, argent, etc., quite disowned me. My forefathers rented land of the famous, noble Keiths of Marshal, and had the honor to share their fate. I do not use the word “honor” with any reference to political principles: *loyal* and *disloyal* I take to be merely relative terms in that ancient and formidable court known in this country by the name of “club-law.” Those who dare welcome Ruin and shake hands with Infamy, for what they believe sincerely to be the cause of their God or their King, are—as Mark Antony in *Shakespear* says of Brutus and Cassius—“honorable men.” I mention this circumstance because it threw my Father on the world at large; where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my pretensions to WISDOM. I have met with few who understood Men, their manners and their ways, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly Integrity, and headlong, ungovernable Irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son.

For the first six or seven years of my life, my Father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr.\* Had my Father continued in that situation, I must have marched off to have been one of the

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\* William Fergusson, Esq. of Doonholm, then Provost of Ayr.

little underlings about a farmhouse ; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye, till they could discern between good and evil ; so, with the assistance of his generous Master, he ventured on a small farm in that gentleman's estate. At these years, I was by no means a favourite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn, sturdy *something* in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot-piety. I say "idiot-piety," because I was then but a child. Though I cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar ; and against the years of ten or eleven, I was absolutely a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old maid of my mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country, of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, enchanted towers, giants, dragons and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of Poesy ; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places ; and though nobody can be more sceptical in these matters than I, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest thing of composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was "The Vision of Mirza," and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, "How are thy servants blest, O Lord !" I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ears,—

"For though in dreadful whirls we hung  
High on the broken wave ;"

I met with these pieces in Mason's English Collection, one of my school-books. The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books



I ever read again, were "The Life of Hannibal," and "The History of Sir William Wallace." Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough that I might be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.

Polemical Divinity about this time was putting the country half-mad, and I, ambitious of shining on Sundays, between sermons, in conversation parties, at funerals, &c., in a few years more, used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised a hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

My vicinity to Ayr was of great advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modification of spited pride,\* like our Catechism's definition of Infinitude was "without bounds or limits." I formed many connexions with other youngers who possessed superior advantages; the youngling actors who were busy with the rehearsal of parts, in which they were shortly to appear on that stage where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at these green years that the young Noblesse and Gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. It takes a few dashes into the world, to give the young Great Man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who perhaps were born in the same Village. My young superiors never insulted the clouterly appearance of my plough-boy carcase,

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\* The MS. reads "spited pride," and so it reads in Currie's first and second editions. The epithet is changed to "spirited" in the third edition, which expression has been retained in all reprints of the letter down to the present day. Currie also has "modification" in the plural.

the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books ; among them, even then, I could pick up some observations, and one, whose heart I am sure not even the "Munny Begum's" scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors, as they dropped off for East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction ; but I was soon called to more serious evils. My Father's generous Master died ; the farm proved a ruinous bargain ; and to clench the curse, we fell into the hands of a Factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my tale of *Two Dogs*. My Father was advanced in life when he married ; I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labor. My Father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and to weather these, we retrenched expenses. We lived very poorly : I was a dexterous ploughman for my years, and the next eldest to me was a brother, who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash. A novel-writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I ; my indignation yet boils at [the recollection of] the threatening, insolent epistles from the Scoundrel Tyrant, which used to set us all in tears.

This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year ; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and a woman together as partners in the labors of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature who just counted an autumn less. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scotch idiom : she was a "bonie, sweet, sonsie lass." In short, she, altogether

unwittingly to herself, initiated me into a certain delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our chiefest pleasure here below. How she caught the contagion I can't say; you medical folks talk much of infection by breathing the same air, the touch, etc.; but I never expressly told her that I loved her. Indeed, I did not well know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an *Æolian* harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious rantann, when I looked and fingered over her hand to pick out the nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualifications, she sung sweetly; and 'twas her favourite Scotch reel that I attempted to give an embodied vehicle to in rhyme. I was not so presumptive as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting smearing sheep, and casting peats (his father living in the moors), he had no more scholar-craft than I had. Thus with me began love and poesy; which at times have been my only, and till within this last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment.

My Father struggled on till he reached a freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain was such as to throw a little ready money in his hand at the commencement, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a lawsuit between him and his landlord commencing, after three

years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my Father was just saved from absorption in a jail, by a phthisical consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stepped in, and snatched him away to "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

It is during this climacteric that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward being in the parish. No *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. My knowledge of ancient story was gathered from Guthrie's and Salmon's Geographical Grammar; my knowledge of modern manners, and of literature and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*. These, with Pope's Works, some Plays of Shakspear, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, The Pantheon, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener, Boyle Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Doctor Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditations, had been the extent of my reading. The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the tender or sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe much to this for my critic-craft, such as it is.

In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My Father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings, and my going was, what to this hour I repent, in absolute defiance of his commands. My Father, as I said before, was the sport of strong passions; from that instance of rebellion he took a kind of dislike to me, which, I believe, was one cause of that dissipation which marked my future years. I say dissipation, comparative with the strictness and sobriety of

Presbyterian country life; for though the Will-O'-Wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet, early ingrained piety and virtue never failed to point me out the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was never to have an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of *Homer's* Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two doors by which I could enter the fields of fortune were—the most niggardly economy, or the little chicaning art of bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it: the last—I always hated the contamination of its threshold! Thus abandoned of view or aim in life, with a strong appetite for sociability (as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark), and a constitutional hypochondriac taint which made me fly solitude: add to all these incentives to social life—my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense, made me generally a welcome guest. So 'tis no great wonder that always, “where two or three were met together, there was I in the midst of them.” But far beyond all the other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain*. My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some Goddess or other; and, like every warfare in this world, I was sometimes crowned with success, and sometimes mortified with defeat. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and set want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for any labors than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evening in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on an amour without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity in these matters which recommended

me as a proper second in duels of that kind ; and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure at being in the secret of half the amours in the parish, as ever did Premier at knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe.

The very goose-feather in my hand seems instinctively to know the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song ; and is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the amours of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage: but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice baptize these things by the name of follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty they are matters of the most serious nature : to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious part of their enjoyments.

Another circumstance in my life which made very considerable alterations on my mind and manners was—I spent my seventeenth summer\* a good distance from home, at a noted school on a smuggling coast, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, etc. in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at this time very successful : scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were as yet new to me, and I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to look unconcernedly on a large tavern-bill, and mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand in my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo,† a month which is always a carnival in my bosom : a charming *Fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset

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\* This is “nineteenth summer” in Currie’s edition ; he has noted that the alteration was suggested by Gilbert Burns ; but the poet’s own date is evidently the proper one. In Gilbert’s narrative of his brother’s life, his dates are generally in error by two years at least.

† Sun enters Virgo on 23rd August.



my trigonometry, and set me off in a tangent from the spheres of my studies. I struggled on with my sines and co-sines for a few days more; but stepping out to the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, I met with my angel—

“Like Proserpine gathering flowers,  
Herself a fairer flower——.”

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet with her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, I was innocent.

I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works: I had seen mankind in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my schoolfellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three-farthings' worth of business in the world, yet every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

My life flowed on much in the same tenor till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; Sterne and Mackenzie—“Tristram Shandy” and the “Man of Feeling”—were my bosom favourites.

Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind, but 'twas only the humour of the hour. I had usually half a dozen

or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed it as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once they were lighted up, raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme; and then conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except "Winter, a dirge" (the eldest of my printed pieces), "The Death and dying words of poor Mailie," "John Barleycorn," and Songs first, and second, and third. Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school-business.

My twenty-third year was to me an important æra. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined with a flax-dresser in a neighbouring country town, to learn his trade, and carry on the business of manufacturing and retailing flax. This turned out a sadly unlucky affair. My partner was a scoundrel of the first water, who made money by the mystery of Thieving, and to finish the whole, while we were giving a welcome carousal to the New Year, our shop, by the drunken carelessness of my partner's wife, took fire and burned to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth sixpence. I was obliged to give up business; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my Father's head; the darkest of which was—he was visibly far gone in a consumption. To crown all, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the fields of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my hypochondriac complaint being irritated to such a degree, that for three months I was in a diseased state of body and mind, scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have just got their sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed! etc."



From this adventure I learned something of a Town life ; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn was—I formed a bosom friendship with a young fellow, the *first*\* created being I had ever seen, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a plain mechanic ; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view to bettering his situation in life. The patron dying, and leaving my friend unprovided for, just as he was ready to launch forth into the world, the poor fellow, in despair, went to sea ; where, after a variety of good and bad fortune, he was, a little before I was acquainted with him, set a-shore by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stript of everything. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding, that he is at this moment Captain of a large West-Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

This gentleman's mind was fraught with courage, independence, and magnanimity, and every noble, manly virtue. I loved him ; I admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and I strove to imitate him. I in some measure succeeded ; I had the pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself when Woman was the presiding star ; but he spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief, and the consequence was that soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the enclosed "Welcome." †

My reading was only increased by two stray volumes of

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\* So in the MS. meaning *most excellent*, a favourite form of expression with Burns. This was Mr Richard Brown, who afterwards became one of the poet's correspondents.

† See Poetry, Vol. I., p. 72.

Pamela, and one of Ferdinand Count Fathom, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces which are in print, I had given up; but meeting with Fergusson's Scotch Poems, I strung anew my wildly-sounding, rustic lyre with emulating vigour. When my Father died, his all went among the rapacious hell-hounds that growl in the kennel of justice; but we made a shift to scrape a little money in the family amongst us, with which, (to keep us together) my brother and I took a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted my hare-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.

I entered on this farm with a full resolution "Come, go to, I will be wise!" I read farming books, I calculated crops; I attended markets; and in short, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying in bad seed; the second, from a late harvest, we lost half of both our crops. This upset all my wisdom, and I returned, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." I now began to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light, was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two Reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my "Holy Fair." I had an idea myself that the piece had some merits; but, to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of these things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain side of both clergy and laity, it met with a roar of applause. "Holy Willie's Prayer" next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held three several meetings to look over their holy artillery, if any of it was pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me,

my idle wanderings led me on another side, point-blank, within reach of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story alluded to in my printed poem, "The Lament." 'Twas a shocking affair, which I cannot yet bear to recollect, and it had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning, of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; as in truth it was only nominally mine (for stock I had none to embark in it), and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. Before leaving my native country, however, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as in my power; I thought they had merit; and 'twas a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even tho' it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver—or perhaps gone to the world of spirits, a victim to that inhospitable clime. I can truly say, that *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and my works as I have at this moment. It was ever my opinion that the great, unhappy mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance or mistaken notions of themselves. To know myself, had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself, alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design, where she seemed to have intended the various *lights* and *shades* in my character. I was pretty sure my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of Censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes would make me forget Neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three

hundred and fifty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; besides pocketing (all expenses deducted), near twenty pounds. This last came very seasonably, as I was about to indent myself, for want of money to pay my freight. So soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the Torrid Zone, I bespoke a passage in the very first Ship that was to sail, for

“Hungry ruin had me in the wind.”

I had for some time been skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised, ungrateful people had uncoupled the merciless legal pack at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed a song, “The gloomy night is gathering fast,” which was to be the last effort of my muse in Caledonia, when a letter from Dr Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes, by rousing my poetic ambition. The Doctor belonged to a class of critics for whose applause I had not even dared to hope. His idea, that I would meet with every encouragement for a second edition, fired me so much that away I posted for Edinburgh without a single acquaintance in town, or a single letter of recommendation in my pocket. The baneful star that had so long presided in my Zenith, for once made a revolution to the Nadir; and the providential care of a good God placed me under the patronage of one of his noblest creatures, the Earl of Glencairn. “*Oubliez moi, grand Dieu, si jamais je l’oublie!*”

I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to “catch the manners living as they rise.”

You can now, Sir, form a pretty near guess of what sort of a Wight he is, whom for some time you have honored

with your correspondence. That Whim and Fancy, keen sensibility and riotous passions, may still make him zig-zag in his future path of life, is very probable; but, come what will, I shall answer for him—the most determinate integrity and honor [shall ever characterise him;]\* and though his evil star should again blaze in his meridian with tenfold more direful influence, he may reluctantly tax friendship with pity, but no more.

My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. The very elegant and friendly letter she honored me with a few days ago, I cannot answer at present, as my presence is required at Edinburgh for a week or so, and I set off to-morrow.

I enclose you “Holy Willie” for the sake of giving you a little further information of the affair than Mr Creech could do. An Elegy I composed the other day on Sir James H. Blair, if time allow, I will transcribe. The merit is just mediocre.

If you will oblige me so highly and do me so much honor as now and then to drop me a line, please direct to me at Mauchline, Ayrshire. With the most grateful respect, I have the honor to be, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

MATCHLINE, *2nd August*, 1787.

Direct to me at Mauchline, Ayrshire.

EDINBURGH, *23rd September*.

SIR,—The foregoing letter was unluckily forgot among other papers at Glasgow on my way to Edinburgh. Soon after I came to Edinburgh I went on a tour through the Highlands, and did not recover the letter till my return to

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\* The four words within brackets are not in the MS., but the sentence is incomplete without them.

town, which was the other day. My ideas, picked up in my pilgrimage, and some rhymes of my earlier years, I shall soon be at leisure to give you at large—so soon as I hear from you whether you are in London. I am, again, Sir, yours most gratefully,

R. BURNS.\*

The foregoing letter to Dr Moore, which furnishes such a masterly panoramic view of the writer's early life down to his twenty-ninth year, is too concise to satisfy the public thirst for every detail in the early career of a man and a poet like Burns. We shall therefore, before presenting the reader with the earliest known specimen of the author's prose composition, require to retrace our steps, with a view to supply missing links in the biographic chain of events, and render the story of the bard's earlier years as complete as possible.

#### ALLOWAY—EARLY NURTURE—JOHN MURDOCH.

The record of the poet's birth contained in the session books of the conjoined parishes of Alloway and Ayr is as follows :—

“Robert Burns, lawful son of William Burns in Alloway, and Agnes Brown his spouse, was born in January 25th, 1759 : baptised by Mr William Dalrymple. Witnesses, John Tennant and James Young.”†

\* Footnote by Dr Currie, 1800. “There are various copies of this letter in the author's handwriting ; and one of these, evidently corrected, is in the book in which he copied several of his letters. This has been used for the press, with some omissions, and one slight alteration suggested by Gilbert Burns.”

† The reader will observe that the family name is not here spelled as if pronounced with two syllables, but is in the form into which the poet and his brother Gilbert agreed to contract it in April 1786. The explanation is that in Ayrshire the compressed mode had been established by familiar usage, while in the North, the old spelling and pronunciation were retained. It is also interesting to note that “John Tennant,” one of the witnesses of the poet's baptism, was an early Ayrshire friend of William Burnes, afterwards known as “John Tennant in Glenconner,” of which fact we shall afterwards adduce proof. The Rev. William Dalrymple survived to know Burns as a distinguished poet and to be himself a subject of panegyric in his verses.



Dr Currie narrates that the future poet was sent "In his sixth year to a school at Alloway Miln, about a mile distant from the cottage, taught by a person named Campbell; but this teacher being in a few months appointed master of the workhouse at Ayr, William Burnes, in conjunction with some other heads of families, engaged John Murdoch in his stead." The latter was a promising student, about eighteen years old, when in May 1765, he was thus incidentally made instrumental in training the mind of Scotland's national poet. The little house then selected for use as a school still exists on the roadside, directly opposite the cottage in which his celebrated pupil was born. "In that cottage," wrote Murdoch in 1799, "of which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace in Europe. . . . My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum." Murdoch conducted this little school for nearly two years and a half; but considerably prior to the close of that engagement, William Burnes had removed with his family to Mount Oliphant, above two miles south-eastward, a bleak upland farm of seventy acres, which he leased from his kind employer and patron, Provost Ferguson.

#### MOUNT OLIPHANT—PARENTAL TRAINING—EARLY HARDSHIPS.

The date of the lease, (the original of which is now possessed by Mr Gilbert Burns, of Dublin) is 1765; but the family did not begin to reside on the farm till Whitsunday 1766. That removal interrupted the progress of the poet's education under Murdoch, who records that, in consequence of the distance, the boys could not attend regularly. Gilbert adds that "there being no school near us, and our little services being useful on the farm, my father undertook to teach us arithmetic in the winter evenings by candlelight; and in this way my two elder sisters got all the education they ever received."

Another kind of education, which was of much use to Burns in afterlife, he makes special reference to in the Autobiography. The old woman residing with the family, to whom he expresses his

indebtedness for having sown in his infantile and boyish mind the latent seeds of poetry, was Betty Davidson, the widow of a cousin of his mother. According to Mrs Begg's remembrance, Betty endeavoured to requite the kindness of William Burns by her assiduity in spinning, carding, and doing all kinds of good offices that were in her power, and she was a great favourite with the children.

"Nothing," says Gilbert, "could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age or near it in the neighbourhood; indeed my father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men, and was at great pains, as we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects, as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm us in virtuous habits." The devoted parent borrowed books for the instruction of his children, and "Robert read all these with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled; and no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches."

During a summer quarter of 1772, according to Gilbert's narrative, Robert and he were sent "week about" to the parish school of Dalrymple, distant about three miles, to improve their handwriting. One of Robert's school exercises there—eight lines of verse on the value of Religion—he retained throughout life and loved to quote to serious correspondents. It was there also that he formed the acquaintanceship of James Candlish, who afterwards married the wittiest of the "Mauchline Belles," became a distinguished lecturer on Medicine in Edinburgh, and the father of a still more distinguished son—the late Principal Candlish of the Free Church College.

Meanwhile, in this same year (1772), the poet's early tutor, John Murdoch, was appointed to succeed David Tennant as teacher of the English School at Ayr. "This was," wrote Gilbert, "a circumstance of considerable importance to us; the remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do everything in his power for our improve-



ment." In particular, Robert went to Ayr a little before the harvest season of 1773, and lodged with Murdoch during a few weeks, for the purpose of revising English Grammar, &c., "that he might be the better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home." A week's study sufficed to make him master of the parts of speech, and the remaining portion of that visit was spent in acquiring a pretty general knowledge of the French language. This worthy schoolmaster, who had so materially contributed towards the proper cultivation of his distinguished pupil's mind, thus modestly concludes his description of the manly qualities and Christian virtues of William Burnes:—  
 "Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive from these few particulars, *what kind of person had the principal part in the education of the Poet*. He spoke the English language with more propriety, both with respect to diction and pronunciation, than any man I ever knew, with no greater advantages: this had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men much sooner than their neighbours."

It must have been about this period that the venerated parent compiled for the use of his children what Dr Currie refers to as a "little manual of religious belief in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son, in which the benevolence of his heart seems to have led him to soften the rigid Calvinism of the Scottish Church into something approaching to Arminianism." That document, carefully transcribed in the hand-writing of John Murdoch, is now in the possession of Mr Gilbert Burns of Dublin,\* who also is custodier of the "big Ha'-Bible" which belonged to William Burnes, containing on one of its fly leaves the following Family Register entered by his own hand:—

"William Burnes was born, 11th November 1721.

Agnes Brown was born, 17th March 1732. Married together,  
 15th December 1757.

Had a son Robert, 25th January 1759.

Had a son Gilbert, 28th September 1760.

Had a daughter Agnes, 30th September 1762.

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\* This interesting relic forms article A of our Appendix. It was first published at Kilmarnock, in 1875, with a well-written Biographical Preface by Mr James Gibson, of Liverpool, eminent as an enthusiast in Burnsiana.

Had a daughter Annabella, 14th November 1764.

Had a son William, 30th July 1767.

Had a son John, 10th July 1769.

Had a daughter Isbal, 27th June 1771."

At the Martinmas following the birth of Isabella, the youngest child of the family, the first break in the lease of Mount Oliphant occurred. Gilbert has recorded that by a stipulation in the lease, his father had a right to throw it up, if he thought proper, at the end of every sixth year. He attempted to fix himself in a better farm at the end of the first six years, but failing in that attempt, he continued where he was for six years more. Burns himself, immediately after referring to his three weeks' abode with Murdoch in 1772, at the Ayr Grammar School, and his distress at parting with some of his fellow-pupils of superior rank in life, as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, adds—"But I was soon called to more serious evils: my father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and, to clench the curse, we fell into the hands of a factor," &c. Gilbert also, in his narrative says—"My father in consequence of the wretched soil, soon came into difficulties, which were increased by the loss of several of his cattle by accidents and disease. To the buffetings of misfortune we could only oppose hard labour and the most rigid economy. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in threshing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards."

In the preceding Autobiography we find that in the summer of 1775, the poet spent a few months at a noted school in Kirkoswald to learn mensuration, &c. To that date the following passage refers:—"My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labour. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and to weather these we retrenched expenses," &c.

Some apparent confusion in the author's chronology arises from the sudden introduction of a very condensed paragraph of twelve lines (near the foot of page 9), commencing, "My Father struggled on," and closing with an affecting reference to that parent's death, several years thereafter. The narrator is in the midst of incidents of Mount Oliphant life, when he thus carries the reader's attention to the Lochlie period. But the autobiographer immediately retraces his steps and returns to Mount Oliphant incidents: first, he tells of his poring over a collection of songs while "driving in his cart, or walking to labour;" and, then of his father's umbrage at him for joining a dancing-school, "in defiance of his commands;" and thereafter he gives the story of his visit to Kirkoswald, in his seventeenth summer, with the charming love-adventure with Peggy Thomson.

"It was during this climacteric," he writes, "that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward being in the parish"—that is to say, in the parish of Alloway—certainly not of *Tarbolton*, as Dr Currie's paraphrase of the passage has hitherto misled all readers to imagine. The poet is speaking of a "climacteric," or culminating point in his career, and not of a lengthened period of residence anywhere.

The author's poetical productions of his juvenile years, from 1773 to 1777, will be found in Volume First, pp. 1 to 10.

#### REMOVAL TO LOCHLIE IN TARBOLTON PARISH.

The lease of this farm extended from Whitsunday 1777 to Whitsunday 1784. "For four years we lived comfortably here," the poet writes, "but a lawsuit commencing," &c. Gilbert, in his narrative, thus remarks:—"These seven years were not marked by much literary improvement; but during this time, the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though, when young, he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. As these connections were

governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till he reached his 23rd year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while; he began therefore to think of trying some other line of life." \*

The foregoing biographical notes bring the reader down to the year 1780, at which date the author's correspondence begins. Dr Currie's first edition includes four letters addressed to "My dear E." which we are now to present. They were not printed from the original, but from scroll copies found among the poet's manuscripts. It is our singular good fortune to be enabled (through the kindness of John Adam, Esq., Greenock, possessor of the poet's holograph) to present in this edition what appears to be the very earliest example extant of Burns's letter-writing. We think we shall be justified in coming to the conclusion that it forms number one of the series of letters to E. B., of date 1780—81.

Lockhart makes the remark concerning these early love letters —"They are omitted in the 'General Correspondence' of Gilbert's edition, for what reason I know not, for they are surely as well worth preserving as many in the collection, particularly when their early date is considered. In such excellent English did Burns woo his country maidens in at most his twenty-second year."

\* See articles in Appendix B and C.



What you may think of this letter when you see the name  
that subscribes it I cannot know; & perhaps I ought to make  
a long preface of apologies for the freedom I am going to  
take, but as my heart means no offence but on the contrary  
is rather too warmly interested in your favor, for that  
reason I hope <sup>you will</sup> forgive me when I tell you that I most  
sincerely & affectionately love you — I am a stranger  
in these matters & — as I assure you, that you are  
the first woman to whom I ever made such a declaration  
so I declare I am at a loss how to proceed; — I have more  
than once come into your company with a resolution to tell  
you what I have just now told you but my resolution al-  
ways fails me, & even now my heart trembles for the  
consequence of what I have said — I hope my <sup>intentions</sup> &   
you will not despise me because I am ignorant of the flatter-  
ing arts of courtship; I hope my inexperience of the world  
will plead for me — I can only say I sincerely love you &  
there is nothing on earth I so assently wish for, or wish  
possibly gives me so much happiness as one day to see  
you mine — I think you cannot you cannot  
doubt my sincerity as I am sure that whenever I see  
you my very looks betray me, and when once you are  
convinced I am sincere I am perfectly certain you  
have too much goodness & humanity to allow an honest  
man to languish in suspense only because he  
loves you too well, but I am certain that in such  
a state of anxiety as I myself <sup>at present</sup> ~~now~~ feel an absolute  
denial would be a much preferable state.



## (1) TO ELLISON, OR ALISON BEGBIE (?)

*(Here first published.)*

WHAT you may think of this letter, when you see the name that subscribes it, I cannot know; and perhaps I ought to make a long preface of apologies for the freedom I am going to take; but as my heart means no offence, but on the contrary is rather too warmly interested in your favour; for that reason, I hope you will forgive me when I tell you that I most sincerely and affectionately love you. I am a stranger in these matters, A——, as I assure you that you are the first woman to whom I ever made such a declaration; so I declare I am at a loss how to proceed.

I have more than once come into your company with a resolution to say what I have just now told you; but my resolution always failed me, and even now, my heart trembles for the consequence of what I have said. I hope my dear A—— you will not despise me because I am ignorant of the flattering arts of courtship: I hope my inexperience of the world will plead for me. I can only say I sincerely love you, and there is nothing on earth I so ardently wish for, or could possibly give me so much happiness, as one day to see you mine.

I think you cannot doubt my sincerity, as I am sure that whenever I see you, my very looks betray me: and when once you are convinced I am sincere, I am perfectly certain you have too much goodness and humanity to allow an honest man to languish in suspense, only because he loves you too well. And, I am certain that in such a state of anxiety, as I myself at present feel, an absolute denial would be a much preferable state.

[The style of penmanship of the above betokens its early date; but it is impossible to determine from internal evidence whether

the writer of it speaks for himself, or is merely helping some one of his less able rustic brethren, by dictating a love letter for him. We know that in after-life Burns occasionally did vicarious work of this kind, and we have his own assurance in the narrative of his Tarbolton days, that such was an early practice of his. He says "a country lad seldom carries on an amour without an assisting confident; and I felt as much pleasure at being in the secret of half the amours of the parish, as ever did Premier at knowing the intrigues of half the courts in Europe." It seems to us, however, that the closing paragraph of this letter is in wonderful harmony with the concluding verse of the song "Mary Morison," which is understood to have been inspired by the poet's passion for Alison Begbie :

"O Mary canst thou wreck his peace,  
Wha for thy sake would gladly die?  
Or canst thou break that heart o' his  
Whose only fau't is loving thee!  
If love for love thou will na gie,  
At least be pity to me shown;  
A thoecht ungentle canna be  
The thoecht o' Mary Morison."

## (2) TO ELLISON, OR ALISON BEGBIE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[LOCHLIE, 1780.]

MY DEAR E.,—I do not remember, in the course of your acquaintance and mine, ever to have heard your opinion on the ordinary way of falling in love, amongst people of our station of life: I do not mean the persons who proceed in the way of bargain, but those whose affection is really placed on the person.

Though I be, as you know very well, but a very awkward lover myself, yet as I have some opportunities of observing the conduct of others who are much better skilled in the affair of courtship than I am, I often think it is owing to lucky chance more than to good management, that there are not more unhappy marriages than usually are.

It is natural for a young fellow to like the acquaintance



of the females, and customary for him to keep their company when occasion serves: some one of them is more agreeable to him than the rest; there is something—he knows not what—pleases him—he knows not how—in her company. This I take to be what is called *Love* with the greatest part of us, and I must own, my dear E., it is a hard game such a one as you have to play, when you meet with such a lover. You cannot admit but he is sincere, and yet, though you use him ever so favourably, perhaps in a few months, or at farthest a year or two, the same unaccountable fancy may make him as distractedly fond of another, whilst you are quite forgot. I am aware that perhaps the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you, you may bid me take my own lesson home, and tell me that the passion I have professed for you is perhaps one of those transient flashes I have been describing; but I hope, my dear E., you will do me the justice to believe me, when I assure you, that the love I have for you is founded on the sacred principles of Virtue and Honor; and by consequence, so long as you continue possessed of those amiable qualities which first inspired my passion for you, so long must I continue to love you. Believe me, my Dear, it is love like this alone which can render the married state happy. People may talk of flames and raptures as long as they please; and a warm fancy, with a flow of youthful spirits, may make them feel something like what they describe; but sure I am, the nobler faculties of the mind, with kindred feelings of the heart, can only be the foundation of friendship; and it has always been my opinion, that the married life is only *Friendship* in a more exalted degree.

If you will be so good as to grant my wishes, and it should please Providence to spare us to the latest periods of life, I can look forward and see, that even then, though bent down with wrinkled age; even then, when all other

worldly circumstances will be indifferent to me, I will regard my E., with the tenderest affection; and for this plain reason, because she is still possessed of those noble qualities, improved to a much higher degree, which first inspired my affection for her.

“O happy state, when souls each other draw,  
Where love is liberty, and nature law.”

I know, were I to speak in such a style to many a girl who thinks herself possessed of no small share of sense, she would think it ridiculous; but the language of the heart is—my dear E,—the only courtship I shall ever use to you.

When I look over what I have written, I am sensible it is vastly different from the ordinary style of courtship; but I shall make no apology. I know your good nature will excuse what your good sense may see amiss.

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(3) TO ELLISON, OR ALISON BEGBIE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[LOCHLIE, 1780.]

I VERILY believe, my dear E., that the pure, genuine feelings of Love are as rare in the world as the pure, genuine principles of Virtue and Piety. This I hope will account for the uncommon style of all my letters to you. By uncommon, I mean, their being written in such a serious manner, which, to tell you the truth, has made me often afraid lest you should take me for some zealous bigot, who conversed with his mistress as he would converse with his minister. I don't know how it is, my Dear; for though, except your company, there is nothing on earth gives me so much pleasure as writing to you, yet it never gives me those giddy raptures so much talked of among lovers. I have often thought that if a well-grounded affection be not

really a part of virtue, 'tis something extremely akin to it. Whenever the thought of my E. warms my heart, every feeling of humanity, every principle of generosity, kindles in my breast. It extinguishes every dirty spark of malice and envy, which are but too apt to infest me. I grasp every creature in the arms of Universal Benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and sympathize with the miseries of the unfortunate. I assure you, my Dear, I often look up to the Divine disposer of events, with an eye of gratitude for the blessing which I hope He intends to bestow on me, in bestowing you. I sincerely wish that He may bless my endeavours to make your life as comfortable and happy as possible, both in sweetening the rougher parts of my natural temper, and bettering the unkindly circumstances of my fortune. This, my Dear, is a passion, at least in my view, worthy of a man, and I will add, worthy of a Christian. The sordid earth-worm may profess love to a woman's person, whilst in reality his affection is centered in her pocket ; and the slavish drudge may go a-wooing as he goes to the horse-market, to choose one who is stout and firm, and as we may say of an old horse, one who will be a good drudge and draw kindly. I disdain their dirty, puny ideas. I would be heartily out of humour with myself, if I thought I were capable of having so poor a notion of the Sex which were designed to crown the pleasures of society. Poor devils ! I don't envy them their happiness who have such notions. For my part, I propose quite other pleasures with my dear partner.

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## (4) TO ELLISON, OR ALISON BEGBIE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[LOCHLIE, 1781.]

MY DEAR E.—I have often thought it a peculiarly unlucky circumstance in love, that though in every other situation in life, telling the truth is not only the safest, but actually by far the easiest way of proceeding, a Lover is never under greater difficulty in acting, or more puzzled for expression, than when his passion is sincere, and his intentions are honourable. I do not think that it is very difficult for a person of ordinary capacity to talk of love and fondness, which are not felt, and to make vows of constancy and fidelity which are never intended to be performed, if he be villain enough to practise such detestable conduct: but to a man whose heart glows with the principles of integrity and truth, and who sincerely loves a woman of amiable person, uncommon refinement of sentiment, and purity of manners—to such a one, in such circumstances, I can assure you, my Dear, from my own feelings at this present moment, *Courtship* is a task indeed. There is such a number of foreboding fears, and distrustful anxieties crowd into my mind when I am in your company, or when I sit down to write to you, that what to speak or what to write I am altogether at a loss.

There is one rule which I have hitherto practised, and which I shall invariably keep with you, and that is, honestly to tell you the plain truth. There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am surprised they can be used by any one in so noble, so generous a passion as Virtuous Love. No, my dear E., I shall never endeavour to gain your favour by such detestable practices. If you will be so good and so generous as to admit me for your partner, your companion, your bosom

friend through life ; there is nothing on this side of eternity shall give me greater transport ; but I shall never think of purchasing your hand by any arts unworthy of a man, and I will add, of a Christian. There is one thing, my Dear, which I earnestly request of you, and it is this ; that you would soon either put an end to my hopes by a peremptory refusal, or cure me of my fears by a generous consent.

It would oblige me much if you would send me a line or two when convenient. I shall only add further, that if a behaviour regulated (though perhaps but very imperfectly) by the rules of Honor and Virtue, if a heart devoted to love and esteem you, and an earnest endeavour to promote your happiness ; if these are qualities you would wish in a friend, in a husband ; I hope you shall ever find them in your real friend and sincere lover.

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(<sup>o</sup>) TO ELLISON, OR ALISON BEGBIE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[LOCHLIE, 1781.]

I OUGHT in good manners to have acknowledged the receipt of your letter before this time, but my heart was so shocked with the contents of it, that I can scarcely yet collect my thoughts so as to write to you on the subject. I will not attempt to describe what I felt on receiving your letter. I read it over and over, again and again, and though it was in the politest language of refusal, still it was peremptory ; ‘you were very sorry you could not make me a return, but you wish me’ what without you I never can obtain, ‘you wish me all kind of happiness.’ It would be weak and unmanly to say that without you I never can be happy ; but sure I am, that sharing life with you, would have given it a relish, that, wanting you, I never can taste.

Your uncommon personal advantages, and your superior good sense, do not so much strike me; these possibly in a few instances may be met with in others; but that amiable goodness, that tender, feminine softness, that endearing sweetness of disposition, with all the charming offspring of a warm feeling heart—these I never again expect to meet with in such a degree in this world. All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond anything I have ever met with in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not think the world can ever efface. My imagination had fondly flattered itself with a wish, I dare not say it ever reached a hope, that possibly I might one day call you mine. I had formed the most delightful images, and my fancy fondly brooded over them; but now I am wretched for the loss of what I really had no right to expect. I must now think no more of you as a mistress, still I presume to ask to be admitted as a friend. As such I wish to be allowed to wait on you, and as I expect to remove in a few days a little farther off, and you, I suppose, will perhaps soon leave this place, I wish to see you or hear from you soon; and if an expression should perhaps escape me rather too warm for friendship, I hope you will pardon it in, my dear Miss ———, (pardon me the dear expression for once).\*

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#### BRIEF SOJOURN IN IRVINE, AND RETURN TO LOCHLIE.

The last of the foregoing series of love letters closes with a reference to the fact that the writer expected soon to remove to

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\* We have already quoted Lockhart's favourable opinion of the foregoing letters. Motherwell remarks, that "Burns in these letters moralizes occasionally very happily on love and marriage. They are in fact the only sensible love letters we have seen; yet they have an air of task-work and constraint about them that is far from natural."

Dr Hately Waddell's opinion of them is thus briefly expressed:—"After such sermonising, the result was by no means wonderful."



some distance. Gilbert has explained that Robert and he had been allowed by their father to cultivate flax on their own account on a portion of the ground at Lochlie; and that in course of selling it Robert began to think of learning and pursuing the trade of a flax dresser, as well to suit his grand view of settling in life, as to turn the flax-growing on the farm to good account. On 11th November 1780, he was mainly instrumental in forming a Bachelor debating club in the village of Tarbolton, whose glory at length culminated in causing the production of the famous poem "Death and Dr Hornbook." On the 4th of July 1781, he was admitted an apprentice free-mason of St. David's Tarbolton Lodge, No. 174, and immediately thereafter he removed to the seaport town of Irvine, where he entered into partnership with a flax-dresser named Peacock, a distant relative of his mother's; but the result of that scheme was far from satisfactory. There, however, he formed an intimate friendship with a young seaman named Richard Brown, of whose talents and manliness of character he formed so high an opinion, that he seems to have adopted him as his model, both in sentiment and deportment. This young man became in course of time one of his most cherished correspondents; and it appears from one of Burns's letters to him (30th December 1787) that Brown was among the first individuals who discerned his latent genius, and encouraged him to aspire to the character of a poet.

The records of St. David's Lodge, Tarbolton, show that Burns was "passed and raised" into full masonic fellowship, on 1st October 1781, and the inference is that he paid a short visit to Lochlie at that period. It is certain also that his venerable father visited him in Irvine shortly thereafter, on being informed that Robert was suffering from a nervous complaint. Burns himself in his Autobiography closely associates that illness with the mortification he had experienced through the failure of his love-suit to "a *belle-fille* whom he adored." In all likelihood the reference there is to Ellison Begbie's rejection of his addresses already adverted to. Some religious verses, together with the dirge called "Winter" (given at pp. 28 to 37, vol. I), seem to have been composed at this melancholy period—"a period" (he afterwards wrote) "the recollection of which makes me yet shudder."



The following letter addressed by him to his father completes the picture of that distress at Irvine; he was enabled to leave that town early in the spring of 1782, and return to his rustic occupation at Lochlie.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO HIS FATHER.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

IRVINE, *Dec. 27, 1781.*

HONORED SIR,—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you, on New-Year's day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review my past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I glimmer a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable, employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

“The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,  
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.”

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th,

and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelation,\* than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which, I hope have been remembered ere it was too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr and Mrs Muir; and, with wishing you a merry New-year's day I shall conclude. I am, honored Sir, your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNES.

*P.S.*—My meal is nearly out; but I am going to borrow till I get more.

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#### THE PLOUGH AND THE LYRE RESUMED, 1782.

Speaking of this period in his Autobiography, the author says—  
 “Rhyme, except some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up; but meeting with Fergusson’s Scots Poems, I strung anew my wildly-sounding rustic lyre with emulating vigour.”  
 The admirable piece called “The death and dying words of poor

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\* ‘Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.’

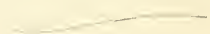
Mailie," together with the songs, "My Nanie O," and "The Rigs o' Barley," are the striking compositions which the above remark suggests to the reader's mind; we gather from Gilbert's account of the production of *Poor Mailie* that their youngest brother John (born in 1769) was then alive. That youth was fourteen years old when he died, and consequently would be laid in Alloway kirkyard in 1783, just about a year before the patriarchal father was carried thither.

Concerning the family history at Lochlie, two letters exist in the handwriting of the poet's father, one dated 8th September 1780, and the other 14th April 1781, which we shall give in an appendix to this volume. Interesting personal reminiscences of the household of William Burnes at this period by David Sillar, and by Dr John Mackenzie, were published by Professor Walker in his *Memoir and Works of Burns*, 1811. These also we shall reproduce in our appendix (Articles D, E, F), to which we refer the reader who is desirous of farther details. Meanwhile we proceed to lay before the reader a prose composition of Burns hitherto unpublished. It concerns his connection with Free Masonry, and from internal evidence seems to have been penned about the close of the year 1782.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD, BART.  
OF BALLOCHMYLE.

(*Here first published.*)

SIR,—We who subscribe this are both members of St James's Lodge, Tarbolton, and one of us in the office of Warden, and as we have the honor of having you for Master of our Lodge, we hope you will excuse this freedom, as you are the proper person to whom we ought to apply. We look on our Mason Lodge to be a serious matter, both with respect to the character of Masonry itself, and likewise as it is a Charitable Society. This last, indeed, does not interest you farther than a benevolent heart is interested in the welfare of its fellow-creatures; but to us, Sir, who



are of the lower orders of mankind, to have a fund in view, on which we may with certainty depend to be kept from want should we be in circumstances of distress, or old age, this is a matter of high importance.

We are sorry to observe that our Lodge's affairs with respect to its finances, have for a good while been in a wretched situation. We have considerable sums in bills which lye by without being paid, or put in execution, and many of our members never mind their yearly dues, or anything else belonging to the Lodge. And since the separation from St. David's, we are not sure even of our existence as a Lodge. There has been a dispute before the Grand Lodge, but how decided, or if decided at all, we know not.

For these and other reasons, we humbly beg the favor of you, as soon as convenient, to call a meeting, and let us consider on some means to retrieve our wretched affairs,—We are, &c.

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The separation between the St. David's and St. James's Lodges of Tarbolton, above referred to, happened in June 1782; and therefore the latter portion of that year seems to be the date of the foregoing letter. It exists as a scroll in the poet's handwriting, on the back of his draft of No. 1 of the love-letters to Ellison Begbie, given at p. 27, *supra*. To John Adam, Esq., Greenock, possessor of that document, we are indebted for its appearance here.

We have already noted that Burns was admitted an apprentice in St. David's Tarbolton Lodge (174) on 4th July, and passed and raised on 1st October 1781. At the disruption of that Lodge in June 1782, the separating body to which Burns belonged obtained constitution as "St James's Tarbolton Lodge (178)," and the poet's name occurs in the books of that Lodge as Deputemaster, on 27th July 1784.

The next letter of the young bard is a very interesting one, addressed to his early preceptor, Murdoch. It not only exhibits the progress of his studies, but (as Motherwell has remarked)

“affords us an insight into the origin of part of that sentimentalism and exaggeration of feeling which are occasionally perceptible, especially in his prose writings.” The ballad “My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border,” given at p. 40, vol. I., contains many of the characteristic thoughts found in this letter.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR JOHN MURDOCH, SCHOOLMASTER,

STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

LOCILIE, 15th January 1783.

DEAR SIR,—As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense, which any production of mine would ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor will ever forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, Sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have indeed kept pretty clear of vicious habits, and in this respect, I hope my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but, as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls, a pushing active fellow; but to tell you the truth, Sir, there is hardly any thing more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world to see and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be any thing original about him

which shews me human nature in a different light from any thing I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to “study men, their manners, and their ways;” and for this darling subject I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour I am very easy with regard to anything further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched,\* does not much terrify me: I know that even then, my talent for what country folks call “a sensible crack,” when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then—I would learn to be happy. However, I am under no apprehensions about that, for though indolent, yet so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy; and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist; not indeed for the sake of the money; but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach, and I scorn to fear the face of any man living; above everything, I abhor as hell, the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch who in my heart I despise and detest. ’Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me.† In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his *Elegies*; Thomson; *Man of Feeling* (a book I prize next to the Bible); *Man of the World*; Sterne, especially his *Sentimental Journey*; M’Pherson’s *Ossian*, &c.: these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct; and ’tis

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\* The last shift alluded to here, must be the condition of an itinerant beggar.—CURRIE. The same sentiment, clothed in fascinating verse, is found in the first “Epistle to Davie.”

† The reader will recognise in the above passage the materials of one of the most admired stanzas in the “Epistle to a young Friend.”



incongruous, 'tis absurd to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to the whole human race—he “who can soar above this little scene of things”—can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial\* race fret, and fume, and vex themselves! O how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them reading a page or two of Mankind, and “catching the manners living as they rise,” whilst the men of business jostle me on every side as an idle incumbrance in their way. †—But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere common place story; but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare; and accept of the same for yourself, from,—Dear Sir, yours, &c.

The reference made in the above letter to the writer's aged father is very slight, but elsewhere he says:—“The clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head, the darkest of which was, he was visibly far gone in a consumption.” The two letters which follow—addressed to the son of James, the deceased elder brother of William Burnes, carry that topic to its dark issue, and the first of these is expanded into what Chambers terms, “a sensible this-world-like sketch of the state of country matters at that time in Ayrshire.”

In strict chronological order we ought here to introduce the opening passages of a very interesting common-place Book, which

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\* Burns was fond of such Latin compounds as “terræfilial” and “tenebrific,” the latter of which he uses in the *Epistle to Davie*.

† The reader will in this passage be reminded of similar language introduced into some of the poet's epistles in 1785, for instance,

“The warly race may drudge and drive,  
Hog-shouther jundie, stretch and strive,  
Let me fair Nature's face describe,” &c.



the poet commenced in April 1783, and continued from time to time to insert entries therein till he closed it in October 1785, with the words—"Let my pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity." But we are desirous to present that document *verbatim* and intact, from the original manuscript, and therefore defer its introduction for a little, until it may be perused with more effect.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR JAMES BURNES, WRITER, MONTROSE.\*

(GILBERT BURNS' ED., 1820.)

DEAR SIR,—My father received your favour of the 10th curt., and as he has been for some months very poorly in health, and is, in his own opinion—and indeed in almost every body's else—in a dying condition, he has only with great difficulty wrote a few farewell lines to each of his brothers-in-law. For this melancholy reason, I now hold the pen for him to thank you for your kind letter, and to assure you, Sir, that it shall not be my fault if my father's correspondence in the north die with him. My brother writes to John Caird, and to him I must refer you for the news of our family.†

I shall only trouble you with a few particulars relative to the present wretched state of this country. Our markets are exceedingly high—oatmeal 17d. and 18d. per peck, and not to be got even at that price. We have indeed been pretty well supplied with quantities of white peas from England and elsewhere, but that resource is likely to fail us, and what will become of us then, particularly the very poorest sort, Heaven only knows. This country, till of late,

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\* This gentleman, a son of James Burnes, the deceased brother of William Burnes, was, of course, a full cousin of the poet, and his senior by upwards of eight years.

† John Caird, as the reader has seen at p. 3 *supra*, was the husband of Elspet, a sister of the poet's father.

was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of Silk, Lawn, and Carpet-weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the Shoe way, but now entirely ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our Landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from English, and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds of the quality of land, and consequently stretch us much beyond what, in the event, we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods in our improvements of farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed in new ones. In short, my dear Sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its as unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast. Even in higher life, a couple of our Ayrshire noblemen, and the major part of our knights and squires, are all insolvent. A miserable job of a Douglas, Heron, and Co.'s bank, which no doubt you have heard of, has undone numbers of them; and imitating English and French, and other foreign luxuries and fopperies, has ruined as many more. There is a great trade of smuggling carried on along our coasts, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it, but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance; but Fortune, as is usual with her when she is uncommonly lavish of her favours, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them if she would leave them no worse than when she found them.

My mother sends you a small present of a cheese; 'tis but

a very little one, as our last year's stock is sold off; but if you could fix on any correspondent in Edinburgh or Glasgow, we would send you a proper one in the season. Mrs Black promises to take the cheese under her care so far, and then to send it to you by the Stirling carrier.

I shall conclude this long letter with assuring you that I shall be very happy to hear from you, or any of our friends in your country, when opportunity serves.

My father sends you, probably for the last time in this world, his warmest wishes for your welfare and happiness; and mother and the rest of the family desire to enclose their kind comp<sup>nts</sup>. to you, Mrs Burness, and the rest of your family, along with, dear Sir,

Your affectionate Cousin,

ROBT. BURNESS.\*

LOCHLIE, 21st *June* 1783.

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.†

(GILBERT BURNS' ED., 1820.)

D<sup>R</sup>. COUSIN,—I would have returned you my thanks for your kind favour of the 13th of December sooner, had it not been that I waited to give you an account of that melancholy event which for some time past we have from day to day expected.

On the 13th current I lost the best of fathers.‡ Though,

\* The original MS. of this letter, and of that which immediately follows, is preserved in the poet's monument at Edinburgh. A comparison of our text with that of other editions will show several nice variations here as the result of the collation.

† The reader is referred to a letter printed in our appendix, Article G, of same date with the present, wherein the writer—Robert Burnes, uncle of the poet—designs his nephew James as a “Schoolmaster” in Montrose. That appears to have been this gentleman's original avocation, although he afterwards practised as a Notary Public and Writer.

‡ For a gracefully recorded estimate of the worth of William Burness, the reader is referred to John Murdoch's little memoir of the family, printed in the Appendix to this volume.

to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke ; still the feelings of nature claim their part, and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends and the ablest of instructors, without feeling what, perhaps, the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn.

I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connection in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure—with pride, acknowledge my connection with those who were allied by the ties of blood and friendship to a man whose memory I shall ever honor and revere.

I expect therefore, my dear Sir, you will not neglect any opportunity of letting me hear from you, which will very much oblige,—My dear Cousin, yours sincerely,

ROBERT BURNES.

LOCHLIE, 17th February 1784.

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MOSSGIEL AND MAUCHLINE.

“ When my father died (wrote Burns in his Autobiography) his all went among the rapacious hell-hounds that growl in the kennel of Justice ; but we made a shift to scrape a little money in the family amongst us, with which to keep us together, and my brother and I took a neighbouring farm.” That was the farm of Mossgiel near Mauchline, which the genius of the poet soon rendered so famous. It consisted of one hundred and eighteen acres of cold clayey soil lying in a bare upland, which the traveller by railway misses a sight of because he passes it underground through a tunnel of some extent. The Burns family, after the death of the venerated head of the household, commenced to reside there at Whitsunday 1784. The steading which then existed continued in the same state down to a comparatively recent period, when it was replaced by a new erection ; the basement walls of the older fabric, however, still form part of the new farm-house. The present tenant (James Wyllie) entered in 1841, and only two tenants, Mr Alexander, and Mr James Orr, intervened between the existing

tenant and Gilbert Burns, who left the farm in 1798. The poet's immediate landlord of Mossiel was Mr Gavin Hamilton, writer in Mauchline, who was the principal tenant of that and other neighbouring lands held under the proprietor, the Earl of Loudoun. This accidental connexion with Mr Hamilton soon ripened into a close intimacy and cherished friendship between "Poet and Patron;" abundant evidence of which is supplied in verse and prose contained in these volumes.

Before proceeding to give the contents of the poet's first Common-Place Book, already referred to, we shall present two existing examples of his correspondence in the latter portion of the year 1784.

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR JAMES BURNES, WRITER, MONTROSE.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 3 Aug. 1784.

MY DEAR SIR,—I ought in gratitude to have acknowledged the receipt of your last kind letter before this time; but, without troubling you with any apology, I shall proceed to inform you that our family are all in good health at present, and we were very happy with the unexpected favour of John Caird's company for nearly two weeks, and I must say it of him that he is one of the most agreeable, facetious, warm-hearted lads I was ever acquainted with.

We have been surprised with one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the moral world, which, I dare say, has happened in the course of this last century. We have had a party of the "Presbytery Relief," as they call themselves, for some time in this country. A pretty thriving society of them has been in the burgh of Irvine for some years past, till about two years ago, a Mrs Buchan from Glasgow came and began to spread some fanatical notions of religion among them, and in a short time made many converts among them, and among others, their Preacher, one

Mr Whyte, who, upon that account, has been suspended and formally deposed by his brethren. He continued, however, to preach in private to his party, and was supported, both he and their Spiritual Mother, as they affect to call old Buchan, by the contributions of the rest, several of whom were in good circumstances; till in Spring last, the populace rose and mobbed the old leader, Buchan, and put her out of the town; on which all her followers voluntarily quitted the place likewise, and with such precipitation, that many of them never shut their doors behind them; one left a washing on the green, another a cow bellowing at the crib without meat, or any body to mind her, and after several stages they are fixed at present in the neighbourhood of Dumfries. Their tenets are a strange jumble of enthusiastic jargon; among others, she pretends to give them the Holy Ghost by breathing on them, which she does with postures and practices that are scandalously indecent. They have likewise disposed of all their effects, and hold a community of goods, and live nearly an idle life, carrying on a great farce of pretended devotion in barns and woods, where they lodge and lie all together, and hold likewise a community of women, as it is another of their tenets that they can commit no moral sin. I am personally acquainted with most of them, and I can assure you the above mentioned are facts.

This, my dear Sir, is one of the many instances of the folly in leaving the guidance of sound reason and common sense in matters of religion. Whenever we neglect or despise these sacred monitors, the whimsical notions of a perturbed brain are taken for the immediate influences of the Deity, and the wildest fanaticism, and the most inconsistent absurdities, will meet with abettors and converts. Nay, I have often thought, that the more out-of-the-way and ridiculous their fancies are, if once they are sanctified



under the sacred name of Religion, the unhappy mistaken votaries are the more firmly glued to them.

I expect to hear from you soon, and I beg you will remember me to all friends, and believe me to be, my Dear Sir, your affectionate Cousin,

ROBERT BURNES.

Direct to me at Mossgiel, parish of Mauchline, near Kilmarnock.

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The holograph of the above letter is preserved in the poet's monument at Edinburgh, from which we supply the opening and concluding paragraphs hitherto omitted, and correct several inaccuracies in former editions.

The notice of "the Buchanites" which appears so prominently in this letter, may require to be supplemented with the following particulars:—Mrs Elspat Buchan, born near Banff in 1738, became the wife of a potter in Glasgow, belonging to what was called the "Relief" body of Presbyterians. The Rev. Mr Whyte, minister of the Relief congregation of Irvine, happening to assist on a Sacramental occasion in Glasgow, Mrs Buchan was, or affected to be, captivated by his spiritual oratory, and after some correspondence she joined him at Irvine in 1782, a few months after Burns had left that town. Mrs Buchan soon obtained an ascendancy over the mind and actions of the pastor; for she assumed the position of prophetess, and satisfied him that she was the woman spoken of in the 12th chapter of *Revelations*, Mr Whyte himself being the spiritual man-child she had brought forth. Many of the congregation and frequenters of their nightly meetings were fascinated and misled. The poet in his letter says that he was "personally acquainted with most of" Mrs Buchan's followers; and on the authority of Mrs Begg, it is ascertained that Burns was considerably attached to a young woman of prepossessing appearance, named Jean Gardener, who became one of those victims of fanaticism. Mrs Buchan at length was apprehended by order of the Magistrates of Irvine, and, in May 1784, was formally banished from the town as a blasphemer. Mr Whyte, with her more devoted adherents, soon joined her at



Kilmaurs, whence they marched, singing like pilgrims, by way of Kilmarnock, Mauchline and Cumnock, to Closeburn in Dumfriesshire, where they made their permanent encampment. The prophetess led her followers to believe that she and they would be bodily translated to heaven without the intervention of death; but eventually—in May 1791—she herself succumbed to the common foe, and paid the debt of nature. The camp soon thereafter thinned, and the delusion itself died a natural death.

On the authority of Mrs Begg also, we are informed that about this period her brother, the poet, had revived his early attachment to Peggy Thomson of Kirkoswald, heroine of the song, "Now westlin win's, and slaughtering guns"—p. 53, vol. i. An untoward event, however, that happened early in November 1784, namely the birth of his illegitimate child, by Elizabeth Paton, once a servant with his father at Lochlie, put an end to all courtship at that time "with a view to marriage." See *Epistle to Rankine*, vol. i. p. 68, and "A Poet's Welcome," p. 72.

The following letter is addressed to Thomas Orr, an old associate of the poet, in his Kirkoswald School days of Autumn 1775, who occasionally came to Lochlie to assist in shearing the harvest grain. Thomas Orr was in Burns's confidence regarding his amour with Peggy Thomson, which forms the subject of the following note.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR THOMAS ORR,

PARK, NEAR KIRKOSWALD.

*(Here first included in the Poet's Correspondence.)*

D<sup>R</sup>. THOMAS,—I am much obliged to you for your last letter, tho' I assure you the contents of it gave me no manner of concern. I am presently so cursedly taken in with an affair of gallantry, that I am very glad Peggy is off my hand, as I am at present embarrassed enough without her. I don't choose to enter into particulars in writing, but never was a poor rakish rascal in a more pitiful taking. I

should be glad to see you to tell you the affair, meanwhile  
I am, your friend,

ROBERT BURNES.

MOSSGAVIL, 11th Nov. 1784.\*

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## OBSERVATIONS, HINTS, SONGS, SCRAPS OF POETRY, &c., BY ROBT. BURNES.

(*Here printed verbatim from the original MS.*)

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THIS unique manuscript, extended in a stitched book of twenty-two leaves folio, was purchased by its present possessor, John Adam, Esq., Town Chamberlain, Greenock, in 1861; its previous owner having been J. L. Sangford, Esq., of the Temple. Sundry markings on it shew that it had passed through the hands of Currie, who printed from it the song "Handsome Nell." That editor, however, seems to have thrown it aside; for instead of selecting examples of the poet's first Common-place Book from the original MS., he preferred to give the brief abridgement of it inscribed by Burns in the volume of Letters which he wrote out for Mr Robert Riddell of Glenriddell. This early manuscript, in a few years thereafter, came into the hands of Cromeek, who, in his *Reliques* (1808), professed to print the document entire; yet he not only presented it in a very incomplete form, but confused it by interpolating passages from other manuscripts of Burns; in particular, that very interesting one headed "Egotisms from my own sensations," which never formed a portion of this Common-place Book. Where Cromeek obtained those additions, embracing the *Elegy on Robert Ruisseau*, the song *Rantin, rovin Robin*, and two song-fragments, one of which refers to the poet's anticipated expatriation, does not appear, and the MS. has not yet turned up. Cromeek has dove-tailed those "Egotisms" into his version of the

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\* This letter was printed and circulated in *fac-simile* many years ago by Mr Dick, Bookseller, Irvine.

early Common-place Book, as of date *May* 1785; but the pieces, from internal evidence, apparently belong to the year following.

The manuscript, of which, by the kindness of the owner, we are now enabled to present to the reader a perfect reproduction, bears every mark of integrity and completeness, and seems to be as fresh as the day when its author put his last touch to it in October 1785. There are sundry judicious notes scattered throughout its pages, bearing the initials "J. S.," which are recognised to be in the hand-writing of John Syme, Esq., of Ryedale. He accompanied Gilbert Burns on his visit to Dr Currie of Liverpool, to place in that biographer's hands the materials for the *Life and Works of the Poet*. There appears also a series of earlier notes signed "W. R.," which indicate that Burns in 1786 had submitted the MS. to a Mauchline friend bearing those initials, for his advice as to what pieces might be extracted from it to help his Kilmarnock edition. The annotations of that person are in the highest degree absurd and conceited, and we have little hesitation in assigning them to William Ronald, tobacconist and merchant in Mauchline, who assumed at that time to be one of the poet's patrons. Burns, in a letter to his brother William in November 1789, refers to the "insolent vanity" of Ronald during former sunshiny days, and contrasts that with his present bankruptcy.

To render our print of this Common-place Book complete, we not only introduce the notes referred to, but give the text *verbatim et literatim*, exhibiting even defective spelling and punctuation where these occur. Such minuteness seems requisite and even interesting to the reader, as marking the gradual development of the poet in his course of self-education, and shewing the labours through which he ultimately mastered the niceties of his art. It is proper to add that in 1872 a privately printed copy of this Greenock MS., was executed at Edinburgh, and circulated to a limited extent. It is a creditable performance, but unfortunately the letterpress was set up, not from the manuscript itself, but from a transcript of it by an amanuensis who has failed to produce an exact rendering of the original. Possessors of that printed copy are invited to compare it with what we now present.

"Examined—J. S., 30th Aug. 1797."

Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry &c. by Robt Burness ; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it ; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature rational or irrational.—As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinged with his unpolished, rustic way of life ; but as I believe, they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human-nature to see how a Ploughman thinks, and feels, under the pressure of Love, Ambition, Anxiety, Grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the Modes, and Manners of life, operate pretty much alike I believe, in all the Species.

"There are numbers in the world, who do not want sense, to make a figure ; so much as an opinion of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print."—SHENSTONE

"Pleasing when youth is long expir'd to trace,

"The forms our pencil, or our pen design'd !

"Such was our youthful air and shape and face !

"Such the soft image of our youthful mind "

IBIDEM.\*

X April—83. Notwithstanding all that has been said against Love respecting the folly & weakness it leads a young unexperienced mind into ; still I think it, in a great measure, deserves the highest encomiums that have been

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\* In the original MS. this note occurs here :—

"The following pieces marked thus X appear to J. S. to be agreeable and interesting—not only from their own merit but from the circumstances and time in which they must have been written. The observations &c. made by Burns give them additional value. The maxims and remarks also seem to me to be worthy of being published for the same reason."

passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport it is the feelings of green eighteen\* in the company of the mistress of his heart when she repays him with a equal return of affection.

Aug. There is certainly some connection between Love, and Music, & Poetry ; and therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of Nature, that passage in a modern love composition

“ As towards her cot he joggd along ”

“ Her name was frequent in his song ”

For my own part I never had the least thought or inclination of turning Poet till I got once heartily in Love, and then Rhyme and Song were in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity ; unacquainted, and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly : but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of Her then—but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end.

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\* In the MS., by means of deletion and interpolation, the poet's characteristic expression “green eighteen” has been changed by some clumsy critic into the prosaic phrase “a youth at eighteen.” The student of Burns will recognise in this brief entry of April 1783 the germ of one of the finest stanzas in “The Cottar's Saturday Night.”

X SONG.—(*Tune*—"I am a man unmarried.")

1.

O once I lov'd a bonny lass  
Ay and I love her still  
And whilst that honor warms my breast  
I'll love my handsome Nell  
Fal lal de dal &c.

2.

As bonny lasses I hae seen,  
And mony full as braw ;  
But for a modest gracefu' mien,  
The like I never saw.

3.

A bonny lass I will confess  
Is pleasant to the e'e ;  
But without some better qualities  
She's no a lass for me.

4.

But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,  
And what is best of a',  
Her reputation is compleat  
And fair without a flaw.

5.

She dresses ay sae clean and neat,  
Both decent and genteel ;  
And then there's something in her gate  
Gars ony dress look weel.



## 6.

A gaudy dress and gentle air  
May slightly touch the heart ;  
But it's innocence and modesty  
That polishes the dart.

## 7.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me ;  
'Tis this enchants my soul ;  
For absolutely in my breast  
She reigns without controul.

FINIS.

## X Criticism on the Foregoing Song.

Lest my works should be thought below Criticism ; or meet with a Critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favorable an eye ; I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distic of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads ; and on the other hand, the second distic is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with ; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the Sex—the agreeables ; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sonsy Lass. The third Stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it ; and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth Stanza is a very indifferent one ; the first line is, indeed all in the strain of the second Stanza, but the rest is mostly an expletive. The thoughts in the fifth Stanza come finely up to my favorite idea a sweet sonsy Lass : the last line however, halts a little.



The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth Stanza but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurts the whole. The seventh Stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it, but my heart melts, and my blood sallies at the remembrance.

Sept. I intirely agree with that judicious Philosopher Mr Smith in his excellent Theory of Moral Sentiments, that Remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well, under those calamities, in the procurement of which, we ourselves have had no hand; but when our own follies or crimes, have made us miserable & wretched, to bear it up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct,—is a glorious effort of Self-command.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace;  
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish;  
Beyond comparison the worst are those  
By our own folly, or our guilt brought on.  
In ev'ry other circumstance the mind  
Has this to say, it was no deed of mine:  
But, when to all the evil of misfortune  
This sting is added, blame thy foolish self;  
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse:  
The tort'ring, gnawing consciousness of guilt—  
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involved others;  
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov'd us:  
Nay more, that very love their cause of ruin—  
O! burning Hell, in all thy store of torments  
There's not a keener Lash ————  
Lives there a man so firm who, while his heart

Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,  
 Can reason down it's agonizing throbs,  
 And, after proper purpose of amendment,  
 Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace.  
 O happy, happy, enviable man !  
 O glorious magnanimity of soul !

March—84. A penitential thought, in the hour of  
 Remorse, Intended for a tragedy

All devil as I am, a damned wretch ;  
 A hardened, stubborn, unrepenting villain :  
 Still my heart melts at human wretchedness ;  
 And with sincere, though unavailing sighs  
 I view the helpless children of distress.  
 With tears indignant I behold th' Oppressor  
 Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction  
 Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.

Even you, ye hapless crew, I pity you,  
 Ye, whom the seeming good think sin to pity ;  
 Ye, poor, despis'd, abandon'd vagabonds  
 Whom Vice as usual, has turn'd o'er to ruin.  
 O but for kind, though ill requited friends  
 I had been driven forth like you forlorn  
 The most detested, worthless wretch among ye :  
 O ! injur'd God ! thy goodness has endow'd me  
 With talents passing most of my compeers,  
 Which I in just proportion have abus'd,  
 As far surpassing other common villains  
 As Thou in nat'ral parts hast given me more

I have often observed in the course of my experience of  
 human life that every man even the worst, have something

good about them, though very often nothing else than a happy temperment of constitution inclining them to this or that virtue ; on this likewise, depend a great many, no man can say how many of our vices ; for this reason no man can say in what degree any person besides himself can be, with strict justice called wicked.—Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many of his virtues are owing to constitution & education ; how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but from want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening ; how many of the weakness's of mankind he has escaped because he was out of the line of such temptation ; and, what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest ; how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all ; I say any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay the faults & crimes of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.—\*

March—84. I have often coveted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of BLACKGUARDS, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character ; those who by thoughtless prodigality, or headstrong passions have been driven to ruin ;—though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes “Stain'd with guilt, and crimson'd o'er with crimes ;” I have yet found among them, not a few instances, some of the noblest Virtues, Magnanimity Generosity, disinterested friendship and even Modesty, in the highest perfection.†

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\* The reader will scarcely fail to see that the above paragraph contains an outline of the author's famous poetical “Address to the Unco Gude, or the Rigidly Righteous,” published in 1787.

† “My experience of this class has been very much the reverse of that of Burns. I have usually found their virtues of a merely theatrical cast, and their vices real ; much assumed generosity in some instances, but a callousness of feeling, and meanness of spirit, lying concealed beneath.”—HUGH MILLER, 1854.

March—84. There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses & disasters, which threatened, and indeed effected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a Hypochondria, or confirmed Melancholy: in this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the Willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following—

X O Thou great Being ! what Thou art  
Surpassest me to know :  
Yet sure I am that known to thee  
Are all affairs below.

Thy creature here before thee stands,  
All wretched & distrest ;  
Yet sure those ills that press my soul  
Obey thy high behest.

Sure Thou all Perfect canst not act  
From cruelty, or wrath :  
O ! free my weary eyes from tears,  
Or close them fast in death.

But if I must afflicted be  
To suit some wise design ;  
O ! man my soul with firm resolves  
To bear and not repine.

Finis.

X April—As I am, what the men of the world, if they knew of such a man, would call a whimsical Mortal ; I have various sources of pleasure & enjoyment which are, in a manner, peculiar to myself ; or some here & there such other

out-of-the-way person.—Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of Winter, more than the rest of the year.—This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the—

“Mighty tempest & the hoary waste

“Abrupt & deep stretch’d o’er the buried earth—”

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favorable to every thing great & noble.—There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I don’t know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy, winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees & raving o’er the plain.\*—It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of Scripture, “Walks on the wings of the wind.”—In one of these seasons, just after a tract of misfortunes I composed the following

SONG.—(*Tune* “M’Pherson’s Farewel.”)

1

The wintry West extends his blast  
 And hail & rain does blaw;  
 Or the stormy North sends driving forth  
 The blinding sleet & snaw:  
 And tumbling brown, the burn comes down,  
 And roars frae bank to brae;  
 And bird & beast in covert rest,  
 And pass the weary day.

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\* A note by Mr John Syme occurs here in the original MS. :—“I have heard the Bard frequently enforce the same remark, viz., that Winter-wild, raving, tempestuous weather charmed him most.—J. S.”

## 2

“The sweeping blast, the sky o’ercast,”  
 The joyless winter day;  
 Let others fear, to me more dear  
 Than all the pride of May—  
 The tempest’s howl it soothes my soul,  
 My griefs it seems to join;  
 The leafless trees my fancy please,  
 There fate resembles mine.

## 3.

Thou Power Supreme whose mighty scheme,  
 These woes of mine fulfil:  
 Here firm, I rest, they must best,  
 Because they are thy will:  
 Then all I want—(O do Thou grant  
 This one request of mine;)  
 Since to enjoy, Thou dost deny,  
 Assist me to resign.

(Finis.)

April—The following Song is a wild Rhapsody miserably deficient in Versification, but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over.

SONG.—(*Tune* “The weaver & his shuttle O.”)

X I like the following.—J. S.

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border O  
 And carefully he bred me, in decency & order O

He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a  
farthing O

For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth  
regarding O

*Chorus*—Row de dow &c.

Then out into the world my course I did determine. O  
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was  
charming. O

My talents they were not the worst; nor yet my educa-  
tion: O

Resolv'd was I, at least to try, to mend my situation. O

In many a way, & vain essay, I courted fortune's favour; O  
Some cause unseen, still stept between, & frustrate each  
endeavor; O

Some times by foes I was o'erpower'd; sometimes by friends  
forsaken; O

And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst  
mistaken, O

Then sore harass'd & tir'd at last, with fortune's vain  
delusion; O

I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams; and came to this  
conclusion; O

The past was bad, & the future hid; its good or ill  
untryed; O

But the present hour was in my pow'r & so I would  
enjoy it, O

No help, nor hope, nor view had I; nor person to be-  
friend me; O

So I must toil, & sweat & moil, & labor to sustain me, O



To plough & sow, to reap & mow, my father bred me early, O  
For one, he said, to labor bred, was a match for fortune  
fairly, O

Thus all obscure, unknown, & poor, thro' life I'm doom'd to  
wander, O

Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber ; O  
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain  
or sorrow ; O

I live to day as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow, O

But chearful still, I am as well as a Monarch in a palace ; O  
Tho' fortune's frown still hunts me down with all her wonted  
malice : O

I make indeed, my daily bread, but ne'er can make it  
farther ; O

But as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard  
her. O

When sometimes by my labor I earn a little money, O  
Some unforeseen misfortune comes generally upon me ; O  
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my good natur'd  
folly ; O

But come what will I've sworn it still, I'll ne'er be  
melancholy, O

All you who follow wealth & power with unremitting ardor, O  
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view  
the farther ; O

Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore you, O  
A chearful honest-hearted clown, I will prefer before  
you. O\*

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\* In the original MS., this note here occurs ; (a judicious pen has scored it through) :—"I don't think the above will do unless it get a sound harrowing.—W. R."

April—Shenstone observes finely that love-verses writ without any real passion are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of Love composition, except he himself, in one, or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along, a miserable dupe to Love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses & follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill in distinguishing FOPPERY & CONCEIT, from real PASSION & NATURE.—Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is MY OWN; only I can say it was, at the time, REAL.

SONG.—(*Tune* “As I came in by London O.”)

Behind yon hills where Stincher flows  
 'Mong muirs & mosses many, O  
 The weary sun the day has clos'd  
 And I'll awa to Nanie. O

*Chorus*—And O my bonny Nannie O,  
 My young, my handsome Nannie O  
 Tho' I had the world all at my will,  
 I would give it all for Nanie. O

The westlin win' blaws loud & shill,  
 The night's baith dark & rainy O;  
 But I'll get my plaid & out I'll steal  
 And o'er the hill to Nanie O.

My Nanie's charming, sweet, & young;  
 Nae artfu' wiles to win ye O:  
 May ill befa' the flattering tongue  
 That would beguile my Nanie O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,  
As spotless as she's bonny O ;  
The op'ning gowan wet wi' dew  
Nae purer is than Nanie O.

A country lad is my degree  
And few there be that ken me O ;  
But what care I how few they be,  
I'm welcome ay to Nanie O.

My riches a's my pennie fee  
And I maun guide it canny O  
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me  
My thoughts are a' about Nanie O.

Our Guidman delights to view  
His sheep & his ky thrive bonny ; O  
But I'm as blythe that hauds his plew  
And haes nae care but Nanie O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,  
I'll tak' what Heaven will sen' me O ;  
Nae other care in life have I  
But live and love my Nanie O.

And O my bonny Nanie O ;  
My young, my handsome Nanie O  
Tho' I had the world all at my will  
I would give it all to Nanie O.\*

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\* This note here occurs in the original MS., and is also scored through :  
"Nanie is an excellent song, indeed capital—but the last stanza is shamefull,  
must be published.—W. R."

April—Epitaph on Wm. Hood Senr., in Tarbolton.

Here Souter Hood in death does sleep ;  
 To Hell if he's gane thither,  
 Satan, gie him thy gear to keep ;  
 He'll haud it weel the gither.

On Jas. Grieve, Laird of Boghead, Tarbolton.

Here lies Boghead amang the dead,  
 In hopes to get salvation ;  
 But if such as he, in Heav'n may be,  
 Then welcome, hail ! damnation.

April—Epitaph on my own friend, & my father's friend,  
 Wm. Muir in Tarbolton Miln.

Here lies a chearful, honest breast,  
 As e'er God with his image blest.  
 The friend of Man, the friend of Truth ;  
 The friend of age, & guide of youth.  
 Few hearts like his with Virtue warm'd  
 Few heads with knowledge so inform'd,  
 If there's another world, he lives in bliss ;  
 If there is none, he made the best of this.

April—Epitaph on my ever honored Father

O ye ! who sympathise with Virtue's pains !\*  
 Draw near with pious rev'rence & attend ;  
 Here lye the loving HUSBAND's dear remains,  
 The tender FATHER, and the generous Friend.

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\* VAR.—O ye whose hearts decessed merit pains.

The pitying HEART, that felt for human woe,  
 The dauntless HEART, that fear'd no human pride ;  
 The friend of MAN, to vice alone a foe ;  
 For "even his failings lean'd to VIRTUE'S side."\*

(Finis.)

April: I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided in two grand Classes, which I shall call the GRAVE, and the MERRY; tho' by the bye these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. There are indeed, some exceptions; some part of the species who, according to my ideas of these divisions, come under neither of them; such are those individuals whom Nature turns off her hand, oftentimes, very like BLOCKHEADS, but generally, on a nearer inspection, have somethings surprisingly clever about them. They are more properly men of Conceit than men of Genius; men whose heads are filled, and whose faculties are engrossed by some whimsical notions in some art, or science; so that they cannot think, nor speak with pleasure, on any other subject.—Besides this pedantic species, Nature has always produced some meer, insipid blockheads, who may be said to live a vegetable life, in this world.†

The GRAVE, I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on; by the love of money; and those whose darling wish, is, to make a figure in the world.—The MERRY, are the men of Pleasure, of all denominations; the jovial lads who have too much fire & spirit to have any settled rule of action; but without much deliberation,

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\* This note is here inserted in the original MS. "Your Father's and Mr Muir's is worth publishing of the foregoing Epitaphs, but I think you had better suppress the rest.—W. R."

† On this and the next paragraph an anonymous critic inserts the unnecessary remark:—"This is the labour of an inexperienced moralist."

follow the strong impulses of nature : the thoughtless ; the careless ; the indolent ; and in particular He, who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life, generally indeed, in poverty & obscurity ; but poverty & obscurity are only evils to him, who can sit gravely down, and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others ; and lastly to grace the quorum, such are, generally, the men whose heads are capable of all the towering of Genius, and whose hearts are warmed with the delicacy of Feeling.

Aug : The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men ; but as I cannot please myself in the arrangement of my ideas on the subject, I must wait till farther experience, & nicer observations throw more light on the subject.—In the mean time I shall set down the following fragment which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable any body to determine which of the Classes I belong to.

Green grow the rashes—O  
 Green grow the rashes—O  
 The sweetest hour that e'er I spend  
 Are spent among the lasses—O

There's nought but care on ev'ry hand  
 In every hour that passes—O  
 What signifies the life o' man  
 An' 'twere na for the lasses—O  
 Green grow &c.

The warly race may riches chase  
 An' riches still may fly them—O  
 An' tho at last they catch them fast  
 There hearts can ne'er enjoy them—O  
 Green grow &c.

But gie me a canna hour at e'en  
 My arms about my dearie—O  
 An' warly cares and warly men  
 May a' goe tapsalteerie—O  
 Green grow &c.

For you that's douse an' sneers at this  
 Ye're nought but senseless asses—O  
 The wisest man the warl' saw  
 He dearly lov'd the lasses—O \*  
 Green grow &c.

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that BEING, to whom we owe life, with ev'ry enjoyment that renders life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow creatures; that so by forming PIETY & VIRTUE into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the Pious, and the Good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave—I do not see, that the turn of mind, and pursuits of such a one as the above verses describe—one who spends the hours & thoughts which the vocations of the day can spare with Ossian, Shakespeare, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne &c. or as the maggot takes him, a gun, a fiddle, or a Song to make, or mend; and at all times some hearts-dear bony lass in view—I say I do not see that the turn of mind & pursuits of such a one are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of Piety & Virtue, than the, even lawful, bustling, & straining after the world's riches & honors: and I do not see but he may gain Heaven as well, which by the bye, is no mean consideration, who steals thro the Vale of Life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way; as he, who straining strait forward, perhaps

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\* Here occurs the following note in the original MS: "This fragment well deserves a place in your collection.—W. R."



spattering all about him, gains some of Life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see & be seen a little more conspicuously, than, what in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term, the poor, indolent, devil he has left behind him.

Aug: A prayer, when fainting fits, & other alarming symptoms of a Pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threaten me, first put Nature on the alarm.—

O Thou, Unknown, Almighty Cause  
Of all my hope & fear,  
In whose dread presence ere an hour  
Perhaps I must appear.

If I have wander'd in those paths  
Of life I ought to shun,  
As something loudly in my breast  
Remonstrates I have done.

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me  
With passions wild & strong;  
And listening to their witching voice  
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,  
Or FRAILTY stept aside;  
Do Thou, All-Good, for such Thou art,  
In shades of darkness hide,

Where with INTENTION I have err'd,  
No other plea I have  
But Thou art good, & goodness still  
Delighteth to forgive.\*

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\* Here the following remark is inserted in the MS.—“this Would Look not amiss in my opinion.—W. R.”

Aug: Misgivings in the hour of DESPONDENCY and—  
prospect of DEATH.\*

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene,  
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms ?  
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between,  
Some gleams of sunshine 'midst renewing storms ;  
Is it departing pangs my heart alarms,  
Or Death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode ?  
For guilt,—for guilt my terrors are in arms,  
I tremble to approach an angry God  
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say forgive my foul offence,  
Forgive where I so oft have gone astray ;  
But should my Author health again dispence  
Again I would desert fair Virtue's way ;  
Again to passions I would fall a prey,  
Again exalt the brute & sink the man,  
Then how can I for heavenly mercy pray  
Who act so counter Heavenly mercy's plan,  
Who sin so oft have mourn'd then to temptation ran.

O Thou great Governor of all below !  
If one so black with crimes dare call on Thee ;  
Thy breath can make the tempest cease to blow,  
And still the tumult of the raging Sea :  
With that controuling Power assist even me  
Those headlong, furious passions to confine,  
For all unfit my native powers be  
To rule their torrent in th' allowed line :  
O aid me with thy help, Omnipotence Divine !†

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\* "W. R." inserts a brief note thus, in reference to this poem, "too serious.—W. R."

† This closing stanza had been omitted by the poet, and inserted a little farther on, with a note referring to the omission.

Sept. — SONG.—(*Tune.* “Invercald’s reel—Strathspey.”)

*Chorus*—Tibby I hae seen the day  
Ye wadna been sae shy  
An’ for laik o’ gear ye lightly me  
But fien’ a hair care I

Yestreen I met you on the moor  
Ye spak’ na but gaed by like stoor  
Ye lightly me because I’m poor  
But fien’ a hair care I.

When comin’ hame on Sunday last  
Upon the road as I cam’ past  
Ye snufft an’ gae your head a cast  
But trowth I caretna by.

I doubt na lass, but ye may think  
Because ye hae the name o’ clink  
That ye can please me at a wink  
Whene’er ye like to try

But sorrow tak’ him that’s sae mean  
Altho’ his pouch o’ coin were clean  
That follows ony saucy Quean  
That looks sae proud & high

Altho’ a lad were e’er sae smart  
If that he want the yellow dirt  
Ye’ll cast your head anither airt  
An’ answer him fu’ dry

But if he hae the name o’ gear  
Ye’ll fasten till him like a breer  
Tho’ hardly he for sense or lear  
Be better than the ky

But Tibby lass tak' my advice  
 Your father's gear mak's you sae nice  
 The de'il a ane wad speir your price  
       Were ye as poor as I

There lives a lass beside yon park  
 I'd rather hae her in her sark  
 Than you wi' a' your thousand mark  
       That gars you look sae high

An' Tibby I hae seen the day  
       Ye wadna been sae shy  
 An' for laik o' gear ye lightly me  
       But fien' a hair care I.\*

Sept. —

SONG.—(*Tune* "Black Joke.")

My girl she's airy, she's buxom and gay;  
 Her breath is as sweet as the blossoms in may;  
       A touch of her lips it ravishes quite.  
 She's always good natur'd, good humor'd & free;  
 She dances, she glances, she smiles upon me  
       I never am happy when out of her sight.  
 Her slender neck her handsome waist  
 Her hair well curl'd her stays well lac'd  
 Her taper white leg with  
 For her †  
       And O for the joys of a long winter night. ‡

---

\* The following note here occurs in the original: "I will not Dispense with this, it is so Excelent. Change the name of Tibbie to some other if it will nat do.—W. R."

† This portion is inserted in hieroglyphics which our printer has no types to represent.

‡ The sapient "W. R." here writes under the original MS. : "This will not do.—W. R.;" and a third hand adds, "No; you are right, W. R."

## John Barleycorn—A Song, to its own Tune.

I once heard the old song, that goes by this name, sung ; & being very fond of it, & remembering only two or three verses of it viz. the 1st, 2d and 3d, with some scraps which I have interwoven here & there in the following piece.—\*

1785 }  
June }

## 1

There was three kings into the east,  
Three kings both great & high ;  
And they have sworn a solemn oath  
That John Barleycorn should die.

## 2.

They've ta'en a plough & plough'd him down,  
Put clods upon his head,  
And they have sworn a solemn oath  
That John Barleycorn was dead.

## 3.

But the spring time it came on,  
And showers began to fall ;  
John Barleycorn got up again  
And sore surpriz'd them all.

## 4.

The summer it came on,  
And he grew thick & strong ;  
His head well arm'd with pointed spears  
That not one should him wrong.

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\* The reader may notice that the Bard does not complete his sentence here. It is also proper to note that no entries are inserted in the Book betwixt Sept. 1784 and June 1785—a circumstance which tempted Cromeek, in his version of this Journal, to introduce some foreign matter here, dated "May," apparently belonging to 1786.

## 5.

The Autumn it came on,  
And he grew wan & pale ;  
His bending joints & drooping head  
Show'd he began to fail.

## 6.

His color sickened more & more,  
He faded into age,  
And then his enemies began  
To show their deadly rage.

## 7.

They took a hook was long & sharp  
And cut him down at knee ;  
They ty'd him fast upon a cart  
Like a rogue for forgery.

## 8.

They laid him down upon his back  
And cudgel'd him full sore ;  
They hung him up before the storm  
And turn'd him o'er & o'er.

## 9.

They filled up a darksome pit  
With water to the brim,  
They've heaved in John Barleycorn  
There let him sink or swim.

## 10.

They've thrown him out upon the floor  
To work him farther woe ;  
And still as signs of life appear'd  
They toss'd him to & fro.

## 11.

They wasted o'er a scorching flame  
The marrow of his bones ;  
But the Miller us'd him worst of all  
For he crush'd him between two stones.

## 12.

And they have ta'en his very heart's blood  
And drank it round & round ;  
And still the more & more they drank  
Their joy did more abound.

## 13.

John Barleycorn was a Hero bold  
Of noble enterprize,  
For if you do but taste his blood  
'Twill make your courage rise.

## 14.

'Twill make a man forget his woe,  
And heighten all his joy ;  
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing  
Tho the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn  
Each man a glass in hand,  
And may his great posterity  
Ne'er fail in old Scotland.\*

Finis.

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\* Here is inserted under the original, the following criticism :—"I dont like the above, but perhaps I am wrong.—W. R."



*June.* { The death & dyin' words o' poor Malie—my ain  
pet ewe—an unco mournfu' Tale.

As Mailie & her lambs the gither  
Were ae day nibblin' on the tether,  
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch  
And o'er she warsl'd in the ditch.  
There groanin', dyin' she did lye  
When Hughoc he cam' doitin' bye.  
Wi' glowrin' een & lifted hands  
Poor Hughoc like a statue stands ;  
He saw her days were near hand ended,  
But waes my heart, he couldna mend it ;  
He gapit wide, but naething spak ;  
At length poor Mailie silence brak—

O Thou whas lamentable face  
Appears to mourn my woefu' case,  
My dyin' words attentive hear  
And bear them to my Master dear :  
Tell him if e'er again he keep  
As muckle gear as buy a sheep ;  
O bid him never tye them mair  
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair ;  
But caw them out to park or hill  
And let them wander at their will,  
So may his flock increase & grow  
To scores o' lambs & packs of woo'.

Tell him he was a master kind  
And ay was gude to me & mine ;  
And now my dyin' charge I gi'e him  
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.

O bid him save their harmless lives  
Frae dogs & tods & butchers knives ;  
But gie them gude het milk their fill  
Till they be fit to fen' themsel :  
And tent them duely e'en & morn  
Wi' tates o' hay & ripps o' corn.  
O may they never learn the gaits  
Of ither vile unrestfu' pets,  
To slink thro slaps, & reave & steal  
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail :  
So may they like their auld forbears  
For mony a year come thro the shears  
So wives 'll gie them bits o' bread  
And bairns greet for them when they're dead.

My poor toop lamb, my sinn & heir,  
O bid him breed him up wi' care ;  
And if he live to be a beast  
To put some havins in his breast.  
And warn him ay at ridin' time  
To stay content wi' ewes at hame,  
And no to rin & wear his cloots  
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes ;——

And neist my ewie, silly thing,  
Gude keep thee frae a tether string.  
O may thou ne'er forgather up  
Wi' ony blastit moorlan' tipp ;  
But ay keep mind to moop & mell  
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel.  
And now my bairns, wi' my last breath  
I li'e my blessin' wi' you baith :  
And when ye ever mind your mither  
Mind to be kind to ane anither.

Now honest Hughoc, dinna fail  
 To tell my master a' my tale ;  
 And bid him burn this cursed tether,  
 And for thy pains thou's get my blether.

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head  
 And clos'd her een amang the dead.\*

Finis.

*June.* { A letter sent to John Lapraik, near Muirkirk, a  
           true, genuine, Scottish Bard.

April 1st 1785

While breers & woodbines buding green  
 And paitricks sraichin' loud at e'en  
 And mornin' poosie whiddin' seen  
                     Inspire my muse  
 This freedom in an unknown frien'  
                     I pray excuse.

On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin,  
 To ca' the crack & weave our stockin'  
 And there was meikle fun & jokin'  
                     Ye need na doubt  
 At length we had a hearty yokin'  
                     At sang about.

There was ae sang amang the rest  
 Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best  
 That some kind husband had address  
                     To some sweet wife  
 It touch'd the feelings o' the breast  
                     A' to the life.

---

\* Here is inserted the following note :—" Maily must appear.—W. R."

I've scarce heard ought I pleas'd sae weel  
The style sae tastie & genteel  
Thought I can this be Pope, or Steele,  
Or Beatties wark  
They tald me 'twas an odd kind chiel  
About Muirkirk.

My heart was fidgin' fain to hear't  
And sae about him a' I speirt  
Then a' that kent him round declar't  
He was a devil  
But had a frank & friendly heart  
Discreet & civil.

That set him to a pint of ale  
And either douse or merry tale  
Or rhymes & sangs he'd made himsel  
Or witty catches  
'Tween Inverness & Tiviotdale  
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, & swoor an aith  
Tho I should pawn my pleugh & graith  
Or die a cadger pownie's death  
At some dyke back  
A pint & gill I'd gie them baith  
To hear your crack.

But first & foremost I should tell  
Amaist since ever I could spell  
I've dealt in makin' rhymes mysel  
Tho' rude & rough  
But croonin' at a pleugh or flail  
Do weel enough

I am na Poet in a sense  
But just a Rhymer like by chance  
And hae to learnin' nae pretence  
Yet what the matter  
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance  
I jingle at her.

Your Critic folk may cock their nose  
And say how can you e'er propose  
You wha ken hardly verse by prose  
To mak' a sang  
But by your leaves my learned foes  
Ye're maybe wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' the schools  
Your latin names for horns & stools  
If honest nature made you fools  
What sairs your grammars  
Ye'd better ta'en up spades & shoals  
Or knappin' hammers.

A set of silly senseless asses  
Confuse their brains in Colledge classes  
They gang in stirks & come out asses  
Thus sae to speak  
And then they think to climb Parnassus  
By dint o' Greek.

Gi'e me ae spark o' nature's fire  
That's a' the learnin' I desire  
Then tho I drudge thro dub & mire  
At pleugh or cart  
My Muse tho hamely in attire  
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' Allan's glee  
 Or Ferguson the bauld & slee  
 Or tight Lapraik my friend to be  
                     If I can hit it  
 That would be lear enough for me  
                     If I could get it.

Now, Sir, if ye hae frien's enow  
 Tho real frien's I b'lieve are few  
 Yet if your catalogue be fou  
                     I'll no insist  
 But if ye want ae friend that's true  
                     I'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel  
 As ill I like my fauts to tell  
 But friends & folk that wish me well  
                     They some times roose me  
 Tho I maun own as mony still  
                     As far abuse me.

There's ae wee faut they whiles lay to me.  
 I like the lasses Gûde forgie me  
 For mony a plack they wheedle fae me  
                     At dance or fair  
 May be some ither thing they gie me  
                     They weel can spare.

At Mauchline race or Mauchline fair  
 I should be proud to meet you there  
 We'll gie ae night's discharge to care  
                     If we foregather  
 And hae a swap o' rhyiming ware  
                     Wi' ane anither.





This hour on e'enin's edge I take  
To own I'm debtor  
To honest hearted auld LAPRAIK  
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair wi' weary legs  
Rattlin' the corn out owre the rigs  
Or dealin' thro' amang the naigs  
Their ten hours bite  
My dowie muse sair pleads & begs  
I would na write.

The tapietless ramfeezl'd hissie  
She's saft at best & something lazy  
Quo' she ye ken I've been sae bissie  
This month & mair  
That trouth my head is grown right dissie  
And something sair.

Her dowf excuses pat me mad  
Conscience says I ye thowless jad'  
I'll write and that a hearty blaud  
This vera night  
Sae dinna ye affront your trade  
But rhyme it right

Shall bauld Lapraik the Ace o' hearts  
Tho mankind were a pack o' cartes  
Roose you sae weel for your deserts  
In terms sae friendly  
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts  
And thank him kindly.\*

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\* In the MS. the author had misplaced this verse by making it follow the words "Just clean aff loof," but in a note he points out this as its proper place.

Sae I got paper in a blink  
 And in went stumple in the ink  
 Says I before I sleep a wink  
                                 I vow I'll close it  
 And if ye winna make it clink  
                                 By Jove I'll prose it.

But what my theme's to be, or whether  
 In rhyme or prose or baith the gither  
 Or some hotchpotch that's rightly neither  
                                 Let time mak' proof  
 But I shall scribble down some blether  
                                 Just clean aff loof.

My worthy friend ne'er grudge & carp  
 Tho fortune use you hard & sharp  
 Come kittle up your moorland harp  
                                 Wi' gleesome touch  
 Ne'er mind how Fortune waft & warp  
                                 She's but a b——.

She's gien me mony a jirt & fleg  
 Sin' I could striddle o'er a rig  
 But by the l—d tho I should beg  
                                 Wi' lyart pow  
 I'll laugh, & sing, & shake my leg  
                                 As lang's I dow.

Do ye envy the city Gent  
 Behint a kist to lie & sklent  
 Or purse-proud, big wi' cent per cent  
                                 And muckle wame  
 In some bit Burgh to represent  
                                 A Bailie's name.

Or is't the lordly feudal Thane  
Wi' ruffled sark & glancin' cane  
Wha thinks himsel nae sheepshank bane  
But lordly stalks  
While caps and bonnets aff are ta'en  
As by he walks.

May He wha gives us each good gift  
Gie me o' wit & sense a lift  
Then tho' he turn me out adrift  
Thro Scotland wide  
Wi' cits & lairds I wad na shift  
In a' their pride.

Were this the charter of our state  
"On pain of Hell be rich & great"  
Damnation then would be our fate  
Beyond remead  
But thanks to Heaven, that's no the gate  
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran  
Since first the HUMAN-RACE began  
"The social, friendly, honest man,  
Whate'er he be,  
Tis he fulfils Great Nature's plan,  
And none but He."

O mandate, glorious & divine !  
The followers o' the ragged Nine,  
Poor honest devils, yet may shine  
In glorious light,  
While sordid sons o' MAMON's line  
Are dark as night.

Tho' here, they grunt, & scrape & growl,  
 Their silly nivefow o' a soul  
 May in some future carcase howl,  
                     The forest's fright;  
 Or in a day-detesting owl  
                     May shun the light.

LAPRAIK, & BURNES then may rise  
 And reach their native, kindred skies,  
 And sing their pleasures hopes & joys  
                     In some mild sphere  
 Still closer knit in Friendship's ties  
                     Each passing year.\*

August.                   A SONG—(*Tune*, Peggy Bawn.)

When chill November's surly blast  
     Made fields & forests bare,  
 One evening as I wandered forth  
     Along the banks of Ayr;  
 I spi'd a man whose aged step  
     Seem'd weary worn with care  
 His face was furrow'd o'er with years  
     And hoary was his hair.

“Young Stranger whither wanderest thou,”  
     Began the rev'rend Sage;  
 Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,  
     Or youthful pleasure's rage;  
 Or hap'ly prest by cares and woes  
     Too soon thou hast began  
 To wander forth with me to mourn  
     The miseries of MAN.

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\* Here Mr Ronald adds the following note:—“I think there is some faults in the above which might be easily amended, but the last part of it flags unpardonably,—the first is fraught with genuine humour.—W. R.”

Yon sun that hangs o'er Carrick Moors  
That spread so far and wide ;  
Where hundreds labor to support  
The lordly Cassilis pride : \*  
I've seen yon weary winter sun  
Twice forty times return.  
And every time has added proofs  
That man was made to mourn.

O man ! while in thy early years  
How prodigal of time ;  
Mispending all those precious hours  
Thy glorious youthful prime :  
Alternate follies take the sway,  
Licentious passions burn,  
Which tenfold force give Nature's law  
That, man was made to mourn.

Look not alone on youthful prime,  
Or manhood's active might ;  
Man then is useful to his kind,  
Supported is his right :  
But see him "on the edge of days"  
With cares and labors worn,  
Then Age and Want—O ill matched Pair !  
Show man was made to mourn.†

A few seem favorites of Fate  
In Fortune's lap carest ;  
Yet think not all the rich and great  
Are likewise truly blest ;

---

\* A note in the MS. by "W. R." remarks as follows :—"The Lordly Cassilis' pride is a line you must alter. I was astonished to see anything so personal.—W. R."

† The poet had misplaced this verse in transcribing, but points out in a note that this is its proper position.

But O what crowds in ev'ry land  
To wants & sorrows born,  
Thro weary life this lesson learn  
That man was made to mourn !

Many the ills that Nature's hand  
Has woven with our frame ;  
More pointed still we make ourselves  
Regret, remorse, & shame :  
And Man, whose heaven-erected face  
The smiles of love adorn,  
Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn.

See yonder poor o'erlabor'd wight  
So abject, mean & vile,  
Who begs a brother of the earth  
To give him leave to toil ;  
And see his lordly fellow worm  
The poor petition spurn,  
Unmindful tho a weeping wife,  
And helpless children mourn.

If I am doom'd yon Lordling 's slave,  
By Natures hand design'd,  
Why was an independent wish  
E'er planted in my mind ;  
If not, why am I subject to  
His cruelty or scorn,  
Or why has man the will & power  
To make his fellow mourn.

Yet let not this too much, my Son,  
Disturb thy youthful breast ;  
This partial view of HUMANKIND  
Is surely not the last ;

The poor, oppressed, honest heart  
Had surely ne'er been born  
Had there not been some recompence  
To comfort those that mourn.

O Death ! the poor man's dearest friend,  
The kindest & the best !  
Welcome the hour my aged limbs  
Are laid with thee at rest !  
The Great, the Wealthy fear thy blow  
From pomps, & pleasures torn ;  
But oh ! a blest relief for those  
That, weary-laden, MOURN.

Aug.—However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch Poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Ferguson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c. immortalized in such celebrated performances, whilst my dear native country, the ancient Baileries of Carriek, Kyle, & Cunningham, famous both in ancient & modern times for a gallant, and warlike race of inhabitants ; a country where civil, & particularly religious Liberty have ever found their first support, & their last asylum ; a country, the birthplace of many famous Philosophers, Soldiers, & Statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish History, particularly a great many of the actions of the GLORIOUS WALLACE, the SAVIOUR of his country ; yet, we have never had one Scotch Poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands & sequestered scenes on Aire, and the healthy, mountainous source, & winding sweep of Doon emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but Alas ! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius & education.



Obscure I am, & obscure I must be, though no young  
Poet, nor Young Soldier's heart ever beat more fondly for  
fame than mine.

And if there is no other scene of Being  
Where my insatiate wish may have its fill;  
This something at my heart that heaves for room,  
My best, my dearest part was made in vain.\*

Aug : A Fragment. *Tune* I had a horse & I had nae  
mair.

When first I came to Stewart Kyle  
My mind it was nae steady,  
Where e'er I gaed, where e'er I rade,  
A Mistress still I had ay :  
But when I came roun' by Mauchlin town,  
Not dreadin' any body,  
My heart was caught before I thought  
And by a MAUCLINE LADY.

Har'ste.—A Fragment. *Tune* Foregoing

Now breezy win's and slaughtering guns  
Bring Autumn's pleasant weather,  
And the muir cock springs on whirring wings  
Amang the blooming heather.  
Now waving crops, with yellow tops,  
Delight the weary Farmer,  
An' the Moon shines bright when I rove at night,  
To muse on †

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\* Here a note, in an unknown hand inserts :—"The above may furnish  
remark on the Bard."

† The two closing words are in cypher, meaning "Jeanie Armour."

Sept.\* There is a certain irregularity in the old Scotch Songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of Accent & measure that the English Poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old Song of The Mill Mill O, to give it a plain prosaic reading it halts prodigiously out of measure; on the other hand, the Song set to the same tune in Bremner's collection of Scotch Songs which begins "To Fanny fair could I impart &c." it is most exact measure, and yet, let them be both sung before a real Critic, one above the biasses of prejudice, but a thorough Judge of Nature,—how flat & spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first.—This particularly is the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable.—There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions & Fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, & yet, very frequently, nothing, not even *like* rhyme, or sameness of jingle at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that perhaps, it might be possible for a Scotch Poet, with a nice, judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favorite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble Sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness in some of these ancient fragments, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heartake to reflect that such glorious old Bards—Bards, who, very probably, owed all their talents to native

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\* This passage is headed by a note, apparently in Mr Syme's hand, thus: "The following remarks may be introduced somewhere, when Thomson's letters are noticed."

genius, yet have described the exploits of Heroes, the pangs of Disappointment, and the meltings of Love with such fine strokes of Nature, and, O mortifying to a Bard's vanity their very names are "buried 'mongst the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious Names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well! the last, the meanest of the MUSES TRAIN—one who, though far inferiour to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor, rustic BARD UNKNOWN, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of Verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love; he too, has felt all the unfitness of a poetic heart for the struggle of a busy, bad World; he has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and worse than all, the loss of the Woman he adored! Like you, all his consolation was his Muse—She taught him in rustic measures to complain—Happy, could he have done it with your strength of imagination, and flow of Verse! May the turf rest lightly on your bones! And may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of Poesy and love!\*

X Sept.—The following fragment is done, something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scottish Piece called M'Millan's Peggy, and sings to the tune of Galla water. †—My Montgomeries Peggy was my Deity for six, or eight months. She had been bred, tho' as the world says, without any just pretence for it, in a style of life rather elegant.

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\* Mr Syme here suggests to Dr Currie :—"Perhaps the above would take with many readers."

† Mr Syme here puts in a note :—"This explains the love-letters to Begbie."—meaning the four letters to "My dear E.," printed by Currie.

—But as Vanburgh says in one of his comedies, my “dam’d Star Found me out” there too, for though I began the affair, merely in a *gaité de cœur*, or to tell the truth, what would scarcely be believed, a vanity of showing my parts in Courtship, particularly my abilities at a *Billet doux*, which I always piqu’d myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me, one day in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another; but with the greatest friendship and politeness, she offered me every alliance, except actual possession.—I found out afterwards, that what she told me of a preengagement was really true; but it cost some heart Achs to get rid of the affair.—

I have even tried to imitate in this extempore thing, that irregularity in the rhyme which when judiciously done, has such a fine effect on the ear.

FRAGMENT. *Tune, GALLA WATER.*

Altho’ my bed were in yon muir,  
Amang the heather, in my plaidie,  
Yet happy happy would I be  
Had I my dear Montgomerie’s Peggy.

When o’er the hill beat surly storms,  
And winter nights were dark and rainy;  
I’d seek some dell, and in my arms  
I’d shelter dear Montgomerie’s Peggy.

Were I a Baron proud and high,  
And horse and servants waiting ready,  
Then a’ ’twad gie o’ joy to me,  
The sharin’t with Montgomerie’s Peggy.\*

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\* Mr Syme here notes “Indifferent, & G.B. says it is a parody on an old Scotch Song.”

Sept.—Another Fragment in imitation of an old Scotch Song, well known among the Country ingle sides—I cannot tell the name, neither of the Song nor the Tune, but they are in fine Unison with one another.—By the way, these old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental that when one would compose to them; to *south* the tune, as our Scotch phrase is, over & over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration and raise the Bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch Poetry.—I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the Song & tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the Author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times.

Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse

“When clouds in skies do come together  
To hide the brightness of the sun,  
There will surely be some pleasant weather  
When a’ thir storms are past and gone.”

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Though fickle Fortune has deceiv’d me,  
She promis’d fair and perform’d but ill;  
Of Mistress, friends, and wealth bereav’d me,  
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.

I’ll act with prudence as lang’s I’m able  
But if success I must never find,  
Then come Misfortune, I bid thee welcome,  
I’ll meet thee with an undaunted mind.

The above was an extempore under the pressure of a heavy train of Misfortunes, which, indeed, threatened to undo me altogether.—It was just at the close of that

dreadful period mentioned Page 8th; and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since, a “tempest brewing round me in the grim sky” of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will, some time or other, perhaps ere long overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell to pine in solitary, squallid wretchedness. However as I hope my poor, country Muse, who, all rustic, awkward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may, even then, learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and south a sang to sooth my misery.

’Twas at the same time I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style.—I am not Musical Scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps ’tis no great matter, but the following were the verses I composed to suit it.

O raging Fortune’s withering blast

Has laid my leaf full low ! O

O raging Fortune’s withering blast

Has laid my leaf full low ! O

My stem was fair my bud was green

My blossom sweet did blow ; O

The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,

And made my branches grow ; O

But luckless Fortune’s northern storms

Laid a’ my blossoms low.—O

But luckless Fortunes northern storms

Laid a’ my blossoms low.—O

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole Air.



Oct. 85.—If ever any young man, on the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eye over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations; as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil's dear bought Experience.—I have, literally like that great Poet and great Gallant, and by consequence, that great Fool, Solomon,—“turned my eyes to behold Madness and Folly”—Nay I have, with all the ardor of a lively, fanciful and whimsical imagination, accompanied with a warm, feeling, Poetic heart—shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

In the first place, let my Pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity,

. . . . .

---

The reader can scarcely fail to observe that the serious paragraph which closes the foregoing very interesting early record, is almost identical in phraseology with the opening sentence of the Autobiography:—“I have, like Solomon, whose character, except in the trifling affair of wisdom, I sometimes think I resemble—I have, I say, like him ‘turned my eyes to behold madness and folly,’ and like him, too frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.” The date of that closing passage is October 1785, by which time, besides the pieces inserted in the manuscript book, he had composed such important poems as “The Twa Herds,” “The Poet’s Welcome,” “Epistles to John Rankine,” “Holy Willie’s Prayer,” “Death and Dr Hornbook,” “Epistle to Davie,” “Epistle to William Simson,” a third “Epistle to John Lapraik,” a second “Epistle to Davie,” “Epistle to John Gowdie,” and “Epistle to the Rev. John M’Math.” The whole of these display a vigour and brilliancy of imagination and expression which he never afterwards surpassed; so we are forced to infer that the pressing overflow of his poetic wealth made him consider it useless to record the effusions of his exhaustless fancy in a less enduring form than “gude black prent.”

Nothing that Burns ever produced displays his genius more completely than his celebrated cantata of “The Jolly Beggars,”



which must have been composed at this very period. It is known to have sprung out of a night adventure in the summer or autumn of 1785, when the poet, in fellowship with his bosom-cronies, John Richmond and James Smith, was bent on a little more fun, after issuing from their *howff* at the *Whitefoord Arms*. Nearly opposite the entrance-gate of Mauchline kirkyard, a narrow street, called the Cowgate, runs off from the main street or highway which is here broad and spacious. The spectator, standing with his back to the scene of "The Holy fair," confronts a house of two storeys which was once the white-washed Inn of "John Dow, vintner," with the arms of Sir John Whitefoord of Ballochmyle blazoned on a sign-board above the door. It is on the right hand side, near the corner of the Cowgate just referred to; and on the left hand side, at the opposite corner, stands an old building of humbler aspect which, in the poet's Mossgiel days, was tenanted by a Mrs Gibson, who used it as a licensed ale shop and lodging house for all and sundry pedlars, cadgers and other vagrants. The hostess bore the *soubriquet* of "Poosie Nancy" and she had a half-witted daughter who was styled "Racer Jess" from her powerful pedestrian qualities and passion for attending country fairs and race-matches.

Burns and his two companions in passing Nancy's door on the occasion referred to, were attracted by more than common manifestations of uproarious hilarity within, and they knocked and asked leave to mix in the scene of enjoyment, and were made welcome to enter. The "jovial ragged ring" there assembled, and shouting in chorus round a smoking bowl, little knew what sort of *chield* had come among them "taking notes;" but the poet and his friends, after a contribution to the general fund, and enjoying for half an hour the rough entertainment, came away somewhat impressed, if not edified, with what they had witnessed. A few days thereafter Burns produced to Richmond a draft of the wonderful cantata, in which a sailor was introduced as one of the persons of the drama, although ultimately left out in the finished manuscript.

Richmond who, as we have seen, was a clerk in the office of Mr Gavin Hamilton, and also "Clerk of Court" in the burlesque "Court of Equity" which held its meetings in John Dow's Inn, removed from Mauchline to a situation in Edinburgh about Martinmas 1785. It is certain that he carried with him a holo-

graph copy of the *Jolly Beggars*, in whole or in part, and through him the existence of such a poem was made known in Edinburgh. George Thomson, who had seen it or heard of it, made enquiries regarding it in one of his letters to Burns in 1793. In the poet's reply, dated 13th September of that year he says:—"I have forgot the cantata you allude to, as I kept no copy, and indeed did not know of its existence; however I remember that none of the songs pleased myself, except the last, something about

Courts for cowards were erected,  
Churches built to please the priest."

George Thomson, in 1818, published the cantata set to music and arranged with choruses by Sir Henry R. Bishop. Some portions of that music, and especially the soldier's song, "I am a son of Mars," have become popular. The grand closing chorus, however, "See the smoking bowl before us," being the song which Burns remembered with most satisfaction, is not so happy, and makes one regret that the composer had not accepted the old air, "Jolly mortals fill your glasses," to which the poet wrote the words.

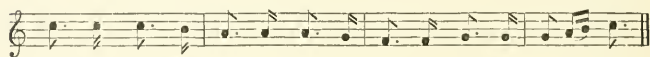
The latter, as impressed on our memory by hearing it sung by our schoolfellows half a century ago, we shall here endeavour to convey to the musical reader, in the hope that he may agree with us in thinking that "the auld spring dings the new."

#### THE BARD'S SONG.

*Tune—"Jolly Mortals, Fill your Glasses."*



See the smok-ing bowl be - fore us, Mark our jo - vial rag-ged ring;



Round and round take up the ehor-us, And in rap-tures let us sing.

*Chorus.*



A fig for those by law pro-ect-ed, Li-ber-ty's a glo-rious feast;



Courts for eow-ards were e-rect-ed, Chureh-es built to please the priest.



A fig for those by law pro-ect-ed, Li-ber-ty's a glo-rious feast.

Of those two companions of Burns whose names are associated with the production of "The Jolly Beggars," very few particulars are known. Richmond came back to reside in his native village of Mauchline, after a long routine-life as a writer's clerk in Edinburgh. He is remembered as a quiet old man, with very little fresh information to supply regarding Burns, yet always proud of the distinction reflected on him from his early intercourse and correspondence with the bard. He died in 1846, and was buried in Mauchline kirkyard, aged 84.

James Smith was a dark-complexioned, thick-set little man of vigorous mind and considerable humour. He seems to have left Ayrshire about the close of 1786, when our poet proceeded to Edinburgh. He had kept a Haberdashery store in Mauchline, and now he went to Linlithgow, and became a partner in the Avon Printworks there. We lose sight of him after April 1788, the date of Burns's last letter to him, in which the poet promises a long continuance of correspondence thus:—"Look on this letter as but a beginning of sorrows! I'll write you till your eyes ache with reading nonsense." He seems to have emigrated shortly thereafter to the West Indies, where (as Cromek records) he met his death. His father, Robert Smith, a successful merchant in Mauchline, was unfortunately killed by a fall from his horse, while James was yet a boy. The widow married a Mr Lambie, who, according to our informant, was a respectable, God-fearing man. James grew up a wild, rakish fellow, and his mother's maid-servant, Christina Wilson, though old enough to be his mother, fell with child to him, while Burns resided at Mossiel. James's only sister Jean became the mother of the celebrated Dr Candlish.

Amid all the wealth of poetry produced by Burns in course of the year 1785, it is curious to note that only one prose letter, known to have been penned by him in that year, is found in his correspondence. It is the one addressed to Miss Peggy Kennedy of Daljarrock, parish of Colmonell, a young Carrick beauty who in the autumn of that year paid a visit of some weeks' duration to her relative, Mrs Gavin Hamilton. Burns became acquainted with her during his then almost daily intercourse with Mr Hamilton, and recorded his admiration of her person in the poem printed at page 146, Vol. I. His warmest good-wishes were at same time expressed in the following letter which enclosed the verses.

## (1) TO MISS MARGARET KENNEDY.

(CROMEK, 1808).

[AUTUMN of 1785].

MADAM,—Permit me to present you with the enclosed song, as a small though grateful tribute for the honor of your acquaintance. I have in these verses attempted some faint sketches of your portrait in the unembellished, simple manner of descriptive TRUTH. Flattery, I leave to your LOVERS, whose exaggerating fancies may make them imagine you are still nearer perfection than you really are.

Poets, Madam, of all mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of BEAUTY ; as, if they are really POETS of Nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate than most of the world. In the cheerful bloom of SPRING, or the pensive mildness of AUTUMN, the grandeur of SUMMER, or the hoary majesty of WINTER, the poet feels a charm unknown to the most of his species : even the sight of a fine flower, or the company of a fine woman (by far the finest part of God's works below), have sensations for the poetic heart that the HERD of men are strangers to. On this last account, Madam, I am, as in many other things, indebted to Mr Hamilton's kindness in introducing me to you. Your lovers may view you with a wish, I look on you with pleasure ; their hearts, in your presence, may glow with desire, mine rises with admiration.

That the arrows of misfortune, however they should, as incident to humanity, glance a slight wound, may never reach your heart—that the snares of villainy may never beset you in the road of life—that INNOCENCE may hand you by the path of HONOR to the dwelling of PEACE—is the sincere wish of him who has the honor to be, &c. R. B.

The closing stanza of the poem inclosed in the above letter shines out in bright contrast with the destinies that eventually overtook the subject of the poet's beatification; and yet there is something almost prophetic in his prose-expressed wish that "the snares of villany may never beset her path in the road of life."

"Ye powers of Honor, Love, and Truth,  
From ev'ry ill defend her!  
Inspire the highly-favor'd youth  
The destinies intend her."

Miss Kennedy, who was a niece of Sir Andrew Cathcart, of Carleton, Bart., was at that time received into the best society. She was believed to be under matrimonial engagement to her relative, Capt. (afterwards Colonel) Andrew M'Doual, younger of Logan, in Wigtonshire, and who, although then but twenty-five years old, represented his county in Parliament. It soon became manifest, to herself at all events, that the betrothal referred to was merely recorded among those lovers' vows which the gods are said to laugh at. The libertinism that attached to the character of M'Doual was widely known, and Miss Kennedy, with apparent submission, if not contentment, continued to reside under her father's roof till his death, about 1791; and thereafter with her brother, who succeeded to the estate of Daljarrock. It appears, however, that during nearly ten years from the time of her first intercourse with M'Doual, in November 1784, when she was but sixteen years old, a voluminous and very concealed written correspondence was maintained, and many secret personal interviews took place, between them. We have, at page 33, Vol. II., on the authority of Chambers, given a misleading anecdote regarding the case of Miss Kennedy, and which, on better knowledge, we now desire to cancel. It speaks of a warm discussion having occurred at the manse of Dr Lawrie in 1786, about "the unfortunate result of Miss Peggy Kennedy's intimacy with M'Doual of Logan, which story *was then beginning to make a noise in Ayrshire*." Chambers also says:—"It was now feared by many that she had qualified herself for a worse than doubtful position in society." There are, however, no grounds for supposing that, at that early date, the people of Ayrshire knew anything at all of the story in question; for those who examine the judicial records of the case will find that the amour was conducted on both



sides with the utmost secrecy, and that no circumstance occurred to bring the affair to light till the lady bore a child to M'Donal in January 1794. Shortly before that event, M'Donal had succeeded to the estates of Logan on the death of his father; and on Miss Kennedy urging him to do justice to their child by admitting that a secret marriage had subsisted between them, he threw off the mask, and defied her to prove that he was even the father of the child.

To bring matters to a crisis, M'Donal committed himself to matrimony with Mary, the daughter of James Russell, Esq., Dumfries, and Miss Kennedy was induced to bring into Court an action of declarator of marriage, and consequent legitimacy of her child, with alternative conclusions of damages against M'Donal for seduction, &c. The unfortunate lady's action had not proceeded far when she died, (in Feb. 1795), probably the victim of anguished feelings; but the process went on in behalf of the infant. The Consistorial Court, in 1798, pronounced for marriage and legitimacy; but the Court of Session, on review, reversed the judgment, yet allowed £3000 to the daughter in name of alimentary provision to herself, and damages due to the deceased mother.\*

Colonel M'Donal survived till 1834, and was succeeded by his eldest son James (born in 1796). The latter was Colonel of the 2nd Life Guards, and married Miss Jane Barnett: their son James is now in possession of the Logan Estate.

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Who the lady was to whom the following letter was addressed is not known. Cromek, who recovered the relic, but did not include it in his work, left it among his manuscripts with a note suggesting that it may have been an early effusion, probably addressed to "Montgomery's Peggy" noticed in the poet's *Commonplace Book*. Chambers, on the other hand, was disposed to regard it as a letter of much later date—say, the summer of 1787, under which he has placed it. He was led to that conclusion by Gilbert's statement that his brother first heard the spinnet played in the house of the minister of Loudoun in the

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\* Chambers in 1851, tells his readers that Peggy's daughter was believed to be "now a married lady residing in Edinburgh."

autumn of 1786. We take a middle course, and venture to place it as a composition of 1785; for we think that Gilbert must have been misinformed in the particular referred to, as the poet could scarcely fail, during his frequent visits to the town of Ayr, to have witnessed performances on the pianoforte in the houses of Mr Aiken, and other early patrons.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MISS ———, AYRSHIRE.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MY DEAR COUNTRYWOMAN: I am so impatient to show you that I am once more at peace with you, that I send you the book I mentioned, directly, rather than wait the uncertain time of my seeing you. I am afraid I have mislaid or lost Collins's Poems, which I promised to Miss Irvin. If I can find them, I will forward them by you; if not, you must apologize for me.

I know you will laugh at it when I tell you that your piano and you together have played the deuce somehow about my heart. My breast has been widowed these many months,\* and I thought myself proof against the fascinating witchcraft, but I am afraid you will "feelingly convince me what I am," I say I am afraid, because I am not sure what is the matter with me. I have one miserable bad symptom; when you whisper, or look kindly to another, it gives me a draught of damnation. I have a kind of wayward wish to be ten minutes by yourself, though what I would say, Heaven above knows, for I am sure I know not. I have no formed design in all this; but just in the nakedness of my heart, write you down a mere matter-of-fact story. You may perhaps give yourself airs of distance on this, and that will completely cure me; but I wish you

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\* This expression may refer to the fact, before noticed, that he had relinquished his courtship of Peggy Thomson. On the other hand, if we are to assume a later date, we may safely infer that "Peggy Chalmers" was the lady thus addressed, in 1787.



would not : just let us meet, if you please, in the old beaten way of friendship.\*

I will not subscribe myself your humble servant, for that is a phrase I think, at least fifty miles off from the heart ; but I will conclude with sincerely wishing that the Great Protector of innocence may shield you from the barbed dart of Calumny, and hand you by the covert snare of deceit.

R. B.†

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The “widowed” condition of the poet’s breast, spoken of in the foregoing letter, could be of no long duration, for he tells us that his “heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other ;” to which Gilbert adds that although “one generally reigned paramount in his affections, yet he was frequently encountering other attractions which formed so many under-plots in the drama of his love.” The exact period when his future wife, Jean Armour, first attracted his attention has not been ascertained ; but we are disposed to fix the date of their earliest interview at the end of April 1785. If her birth-date be correctly stated in the poet’s Family Register, and on her gravestone, she was then in her twenty-first year. On the information of Jean herself, Chambers records that on the night of Mauchline Races it is customary for the young men, with little ceremony, to invite agreeable girls whom they may then fall in with, to join in a “penny dance.” Burns and Jean happened to meet in the same dance, but not as partners, when some confusion and merriment was caused by the poet’s collie dog tracking his footsteps through the hall. He was heard to remark to his partner that “he wished he could get any of the lasses to like him as well as his dog did.” A few weeks after that event Jean happened to be bleaching clothes at the public green when Burns passed with his dog, and she archly hailed him with the question—

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\* This expression—“the beaten way of friendship” occurs in the poet’s letter to his cousin, 25th Sept. 1786, and also in a letter to “Clarinda.”

† The reader can hardly fail to be struck with the similarity of style between the conclusion of this letter and the close of that addressed to Miss Kennedy.

“Have you no fa’n in wi’ a lass yet *to like you as weel as your dog?*” From that moment their intimacy commenced. Her father’s house was situated in close proximity to the Whitefoord Arms Inn, where the poet had frequent occasion to attend, as president of the Bachelor’s Club which we have described in vol. I pp. 163, 166.

The result of the second harvest at Mossiel was so unfavourable as to lead Burns and his brother to think of abandoning their lease of the farm. Love and Poetry however filled up every vacuum in the poet’s waking hours created by this desertion of his rural occupation. Gilbert records that “about the time they came to the final determination to quit the farm” the result of the intercourse between his brother and Jean “could no longer be concealed. It was therefore agreed between them that they should make a legal acknowledgment of an irregular and private marriage; that he should go to Jamaica and push his fortune; and that she should remain with her father till it might please Providence to put the means of supporting a family in his power.”

The first letter of Burns that has been preserved, penned in the year 1786, gives a hint to his correspondent that some important matter with respect to himself,—not the most agreeable—had occurred. It also gives a list of his more recent poetical compositions which not only furnishes an excellent guide in the chronology of those early poems, but evinces how eagerly the poet then was bent on creating materials to fill a volume of his works to be laid before the public.

# (<sup>1</sup>) TO MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MOSSGIEL, 17th February 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I shall only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have enclosed you a piece of rhyming ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the Muses since I saw you, and have composed, among

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

ROBT. BURNES.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO JAMES SMITH, MAUCLINE.

(LOCKHART, 1828.)

. . . . Against two things I am fixed as fate—staying at home; and owning her conjugally. The first, by Heaven, I will not do!—the last, by Hell, I will never do! A good God bless you, and make you happy, up to the warmest weeping wish of parting friendship . . . .

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\* Robert Fergusson's Poems, which Burns had before perused in a borrowed copy.

† James Smith, an account of whom has been given at page 101 *supra*.

If you see Jean, tell her I will meet her, so help me God,  
in my hour of need. R. B.

Mr Lockhart thus explains the above singular fragment:—  
“When Burns was first informed of Miss Armour’s condition, the announcement staggered him like a blow. He saw nothing for it but to fly the country at once; and in a note to James Smith of Mauchline, the *confidante* of his amour, he wrote as above.

“The lovers met accordingly; and the result of the meeting was what was to be anticipated from the tenderness and the manliness of Burns’s feelings. All dread of personal inconvenience yielded at once to the tears of the woman he loved, and ere they parted, he gave into her keeping a written acknowledgment of marriage, which, when produced by a person in Miss Armour’s condition, is, according to the Scots law, to be accepted as legal evidence of an *irregular* marriage . . . . By what arguments the girl’s parents afterwards prevailed on her to take so strange and so painful a step we know not; but the fact is certain, that, at their urgent entreaty, she destroyed the document, which must have been to her the most precious of her possessions—the only evidence of her marriage.”

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR JOHN KENNEDY.\*

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 3d March 1786.

SIR,—I have done myself the pleasure of complying with your request in sending you my Cottager. If you have a leisure minute I should be glad you would copy it, and return me either the original or the transcript, as I have

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\* This gentleman, an intimate friend of Gavin Hamilton, was then Factor at Dumfries House, and subsequently Factor to the Earl of Breadalbane. He died in 1812, aged 55; so that when he was entrusted with a perusal of the poet’s only copy of the Cotter’s Saturday Night, he was quite a young man, senior of Burns by only two years.

not a copy of it by me, and I have a friend who wishes to see it,

Now Kennedy, if foot or horse

E'er bring you in by Mauchline Corse, &c.

*See Vol. I., page 261.*

ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNES.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.\*

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 20th March, 1786.

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

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

ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNES.

\* This gentleman's name is inserted as a subscriber for forty copies of the first Edinburgh edition of our poet's works. He was a wine-merchant of Kilmarnock, and owner of a small estate there, called Loanfoot, which however was burdened with bonds. He died on 22d April 1788, just six days after the registration of the deed which discharged the property from its debt. Being a bachelor, his only sister, Agnes Muir or Smith, wife of Wm. Smith, merchant, Kilmarnock, succeeded to Loanfoot. It was afterwards sold to the Duchess of Portland.

Gilbert Burns thus wrote regarding Robert Muir:—“He was one of those friends Robert's poetry had procured him, and one who was dear to his heart. This gentleman had no very great fortune, or long line of dignified ancestry; but what Robert says of Captain Matthew Henderson might be said of him with great propriety.—‘He held the patent of his honors immediately from Almighty God.’ Nature had indeed marked him a gentleman in the most legible characters.”

(<sup>1</sup>) TO ROBERT AIKEN, Esq., AYR.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 3d April 1786.

DEAR SIR,—I received your kind letter with double pleasure, on account of the *second* flattering instance of Mrs C.'s notice and approbation. I assure you, I

'Turn out the brunt side o' my shin,' as the famous Ramsay, of jingling memory, says, of such a patroness. Present her my most grateful acknowledgments, in your very best manner of telling truth. I have inscribed the following stanza on the blank-leaf of Miss More's works :—

Thou flattering mark of friendship kind.

See Vol. I., page 267.

My proposals for publishing I am just going to send to the press. I expect to hear from you by the first opportunity. I am ever, Dear Sir, yours,

ROBT. BURNES.

Mr Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, was the procurator who so ably defended Mr Gavin Hamilton before the Presbytery in the persecuting proceedings against him at instance of the Rev. Wm. Auld and "Holy Willie." (See Vol. I., page 96.)

We ventured to suggest at p. 267, Vol. I, that "Mrs C." the lady patroness above referred to might have been Mrs Cunningham of Enterkin ; but we now find that Miss Catherine Stewart did not become Mrs Cunningham till the year 1794. With stronger probability we might have suggested Mrs Cunningham of Robertland as the lady who paid these early compliments to Burns. Gilbert, in referring to his brother's early patrons, says "Sir William Cunningham of Robertland paid a very flattering attention and showed a deal of friendship for the poet."

The next letter in order of date is a very important one, as



marking a painful crisis in the story of the poet's intercourse with Jean Armour. It was first published by Cunningham, who has noted that the address is wanting on the original letter, and that from internal evidence only it is supposed to have been written to

(<sup>1</sup>) JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq., BANKER, AYR.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

[About 14th April 1786.]

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

ROB<sup>r</sup>. BURNS.

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One copy of the poet's printed "proposals for publishing," referred to in the foregoing letter, is known to have been preserved. In 1871, J. B. Greenshields, Esq., of Kerse, Lesmahagow, notified in a Glasgow newspaper that he was the fortunate possessor of that unique relic, a copy of which we here annex. Appended to it, in MS. are the signatures of sixteen subscribers, of what district does not appear. The fifteenth name—that of



“Wm. Lorrimer”—is scored through, and the following remark attached “Copy sent per Charles Crichton—the blockhead refused it.”

*April 14th, 1786.*

PROPOSALS FOR PUBLISHING BY SUBSCRIPTION,  
SCOTTISH POEMS BY ROBERT BURNS.

The work to be elegantly printed, in one volume octavo. Price, stitched, Three Shillings. As the Author has not the most distant mercenary view in publishing, as soon as so many Subscribers appear as will defray the necessary expense, the work will be sent to the press.

“Set out the brunt side of your shin,  
For pride in poets is nae sin :  
Glory’s the prize for which they rin,  
And Fame’s their joe ;  
And wha blaws best his horn shall win,  
And wherefore no ?”

*Allan Ramsay.*

We undersubscribers engage to take the above-mentioned work, on the conditions specified.

*(Here follow Subscriber’s names in manuscript.)*

William Murray, one copy,  
R. Thomson, 1 copy,  
James Hall, one copy,  
Gavin Stewart, one copy,  
John Hasting, one copy,  
William Johnston, 3 coppies,  
James Ingles, one copy,  
John Boswell, one copie,  
Gavin Geddes, two coppies,  
Geo. Howitson, one copy,

Colin M'Dougall, one copy,  
Charles Howitson, one copy  
William M'Call, one copy,  
(Sent per Mr Dun.)  
William Templeton, one copy,  
William Lorrimer, (copy sent per  
Charles Crichton—the blockhead  
refused it),  
John Merry, two coppies.

( ) TO MR M'WHINNIE, WRITER, AYR.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[MOSSGIEL, 17th April 1786.]

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

it will gratify *yours* to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

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

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

ROBT. BURNS.

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR JOHN KENNEDY.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

[MOSSGIEL, 20th April 1786.]

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

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

Our race comes on apace—that much expected scene of revelry and mirth; but to me it brings no joy equal to that meeting with you which you last flattered the expectation of, Sir, your indebted Servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

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Enclosed in this letter was the author's poem—"To a Mountain Daisy. On turning one down with the plough in April 1786;" but here inscribed under the title, "THE GOWAN."

“Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower,  
Thou’s met me in an evil hour,” &c., Vol. I. p. 281.

On the subject of the breach between the poet and his privately espoused ‘Bonie Jean,’ with its effects upon his mind and sentiments, the reader is referred to the series of poetical pieces in Vol. I., from p. 279 to p. 291. In the following letter, which is presented to the world for the first time, Burns treats the whole matter in a surprisingly frolicsome humour, approaching even to the burlesque.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO JOHN ARNOT OF DALQUATSWOOD, ESQ.,

INCLOSING A SUBSCRIPTION-BILL FOR MY FIRST EDITION,  
WHICH WAS PRINTED AT KILMARNOCK.

(*Here first published.*)

[April 1786.]

SIR,—I have long wished for some kind of claim to the honour of your acquaintance, and since it is out of my power to make that claim by the least service of mine to you, I shall do it by asking a friendly office of you to me.—I should be much hurt, Sir, if any one should view my poor Parnassian Pegasus in the light of a spur-galled Hack, and think that I wish to make a shilling or two by him. I spurn the thought.—

It may do—maun do, Sir, wi’ them wha  
Maun please the great folk for a wame-fou;  
For me, sae laigh I need na bow,  
For, Lord be thankit! I can plough:  
And when I downa yoke a naig,  
Then, Lord be thankit! I can beg.—

You will then, I hope Sir, forgive my troubling you with the inclosed, and spare a poor heart-crushed devil a world of apologies—a business he is very unfit for at any time; but at present, widowed as he is of every woman-giving comfort, he is utterly incapable of. Sad and grievous of

late, Sir, has been my tribulation, and many and piercing my sorrows; and had it not been for the loss the world would have sustained in losing so great a poet, I had, ere now, done as a much wiser man, the famous Achitophel of long-headed memory did before me, when "he went home and set his house in order." I have lost, Sir, that dearest earthly treasure, that greatest blessing here below, that last, best gift which completed Adam's happiness in the garden of bliss, I have lost—I have lost—my trembling hand refuses its office, the frightened ink recoils up the quill—Tell it not in Gath—I have lost—a—a—a wife!

Fairest of God's creation, last and best!

*Now art thou lost.*

You have doubtless, Sir, heard my story, heard it with all its exaggerations; but as my actions, and my motives for action, are peculiarly like myself, and that is peculiarly like nobody else, I shall just beg a leisure-moment and a spare-tear of you, until I tell my own story my own way.

I have been all my life, Sir, one of the rueful-looking, long-visaged sons of Disappointment.—A damned star has always kept my zenith, and shed its baleful influence, in that emphatic curse of the Prophet—"And behold whatsoever he doth, it shall not prosper!" I rarely hit where I aim: and if I want any thing, I am almost sure never to find it where I seek it. For instance, if my penknife is needed, I pull out twenty things—a plough-wedge, a horse nail, an old letter, or a tattered rhyme, in short everything but my penknife; and that, at last, after a painful, fruitless search, will be found in the unsuspected corner of an unsuspected pocket, as if on purpose thrust out of the way. Still, Sir, I had long had a wishing eye to that inestimable blessing, a wife. My mouth watered deliciously, to see a young fellow, after a few idle, common-place stories from a gentleman in black, strip and go to bed with a young girl, and no one

durst say black was his eye ; while I, for just doing the same thing, only wanting that ceremony, am made a Sunday's laughing stock, and abused like a pick-pocket. I was well aware though, that if my ill-starred fortune got the least hint of my connubial wish, my schemes would go to nothing. To prevent this, I determined to take my measures with such thought and forethought, such a caution and precaution, that all the malignant planets in the Hemisphere should be unable to blight my designs. Not content with, to use the words of the celebrated Westminster Divines, "The outward and ordinary means" I left no stone unturned, sounded every unfathomed depth ; stopped up every hole and bore of an objection ; but, how shall I tell it ! notwithstanding all this turning of stones, stopping of bores, etc.—whilst I, with secret pleasure, marked my project swelling to the proper crisis, and was singing *Te Deum* in my own fancy ; or, to change the metaphor, whilst I was vigorously pressing on the siege ; had carried the counter-scarp, and made a practicable breach behind the curtain in the gorge of the very principal bastion ; nay, having mastered the covered way, I had found means to slip a choice detachment into the very citadel ; while I had nothing less in view than displaying my victorious banners on the top of the walls—Heaven and Earth must I "remember" ! my damned star wheeled about to the zenith, by whose baleful rays Fortune took the alarm, and pouring in her forces on all quarters, front, flank, and rear, I was utterly routed, my baggage lost, my military chest in the hands of the enemy ; and your poor devil of a humble servant, commander-in-chief forsooth, was obliged to scamper away, without either arms or honors of war, except his bare bayonet and cartridge-pouch ; nor in all probability had he escaped even with them, had he not made a shift to hide them under the lap of his military cloak.

In short, Pharaoh at the Red Sea, Darius at Arbela, Pompey at Pharsalia, Edward at Bannockburn, Charles at Pultaway, Burgoyne at Saratoga—no Prince, Potentate, or Commander of ancient or modern unfortunate memory ever got a more shameful or more total defeat—

“O horrible ! O horrible ! most horrible !”

How I bore this, can only be conceived. All powers of recital labor far, far behind. There is a pretty large portion of bedlam in the composition of a poet at any time ; but on this occasion I was nine parts and nine tenths, out of ten, stark staring mad. At first, I was fixed in stuporific insensibility, silent, sullen, staring like Lot's wife besaltified in the plains of Gomorha. But my second paroxysm chiefly beggars description. The rifted northern ocean when returning suns dissolve the chains of winter, and loosening precipices of long accumulated ice tempest with hideous crash the foaming Deep—images like these may give some faint shadow of what was the situation of my bosom. My chained faculties broke loose, my maddening passions, roused to tenfold fury, bore over their banks with impetuous, resistless force, carrying every check and principle before them. Counsel, was an unheeded call to the passing hurricane ; Reason, a screaming elk in the vortex of Moskoestrom ; and Religion, a feebly-struggling beaver down the roarings of Niagara. I reprobated the first moment of my existence ; execrated Adam's folly-infatuated wish for that goodly-looking, but poison-breathing gift, which had ruined him, and undone me ; and called on the womb of uncreated night to close over me and all my sorrows.

A storm naturally overblows itself. My spent passions gradually sank into a lurid calm ; and by degrees I have subsided into the time-settled sorrow of the sable widower,



who, wiping away the decent tear, lifts up his grief-worn eye to look—for another wife.—

“Such is the state of man ; to-day he buds  
His tender leaves of hope ; to-morrow blossoms,  
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him ;  
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,  
And nips his root, and then he falls as I do.”

Such, Sir, has been this fatal era of my life.—“ And it came to pass, that when I looked for sweet, behold bitter ; and for light, behold darkness.”

But this is not all.—Already the holy beagles, the hough-magandie pack, begin to snuff the scent, and I expect every moment to see them cast off, and hear them after me in full cry ; but as I am an old fox, I shall give them dodging and doubling for it, and by and by, I intend to earth among the mountains of Jamaica.

I am so struck, on a review, with the impertinent length of this letter, that I shall not increase it with one single word of apology ; but abruptly conclude with assuring you that I am, Sir, Your and Misery's most humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

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The name of the gentleman to whom the foregoing strange epistle is addressed is found in the list of subscribers to the author's edition, Edinburgh 1787. That Burns himself thought well of this voluminous letter is certain from the circumstance that he preserved a copy of it, and several years afterwards was at the pains to transcribe it into the book of his letters collected by him for his friend, Mr Riddell of Friar's Carse. In that collection it is placed No. 2 in the list, and headed by the following introductory note :—

This was addressed to one of the most accomplished of the sons of men that I ever met with—John Arnot of Dalquhatswood in Ayrshire. Alas ! had he been equally



prudent ! It is a damning circumstance in human life that prudence, insular and alone, without another virtue, will conduct a man to the most envied eminence in life, while, having every other quality, and wanting that one, which at best is itself but a half virtue, will not save a man from the world's contempt, and real misery—perhaps perdition.

The story of the letter was this. I had got deeply in love with a young fair one, of which proofs were every day arising more and more to view. I would gladly have covered my *Inamorata* from the darts of calumny with the conjugal shield—nay, I had actually made up some sort of Wedlock ; but I was at that time deep in the guilt of being unfortunate, for which good and lawful objection, the lady's friends broke all our measures and drove me *au desespoir*.

#### EPISODE OF HIGHLAND MARY.

“Lightly tread, 'tis hallowed ground.”

It may well excite our wonder that in the continued mental exercise of composing and preparing his poems for the press at this very time, Burns could step aside and spend his energies in penning such a letter as the above to Arnot. But it is to us more wonderful still, that, in such a whirl of excitement, and groaning under the contempt poured on the matrimonial coverture he had offered to Jean Armour, he found time and zest for secret interviews, and anxious hours of courtship, with another young woman of the village, whose heart and hand he managed to engage at this crisis. His own memorable words on this point are these :—“After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment, we met by appointment on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot by the banks of Ayr, where we spent the day in taking a farewell before she should embark for the West Highlands to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life.”

“Projected change of life !” what could that mean ! In the foregoing letter, penned just two weeks prior to that day of

solemnity on Ayr banks, he speaks of himself as “an old fox given to dodging and doubling,” and thus indicates a serious projected change:—“I intend to earth among the mountains of Jamaica!” What poor Mary’s project was, it is hard to conjecture. But he made no secret of his Jamaica scheme in the ballads he at that time addressed to her:—

“O plight me your faith, my Mary,  
And plight me your lily-white hand;  
O plight me your faith, my Mary  
Before I leave Scotia’s strand!”

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“For her I’ll dare the billow’s roar,  
For her I’ll trace a distant shore,  
That Indian wealth may lustre throw  
Around my Highland Lassie, O.”

“Truly,” as Chambers observes, “the heart of man is full of mystery! Sometimes when it appears most keenly set upon one passion, it is at the nearest point to turning into some wholly different channel. Its reactions from wounded affections are amongst its most surprising transitions.”

This mysterious episode in the life of Burns is of sufficient importance to warrant us in halting here for a little to explain to the reader that, in all biographies of the poet till within the past thirty years, it is more or less assumed that “Highland Mary” was one of his earlier personal heroines. Cromek, indeed, who was the first to reveal her surname, “Campbell,” expressly says that she was “the *first* object of the youthful Poet’s love.” It was no doubt Burns himself who, for sufficient reasons of his own, in the account he vouchsafed to give of that love attachment, misled his readers as to its date. When he sent the thrilling dirge—“Highland Mary” to Thomson, in November 1792, he thus wrote, truly enough:—“The subject is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days.” But there is more dubiety in his words when he tendered to the same gentleman the song, *Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary*:—“In my *very early* years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl.” Finally, in his note to the Song, “My Highland Lassie, O,” in Glenriddell’s interleaved copy of *The Museum*, we are now apt to startle at the mis-

leading words :—"This is a composition of mine in very early life, before I was known at all in the world."

Dr Currie did not expressly state the precise period of Burns's life when this tenderest of his love-attachments intervened; but his very guarded words indicate that the anxiously covered facts had been confided to him, and that he had been requested to tread lightly on such hallowed ground. After narrating the poet's rencontre with the *Lass of Ballochmyle*, and quoting the song which it produced, he adds :—"The banks of the Ayr formed the scene of youthful passions of a still tenderer nature, the history of which it would be improper to reveal, were it even in our power, and the traces of which will soon be discoverable only in those strains of nature and sensibility to which they gave birth. The song 'Highland Mary' is known to relate to one of these attachments."

It is truly marvellous that the above passage in Currie's biography of the Bard, together with the key afforded by the fact that all the poet's own references to Mary are identified with his scheme of emigrating to the West Indies, failed to open the eyes of subsequent editors and annotators to discern the date and character of this celebrated passion. Lockhart, who in 1828 first quoted the poet's holographs on Mary's Bible with the inscribed address "Mossgiel," pointing like a finger-post to the long-hidden facts, never ventured forward into the light. His mind seems to have been so imbued with the popular notion, adopted so extravagantly by Cromek, that he thus dismisses the question of date :—"Highland Mary seems to have died ere her lover had made any of his more serious efforts in poetry, seeing, in his Epistle to Sillar (one of the earliest of those attempts, according to Gilbert,) he celebrates his *Jean*." Sir Harris Nicolas in 1830, Cunningham in 1834, the Ettrick Shepherd in 1835, and Chambers in 1838, all follow in the same track, without making use of the hint afforded by the discovery of Mary's Bible. The obvious inference suggested, by the bard's courtship of Mary being identified with his resolution to emigrate, is thrust aside by Lockhart, and by Cunningham, thus :—"In 1786 Burns seems to have revived a notion which he had long entertained, of going out as a sort of steward, to the plantations." This unfounded statement is thus supported by Chambers :—"That the poet contemplated leaving Scotland at the

early period of his career when he loved Mary Campbell has never been stated in his biography ; but a note of his own on the song, ‘Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,’ renders it probable that such was really the case.” How Chambers, with the inscription on Mary’s Bible lying before him, could have penned such a sentence as that, seems incomprehensible. Professor Wilson followed with his celebrated “Essay on Burns,” in 1840. He, with more consistency in speaking of “the early period of the poet’s career when he loved Mary Campbell,” ignores altogether the recovery of Mary’s Bible, and treats the subject from Cromek’s point of view. Very picturesquely he thus refers to the poet’s residence in Irvine, during his twenty-third year, as the critical turning-point in his moral progress :—“During these years, the most dangerous in the life of every one, Burns was singularly free from the sin, to which nature is prone ; nor had he drunk of that guilty cup of intoxication of the passions that bewilders the virtues, and changes their wisdom into foolishness, of the discreetest of the children of men. But drink of it at last he did, and like other sinners seemed sometimes even to glory in his shame . . . . . How wisely (taught by his own experience) he thus addresses his young friend !

The sacred love o’ weel-placed love,  
 Luxuriously indulge it ;  
 But never tempt th’ illicit rove,  
 Tho’ naething should divulge it :  
 I waive the quantum o’ the sin,  
 The hazard o’ concealing ;  
 But Och ! it hardens a’ within,  
 And petrifies the feeling !

It was before any such petrification of feeling had to be deplored by Robert Burns that he loved Mary Campbell—his ‘Highland Mary,’ with as pure a passion as ever possessed young poet’s heart ; nor is there so sweet and sad a passage recorded in the life of any other one of all the sons of Song. Many such partings have there been between us poor beings—blind at all times, and often blindest in our bliss—but all gone to oblivion. But that hour can never die ! that scene will live for ever ! Immortal the two shadows standing there holding together the Bible, a little rivulet flowing between, in which, as in consecrated water, they have

dipt their hands, water not purer than at this moment their united hearts !”

Who would seek to disturb a picture like this ? “The scene (to quote from an eloquent article on the subject in the *Inverness Courier* of 31st January 1850,) sheds an indescribable charm over our poetical history and over the peasant life of Scotland : it falls on the heart like Sabbath sunshine which hallowed the woods, the stream, the parting hour ; and for once we see genius, virtue, and beauty, in perfect union, irradiated with light from heaven.

“The entire innocence and completeness of this picture, however, have been disturbed—we shall not say broken—by a discussion raised at a meeting of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, held at Edinburgh on the 16th current. Some new members, including the Duke of Argyle and Lord Murray, were elected ; John Whitefoord Mackenzie, Esq., was in the chair ; Professor Wilson, Robert Chambers, and others were present. ‘The chief attraction of the evening,’ according to the report in the *Edinburgh Courant*, ‘was a communication by Mr William Douglas, embodying the result of an extensive correspondence, and a considerable amount of critical research, to ascertain the exact period in the history of Burns, when his intercourse with *Highland Mary* occurred.’” The learned writer of the article in the *Inverness paper*, after giving his readers a sketch of the new disturbing theory, goes consecutively over the grounds of argument, and contends hard to prove that the second Sunday of May 1785, rather than of 1786, was the celebrated “day of parting love” between Burns and Mary. “We must not,” he writes, “suffer the noble love story of Highland Mary and her Poet to be thrust in as a mere interlude between the acts of bonie Jean Armour’s drama. We must not suffer so precious an image to be destroyed—so invaluable and bright a portion of Burns’s history to be ‘crushed beneath the furrow’s weight’ like all the hopes and aspirations of his youth.”

The late Alexander Russel, editor of *The Scotsman*, had in the meantime taken up the subject right heartily, and in a leader of uncommon length (of date 26th January 1850) went into the heart and marrow of the question, opening in these words :—“The question is one, to the stirring of which objections



may be urged on several, though, as we think, insufficient grounds. It may be pleaded, with show of reason, that we have already had more than enough about the Bard's amours; but that is rather an argument against the notion of beginning to affect a reverential delicacy at this time of day, and refusing to hear the *truth* on a particular point concerning which we have hitherto been willing to hear error. It may also be pleaded that the new colour given to this particular case tends to destroy the prevalent ideas as to one of the purest and tenderest episodes in the poet's life. To this, however, the obvious reply presents itself that now, when this object of the poet's affection has assumed so prominent a place in his biography, and in the history of his noblest poems, it is surely too late to tell us that we must shun the investigation of one of the most remarkable episodes of his life, lest in freeing it from misapprehension and error, we shall also impair somewhat of its romance. But, while we have no right to shut our eyes to the truth if thrust before us, or even if plainly accessible, there really is little or nothing in the statements sought to be established which can cast a less pleasing hue on the ever-famous attachment in question, or on the poet's character for sincerity and faithfulness in love affairs. Certainly we can see nothing in the spirit in which the inquiry has been approached, or in the keen popular interest which still exists regarding such details, that indicates any want of reverence and love for Burns. On the contrary, such things may much more justifiably be held as indications of the consoling and elating fact that, even in these days of feebleness and Pharisaism, the Scottish love for him who was not only a great Poet, but, spite of his faults and follies, a great Man, continues to burn in undecaying, undying strength.

"The question now raised is, What was the *date* of Burns's brief but deep attachment to Mary Campbell? Mr Douglas thus tells how he was led to enter on the inquiry:—"I had been trying to construct, for my own use, a chronological table of the events of Burns's life, and of the several productions of his muse. *Highland Mary* completely stumbled me, I tried every year in rotation from his time of puberty down to the said year 1786, but in none of them could I get her to fit, and I found the table would do very well if I left her out altogether. The events of his early life I found scattered in confusion like a child's puzzle-map, and

as piece after piece was joined to its proper place, I ever found, when the whole was united, that Mary was left out! Poor wandering spirit! like Noah's dove 'there was found no rest for the sole of her foot,' and yet I could not, like Noah, reach forth my hand and take her in. I began in truth to *doubt* her reality; the nursery-rhyme occurred to me—

'And she grew, and she grew to a milk-white doo,

And she flew, and she flew to the lift sae blue,'

and there in the *lift* I left her—*Mary in Heaven!* The earth disowned her!

"Having made enquiries and arrived at a conclusion different from that popularly accepted, Mr Douglas was stimulated to *write* by the appearance of the following note to the third volume of Wood's edition of the Songs of Scotland.

Thos. Thorburn Esq. of Ryedale, in a letter of 9th Feb. 1849, to the editor, writes as follows regarding Highland Mary :—

'I lately received some particulars regarding Highland Mary which are interesting. She was born at the farm of Auchanmore, in the parish of Dunoon, Argyleshire, in the summer of 1761 or 1762, and died of an epidemic at Greenock on or about 17th September 1784. She was of a fair complexion, with reddish fair hair and dark blue eyes, and of a lively disposition. Burns left Lochlie and went to Mossgiel at Martinmas 1783, and this proves the authenticity of the bibles which were lately deposited in the Ayr Monument, with 'Rob. Burns, Mossgiel,' written on them. The never-to-be-forgotten meeting of Burns and Mary must therefore have taken place on the second Sunday of May 1784.'

"This being the first attempt really to fix the *date* of Mary's death, Mr Douglas entered into a correspondence with Mr Thorburn, asking his authority for thus positively fixing a point on which the biographers of Burns have been silent or vague. The only authority given by Mr Thorburn was the session-clerk of Greenock (John Munro) who was himself present at her funeral, and had lately made enquiries among surviving relatives of Mary Campbell, and who, as the result of his knowledge, affirmed that her interment *must* have taken place on or about 17th September 1784. Mr Douglas suggested new difficulties and new enquiries, and the session-clerk resumed the search and was converted; becoming convinced—partly through the recollection of old persons, Mary's relations, that it was in the year of 'the awfu' fever,' partly through rubbing up his own memory as



to the circumstances leading to his attendance as a boy at the funeral—that the death took place in the autumn of 1786. Mr Thorburn, however, though deserted by his authority, still stoutly maintains, that it is ‘a moral, physical, and mathematical impossibility that Mary could have been alive in 1786.’

“Although, in contact with the glorious poetry which Burns never failed to pour forth on the theme which kindled his highest and purest inspiration, inquiries as to dates may seem small and harsh, yet when the poet has himself left on record the day of the *week*, there can be nothing petty or unseemly in trying also to fix the *year* of that famous interview which is embalmed in immortal verse, and which to the eyes even of men in distant lands and distant days will for ever render green the banks and braes, and bright the streams ‘around the Castle o’ Montgomery.’ The designation ‘Mossgiel’ on the bibles proves that the attachment could not have existed prior to 1784, and scarcely then; thus there are only two years between the disputed dates—the difference involving the question, whether Burns’s attachment to Mary *preceded* or *interrupted* his connexion with his future wife, Jean Armour. And here we may dismiss the arguments of the advocates for the earlier of these dates, drawn from Burns having afterwards said that the attachment was in his ‘very early years.’ In the use of such a phrase, no distinction worth founding on can be made between a man of twenty-five and a man of twenty-seven. Strictly it is applicable to neither—loosely, to either.”

Mr Russel winds up his careful article with the following concluding words:—“It may help to a fair consideration of the question to mention that, on the evidence of Mr Douglas’s paper (which we have found no reason to subtract from, but, on the contrary, have added something to in confirmation), Professor Wilson and Mr Robert Chambers have declared themselves convinced, although both were more or less committed by their writings to an opposite view; and to this we are now able to add the conclusive, and altogether incontrovertible evidence, that Mrs Begg, the poet’s sister, now acknowledges the correctness of the conclusions arrived at, and admits that the facts have been all along known to the family.

“We cannot conclude without expressing surprise that, among the numerous biographers of Burns, there should not be one who

does not, in this and other cases, exhibit a lamentable destitution, looseness, and confusion in the matter of dates."

The importance of this subject in the biography of Burns must be our excuse for the lengthened discussion we have laid before the reader, and the beauty of the vignette which faces the frontispiece to this volume will justify us in reproducing the following passage from the Rev. Hamilton Paul's Memoir of Burns, (1819), which so well describes the locality there represented.

"The scenery of the Ayr from Sorn to the ancient burgh at its mouth, though it may be equalled in grandeur, is scarcely anywhere surpassed in beauty. To trace its meanders, to wander amid its green woods, to lean over its precipitous and rocky banks, to explore its coves, to survey its gothic towers, and to admire its modern edifices, is not only highly delightful but truly inspiring. If the Poet in his excursions along the banks of the river, or in penetrating into the deepest recesses of the grove, be accompanied by his favourite fair one, whose admiration of rural and sylvan beauty is akin to his own, however hazardous the experiment, the bliss is ecstatic. To warn the young and unsuspecting of their danger is only to stimulate their curiosity. The well-meant dissuasive of Thomson is more seductive in its tendency than the admirers of that poet's morality are aware :—

‘ Ah ! then ye Fair,  
Be greatly cautious of your sliding hearts ;  
Dare not th’ infectious sigh, nor in the bower,  
While evening draws her crimson curtains round,  
Trust your soft minutes with betraying man.’

"We are decidedly of opinion that the inexperienced fair one will be equally disposed to disregard this sentimental prohibition, and to accept the invitation of another bard, whose libertinism is less disguised :—

‘ Will you go to the bower I have shaded for you,  
Your bed shall be roses bespangled with dew.’

"Let the traveller from Ayr to Mauchline pause at the spot where the Fail disembogues itself into the Ayr. Let him take his station near the neat little cottage on the sloping green at the side of the wood, and let him cast his eyes across the stream where the trees recede from one another and form a vista on the

grey rocks which, mantled over with tangling shrubs, wild roses, heath, and honeysuckle, project from the opposite side, and we tell him that *there*, or *thereabout*, Burns took the last farewell of his 'sweet Highland Mary.' The 'Castle of Montgomery,' which, with its 'banks and braes and streams around,' forms a distinguished accessory of that distressingly tender ballad, is Coilsfield, one of the seats of the Earl of Eglinton." \*

A good deal of confusion has been created in the chronology of some of the poet's smaller pieces through the misjudgment of Mr Cromeek, in printing, as a portion of the early Common-place Book, closed in October 1785, the following Scrap from some other Journal or Memoranda of the year 1786. The reader, by reverting to p. 75, *supra*, will see that the poet has no entry in the Common-place Book betwixt the song "My girl she's airy," dated September 1784, and the ballad of "John Barleycorn," inserted under date "June 1785." Cromeek therefore ventured to fill up the blank by interpolating four poetical pieces headed by a prose passage entitled "Egotisms from my own sensations." There cannot be a reasonable doubt that 1786, rather than 1785, was the year in which those "Egotisms" were penned. In May 1785, the time and the occasion had not yet arrived for him thus to sing of his impending severance from Jean Armour:—

"Tho' mountains frown and deserts howl, and oceans roar between;  
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul, I still would love my Jean."

This, be it observed, although not recorded till May, must have been composed in March preceding, when he came to the resolution of publishing his poems with a view to raise funds to convey him to Jamaica. Moreover, the song "There was a lad was born in Kyle," suggests that while the author composed it, he was anticipating the favourable judgment of the public on the poems he was then preparing for the press:—

"He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',  
But ay a heart aboon them a':  
He'll be a credit till us a',  
We'll a' be proud o' Robin."

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\* The reader, on this subject, may consult the notes in Vol. I. pp. 294 to 300.

Lastly, the "Elegy on the death of Robert Ruisseau" raises suggestions of the same kind :—

" Tho' he was bred to kintra wark,  
And counted was baith wight and stork,  
Yet that was never Robin's mark  
To mak a man ;  
But, tell him he was learn'd and clark,  
Ye roos'd him then ! "

Even the French translation of his own name "ruisseaux" for *burns*, or *riculets*, applies more fitly to the contracted name *Burns* than to *Burness*, which latter form he used down to, and including, 3rd April 1786. On the whole, it seems very probable that this humorous Elegy was his first effort to produce a telling *finale-piece* for his forthcoming volume, and was ultimately thrown aside to make way for the solemnising "Bard's Epitaph,"—

" Is there a man whose judgement clear  
Can others teach the course to steer,  
Yet runs, himself, Life's mad career,  
Wild as the wave,  
Here pause—and thro' the starting tear,  
Survey this grave."

## EGOTISMS FROM MY OWN SENSATIONS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

May, ———

I don't well know what is the reason of it, but somehow or other though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved ; yet I never could get the art of commanding respect. I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in what Sterne calls "that understrapping virtue of discretion." I am so apt to a *lapsus linguæ*, that I sometimes think the character of a certain great man I have read of somewhere is very much *apropos* to myself, that he was "a compound of great talents and great folly."

N.B.—To try if I can discover the causes of this wretched infirmity, and, if possible, to mend it.

The preceding remarks are followed by these pieces :—

1. Song—"Tho' cruel Fate should bid us part,"
2. Fragment—"One night as I did wander,"
3. Song—"There was a lad was born in Kyle,"
4. Elegy on the Death of Robert Ruisseaux,

*Pp. 129 to 134, Vol. I.*

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR JOHN KENNEDY,

ENCLOSING THE AUTHOR'S "EPISTLE TO JOHN RANKINE,"

VOL. I., P. 68.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 17th May 1786.

DEAR SIR,—I have sent you the above hasty copy as I promised. In about three or four weeks I shall probably set the press a-going. I am much hurried at present, otherwise your diligence, so very friendly in my Subscription, should have a more lengthened acknowledgment from, Dear Sir, your obliged Servant, ROBT. BURNS.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO MR DAVID BRICE, SHOEMAKER, GLASGOW.

(CROMEK, 1808,\* and CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 12th June 1786.

DEAR BRICE,—I received your message by G. Paterson, and as I am very throng at present, I just write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate as your humble servant still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you that will give me any pleasure to mention, or you to hear.

Poor ill-advised, ungrateful Armour came home on Friday last. You have heard all the particulars of that

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\* Cromeek gave a mere fragment of this letter, which Cunningham afterwards published more completely.

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

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

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

ROBT. BURNS.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO MR JAMES BURNES, WRITER, MONTROSE.

(*Here first published.*)

MY DEAR SIR,—I wrote you about three half-twelve



months ago by post, and I wrote you about a year ago by a private hand, and I have not had the least return from you. I have just half-a-minute to write you by an Aberdeen gentleman of my acquaintance who promises to wait upon you with this on his arrival, or soon after : I intend to send you a letter accompanied with a singular curiosity in about five or six weeks hence. I shall then write you more at large ; meanwhile you are just to look on this as a *memento me*. I hope all friends are well.—I am ever, my dear Sir, your affectionate cousin,

ROBT. BURNES.

MOSSGIEL, near MAUCHLIN, }  
*July 5th, 1786.*

The poet's holograph of this note is in his monument at Edinburgh. The "singular curiosity" here referred to means a copy of the first edition of the author's poems, then at the press. The reader will notice that although Burns had, some three months previously, ceased to write his name, as in two syllables, he here returns to the old mode of spelling, in deference to his correspondent.

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

(HOGG and MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

MOSSGIEL, *9th July 1786.*

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

No news worth anything ; only godly Bryan was in the *Inquisition* yesterday, and half the countryside as witnesses against him. He still stands out steady and denying ; but proof was led yesternight of circumstances highly suspicious, almost *de facto* : one of the girls made oath that she upon



a time rashly entered the house (to speak in your cant) "in the hour of cause."\*

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

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

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR DAVID BRICE, SHOEMAKER, GLASGOW.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 17th July 1786.

I HAVE been so throng printing my Poems, that I could scarcely find as much time as to write to you. Poor Armour is come back again to Mauchline, and I went to call for her, and her mother forbade me the house, nor did she herself express much sorrow for what she has done. I have already appeared publicly in church, and was indulged in the liberty of standing in my own seat. I do this to get a certificate as a bachelor, which Mr Auld has promised me.

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\* This paragraph Dr Chambers has fastidiously omitted. The "Inquisition" here alluded to was probably the "Court of Equity" held within the house of John Dow, vintner, some account of which is given at p. 166. Vol. I. John Richmond had formerly acted as "Clerk of Court," and hence the reason of "godly Bryan's" delinquency being communicated to him.

I am now fixed to go for the West Indies in October. Jean and her friends insisted much that she should stand along with me in the kirk, but the minister would not allow it, which bred a great trouble I assure you, and I am blamed as the cause of it, though I am sure I am innocent; but I am very much pleased, for all that, not to have had her company. I have no news to tell you that I remember. I am really happy to hear of your welfare, and that you are so well in Glasgow. I must certainly see you before I leave the country. I shall expect to hear from you soon, and am, dear Brice, yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

The printing of the poet's first edition of his poems was now approaching completion, and the Armours, in the supposition that the profits arising from the sale of the volume might amount to a considerable sum, conceived that the present might be a favourable opportunity to raise a legal process against Burns, to compel him to find security for the maintenance of the apparent offspring of which their daughter Jean was then pregnant. As the poet made no secret of his intention to emigrate to the West Indies as soon as he could command the necessary funds, such proceedings were quite competent in law; but it has been pleaded in excuse of Jean's parents that their sole intention was to hasten his departure, lest his success by the publication, might induce him to remain in this country—as it eventually did. "Humble as Miss Armour's station was," wrote Gilbert, "and great though her imprudence had been, she still, in the eyes of her partial parents, might look to a better connexion than with my friendless and unhappy brother at that time."

Whatever were the real intentions of the Armours in adopting those proceedings, it is certain that Burns then saw only revenge and covetousness as their motives, and he used every means in his power to thwart and disappoint them. A year after the time we speak of, and even after a renewal of his love-intercourse with Jean, he wrote thus disapprovingly of their measures:—"Some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless legal pack at my heels." The following deed of assignment, in favour of his brother

Gilbert, of all his earthly possessions, including "the profits that may arise from the publication of my Poems presently in the press," tells its own tale. His fatherly care for the welfare of his former illegitimate child—"Wee image of my bonie Betty," in contrast to his contemptuous disregard of Jean's forthcoming blossom, must have been intended as a severe cut to the Armours.

KNOW all men by these presents, that I, Robert Burns in Mossiel : whereas I intend to leave Scotland and go abroad, and having acknowledged myself the father of a child named Elizabeth, begot upon Elizabeth Paton in Largside : and whereas Gilbert Burns in Mossiel, my brother, has become bound, and hereby binds and obliges himself to aliment, clothe, and educate my said natural child in a suitable manner as if she was his own, in case her Mother chuse to part with her, and that until she arrive at the age of fifteen years. Therefore, and to enable the said Gilbert Burns to make good his said engagement, wit ye me to have assigned, disposed, conveyed, and made over to, and in favors of, the said Gilbert Burns, his Heirs, Executors, and Assignees, who are always to be bound in like manner with himself, all and sundry Goods, Gear, Corns, Cattle, Horses, Nolt, Sheep, Household furniture, and all other movable effects of whatever kind that I shall leave behind me on my departure from the kingdom, after allowing for my part of the conjunct debts due by the said Gilbert Burns and me as joint tacksmen of the farm of Mossiel. And particularly, without prejudice of the foresaid generality, the profits that may arise from the publication of my Poems presently in the press—And also, I hereby dispoine and convey to him in trust for behoof of my said natural daughter, the Copyright of said Poems, in so far as I can dispose of the same by law, after she arrives at the above age of fifteen years complete—Surrogating and Substituting the said Gilbert Burns, my

brother, and his foresaids, in my full right, title, room, and place of the whole premises, with power to him to intromit with, and dispose upon the same at pleasure, and in general to do every other thing in the premises that I could have done myself before granting hereof, but always with and under the conditions before expressed—and I oblige myself to warrand this disposition and assignation from my own proper fact and deed allenarly—Consenting to the Registration hereof in the Books of Council and Session, or any other Judges Books competent, therein to remain for preservation, and constitute . . . . Procutors, &c.

In witness whereof I have wrote and signed these presents, consisting of this and the preceeding page, on stamped paper, with my own hand, at Mossiel, the twenty-second day of July, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six years.

ROBERT BURNS.\*

(<sup>3</sup>) TO JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

OLD ROME FOREST,† 30th July, 1786.

MY DEAR RICHMOND,—My hour is now come—you and I will never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at farthest, to repair aboard the Nancy, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica, and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it?

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\* This document is here printed *verbatim et literatim* from a well executed fac-simile of the original MS. Cunningham was the first to include it in an edition of the Poet's Works. Legal intimation of the assignment was duly made on 24th July, by William Chalmers, N.P., at the Market Cross of Ayr.

† "Old Rome Forest" is in the neighbourhood of Kilmarnock, at which place resided a relative of the poet, and who took charge of his travelling chest. This explains the passage in the Autobiography:—"My chest was on the road to Greenock."

Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail till I find security for an enormous sum. This they keep an entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of; and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son of the gospel, "have no where to lay my head." I know you will pour an execration on her head, but spare the poor, ill-advised girl, for my sake; though, may all the furies that rend the injured, enraged lover's bosom, await her mother until her latest hour! I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn. I can write no more—let me hear from you by the return of coach. I will write you ere I go.—I am, dear Sir, yours here and hereafter, R. B.

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The day after the preceding letter was penned, John Wilson, Printer in Kilmarnock, began to issue subscription copies of the precious volume of *Scottish Poems*, which his press had been honoured to print. We gather the following interesting particulars concerning the distribution of that eagerly longed-for Book, from the careful printer's own memoranda, now or lately in the possession of Robert Cole, Esq., London.

On 31st July 1786, one copy was delivered to Mr Aiken of Ayr: on 5th August he received 12 copies: on 10th August, 20 copies: on 12th August, 40 copies: on 14th August, 36 copies; and on 16th August, 36 copies—in all 145 copies, being nearly one fourth of the whole impression.

On 2nd August, Mr Robert Muir of Kilmarnock obtained two copies; and between that and 17th August, he received 70 more. In referring to that circumstance, Mr Gilbert Burns made the mistake of setting down the name of Mr Wm. Parker, for that of Robert Muir.

On 4th August, Mr James Smith of Mauchline received one copy; and on the 8th of that month he obtained 40 more. On 18th August, 40 copies were delivered to Mr Gavin Hamilton of Mauchline. Burns himself, on three several occasions, obtained one copy; namely on 3rd, 4th and 5th of August. Gilbert Burns

obtained 70 copies for distribution during August ; and a like number was distributed by John Wilson, the printer of the volume.

Besides copies supplied to William Parker, Thomas Samson, Ralph Sellars, and John Rankine of Adamhill, the following persons obtained the number of copies attached to their respective names:—John Kennedy, Dumfries House, 20 ; John Logan of Laight, 20 ; Mr M'Whinnie, Writer, Ayr, 20 ; David Sillar, Irvine, 14 ; William Niven, Maybole, 7 ; Walter Morton, Cumnock, 6 ; John Neilson, Kirkoswald, 5.

On 28th August, less than a month after the volume was printed, 559 copies had been disposed of, and only 15 remained on hand. Indeed, so scarce did the volume become, that the poet's brothers and sisters at Mossiel had not an opportunity of reading the poems in print, until they were furnished with a copy of the Edinburgh edition.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO MR JOHN KENNEDY, DUMFRIES HOUSE.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

KILMARNOCK, *August*, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your truly facetious epistle of the 3rd inst. gave me much entertainment. I was only sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as I passed your way, but we shall bring up all our leeway on Wednesday, the 16th current, when I hope to have it in my power to call on you and take a kind, very probably a last adieu, before I go for Jamaica ; and I expect orders to repair to Greenock every day. I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class. Could I have got a carrier, you should have had a score of vouchers for my Authorship ; but now you have them, let them speak for themselves.

Farewell, dear Friend ! may gude luck hit you,  
And 'mang her favorites admit you !



\* This is the gentleman referred to in John Wilson's memoranda above quoted. We shall hear of him again as "John Logan of Knockshinnoch" in connexion with "The Kirk's Alarm"—See p. 241, Vol. I.



(<sup>2</sup>) TO MONS. JAMES SMITH, MAUCHLINE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MONDAY MORNING, 14th Aug. 1786.

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

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

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\* Dr. Currie printed in the correspondence of the poet, a letter addressed to the latter by an early acquaintance, a Mr John Hutchinson, who had gone to reside in the West Indies. It is dated “Jamaica, St. Anns, 14 June 1787,” and thus proceeds:—“I received yours wherein you acquaint me you were engaged with Mr Douglas, Port Antonio, for three years, at Thirty pound St<sup>g</sup>. a-year; and am happy that some unexpected accident intervened to prevent your sailing with the vessel, as I have great reason to think Mr Douglas's employ would by no means have answered your expectations. I received a copy of your publication, for which I return you my thanks, and it is my own opinion, as well as that of such of my friends as have seen the poems, that they are most excellent in their kind. . . . I can by no means advise you now to think of coming to the West Indies, as, I assure you, there is no encouragement for a man of learning and genius here; and am very confident you can do far better in Great Britain than in Jamaica. . . . I will esteem it a particular favour if you will send me a copy of the other edition you are now printing.”

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

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

R. B.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MONS. THOMAS CAMPBELL, PENCLOE.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1867.)

[NEW CUMNOCK, 19th Aug. 1786.]

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

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

ROBERT BURNS.

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

(<sup>1</sup>) TO WILLIAM NIVEN, MERCHANT, MAYBOLE.

CARE OF THOMAS PIPER, SURGEON—TO BE LEFT AT DR  
CHARLES'S SHOP, AYR.

(Here first included in the Poet's Correspondence.)

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have been very throng ever since I

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\* The wife of this landlord at New Cumnock was Anne Rankine, a daughter of the waggish farmer at Adamhill. She long survived her husband, and used to sing to her customers Burns's song, "The Rigs o' barley," with an overpowering pipe, and quietly hint that she herself was the "Annie" of the song.

saw you, and have not got the whole of my promise performed to you ; but you know the old proverb, “ The break o’ a day’s no the break o’ a bargain.” Have patience and I will pay you all.

I thank you with the most heartfelt sincerity for the worthy knot of lads you introduced me to. Never did I meet with so many congenial souls together, without one dissonant jar in the concert. To all and each of them make my friendly compliments, particularly “ Spunkie youth, Tammie.”\* Remember me in the most respectful manner to the Bailie, and Mrs Niven,† to Mr Dun,‡ and the two truly worthy old gentlemen I had the honor of being introduced to on Friday ; tho’ I am afraid the conduct you forced me on may make them see me in a light I would fondly think I do not deserve.

I will perform the next of my promise soon ; in the meantime, remember this—never blaze my Songs among the million, as I would abhor to hear every prentice mouthing my poor performances in the streets. Every one of my Maybole friends is welcome to a copy if they chuse ; but I don’t wish them to go farther. I mean it as a small token of my respect for them—a respect as sincere as the love of dying saints.—I am ever, my d<sup>r</sup>. W<sup>m</sup>., your obliged.

ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, 30th August, 1786.

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The foregoing very interesting letter we believe still exists in a very dilapidated condition : it was printed—as an appendix to a small pamphlet of twenty-four pages, entitled “ The real Souter

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\* “ Spunkie Tammie,” Alias Thomas Piper, was a young professional assistant of the late Hugh Logan, M.D., long the only medical practitioner in Maybole and neighbourhood. “ Spunkie” went afterwards to Jamaica where he died.

† The “ Bailie and Mrs Niven ” were the parents of his correspondent.

‡ Mr Dun was the then parochial teacher of Maybole.

Johnny," published at Maybole in 1834. Friday the 28th of August was the day on which Burns had the jovial meeting with the Carrick friends referred to in the letter. He was then on his return home from a southward journey collecting the subscription money due by the subscribers to his volume. On Thursday, 17th August (as we learn from the above letter to Smith), he was to be in Mauchline at early morn, as he "rode through to Cumnock"—a day later than he had anticipated in his letter to John Kennedy.—Leaving Cumnock on the 19th he seems to have made a circuit by seaward direction, and tarried for some days in the locality of his maternal relatives. One special copy of his book he brought with him carefully inscribed to his old sweetheart, "Kirkoswald Peggy," now the wife of his own early acquaintance, John Neilson. That Inscription, with a relative note in Burns's autograph, is thus carefully engrossed in the Glenriddell volume of MS. poems:—  
 "Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the first Edition of my Poems, which I presented to an Old Sweetheart, then married.

Once fondly loved and still remember'd dear, &c.  
 (See Vol. I., page 333.)

"Twas the girl I mentioned in my letter to Dr Moore, where I speak of taking the sun's altitude. Poor Peggy! Her husband is my old acquaintance and a most worthy fellow. When I was taking leave of my Carrick relations, intending to go to the West Indies, when I took farewell of her, neither she nor I could speak a syllable. Her husband escorted me three miles on my road, and we both parted with tears."

Chambers gives the following particulars regarding the poet's halt at Maybole on this occasion, which are not inconsistent with the contents of his letter to Niven. It is clear, however, that Burns performed this pretty extensive journey on a good horse; and it is more than likely that his saddle-bags were well filled with copies of his volume for distribution in out-of-the-way localities. All this renders the idea of Chambers, that most of the journey was performed on foot, quite absurd. Nevertheless we quote his diverting account for what it is worth:—"In the course of his rounds Burns came to Maybole, where his Kirkoswald friend, Willie Niven, had been doing what

he could for the sale of his book. The bard was in the highest spirits, for, as he acknowledged, he had never before been in possession of so much ready cash. Willie assembled a few choice spirits at the King's Arms to do honour to the bard; and they spent a night together, Burns being, as usual, the life and soul of the party. He had, as we know, heavy griefs hanging at his heart; but amongst genial men, over a glass of Scotch drink, no pain could long molest him. Comic verses flashed from his mouth *al improvviso*, to the astonishment of the company, all of whom felt that a paragon of mirthful genius had come before them.

"In the pride of his heart next morning, he determined on hiring from his host a certain poor hack mare, well known along the whole road from Glasgow to Portpatrick as a beast that could now do little better than 'hoyte and hoble, and wintle like a saw-mont coble.' Willie and a few others of his Maybole friends walked out of town before him, for the purpose of taking leave at a particular spot; and before he came up, they had, by way of keeping up the style of the preceding evening, prepared a few mock heroics in which to bid him speed on his journey. Burns received their salute with a subdued merriment; and when their spokesman had done, broke out with—'What need of all this fine parade of verse, my friends? It would have been quite enough if you had said just this—

'Here comes Burns on his Rosinante;  
She's d——d poor, but he's d——d canty!'

And then he went on his way."

The reader, of course, will understand that the "Willie Niven" of Chambers's anecdote was the individual to whom the poet's letter of 30th August, above given, is addressed. Ever since the memorable summer spent at Kirkoswald in 1775, Burns and he had been friends and occasional correspondents, and when Niven commenced business in Maybole, it is said that our poet addressed to him a poetical *memento* giving appropriate advice, headed with the motto from Blair's Grave.

"Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul,  
Sweet'ner of life and solder of society."

Unfortunately, none of those early letters of Burns, nor the alleged poem have been produced; but Niven, who by steady application

to trade, eventually realised a handsome fortune, and became a landed proprietor, maintained to his dying day that when he first inspected Burns's Kilmarnock volume, he was so mortified to find, in the "Epistle to a young friend," inscribed to Andrew Aiken, merely a slightly altered version of the one which had been addressed to himself a year or two previously, that he resolved thenceforth to have nothing more to say to such a weathercock friend. How much of truth may be in this allegation it is impossible to determine; but if true, Niven was absurdly intolerant and exacting. Dr Waddell, who seems to have personally known the successful trader in his old age, says on this point:—"The gentleman doubtless had confidence enough to claim any sort of moral or social relationship to Burns that would exalt himself; but how he could ever be the bosom-friend of such a man, or entitled to the honour of an endearing epistle from him, is to us incomprehensible, except on the principle of some involuntary assimilation of antipathies."\*

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#### THE "THIRD OF LIBRA," AND ITS RESULTS.

An event was about to happen in Mauchline, which had the effect of considerably allaying the tempest in the poet's mind that manifested itself in his letters to John Richmond and to James Smith, above given. On Sunday the 3rd of September 1786, Burns made his way to the forenoon service in Mauchline church, but first called, on his road thither, upon his friend Gavin Hamilton, who asked the poet to bring him a poetical note of the sermon.

In the absence of Mr Auld, the pulpit was supplied on that occasion by the Rev. James Steven, afterwards preacher to a Scotch congregation in London, and ultimately minister of Kil-

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\* See the "Life and Works of Robert Burns, by P. Hatley Waddell, LL.D.," 1874. He also adds that in his native district, Niven "officiated as magistrate for many years, with an assumption of importance that exposed him occasionally to not a little popular ridicule." He moreover remarks that "from a very early age, Niven seems to have manifested the prudential, money-making faculty, and therefore it is extremely unlikely that Burns would throw away so much excellent advice on an acquaintance whose own worldly sagacity so little required it."



winning parish. Burns returned to Mr Hamilton's house after the service, where he found Mr Mackenzie, surgeon, in attendance. He produced four stanzas of his now well-known poem, called "The Calf," which he read to his two friends, and Mr Mackenzie having begged a copy of the lines, the author promised to forward them to him in the evening, which promise he more than performed, accompanied with the following note:—

JOHN MACKENZIE, ESQ., SURGEON, MAUCHLINE.

*(Here first published.)*

DR. SIR,—I am afraid the foregoing scrawl will be scarce intelligible.

The fourth and the last stanzas are added since I saw you to-day. I am ever, Dear Sir, Yours, ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

8 o'clock, P.M.

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While the poet had been musing over "The Calf" in church, all unconscious of what was being at that moment transacted, not two hundred yards from the pew in which he sat, it now appears that at "a quarter past Noon" of that Sunday, his Jean was delivered of twin children—a boy and girl. Chambers, on the information of Mrs Begg, records that not until the evening, did a message arrive at Mossgiel with the intelligence. How the news affected Burns is amusingly displayed in the following note which he immediately scrawled and posted.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

*(Here first included in the poet's correspondence.)*

WISH me luck, dear Richmond! Armour has just brought me a fine boy and girl at one throw. God bless the little dears!

'Green grow the rushes, O,  
 Green grow the rushes, O,  
 A feather bed is no sae saft,  
 As the bosoms o' the lasses, O.'

ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, }  
 Sunday, 3rd Sep. 1786. }



An arrangement by compromise was come to betwixt the poet's family and the Armour's (somewhat corresponding with the famous "Judgment of Solomon") whereby the twin-burden was divided equally between the two hitherto contending families—the girl was retained and nursed by Jean, while the boy was sent to Mossiel to be reared by *pap and spoon* under the care of the poet's mother and sisters.

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

WITH A COPY OF "THE CALF."

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSIEL, *Friday Morning*,  
[*Sep. 8th 1786.*]

MY FRIEND AND BROTHER.—Warm recollections of an absent friend presses so hard upon my heart, that I send him the prefixed bagatelle, pleased with the thought that it will greet the man of my bosom, and be a kind of distant language of friendship.

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

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

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

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

R. B.

The following letter of Dr Thomas Blacklock, the blind poet of Edinburgh, being of so much consequence in this part of the Biography of Burns, cannot well be omitted here. Dr Lawrie would seem to have retained it in his possession for at least a fortnight before he sent it, or a copy thereof, to Mr Hamilton, in order that it might be handed to Burns. We have seen, in the last letter to Muir, that the poet proposed to be in Kilmarnock about the middle of September, during which visit, it is supposed he composed "Tam Samson's Elegy." Before the end of that month he is again found at Mossgiel.

TO MR GEORGE LAWRIE, V.D.M.,

ST. MARGARET'S HILL, KILMARNOCK.

(CURRIE, 1800).

EDIN., *Sep. 4th*, 1786.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—I ought to have acknowledged your favour long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and perhaps one of the most genuine, entertainments of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the Poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of Nature's force and beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse; but whether from declining life, or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that agreeable intention.

Mr Stewart, Professor of Morals in this University, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers; but whether this was done or not I could never learn. I have little intercourse

with Dr Blair, but will take care to have the Poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman to whom I shewed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were, therefore, much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than any thing of the kind which has been published within my memory.

T. BLACKLOCK.

(<sup>5</sup>) TO MR JAMES BURNES, WRITER, MONTROSE.

(CHAMBERS, 1840.\*)

MOSSGIEL, *Tuesday, noon,*  
*Sep. 26, 1786.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I this moment receive yours—receive it with the honest, hospitable warmth of a friend's welcome. Whatever comes from you wakens always up the better blood about my heart, which your kind little recollections of my Parental Friend carries as far as it will go. 'Tis there, that man is blest! 'Tis there, my friend, man feels a consciousness of something within him above the trodden clod! The grateful reverence to the hoary earthly authors of his being—the burning glow when he clasps the woman of his soul to his bosom—the tender yearnings of heart for the little angels to whom he has given existence—these Nature has poured in milky streams about the human heart; and the man who never rouses them to action by the inspiring influences of their proper objects, loses by far the most pleasurable part of his existence.

My departure is uncertain, but I do not think it will be till after harvest. I will be on very short allowance of time

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\* The original MS. of this letter we believe to be in the Arbroath Museum.

indeed, if I do not comply with your friendly invitation. When it will be, I don't know; but if I can make my wish good I will endeavour to drop you a line some time before. My best compliments to Mrs Burness; I should be equally mortified should I drop in when she is abroad, but of that I suppose there is little chance.

What I have wrote, heaven knows; I have not time to review it, so accept of it in the beaten way of friendship. With the ordinary phrase, and perhaps rather more than the ordinary sincerity—I am, dear Sir, ever yours, R. B.

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TO MRS STEWART OF STAIR,

ON THE EVE OF MY INTENDED GOING TO JAMAICA.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[*Close of Sep., or beginning of Oct.*]

MADAM,—The hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promises so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs, &c., which never made their appearance, except to a friend or two at most. The song, to the tune of *Ettrick Banks*, you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript.\* I think, myself, it has some merit; both as a tolerable description of one of nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening; and one of the finest pieces of nature's workmanship, the finest indeed we know anything of—an amiable, beautiful young woman: but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, Madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the

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\* The Song addressed to Miss Alexander, Ballochmyle.

altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, Madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing of your connections in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found—the company of your compeers: and more, I am afraid that even the most refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure remember; the reception I got when I had the honour of waiting on you at Stair. I am little acquainted with politeness, but I know a good deal of benevolence of temper, and goodness of heart. Surely, did those in exalted stations know how happy they could make some classes of their inferiors by condescension and affability, they would never stand so high, measuring out with every look the height of their elevation, but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs Stewart of Stair.

R. B.

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Katherine Gordon, heiress of Afton in New Cumnock, was married on 1st Feb. 1770 to Alexander (afterwards Major-General) Stewart. Stair house, with its grounds picturesquely situated on the river Ayr, some three miles below Barskimming, was purchased from the Stair family, and continued to be the residence of Mrs and Major Stewart for upwards of twenty years, and there all their children—five in number—were born. They afterwards sold Stair House, which, after passing through several hands, was repurchased by the late Earl of Stair, who got the estate secured to his descendants by an entail. Major-General Stewart M.P., who was also Colonel of the 2nd Regiment of Foot, died at London in December 1794, aged 53, just six months after the marriage of his eldest daughter Catherine to Wm. Cunningham Esq. of Enterkin. After parting with Stair, Mrs Stewart erected a new mansion on a portion of the Enterkin estate,

bought for the purpose, and named her new residence "Afton Lodge." She died there in January 1818, having survived her daughter Mrs Cunningham by seven or eight years. The family record from which the above particulars are derived, says "She was buried in Stair Churchyard—a daughter on each side of her."

The "parcel of Songs, &c." which accompanied the letter that forms the text, consisted of the following eight pieces, and have been called "The Stair MSS." to distinguish them from the "Afton MSS." a list of which we have already furnished at page 28, Vol. III.

1. Original draft of "The Vision," unabridged as at first composed.
2. Song—"The Lass of Ballochmyle—tune, *Ettrick Banks*."
3. Song—"The gloomy night is gathering fast."
4. Song—"My Nanie, O."
5. Song—"Handsome Nell—the author's first attempt in verse."
6. "Song in the character of a ruined farmer."
7. Song—"Tho' cruel Fate should bid us part."
8. Poem—"Misgivings of Despondency on the approach of the Gloomy Monarch of the Grave."

On the death of Mr Dick, bookseller in Ayr, who had purchased this interesting lot from Mrs Stewart's grandson, his representatives could not arrange to have them preserved entire. The pieces were dissevered and shared piecemeal: ultimately the separate poems reached the auction-room, and were there dispersed. Even the long poem of *The Vision* has been cut up into sub-divisions, and the dismembered sections are now owned by far-removed possessors.

(1) TO ROBERT AIKEN, Esq., WRITER, AYR.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[About 8th October 1786.]

SIR,—I was with Wilson, my printer, t'other day, and settled all our by-gone matters between us. After I had paid him all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of *the first and readiest*, which he declines. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing



about fifteen or sixteen : he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power ; so farewell hopes of a second edition till I grow richer ! an epoch, which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British National Debt.

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

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

. . . . .



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

. . . . .

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

. . . . .

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

creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners, (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast;) still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be *done*. When all my school-fellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted, who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the *hallachores* of the human race) were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent, in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was 'standing idle in the market place,' or only left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt from whim to whim.

. . . . .

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

. . . . .

(<sup>2</sup>) TO JOHN MACKENZIE, ESQ., SURGEON, MAUCHLINE,  
ENCLOSING VERSES ON DINING WITH LORD DAER.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

*Wednesday Morning, [1st Nov. 1786.]*

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

I think his character, divided into ten parts, stand thus:—four parts Socrates—four parts Nathanael—and two parts Shakespeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore, but a little corrected since. They may entertain you a little with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as to favour the performances of, Dear Sir, your very humble servant,

R. B.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[November 1786.]

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 by the handsome compliments you were pleased to pay to my poetic abilities.\* I am fully persuaded 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, honour him with their approbation. 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 book I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, was “The life of Hannibal ;” the next was “The History of Sir William Wallace :” for

\* Gilbert has left on record that his brother “was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs Dunlop had heard of him. She had been afflicted with a long and severe illness when 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. Mrs Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossiel, a distance of fifteen or sixteen miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half-a-dozen copies of the poems if he had them to spare, and begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop House as soon as convenient.”

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 stories. In those boyish days I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story, where these lines occur—

“Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,  
To make a silent and a safe retreat.”

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of 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 lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymers) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.

R. B.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR ARCHIBALD LAWRIE, NEWMILNS.†

(BLACKIE'S "LAND OF BURNS," 1840.)

MOSSGIEL, 13th November 1786.

DEAR SIR,—I have, along with this, sent two volumes of Ossian, with the remaining volume of the songs. Ossian I am not in such a hurry about; but I wish the songs, with the volume of the Scotch poets, as soon as they can conveniently be despatched. If they are left at Mr Wilson the bookseller's shop in Kilmarnock, they will easily reach me.

My most respectful compliments to Mr and Mrs Lawrie, and a poet's warmest wishes for their happiness to the young

\* Leglen Wood is situated in the heart of a peninsula, formed by a peculiar bend of the river Ayr, near Auchencruive. The distance is here measured from Mount Oliphant.

† Son of the parish minister of Loudoun, to whom Dr Blacklock wrote the letter given at page 149.

ladies, particularly the fair musician, whom I think much better qualified than ever David was, or could be, to charm an evil spirit out of Saul.

Indeed, it needs not the feelings of a poet to be interested in the welfare of one of the sweetest scenes of domestic peace and kindred love that ever I saw ; as I think the peaceful unity of St. Margaret's Hill can only be excelled by the harmonious concord of the Apocalyptic Zion.

R. B.

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MONS<sup>R</sup>. ARCHIBALD LAWRIE,

COLLINE DE ST. MARGARETE.

(BLACKIE'S "LAND OF BURNS," 1840.)

MAUCHLINE, 15th November 1786.

DEAR SIR,—If convenient, please return me by Connel, the bearer, the two volumes of Songs I left last time I was at St. Margaret's Hill.

My best compliments to all the good family. *A Dieu je vous commende.*

ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR ROB<sup>T</sup>. MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

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

ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, 18th Nov<sup>r</sup>. 1786.

TO MISS WILHELMINA ALEXANDER,

ENCLOSING A SONG INSPIRED BY HER CHARMS.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MOSSGIEL, 18th Nov., 1786.

MADAM,—Poets are such outré beings, so much the childreu

of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in the rules of propriety, than the sober sons of judgment and prudence. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you in the enclosed poem, which he begs leave to present to you. Whether it has poetical merit any way worthy of the theme, I am not the proper judge; but it is the best my abilities can produce; and what to a good heart will, perhaps, be a superior grace, it is equally sincere as fervent.

The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I dare say, Madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *Reveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my muse—the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed, who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and rob you of all the property nature gives you—your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely-browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene, and such the hour, when in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the finest pieces of Nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, or blest



a poet's eye—those visionary bards excepted who hold commerce with ærial beings! Had Calumny and Villainy taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain dull historic prose to metaphor and measure.

The enclosed song was the work of my return home, and perhaps but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene. I am going to print a second edition of my Poems, but cannot insert these verses without your permission. I have the honor to be, Madam, your most obedient and very humble servant, ROBT BURNS.

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WELL, Mr Burns, and *did* the lady give you the desired permission? No! She was too fine a lady to *notice* so plain a compliment. As to her great brothers whom I have since met in life on more equal terms of respectability\*—Why should I quarrel their want of attention to me? When Fate swore that their purses should be full, Nature was equally positive that their heads should be empty. Men of their fashion were surely incapable of being unpolite? “Ye canna mak a silk-purse o’ a sow’s lug.”

R. B., 1792.

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The reader will understand that the foregoing letter, which enclosed the song called “The Lass of Ballochmyle” to the lady who formed the main subject of it, is here printed, not from Currie's edition, but from the poet's own transcript of it in the Glenriddell volume of his letters, preserved in the Liverpool

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\* In particular (as the reader will afterwards see) he, as Depute Master of St. James' Lodge, Tarbolton, admitted Claude Alexander, Esq., of Ballochmyle, on 25th July 1787, an Honorary member of the Lodge, in company with Brother Professor Stewart of Catrine, and other gentlemen of distinction.



Athenæum Library. The author's characteristic note appended to it is here for the first time published.

The veritable letter with the song which the poet transmitted to the "Lass of Ballochmyle" now hangs for the inspection of visitors in the main parlour of the farm-house of Mossiel, near Mauchline.

(<sup>2</sup>) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., BANKER, AYR,  
ENCLOSING THE POEM CALLED, "A WINTER NIGHT."

*(Here first included in the Correspondence.)*

SIR,—Enclosed you have my first attempt in that irregular kind of measure in which many of our finest Odes are wrote. How far I have succeeded, I don't know, but I shall be happy to have your opinion on Friday first (24th Nov.) when I intend being in Ayr.

I hear of no returns from Edinburgh to Mr Aiken respecting my second edition business, so I am thinking to set out beginning of next week for the City myself. If my first poetic patron, Mr Aiken, is in town, I want to get his advice, both in my procedure and some little criticism affairs much, if business will permit you to honour me with a few minutes when I come down on Friday. I have the honour to be, Sir, your much indebted humble Serv<sup>t</sup>. ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, 20th Nov., 1788.

The history of the above interesting relic of the Bard is very curious, and we are indebted to Dr Carruthers of Inverness for its appearance here. He obtained it from his much lamented deceased friend, Colonel Francis Cunningham (youngest son of the famous Allan) who, shortly before his death in 1875, had copied it from a lady's album in Boulogne-sur-mer, in which the precious holograph was enshrined. The poem referred to did not accompany the letter; but from the description given—"my first attempt in that irregular kind of measure"—it could be no other than the one we have ventured to indicate, and which was first published in the author's Edinburgh edition, 1787.

## (1) IN THE NAME OF THE NINE, AMEN.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

WE, Robert Burns, by virtue of a warrant from Nature, bearing date the twenty-fifth of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine, Poet Laureat and Bard-in-Chief, in and over the districts and countries of Kyle, Cunningham, and Carrick, of old extent, To our trusty and well-beloved William Chalmers and John M'Adam, Students and Practitioners in the ancient and mysterious Science of Confounding Right and Wrong.

## RIGHT TRUSTY :

Be it known unto you, that whereas, in the course of our care and watchings over the order and police of all and sundry the manufacturers, retainers, and venders of Poesy ; bards, poets, poetasters, rhymers, jinglers, songsters, ballad-singers, &c., &c., &c., male and female—We have discovered a certain nefarious, abominable, and wicked song or ballad, a copy whereof we have enclosed ; Our Will therefore is, that Ye pitch upon and appoint the most execrable individual of that most execrable species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nick-name of “ the Deil’s Yell Nowte : ”\* and after having caused him to kindle a fire at the Cross of Ayr, ye shall, at noontide of the day, put into the said wretch’s merciless hands the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked song, to be consumed by fire in the presence of all beholders, in abhorrence of, and terrorem to, all such compositions and composers. And this in nowise leave ye undone, but have it executed in every point as this Our Mandate bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when in person We hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.

Given at Mauchline this twentieth day of November, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.

GOD SAVE THE BARD !

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\* Explained by Currie to be Old Bachelors ; by Gilbert Burns to be Sheriff-Officers.

Our Bard's head-quarters are now to be shifted from Mossgiel and Mauchline to Edinburgh; and before quitting Ayrshire at this time, we shall, for the sake of those readers who are partial to Free-masonry, record a few jottings taken from the Books of St James' Lodge, Tarbolton, bearing upon the poet's connexion therewith, down to the close of the year 1786. The earliest existing entry in which his name appears in a Minute dated

July 27th, 1784, which he signs in his official capacity. The body of the minute refers to

“ Brother Robert Burness, Depute Master,  
 Brother Wilson, Secretary, and  
 Capt. James Montgomerie, G. M.”

“ *Tarbolton, June 29th, 1785.*—This night the Lodge met and inspected the Incidental Charges of the Lodge, and find them to amount to the sum of three pounds, nineteen shillings and three farthings Sterling, which they order their Treasurer to pay to Brother Robert Woodrow, who is to settle the same.

ROBERT BURNESS, *D. M.*

P.S. The Lodge unanimously agree, according to their rules, to exclude John Highat, a late brother.

R. B., *D. M.*

Minute, dated Tarbolton,	2d Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1785,	signed Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	18th Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1785,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	7th Sep <sup>t</sup> . 1785,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	15th Sep <sup>t</sup> . 1785,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	26th Oct <sup>r</sup> . 1785,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	10th Nov <sup>r</sup> . 1785,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	1st Dec <sup>r</sup> . 1785,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	7th Dec <sup>r</sup> . 1785,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	7th Jan <sup>y</sup> . 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ * Tarbolton,	1st March 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burness, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	25th May 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	7th June 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	15th June 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	23rd June 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	29th June 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	4th Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1786,	“ Gilbert Burns, <i>J. W.</i>
“ “ Tarbolton,	18th Aug <sup>t</sup> . 1786,	“ Robert Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Sorn,	5th Oct <sup>r</sup> . 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	10th Nov <sup>r</sup> . 1786,	“ Rob <sup>t</sup> . Burns, <i>D. M.</i>
“ “ Mauchline,	14th Dec <sup>r</sup> . 1786,	“ Gilbert Burns, <i>J. W.</i>

\* On this occasion, Gilbert Burness is “passed and raised,” and be it observed that this is the last instance in these Books where the important surname is signed “Burness.”

## JOURNEY TO EDINBURGH.

For nearly half a century after the death of Burns, it was a common belief that on his first journey to Edinburgh he tramped all the way—a distance of nearly sixty miles. Dr Currie's misstatement to that effect in his first edition was never corrected, except by omitting, in his next issue, the concluding part of the sentence in which the mis-statement was made—"having performed his journey on foot." Chambers, in 1838, improved on Currie's mistake by adding that the poor bard was so foot-sore and knocked up with his journey that he could not leave his room for two days after reaching the city. Allan Cunningham, whose imagination was a ready mint for the coinage of his biographical facts, told his readers that the poet "took a secret leave of his mother, and away he walked through Glenap to Edinburgh. . . . He turned his face to Arthur's Seat, and sung, with much buoyancy of heart as he went, a soothing snatch of an old ballad—

'As I cam in by Glenap, I met wi' an aged woman;

She bade me cheer up my heart, for the best o' my days was comin.'"

Honest Allan, who never in his life seems to have consulted a map, and who never took the pains to visit Ayrshire before venturing to tell the world all about Burns, did not know that Glenap lies nearly as far from Mossiel in a south-westerly direction as Edinburgh does in a north-easterly one. At same time, it is but justice to him to allow that he had Lockhart's authority for putting that ballad-snatch into the poet's lips.

Nevertheless, such worse than useless details, about the bard's progress and entry to Edinburgh, assumed an interesting shape when a reliable informant, Mr Archibald Prentice, editor of the *Manchester Times*, on 8th March 1841, forwarded a letter on the subject to Professor Wilson of Edinburgh, who gave the communication immediate publicity. The substance of that information is as follows:—In 1786, the father of Mr Prentice was a young farmer at Covington Mains, near Biggar, and a confirmed admirer of Burns's poetry, as is vouched by the poet's Edinburgh list of subscribers in 1787, where his name is set down for twenty copies. A mutual friend of Mr Prentice and of Burns was Mr

George Reid, of Barquharie, near Ochiltree, who volunteered the aid of an excellent pony to convey the bard to Edinburgh on this occasion. It was arranged that the journey should be performed in two rides, and that Covington, which is just about half-way, should be the resting place, during the first night. In consequence of notice sent by Mr Reid to Mr Prentice of the poet's intentions, the latter prepared an entertainment at his house, to which the neighbouring farmers were invited. Accordingly, on the afternoon of Monday 27th November 1786, Burns was seen approaching under the guidance of Mr Lang, a young clergyman, then located in that quarter, who had been sent out on horseback to meet the poet at some distance off, and herald his way to Covington. Our bard had proceeded from Mossgiel by way of Sorn and Muirkirk, tracing his favourite Ayr to its source at Glenbuck. A step or two brought him into Lanarkshire, where he soon was among the windings of the infant Clyde. The services of Mr Lang would be available there at occasional crossings of that stream; for the fords were uncertain through the effect of frequent floods in that hilly district. The parish of Covington is a beautiful amphitheatre, with Wellbrae Hill to the east, Tintoc and the Culter Fells to the south, and the pretty green conical hill, Quothquan Law, to the east; the whole scene being enlivened by the youthful Clyde which winds its way through the centre, gathering volume from a hundred tributary rills. The bard has not left this picture unpainted—

“ Yon wild mossy mountains sae lofty and wide,  
That nurse in their bosom the youth o' the Clyde,  
Where the grouse thro' the heath lead their coveys to feed,  
And the swain tents his flock as he pipes on his reed.”

The fact of the poet's arrival was intimated to the invited neighbours by a white sheet, attached to a hay-fork, being put on the top of the farmer's highest cornstack, and presently they were seen issuing from their homes and converging to the point of meeting. A glorious evening, or rather night which borrowed something from the morning, followed, and the conversation of the poet confirmed and increased the admiration created by his writings. On the following morning he breakfasted with a large party at the next farm-house, tenanted by James Stodart; and at

Carnwath he lunched with Mr John Stodart, banker there, whose daughter afterwards became Mrs Prentice.

The poet reached Edinburgh on the evening of Tuesday 28th November, and took an early opportunity of returning the pony to Mr Reid by the hands of Mr John Samson (a brother of the renowned "Tam") who happened then to be leaving Edinburgh for Ayrshire. Mr Samson was also bearer of the following note from Burns.

(<sup>d</sup>) TO MR GEORGE REID, BARQUHARIE.

(CHAMBERS, 1851).

MY DEAR SIR,—John Samson begged your pownie in such a manner, seconded by Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, that I hope you will forgive my not returning it by the carrier.

I left Mr Prentice's on Monday night, There was a most agreeable little party in the evening; a Mr Lang, a dainty body of a clergyman; Mr and Mrs Stodart—a glorious fellow, with a still more glorious wife, with whom I breakfasted, along with Mr Prentice, next morning. For Mr Prentice, no words can do him justice. Sound sterling sense, and plain warm hospitality are truly his. R. B.

[EDINBURGH, 29th Nov. 1786.]

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Mr Prentice junior, concluded his interesting communication in these words:—"My father though a strictly moral and religious man himself, always maintained that the virtues of the poet greatly predominated over his faults. I once heard him exclaim with hot wrath, when somebody was quoting from an *apologist*, 'What! do *they* apologise for *him*! One half of his good, and all his bad divided among a score o' them, would make them a' better men!' In the year 1809, I resided for a short time in Ayrshire, in the hospitable house of my father's friend Reid, and surveyed with a strong interest such visitors as had known Burns. I soon



learned how to anticipate their representations of his character. The men of strong minds and strong feelings were invariable in their expressions of admiration; but the prosy consequential *bodies* all disliked him as exceeding dictatorial. The men whose religion was based on intellect and high moral sentiment all thought well of him; but the mere professors, with their ‘two-mile prayers and half-mile graces,’ denounced him as ‘worse than an infidel.’”

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### BURNS IN EDINBURGH.

From allusions in the poet's note to Reid of Barquharie, it is evident that he had, in Ayrshire, been introduced to Mr Dahymple of Orangefield. Chambers suggests that as the latter gentleman, whom he describes as “a warm-hearted, high-pulsed man, enthusiastically given to Masonry, and an occasional scribbler of verses,” had been concerned in the laying of the foundation-stone of the *New Brig* of Ayr, that introduction probably came through Provost Ballantine. The reader will find in our note at page 56, Vol. II., some particulars regarding the family history of Mr Dahymple, and his relationship to the Earl of Glencairn, the Earl of Buchan, &c. Through that opening, Burns secured an almost immediate intercourse with a distinguished coterie of notables in Edinburgh, and his prior acquaintanceship with Professor Dugald Stewart brought him into the circles of science and literature. With exception of the note to Mr George Reid, above printed, the poet's earliest known letter written in Edinburgh is that addressed to

(<sup>1</sup>) JAMES DALRYMPLE, ESQ. OF ORANGEFIELD.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[30th Nov. 1786.]

DEAR SIR,—I suppose the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main* to complete his purposes on you all at once, in making you a

poet. I broke open the letter you sent me : hummed over the rhymes ; and, as I saw they were extempore, said to myself, they were very well ; but when I saw at the bottom a name I shall ever value with grateful respect, “ I gapit wide, but naething spak.” I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction-bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

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

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

R. B.

## (2) TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD, BART.

(CURRIE, 1800).

EDIN., 1st Dec. [1786.]

SIR,—Mr M'Kenzie, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend, has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and, (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, Sir, in one or two instances, been patronized by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by social friends to them, and honoured acquaintances to me; but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested him for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to enquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner,\* as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of the needy, sharpening author, fastening on those in upper life, who honour him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as may, in some measure, palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means, a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn, but I believe a careless, indolent inattention to economy is almost inseparable from it; then there must be in the heart of every bard of Nature's making a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, which will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune, which frequently light on hardy

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\* Compare this expression with a similar one in the letter to the Earl of Eglington, 11th January 1787, page 188.

impudence, and foot-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank Heaven my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one who pretended in the least to the manners of the gentleman should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am, and so inhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude, I thank you, Sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion; but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, Sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock, who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever Calumny aim the poisoned shaft at them, may Friendship be by to ward the blow! R. B.

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The foregoing letter appeared in Currie's first edition under date "Dec. 1788:" in later editions it was shifted back to "Dec. 1787," and here we have no hesitation in removing it even a year farther back. Its contents shew that some over-righteous, or perhaps malicious person, having some pretensions to the position if not the manners of a gentleman, had gone out of his road at this period to attack the poet's moral character, especially by raking up against him the unhappy story of his transactions with Jean Armour.

Dr Mackenzie, who was the friend, and medical attendant of the

family of Sir John Whitefoord, had communicated this circumstance to Burns in a letter, followed by the information that Sir John had silenced the slanderer by a generous defence of the poet. Dr Mackenzie afterwards practised his profession for many years in Irvine, and having attained the highest honours of the magistracy in that burgh, retired in 1827 to Edinburgh, where he died at an advanced age in January 1837. To his son, John Whitefoord Mackenzie, Esq., W.S., we are indebted for some valuable information made use of in these volumes.

The following is Sir John's reply to Burns's letter above given. It was printed in Dr Currie's first edition, under its proper date, but withdrawn from all subsequent issues of that work. The reader will perceive that its opening paragraphs directly refer to the bard's expressions about his "fate as a man, and fame as a poet;" and yet, so careless was Currie, and his successors in same department, in regard to judging of dates by internal evidence supplied from the text they professed to edit, that in this instance the *reply* was placed so as to precede by two years, the poet's letter to which it is an obvious *answer*!

This letter of Sir John is farther interesting as proving that one of the motives which attracted Burns to the city, was the furtherance of his favourite Excise scheme.

#### SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 4th December 1786.

SIR,—I received your letter a few days ago. I do not pretend to much interest, but what I have I shall be ready to exert in procuring the attainment of any object you have in view. Your character as a man, (forgive my reversing your order) as well as a poet, entitle you, I think, to the assistance of every inhabitant of Ayrshire. I have been told you wished to be made a gauger; I submit it to your consideration, whether it would not be more desirable, if a sum could be raised by subscription for a second edition of your poems, to lay it out in the stocking of a small farm. I am persuaded it would be a line of life much more agreeable to your feelings, and in the end more satisfactory. When you have considered this, let me know, and whatever you determine upon, I will endeavour to promote as far as my abilities

will permit. With compliments to my friend the doctor, I am,  
your friend and well wisher, JOHN WHITEFOORD.

P.S. I shall take it as a favour, when you at any time send  
me a new production.

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It may be explained in reference to the next letter of the poet, that "the lands of Mauchline Mains, East, West, and South Mossgiel, Haugh-Mill," and some others in Ayrshire, which the Loudoun family was at that period forced to part with, were advertised to be sold in the Exchange Coffee-house, Edinburgh, on 5th December 1786. Burns seems to have been commissioned by Mr Gavin Hamilton to send him early intelligence of the result of the sale. The Earl of Loudoun (for whom Hamilton acted as factor in Mauchline parish) had died in the most melancholy manner, the victim of pressing embarrassments, in the preceding April.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDINBURGH, *Dec. 7th*, 1786.

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

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birth-day inserted among



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

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

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

Amen. R. B.

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In a periodical called *The Lounger*, published in Edinburgh by Mr Creech, appeared on 9th December 1786, a generous article from the pen of Henry Mackenzie, in which the poetry of Burns, as exhibited in the recent Kilmarnock edition, was reviewed in so appreciative a spirit, and so judiciously illustrated by select examples, that the fame of the poet was soon wafted over the kingdom. The closing passage of that review is worth quoting

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\* It will be shown by and by that the poet was mistaken here; he merely anticipated what ultimately took place.

† "But" in the first of these lines signifies *without*; in the second line it is the common English conjunction.

here :—" Burns possesses the spirit as well as the fancy of a poet. The honest pride and independence of soul, which are sometimes the Muses' only dower, break forth on every occasion in his works. It may be that I shall wrong his feelings while I indulge my own, in calling the attention of the public to his situation and circumstances. That condition, humble as it was, in which he found content, and wooed the Muse, might not have been deemed uncomfortable ; but grief and misfortune have reached him there ; and one or two of his poems hint, what I have learned from some of his countrymen, that he has been obliged to form the resolution of leaving his native land, to seek, under a West Indian clime, that shelter and support which Scotland has denied him. But I trust that means may be found to prevent this resolution from taking effect, and that I do my country no more than justice when I suppose her ready to stretch out her hand to cherish and retain this native poet whose ' woodnotes wild ' possess so much excellence. To repair the wrongs of suffering or neglected merit, to call forth genius from the obscurity in which it had pined indignant, and place it where it may profit or delight the world—these are exertions which give to wealth an enviable superiority, to greatness and to patronage a laudable pride."\*

(<sup>3</sup>) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq., BANKER, AYR.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDINBURGH, 13th Dec., 1786.

MY HONORED FRIEND,—I would not write you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and my matters, which, by the bye, is often no easy task. I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight,† and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable head-ache and stomach complaint, but am now a good deal better. I have

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\* It is worthy of note in this connexion, that on 13th December, a complimentary Epistle to Burns appeared in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, in which he was acknowledged as—"The prince o' Poets and o' Ploughmen."

† Mistake, for "Tuesday was fourteen days." The 13th was Wednesday.

found a worthy warm friend in Mr Dalrymple, of Orange-field, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember, when time will be no more. By his interest it is passed in the "Caledonian Hunt," and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition, for which they are to pay one guinea.\* I have been introduced to a good many of the *Noblesse*, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are the Duchess of Gordon—the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord, and Lady Betty†—the Dean of Faculty—Sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati; Professors Stewart, Blair, and Mr Mackenzie—the Man of Feeling. An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire bard in Mr Sibbald's hands, which I got. I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq., brother to the Justice Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him, by invitation, at his own house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two, next post; when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr Aiken. I saw his son to-day, and he is very well.

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

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

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\* This was only a fallacious *on dit*, as we shall afterwards find.

† Lady Betty Cunningham, an unmarried sister of Lord Glencairn.

matter-of-fact epistle.—I have the honor to be, good Sir,  
your ever most grateful humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

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

(<sup>4</sup>) To MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

EDINBURGH, 15th Dec., 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,—I delayed writing you till I was able to give you some rational account of myself, and my affairs. I am got under the patronage of the Duchess of Gordon, Countess Dowager of Glencairn, Sir John Whitefoord, the Dean of Faculty, Professors Blair, Stewart, Greenfield, and several others of the noblesse and literati. I believe I shall begin at Mr Creech's as my publisher. I am still undetermined as to the future; and, as usual, never think of it. I have now neither house nor home that I can call my own, and live on the world at large. I am just a poor wayfaring Pilgrim on the road to Parnassus, a thoughtless wanderer and sojourner in a strange land. I received a very kind letter from Mr A. Dalziel, for which please return my thanks; and tell him I will write him in a day or two. Mr Parker, Charles, Dr Corsan, and honest John, my *quondam* printer, I remember in my prayers when I pray in rhyme. To all of whom, till I have an opportunity [of saluting them in person, present my warmest remembrances.]\*

\* The original MS. of the above letter, which is now possessed by Mr John Reid, Kingston Place, Glasgow, is in a very fragmentary condition, and wants the closing portion, with the poet's signature.

(3) TO MR ROBERT AIKEN, AYR.

(DR WADDELL'S EDITION, 1869.)

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

You will very probably think, my honored friend, that a hint about the mischievous nature of intoxicated vanity may not be unseasonable; but, alas! you are wide of the mark. Various concurring circumstances have raised my fame as a Poet to a height which I am absolutely certain I have not merits to support; and I look down on the future as I would into the bottomless pit.

You shall have one or two more bills when I have an opportunity of a Carrier. I am ever, with the sincerest gratitude, Honored Sir, Your most devoted humble servt.,

ROBERT BURNS.

EDINR., 16th Dec., 1786.

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\* On 14th December, Mr Creech advertised the Poetical Works of Robert Burns as “in the press, to be published by subscription for the sole benefit of the Author.”

(<sup>5</sup>) TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK,

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

EDINBURGH, Dec. 20th, 1786.

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

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

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The “poet’s Address to a Haggis” was printed in the *Edinburgh Caledonian Mercury*, the day on which the foregoing letter was written. Of same date Burns appears to have had communication, either personally or by letter, with a venerable friend of his father, whose name has already been introduced to the reader’s notice as one of the witnesses at the poet’s baptism. We refer to Mr John Tennant, at that time a farmer on the Doonside property, a little way south of the old “Brig o’ Doon,” but now (1786) residing at Glenconner in Ochiltree parish. We shall hear of him again in the summer of 1787, as Burns’s adviser in the choice of one of the farms offered to him by Patrick Miller, Esq., of Dalswinton. On the present occasion the poet presented Mr Tennant with a Book, which is now in the possession of Charles Tennant, Esq., of

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\* The name of this generous correspondent appears in the list of Subscribers to Creech’s first edition for 40 copies. It will be remembered that he subscribed for 72 copies of the Kilmarnock volume.

† This gives us the first hint of the author’s idea of an Autobiography.



The Glen, Peeblesshire, great-grandson of the donee. It bears the following inscription in the poet's well-defined holograph :—

“A paltry present from Robert Burns, the Scotch Bard, to his own friend and his father's friend, John Tennant, in Glenconner. —20th December, 1786.”

The book thus presented is entitled “Letters concerning the Religion essential to man, as it is distinct from what is merely an accession to it. In two parts; translated from the French. Glasgow, printed for Robert Urie, 1761.” It is referred to by David Sillar as a favourite book with Burns when he first came to Tarbolton parish.

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The following letter, addressed to Burns by his much revered friend, the parish minister of Loudoun, was considered by Dr Currie of sufficient importance to appear in the Bard's correspondence. It seems to justify the belief we have already expressed that Dr Blacklock's letter to Dr Lawrie had a smaller share in the formation of the poet's resolution to remove to Edinburgh than he credits it with in his Autobiography. After Burns had been some weeks in the city without calling upon Dr Blacklock, the latter thus wrote to the Ayrshire clergyman who had directed his notice to the ploughman's poems :—“By the by, I hear that Mr Burns is, and has been some time, in Edinburgh, which news I am sorry to have heard at second hand : they would have come much more welcome from the bard's own mouth. I have, however, written to Mr Mackenzie, *the Man of Feeling*, to beg the favour that he would bring us together.”

#### THE REV. GEORGE LAWRIE TO ROBERT BURNS.

“NEWMILNS, 22nd Dec., 1786.

DEAR SIR,—I last week received a letter from Dr Blacklock, in which he expresses a desire of seeing you. . . . I rejoice to hear, from all corners, of your rising fame, and I wish and expect it may tower still higher by the new publication. But, as a friend, I warn you to prepare to meet with your share of detraction and envy—a train that may always accompany great men. For your comfort I am in great hopes that the number of your friends and admirers will increase, and that you have some chance of

Ministerial, or even Royal patronage. Now, my friend, such rapid success is very uncommon : and do you think yourself in no danger of suffering by applause, and a full purse ? Remember Solomon's advice, which he spoke from experience :—‘ Stronger is he that conquers his own spirit,’ &c.

I hope you will not imagine I speak from suspicion or evil report. I assure you that I speak from love and good report, and good opinion, and a strong desire to see you shine in the sunshine as you have done in the shade—in the practice as you do in the theory of virtue. This is my prayer in return for your elegant composition in verse. All here join in compliments and good wishes for your further prosperity.”

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR WILLIAM CHALMERS, WRITER, AYR.

(CURRIE 1800, AND CROMIE 1808.)

EDINBURGH, *Dec. 27, 1786.*

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

banished the poor son of Zebedee to a desert island in the Archipelago, where he was gifted with the second sight, and saw as many wild beasts as I have seen since I came to Edinburgh; which, a circumstance not very uncommon in story-telling, brings me back to where I set out.

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck.\* One blank in the Address to Edinburgh—"Fair B——," is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I had the honor to be more than once. There has not been anything nearly like her in all the combinations of Beauty, Grace, and Goodness, the great Creator has formed since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.†

I have sent you a parcel of subscription-bills, and have written to Mr Ballantine and Mr Aiken to call on you for some of them, if they want them. My direction is, care of Andrew Bruce, Merchant, Bridge Street.

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After a brief residence in the city, the poet's plain rustic garb gave way to a suit of blue and buff, the livery of Mr Fox, with buckskins and top-boots. He continued to wear his hair tied behind, and spread upon his forehead, but without the powder which was then nearly universal. Lockhart, in 1828 (alas! just half a century ago!) thus wrote with becoming satisfaction of the

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\* Glenbuck (as we have before pointed out), is the last bit of Ayrshire soil Burns passed over before entering Lanarkshire on his way to Edinburgh. The second of the two fresh poems would likely be his "Address to a Haggis."

† We can never forgive Alexander Smith for having committed himself to utter and vend the following inconsiderate sentence:—"Burns has hardly left a trace of himself in the northern capital. During his residence there, his spirit was soured, and he was taught to drink whisky-punch—obligations which he repaid by addressing 'Edina, Scotia's darling Seat,' in a copy of his tamest verses." Lockhart, who could feel poetry as well as the author of "City Poems," says the Address to Edinburgh is specially "remarkable for the grand stanzas on the Castle and Holyrood with which it concludes."

full-length picture of the Bard by Nasmyth, an engraving of which forms the frontispiece to our second volume; "Mr Nasmyth has prepared for the present Memoirs, a sketch of the poet at full length, as he appeared in Edinburgh in the first hey-day of his reputation; dressed in tight jockey boots, and very tight buckskin breeches, according to the fashion of the day, and (Jacobite as he was) in what was considered as the Fox livery, viz., a blue coat and buff waistcoat, with broad blue stripes. The surviving friends of Burns, who have seen this picture, are unanimous in pronouncing it to furnish a very lively representation of the bard as he first attracted public notice on the streets of Edinburgh. The scenery of the back-ground is very nearly that of Burns's native spot—the river and bridge of Doon, near Alloway Kirk."

Mrs Alison Cockburn, authoress of the charming song, "I've seen the smiling of Fortune beguiling," who was, in 1786, a lively old lady residing in Crichton Street, Edinburgh, thus wrote to a friend, near the close of that year:—"The town is at present agog with the Ploughman Poet, who receives adulation with native dignity, and is the very figure of his profession—strong, but coarse; yet has a most enthusiastic heart of love. He has seen Duchess Gordon, and all the gay world. His favourite, for looks and manners, is Bess Burnet—no bad judge indeed!"

"Duchess Gordon and all the gay world!"\* Another extract from a private letter will throw light on that expression. In Feb. 1786, Mr Drummond, a member of the Scottish bar, thus wrote to a friend of his in India, (the letter is in the possession of Mr Blair, Balthayock House, Perthshire):—"The good town is uncommonly crowded and splendid at present. The example of dissipation set by her Grace the Duchess of Gordon, is far from shewing vice her own image. It is really astonishing to think what effect a single person will have on public manners,

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\* Jane, Duchess of Gordon, was of Ayrshire growth, she being a daughter of Magdalene Blair, of Blair, in that county. A great day was that in Ayton, Berwickshire, on 25th October 1767, when Alexander, 4th Duke of Gordon, aged 24, was there married to the charming Jane, second daughter of Sir Wm. Maxwell of Monreith, in Wigtonshire, Bart. Now, after twenty years of wedlock, with neither beauty nor gaiety impaired, she was mother of the Marquis of Huntly and six other children, of whom more anon when Burns visits Gordon Castle, on his Highland tour.

when supported by high rank and great address. She is never absent from a public place, and the later the hour so much the better. It is often four o'clock in the morning before she goes to bed, and she never requires more than five hours' sleep. Dancing, cards, and company, occupy her whole time."

(<sup>1</sup>) TO LORD MONBODDO, ST. JOHN STREET.

*(Here first included in the Correspondence.)\**

I SHALL do myself the honor, sir, to dine with you to-morrow, as you obligingly request.

My conscience twitting me with having neglected to send Miss Eliza a song which she once mentioned to me as a song she wished to have—I inclose it for her, with one or two more, by way of a peace-offering.—I have the honor to be, my Lord, your very humble serv<sup>t</sup>.,      ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

SATURDAY EVE [30th Dec.].

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR JAMES SIBBALD, BOOKSELLER.

(DR WADDELL'S ED. 1867.)

LAWNMARKET, [Jan. 1787.]

SIR—So little am I acquainted with the modes and manners of the more public and polished walks of life, that I often feel myself much embarrassed how to express the feelings of my heart, particularly gratitude.

" ————— Rude am I in speech,  
And little blest in the set, polish'd phrase ;  
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,  
Till now—some nine moons wasted—they have used  
Their dearest efforts in the rural field ;  
And therefore, little can I grace my cause  
In speaking for myself."

The warmth with which you have befriended an obscure

\* From the original MS. in the collection of W. F. Watson, Esq., Edinburgh.

man, and young Author in your three last Magazines—I can only say, Sir, I feel the weight of the obligation, and wish I could express my sense of it. In the meantime accept of this conscious acknowledgement from, Sir, Your obliged Servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

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The foregoing admirable little production first appeared in Nicholl's illustrations of the Literary History of the 18th century, Vol. III. 8vo. 1818. Mr Sibbald himself was distinguished in more than one walk of literary enterprise; his "Chronicle of Scottish Poetry" is a much prized work, and on account of its scarcity fetches now a considerable price.\* He was in 1786 publisher of a monthly periodical, called the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and the three numbers above referred to by Burns, were those of October, November, and December, published respectively in the beginning of the month following. Thus, we may be certain that the letter in the text would be penned about 3rd January 1787. Each of those numbers gave extracts from the Kilmarnock volume, with kindly and judicious observations by the editor. A copy of the October part could not fail to reach Burns in November, while he was yet in Ayrshire.

On January 4th 1787, Professor Dugald Stewart presented Burns with a copy of Dr Aiken's "Essay on Song-Writing, with a collection of English Songs," 2nd Edit. 1774. The identical volume so presented was exhibited in Dumfries on the poet's Centenary Day, 1859.

In the Professor's narrative supplied by him to Dr Currie, we find the following reference to this matter:—"The collection of songs by Dr Aiken, which I first put into Burns's hands, he read with unmixed delight, notwithstanding his former efforts in that very difficult species of writing; and I have little doubt it had some effect in polishing his subsequent compositions."

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\* "May 1803. Died at Edinburgh, Mr James Sibbald, Bookseller."—*Scots Mag.*



## (2) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

(CHAMBERS, 1838.)

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

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

I have met with a very pretty girl, a Lothian farmer's  
 daughter, whom I have almost persuaded to accompany me  
 to the west country, should I ever return to settle there.  
 By the by, a Lothian farmer is about an Ayrshire Squire of  
 the lower kind; and I had a most delicious ride from Leith  
 to her house yesternight, in a hackney-coach, with her  
 brother and two sisters, and brother's wife. We had dined  
 all together at a common friend's house in Leith, and danced,  
 drank, and sang till late enough. The night was dark, the  
 claret had been good, and I thirsty. . . . ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 7th Jan. 1787.

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So early as on 7th December 1786, in the poet's letter to Gavin  
 Hamilton, followed by a letter to Mr Ballantine, six days later,  
 he announces as a fact that the members of the Caledonian  
 Hunt, one and all, in terms of a record entered in the minute  
 book of their meetings, had subscribed for his forthcoming  
 Edition—nay more, that for each copy "they are to pay one  
 guinea." It now appears, however, that the sanguine poet had  
 mistaken Lord Glencairn's *promise* to make some such motion

at an early meeting of his brethren of the *Hunt*, for an assurance that such motion had already been made and assented to. Here follows an

EXCERPT FROM MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE ROYAL CALEDONIAN HUNT,  
Held at Edinburgh on 10th Jan. 1787.

“A motion being made by the Earl of Glencairn, and seconded by Sir John Whitefoord, in favour of Mr Burns, Ayrshire, who had dedicated the new Edition of his poems to the Caledonian Hunt, the meeting were of opinion that, in consideration of his superior merit, as well as of the compliment paid to them, Mr Hagart should be directed to subscribe for one hundred copies, in their name, for which he should pay to Mr Burns twenty-five pounds, upon the publication of his book.”

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR MACKENZIE, SURGEON, MAUCHLINE.

(CHAMBERS, 1851.)

MY DEAR SIR,—Yours gave me something like the pleasure of an old friend's face. I saw *your* friend and *my* honoured patron, Sir John Whitefoord, just after I read your letter, and gave him your respectful compts. He was pleased to say many handsome things of you, which I heard with the more satisfaction, as I knew them to be just.

His son John, who calls very frequently on me, is in a fuss to-day like a coronation. This is the great day—the Assembly and Ball of the Caledonian Hunt; and John has had the good luck to pre-engage the hand of the beauty-famed, and wealth-celebrated MISS M'ADAM, our country-woman. Between friends, John is desperately in for it there, and I am afraid will be desperate indeed.\*

\* The reader may here be reminded of the poet's clever rhyming epistle to Mr M'Adam of Craigangillan, in which his two daughters are thus referred to:—

“Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath  
O' mony flowery simmers,  
And bless your bonie lasses baith—  
I'm tauld they're lo'esome kimmers.

I am sorry to send you the last speech and dying words of the LOUNGER.

A gentleman waited on me yesterday, and gave me, by LORD EGLINTOUN'S order, ten guineas by way of subscription for a brace of copies of my 2nd edition.

I met with Lord Maitland\* and a brother of his to-day at breakfast. They are exceedingly easy, accessible, agreeable fellows, and seemingly pretty clever.—I am ever,  
My D<sup>r</sup>. Sir, Yours,  
ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.†

EDIN<sup>B</sup>. 11th Jan. 1787.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO THE EARL OF EGLINTON.‡

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, 11th January, 1787.

MY LORD,—As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted ideas of a citizen

In “Boswelliana,” consisting of extracts from the Common-place Book of James Boswell, recently printed for the Grampian Club, and edited by Dr Chas. Rogers, we find a very curious reference to the daughters of Craigangillan. “Dr Grant asked me if Mr Macadam had but one daughter, I said he had, properly speaking, but one. She is good-looking, but the other—poor girl!—is very ugly. My wife said it was hard that want of good looks should cause her to be reckoned *not his daughter*. She was the more a daughter on that account, as being more likely to continue with him.”

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

† By the kindness of John Whitefoord Mackenzie, Esq., W.S., son of the bard's correspondent, we have been enabled to present an accurate copy of the original letter, now in his possession.

‡ This was Archibald, XI. Earl of Eglinton, who died in 1796, and was succeeded by his cousin, Hugh Montgomerie of Coilsfield. The poet's patron and correspondent was born about the year 1733, and having been brought up a soldier, he became Colonel of the Scots Greys, and a General in the army. His lordship was twice married, and by his second wife—had two daughters, of whom, the elder, Lady Mary (born 5th March 1787) married the eldest son of Earl Hugh, and became the mother of Archibald-William, who succeeded as XIII. Earl of Eglintoune in December 1819, the hero of the “Tournament,” and the “Burns Festival.”

of the world ; but have all those national prejudices, which I believe glow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotsman. There is scarcely any thing, to which I am so feelingly alive as the honor and welfare of my country ; and, as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life ; but never did a heart pant more ardently, than mine, to be distinguished ; though, till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy then to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your Lordship.\* Your munificence, my Lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgements ; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know, whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your Lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it.† From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude I hope I am incapable of ; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have as much honest pride as to detest.

R. B.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq., BANKER, AYR.

(Partly by CROMEK in 1808, and completed in this edition.)

MY HONORED FRIEND,—It gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie

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\* This is explained in the poet's letter of same date addressed to Dr Maekenzie. The gentleman who brought the Earl's present was John Wauchope, Esq., W.S., a splendid portrait of whom by Raeburn, attracted much attention in the recent Raeburn Exhibition.

† The similarity of expression between this and the words used in his letter to Sir John Whitefoord at page 170 *supra* has been there referred to.

Gaw's skate—"past redemption"\*—for I have still this favourable symptom of Grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me that I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teases me eternally till I do it.

I am still "dark as was chaos" in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr Peter Miller, brother to the Justice Clerk, has been talking with me about a lease of some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought, near Dumfries. Some life-rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier any where than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr Miller is no judge of land; and though I dare say he means to favour me, yet he may give me, in his opinion, an advantageous bargain that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries as I return, and have promised to meet Mr Miller on his lands some time in May.

I went to a Mason-lodge yesternight,† where the most Worshipful Grand Master, Charteris, and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the different Lodges about town were present, in all their pomp.

The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity and honor to himself as a gentleman and Mason, among other general toasts, gave "Caledonia, and Caledonia's Bard, Brother B——," which rung through the whole assembly with multiplied honors and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck, and, trembling in every nerve made the best

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\* This is one of many such old saws, picked up by the poet from the lips of his own mother, who possessed a rich store of traditionary humour and wisdom.—CROMEK.

† On the authority of a little masonic brochure, called "A Winter with Robert Burns," we may state that this was St. Andrew's Lodge, which met on Friday 12th January, not 13th as might be assumed from the date of the poet's letter.

return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the Grand officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent, "Very well, indeed!" which set me something to rights again.

I have just now had a visit from my Landlady, who is a staid, sober, piously-disposed, sculdudry-abhorring widow, coming on her climacterick,\* she is at present in great tribulation respecting some "Daughters of Belial" who are on the floor immediately above. My Landlady, who, as I have said, is a flesh-disciplining, godly matron, firmly believes her husband is in heaven; and having been very happy with him on earth, she vigorously and perseveringly practices some of the most distinguished Christian virtues, such as attending church, railing against vice, &c., that she may be qualified to meet her quondam Bed-fellow in that happy place where the unclean and the ungodly shall never enter. This no doubt requires some strong exertions of self-denial in a hale well-kept widow of forty-five; and as our floors are low and ill-plastered, we can easily distinguish our laughter-loving, night-rejoicing neighbours when they are eating, when they are drinking, when they are singing, when they are &c., &c. My worthy Landlady tosses sleepless and unquiet—"looking for rest and finding none"—the whole night. Just now she told me—though by the by, she is sometimes dubious that I am, in her own phrase, "but a rough an' roun' Christian"—that "we should not be uneasy and envious because the wicked enjoy the good things of this life;" for these base jades who, in her own words, "lie up gandy-going with their filthy fellows, drinking the best of wines, and singing abominable songs, they shall

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\* If Chambers was correctly informed by John Richmond, this worthy lady was "Mrs Carfrae in Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, first scale stair on the left hand in going down, first door in the stair." The latter portion of the above letter was written on a Sunday.



one day lie in hell, weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth over a cup of God's wrath !”

I have to-day corrected my 152d page. My best good wishes to Mr Aiken. I am ever, D<sup>r</sup>. Sir, Your much indebted, humble Serv<sup>t</sup>.  
ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

EDIN<sup>B</sup>. 14th Jan., 1787.

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It may interest some readers to know that the 152d page of the author's Edinburgh edition completes (pat to the subject of his landlady's oration given above) the “Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous.” What a rich illustration of that characteristic effusion, is the portion of the foregoing letter which we, for the first time, here publish ! After the death of the gentleman to whom the letter is addressed, it fell into the possession of Professor Leslie, at the sale of whose library and manuscripts it was purchased by the late Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. It is not known what Mr Sharpe did with the poet's holograph ; but a careful copy of the letter, in his own hand, was presented by him to Mr George Thomson, and that copy became the property of the present Lord Dalhousie, along with the invaluable set of manuscripts which comprise the bard's portion of the “Thomson Correspondence,” purchased by his Lordship in 1852.

## (<sup>2</sup>) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800).

EDINBURGH, 15th January 1787.

MADAM.—Yours of the 9th current, which I am this moment honored 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, before I wrote to you ; but though every day since I received yours of December 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 to-morrow 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 Eglintoun, 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 anything on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print, and the enclosed, 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, of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood.‡ My heart glows

\* It thus appears that the Earl of Eglintoun's kind attention to Burns arose through the interposition of Dr Moore, who had found an opportunity to point out to his lordship the great merits of the ploughman poet.

† " ——— the patriotic tide

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

The phrase thus objected to was, in 1793, altered to

That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart."

‡ Stanzas in *The Vision*, beginning

"By stately tower or palace fair," and ending with the first Duan.

with a wish 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 hastening time, when the blow of Calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph.

\* \* \* \* \*

Your patronizing 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.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO DR JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800).

EDINBURGH, 17th *January* 1787.

SIR,—Mrs Dunlop has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honour of noticing him and his works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solitudes of authorship can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such a manner, by judges of the first character. Your criticisms, Sir, I receive with reverence ; only I am sorry they mostly came too late ; a peccant passage or two that I would certainly have altered were gone to the press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greatest part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities ; and as few if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in

the learned and polite notice I have lately had : and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear ; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttelton and Collins described the heart, I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame.

R. B.

Dr Currie has printed in full the reply of Dr Moore (dated 23rd January) to the above letter, and we shall content ourselves with presenting a quotation merely :—" If I may judge of the author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the *irritable* temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their number, whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease and *curious felicity* of expression. Indeed the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scattered, are not all I admire in your works ; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favourable impression of the poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would have been my seeing the author last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years. . . .

" Before I received your letter, I sent enclosed in a letter to Mrs Dunlop, a sonnet by Miss Williams, a young poetical lady, which she wrote on reading your *Mountain Daisy* ; perhaps it may not displease you."

#### SONNET BY HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

While soon 'the garden's flaunting flowers' decay,  
And scatter'd on the earth neglected lie,  
The 'Mountain Daisy,' cherish'd by the ray  
A poet drew from heav'n, shall never die.

Ah, like that simple flower the poet rose,  
'Mid penury's bare soil and bitter gale ;  
He felt each storm that on the mountain blows,  
And never knew the shelter of the vale.

By genius in her native vigour nurst,  
 On Nature with impassion'd look he gazed ;  
 Then through the cloud of adverse Fortune, burst  
 Indignant, and in light unborrow'd blazed.

SCOTIA ! from rude affliction shield thy Bard,  
 His Heav'n-taught numbers Fame herself will guard.

*January 25th, 1787.*—On this, the Poet's Birth-day, the Earl of Glencairn presented to him a silver snuff-box. The lid shows a five-shilling coin of the reign of Charles I., dated 1644. On an inner and covered bottom of the box, Burns has, with his own hand, recorded the fact and date of the presentation.

In the Poet's Monument at Edinburgh, there is exhibited the original letter sent to him by the Earl of Buchan, dated 1st February 1787. It contains such advices as that nobleman might suppose his rank entitled him to offer to a person in the circumstances and position of the Ploughman Poet of Ayrshire. The document bears marks of having been carried for some time in the bard's pocket, and, in particular, the back of it shows that he made use of it for recording, in a rough pencil scrawl, eight lines of the song "Bonie Dundee." That seems to have been noted from the singing of his Crochallan companion, Mr Robert Cleg-horn, farmer at Saughton Mills, near Edinburgh.

In the British Museum is preserved a holograph scroll or copy of Burns's reply to the Earl, which seems to have been used by Dr Currie to print from, in his volume of the Bard's correspondence, although his divergences from the original are manifold. It is thus docqueted by that biographer, or by Mr John Syme, who assisted in arranging the materials for him:—"Swift says, 'Praise is like ambergrise ; a little is odorous—much stinks.'"

## TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[3d Feb. 1787.]

MY LORD,—The honor your Lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember :—



"Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,  
They best can give it who deserve it most."

Your Lordship touches the darling chord of my heart, when you advise me to fire my muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody Lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my Lord, in the midst of these delighting enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom strides across my imagination, and with the frigid air of a declaiming Preacher, sets off with a text of Scripture, thus—

"I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes, merely to give you pain: I wish through these wounds to imprint a lasting lesson on your heart. I will not mention how many of my salutary advices you have despised: I have given you line upon line and precept upon precept; but while I have been chalking you out the right way to wealth and godly character, you, with audacious effrontery have zigzagged across the path, contemning me to my face: you know the consequences. It is not yet three months since home was so hot for your stay that you were on the wing for the western side of the Atlantic, not to make a fortune, but to hide your disgrace.

"Now that your dear-loved Scotia about whom you make such a racket, puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these will-o'-wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from Want; but still it is half a step from it. If all that I can say is ineffectual, let her

who seldom calls to you in vain, let the call of Pride prevail with you. You know how you feel at the iron grip of ruthless oppression: you know how you bear the galling sneer of contumelious greatness. I tender you the conveniences, the comforts of life, independence and character, on the one hand; I hold you out servility, dependence, and wretchedness, on the other. I will not insult your common sense by bidding you make a choice."

This, my Lord, is an unanswerable harangue. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic Muse in my wonted way at the plough-tail. Still, my Lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons, who have honored me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times draw forth, as now, the swelling tear.

R. B.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO ROBERT CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS,

ENCLOSING AN OLD SONG WITH ADDITIONS.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM NOTES, 1839.)

DEAR CLEGHORN,—You will see by the above that I have added a stanza to "Bonie Dundee." If you think it will do, you may set it agoing,

'Upon a ten string'd instrument,  
And on the psaltery.'

R. B.

To Mr Cleghorn, farmer. God bless the trade!

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO THE REV. GEORGE LAWRIE,

NEWMILNS, NEAR KILMARNOCK.

(CURRIE, 1802.)

EDINBURGH, *Feb.* 5, 1787.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—When I look at the date of your kind letter, my heart reproaches me severely with ingratitude in neglecting so long to answer it. I will not trouble you with any account, by way of apology, of my hurried life and distracted attention; do me the justice to believe that my delay by no means proceeded from want of respect. I feel, and ever shall feel for you the mingled sentiments of esteem for a friend, and reverence for a father.

I thank you, Sir, with all my soul for your friendly hints, though I do not need them so much as my friends are apt to imagine. You are dazzled with newspaper accounts and distant reports; but, in reality, I have no great temptation to be intoxicated with the cup of prosperity. Novelty may attract the attention of mankind awhile; to it I owe my present *éclat*; but I see the time not far distant when the popular tide which has borne me to a height of which I am, perhaps, unworthy, shall recede with silent celerity, and leave me a barren waste of sand, to descend at my leisure to my former station. I do not say this in the affectation of modesty; I see the consequence is unavoidable, and am prepared for it. I had been at a good deal of pains to form a just, impartial estimate of my intellectual powers before I came here; I have not added, since I came to Edinburgh, anything to the account; and I trust I shall take every atom of it back to my shades, the coverts of my unnoticed early years.

IN Dr Blacklock, whom I see very often, I have found

what I would have expected in our friend—a clear head and an excellent heart.

By far the most agreeable hours I spend in Edinburgh must be placed to the account of Miss Lawrie and her pianoforte. I cannot help repeating to you and Mrs Lawrie a compliment that Mr Mackenzie, the celebrated *Man of Feeling*, paid to Miss Lawrie the other night at the concert. I had come in at the interlude, and sat down by him till I saw Miss Lawrie in a seat not very far distant, and went up to pay my respects to her. On my return to Mr Mackenzie, he asked me who she was: I told him 'twas the daughter of a reverend friend of mine in the West country. He returned, there was something very striking, to his idea, in her appearance. On my desiring to know what it was, he was pleased to say: “She has a great deal of the elegance of a well-bred lady about her, with all the sweet simplicity of a country girl.”

My compliments to all the happy inmates of St Margaret's, I am, my dear Sir,—Yours most gratefully,

ROBERT BURNS.

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MINUTE OF THE CANONGATE KILWINNING LODGE  
OF FREEMASONS, EDINBURGH.

“1st February 1787.—There being no meeting in January, the Lodge met this evening. The following gentlemen were entered apprentices:—Mr Burns, Mr Spied, Captain Bartlet, Mr Haig, G. Douglas, Esq., E. B. Clive, Esq., Mr Maule, Mr Wotherspoon, Mr Moir, Mr Lindsay Carnegie, Mr Archibald Millar, and Mr James Buchan. There were also initiated—Colonel Dalrymple of Inveresk, Captain Hammond of Marchfield, Cramond, and J. Hammond, Esq.

The R. W. Master having observed that Brother Burns was at present in the Lodge, who is well known as a great poetic writer, and for a late publication of his works, which have been universally

commended, submitted that he should be assumed a member of this Lodge, which was unanimously agreed to, and he was assumed accordingly. Having spent the evening in a very social manner, as the meetings of the Lodge always have been, it was adjourned till next monthly meeting.

JO. MILLAR, J.W.

ALEX. FERGUSON, M.

CHAS. MORE, D.M."

Much has been said and written, and even painted, on the subject of Burns's formal inauguration, as Poet Laureate of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge; but after careful research among its records, we find that the above is the only notice of his presence at any meeting of the Lodge.

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Cunningham, in his Biography of Burns, states that a few days after reaching Edinburgh "he found his way to the lonely grave of Fergusson, and, kneeling down, kissed the sod." But in the following document, dated after two months' residence in the city, his language leads to the inference that he had not yet ascertained the exact spot:—"I am sorry *to be told* that the remains lie in your church-yard unnoticed and unknown."

### (<sup>1</sup>) TO THE HONORABLE THE BAILIES OF CANONGATE, EDINBURGH.

GENTLEMEN,—I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honor to our Caledonian name, lie in your church-yard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory—a tribute I wish to have the honor of paying.

I petition you then, Gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honor to be, Gentlemen, your very humble Servant, ROBERT BURNS.  
6th Feb. 1787.

This petition, by mistake addressed to the Canongate Magistrates, eventually reached the proper parties, namely, the Managers of the Kirk and the Kirkyard Funds of Canongate, who, at a meeting held in their Session-house on the 22d day of February 1787, had the matter brought formally before them by their Treasurer, who produced the poet's petition. That document having been read and considered, was ordered to be engrossed in their Sederunt-book, followed by a *Grant* in these terms:—

"The said managers, in consideration of the laudable and disinterested motion of Mr Burns, and the propriety of his request, did, and hereby do, unanimously grant power and liberty to the said Robert Burns to erect a headstone at the grave of the said Robert Fergusson, and to keep up and preserve the same to his memory in all time coming."

"Extracted forth of the records of the managers, by

WILLIAM SPROTT, *Clerk*."

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR PETER STUART,

EDITOR OF THE 'STAR' NEWSPAPER, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, Feb. 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,—You may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish, ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say, thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By the by, there is nothing in the whole frame of man, which seems to



me so unaccountable as that thing called Conscience. Had the troublesome yelping eurs powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use ; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun : and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts Conscience and harrows us with the feelings of the damned.

I have enclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr Sprott sent it me.

The inscription on the Stone will be as follows :—

“ HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON, POET.

Born, September 5 1751.—Died, 16 October 1774.

No sculptur'd marble here, nor pompous lay,

‘ No storied urn nor animated bust,’

This simple stone directs pale SCORIA's way

To pour her sorrows o'er her POET's dust.”

On the other side of the Stone will be inscribed :—

“ By special grant of the Managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson.”

R. B.

(<sup>2</sup>) TO DR MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, 15th Feb. 1787.

REVERED SIR,—Pardon my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honor you have done me in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could

boast anything higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me ; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment ; but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny ; but I see with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss Williams has done me, please, Sir, return her in my name my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her ; but the other day I got her poems, which for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore ; there are I think two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, *sombre* tenderness of ‘time settled sorrow.’

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why.

R. B.

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Burns was indeed, as Lockhart has remarked, “far too busy with society and observation to find time for poetical composition during his first residence in Edinburgh. The magnificent scenery of the capital and its surroundings filled him with extraordinary delight. In the spring mornings he walked very often to the top of Arthur’s Seat, and, lying prostrate on the turf, surveyed the rising of the sun out of the sea in silent admiration ; his chosen companion on such occasions being that ardent lover of Nature, and learned

artist, Mr Alexander Nasmyth. The Braid Hills, and the Pentlands, to the south of Edinburgh, were also among his favourite morning walks; and it was in some of these that Mr Dugald Stewart tells us 'he charmed him still more by his private conversation than he had ever done in company.' 'He was,' adds the professor, 'passionately fond of the beauties of Nature, and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained.'" (See Appendix, Article J.)

(<sup>5</sup>) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MY HONORED FRIEND,—I will soon be with you now "in guid black prent;" in a week or two at farthest. I am obliged, against my own wish, to print subscriber's names; so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription-bills, they must be sent in to Creech directly. I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver; and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my book looking, like all other *fools*, to my title-page. I have the honor to be, ever your grateful

ROBT. BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 24th Feb. 1787.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE.

ENCLOSING FRAGMENT—"WHEN GUILDFORD GOOD."

(CHAMBERS, 1851.)

SIR,—I shewed the enclosed political ballad to my Lord Glencairn, to have his opinion whether I should publish it; as I suspect my political tenets, such as they are, may be rather heretical in the opinion of some of my best friends. I have a few first principles in Religion and Politics,

which, I believe I would not easily part with ; but for all the etiquette of, by whom, in what manner, &c. I would not have a dissocial word about it with any one of God's creatures, particularly an honored patron or a respected friend. His lordship seems to think the piece may appear in print, but desired me to send you a copy for your suffrage, I am, with the sincerest gratitude for the notice with which you have been pleased to honor the rustic bard, Sir, your most devoted, humble servant,   ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

Two o'clock.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MY LORD,—I wanted to purchase a profile of your Lordship, which I was told was to be got in town ; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a 'human face divine.' The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your Lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with any thing of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude ; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, there is my noble patron, my generous benefactor. Allow me, my Lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your Lordship by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition.\* I owe much to your Lordship ; and, what has not in some other instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a

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\* Currie notes as follows :—"It does not appear that the Earl granted this request, nor have the verses alluded to been found among the manuscripts." They have subsequently been found, and are now in the Poet's monument at Edinburgh. See Vol. II. page 55.

pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your Lordship's, than which I can say nothing more; and I would not be beholden to favors that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much favored sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me then, my Lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honor to be your Lordship's highly indebted and ever grateful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *Feb.* 1787.

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(<sup>3</sup>) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

(BLACKIE'S ED., 1846.)

EDINBURGH, *March* 8, 1787.

DEAR SIR,—Yours came safe, and I am, as usual, much indebted to your goodness. Poor Captain Montgomery is cast. Yesterday it was tried whether the husband could proceed against the unfortunate lover without first divorcing his wife; and their Gravities on the Bench were unanimously of opinion that Maxwell may prosecute for damages directly, and need not divorce his wife at all if he pleases; and Maxwell is immediately, before the Lord Ordinary, to prove, what I dare say will not be denied, the crim-con. Then their Lordships will modify the damages, which I suppose will be pretty heavy, as their Wisdoms have expressed great abhorrence of my gallant right worshipful brother's conduct.\*

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\* For some interesting particulars in regard to this case, see page 193, Vol. II.

O all ye powers of love unfortunate, and friendless woe !  
pour the balm of sympathising pity on the grief-torn, tender  
heart of the hapless fair one !

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

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

My poor unfortunate songs come again across my memory,  
d—n the pedant, frigid soul of criticism for ever and ever,—  
I am ever, dear Sir, your obliged, ROBERT BURNS.

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(1) TO MR JAMES CANDLISH,†

STUDENT IN PHYSIC, COLLEGE, GLASGOW.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDINBURGH, *March 21, 1787.*

MY EVER DEAR OLD ACQUAINTANCE,—I was equally surprised and pleased at your letter ; though I dare say you

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\* The songs were respectively “The Lass of Ballochmyle,” and “Young Peggy blooms, our boniest Lass.” See Vol. I., pp. 146 and 329. Peggy was a young relative of Mrs Hamilton, and the Miss Kennedy, mentioned near the close of the letter, was an unmarried sister of Mrs Hamilton, who resided in Mr Hamilton’s house.

† Burns seems to have become first acquainted with this correspondent, when they were mere lads, attending the parish school of Dalrymple ; after which they were again companions at the Ayr grammar school for a brief period. Most of the poet’s editors since Cromek’s days have printed with capitals, and inverted commas, the *lady thorn* referred to at the close of this letter ; yet not one has ventured to suggest the locality of that “Lady Thorn,” which the two schoolfellows once sported about. We suspect that *lady thorn* here is merely another name for haw-thorn in blossom, or “May-flower.” Mr



will think by my delaying so long to write to you, that I am so drowned in the intoxication of good fortune as to be indifferent to old, and once dear connections. The truth is, I was determined to write a good letter, full of argument, amplification, erudition, and, as Bayes says, *all that*. I thought of it, and thought of it, but for my soul, I cannot; and lest you should mistake the cause of my silence, I just sit down to tell you so. Don't give yourself credit though, that the strength of your logic scares me: the truth is, I never mean to meet you on that ground at all. You have shown me one thing which was to be demonstrated; that strong pride of reasoning, with a little affectation of singularity, may mislead the best of hearts. I, likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in "the daring path Spinoza trod," but experience of the weakness, not the strength of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.

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

ROBT. BURNS.

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, 22nd March, 1787.

MADAM,—I read your letter with watery eyes. A little,

Candlish married Jean, a sister of the poet's friend, James Smith of Mauchline, and distinguished himself as a lecturer on medicine, in Edinburgh, and died somewhat suddenly in 1806. He was father of the late Principal Candlish of the New College, Edinburgh.

very little while ago, *I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom* ; now I am distinguished, patronized, 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 tried 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 ; 'tis 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.

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By this time Burns had finished his work of revising the sheets of his new edition, and had only to wait a few weeks to see it in shape for delivery to the public. His time was not wholly spent, during his intervals of leisure, in mere social enjoyments ; he did not fail to mix betimes with the eminent men of letters and philosophy, who then shed lustre on the name of Scotland. Lockhart has remarked that “ Burns’s poetry might have procured him access to those circles ; but it was the extraordinary resources he displayed in conversation, the strong sagacity of his observations on life and manners, the splendour of his wit, and the glowing energy of his eloquence, that made him the object of serious admiration among these practised masters of the art of talk.

Even the stateliest of these philosophers had enough to do to maintain the attitude of equality when brought into contact with Burns's gigantic understanding; and every one of them whose impressions on the subject have been recorded agrees in pronouncing his conversation to have been the most remarkable thing about him." "We are thus," says Chambers, "left to understand that the best of Burns has not been, and was not of a nature to be, transmitted to posterity."\*

It was of the document which we are now, in the order of chronology, to lay before the reader that the elder D'Israeli in his nice speculations "On the Literary Character" thus wrote:—"Once we were nearly receiving from the hand of genius the most curious sketches of the temper, the irascible humours, the delicacy of the soul, even to its shadowiness, from the warm *sbozzos* of Burns, when he began a diary of his heart—a narrative of characters and events, and a chronology of his emotions. It was natural for such a creature of sensation and passion to project such a regular task, but quite impossible to get through it."

Lockhart, on this point thus wrote in 1828:—"That most curious document, it is to be observed, has not yet been printed entire: another generation will, no doubt, see the whole of the confession." Fifty years, however, have elapsed since that writer penned his remark, and the world has seen no more of the diary than Dr Currie was pleased to publish: where the MS. has gone to, we are at a loss to know. That biographer says in reference to the suppressed portions:—"The most curious particulars in the book are the delineations of characters he met with. These are not numerous; but they are chiefly of persons of distinction in the republic of letters, and nothing but the delicacy, and respect due to living characters prevents us from committing them to the press. Though it appears that in his conversation he was sometimes disposed to sarcastic remarks on men with whom he lived, nothing of this kind is discoverable in these more deliberate efforts of his understanding, which, while they exhibit great clearness of discrimination, manifest also the wish, as well as the power, to bestow high and generous praise."

\* See Appendix, Articles J., K., L.

## THE AUTHOR'S EDINBURGH COMMON-PLACE BOOK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, *April 9th*, 1787.

As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr Palgrave, that "half a word fixed, upon or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection." I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confident. I will sketch every character that anyway strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking

justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law-phrase, *without feud or favour*. Where I hit on anything clever, my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the losom of any friend whatever.

My own private story likewise, my love-adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light—shall be occasionally inserted. In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up to sale.

To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exception—the connection between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

“When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,  
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.”

*There* confidence—confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion—that endears them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedly “reigns and revels.” But this is not my lot; and, in my situation, if I am wise (which, by the by, I have no great chance of being), my fate should be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow, “to watch alone on the house-tops.” Oh the pity!

There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received everywhere, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due*; he meets at a great man's table



a Squire Something, or a Sir Somebody; he knows the noble landlord at heart gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes, beyond, perhaps, any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eightpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three-farthings, meet with attention and notice that are withheld from the sons of genius and poverty!

The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He shewed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am as capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

With Dr Blair I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*.—When he neglects me for the mere carcase of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, What do I care for him or his pomp either?\*

It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one; but, in my opinion, Dr Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with; his vanity is

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\* What is given after this regarding Dr Blair was not published in Dr Currie's earlier editions; but we observe it in the later reprints of that work.

proverbially known among his acquaintance; but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first, the very first, rank in prose; even in poetry, a bard of Nature's making can only take the *pas* of him. He has a heart, not of the finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is a truly worthy, and most respectable character.\*

The poet's dedication of his new edition to the *Caledonian Hunt* is dated April 7, 1787. On the 9th he commenced his Journal, partly above printed; and for Joseph Wood the player's benefit night, on Monday 16th April, he composed a prologue which the reader will find at page 57, Vol. II.

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### TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, 15th 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 can I grace the cause,  
In speaking of myself;"

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted

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\* We are here tempted to place Samuel Johnson's opinion of Dr Robertson, the historian, in juxtaposition with that of Burns respecting Dr Blair: "He is not a pleasant man. His conversation is neither instructive nor brilliant. He does not talk as if impelled by any fulness of knowledge, or vivacity of imagination. His conversation is like that of any other sensible man. He talks with no wish either to inform or to hear; but only because he does not think it becomes 'an author of position' to sit in a company and say nothing."—Boswell's *Johnson*. 1778.

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' 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.

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17th April 1787.—MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT BETWIXT MR CREECH AND MR BURNS, RESPECTING THE PROPERTY OF MR BURNS'S POEMS.†

By advice of friends, Mr Burns having resolved to dispose of the property of his Poems, and having consulted with Mr Henry M'Kenzie upon the subject, Mr Creech met with Mr Burns at Mr M'Kenzie's house upon Tuesday, the 17th April 1787, in the evening, and they three having retired and conversed upon the subject, Mr Burns and Mr Creech referred the sum, to be named by Mr M'Kenzie, as being well acquainted with matters of this kind, when Mr M'Kenzie said he thought Mr Burns should have a hundred guineas for the property of his poems.

Mr Creech said that he agreed to the proposal, but as Scotland was now amply supplied with the very numerous edition now printed, he could write to Mr Caddell of London, to know if he would take a share of the Book, but at any rate Mr Burns should have the money named by Mr M'Kenzie, which Mr Burns most cordially agreed to, and to make over the property upon these terms, whenever Mr Creech required him.

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\* Author of "The Wealth of Nations."

† A copy of this document was published in the "Burns Calendar," Kilmarnock 1874; we are indebted to Mr Creech's representatives for a perusal of the original, from which we have corrected a few inaccuracies in that printed copy.

Upon Monday the 23d of April 1787, Mr Creech informed Mr Burns that he had remained in Town expecting Mr Caddell's answer, for three days, as to his taking a share of the property of the poems; but that he had received no answer; yet he would, as formerly proposed and agreed to, take the whole upon himself, that Mr Burns might be at no uncertainty in the matter.

Upon this, both parties considered the transaction as finished.

“EDINBURGH, *Oct. 23d*, 1787.

“On demand I promise to pay to Mr Robert Burns, or Order, One Hundred Guineas, value received. WILLIAM CREECH.”

“Received the contents—*May* 30, 1788.”

“ROBERT BURNS.”

(<sup>6</sup>) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.

(GILBERT BURNS'S ED., 1820.)

SIR,—I have taken the liberty to send a hundred copies of my book to your care. . . . I trouble you then, Sir, to find a proper person (of the mercantile folks I suppose will be best) that, for a moderate consideration, will retail the books to subscribers, as they are called for. Several of the subscription bills have been mislaid, so all who say they have subscribed must be served at subscription price; otherwise, those who have not subscribed must pay six shillings. Should more copies be needed, an order by post will be immediately answered.

My respectful compliments to Mr Aiken. I wrote him by David Shaw, which I hope he received.

I have the honor to be, with the most grateful sincerity, Sir, your obliged and very humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *18th April*, 1787.

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR GEORGE REID, BARQUHARIE,\*

WITH A PARCEL,

CARE OF W<sup>m</sup>. RONALD, TOBACCONIST, MAUCHLINE.

(*Here first published.*)

MY DEAR SIR,—The fewer words I can tell my story in, so much the better, as I am in an unco tirryfyke of a hurry.

I have sent two copies of my book to you ; one of them as a present to yourself, or rather, to your wife, the other present in my name to Miss Jenny. It goes to my heart that time does not allow me to make some very fine turned periods on the occasion, as I generally like pretty well to hear myself speak ; at least, fully as well as anybody else.

Tell Miss Jenny that I had wrote her a long letter, wherein I had taken to pieces r<sup>t</sup>. Honorables, Honorables, and Reverends not a few ; but it, with many more of my written things were stolen from my room, which terrified me from “scauding my lips in ither folk’s kail” again. By good luck, the fellow is gone to Gibraltar, and I trust in heaven he will go to the bottom for his pains. I will write you by post when I leave Auld Reekie, which will be in about ten days.

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 19th April 1787.

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We are indebted to John Rodger, Esq., Clydesdale Bank, Greenock, possessor of the poet’s holograph of this letter for its appearance here. The seal attached to it is an elongated oval shewing at full length a figure, not very well cut, of Orpheus, or perhaps Sappho, with harp in hand. The poet’s lodging would, at this date, be the same as that spoken of in the letter to Ballantine of 14th January previous. It appears to be certain that Cromek had seen this letter, although he did not choose to print it. Allan

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\* The name of this gentleman has already been made familiar to the reader at p. 166 *supra*. We have also referred to Wm. Ronald at p. 52 of the present volume.

Cunningham quotes from that editor's unpublished memoranda, a very absurd story, evidently suggested by the letter in the text, that the Bard's Edinburgh private Journal "a clasped volume with lock and key" was stolen from his room by a Leith carpenter who was in the habit of calling on Burns, and which carpenter enlisted immediately thereafter in a company of Artificers then being raised to go to Gibraltar." That story is contradicted by the fact that Dr Currie, in 1800, not only published several extracts from the Journal, but admitted its existence, regretting only that "delicacy and respect due to living characters prevented him from committing the remainder to print."

For the Author's edition, thus ready for delivery on 18th April, there were no fewer than fifteen hundred subscribers, many of whom paid more than the selling price of the volume. The general public demand having speedily exhausted the first impression, the publisher was under the necessity of reprinting the book; and this second impression also failing to supply the extending market, a third reprint bearing date 1787 was produced in London, by arrangement with Mr Creech. Burns now found himself in possession of a considerable sum of ready money, and the first impulse of his mind was to visit some of the classic scenes of Scottish history and romance. "He had as yet," writes Lockhart, "seen but a small part of his own country, and this by no means among the most interesting of her districts, until indeed his own poetry made it equal, on that score, to any other."

(<sup>3</sup>) TO DR JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, *23d April* 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs Dunlop. I am ill-skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, Sir, for the honor you have done me; and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book is what I have in common with the world; but to regard



these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight, and, after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, *Cowdenknowes*, *Banks of Yarrow*, *Tweed*, &c., I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind.\*

ROBT. BURNS.

On the same day that the preceding letter was penned, Burns was presented by Dr James Gregory with an English Translation of Cicero's Select Orations (London, 1756). The Dr was Professor of Medicine in the University of Edinburgh, to which Chair he succeeded in 1773, on the death of his father, Dr John Gregory, author of "A Father's Legacy to his Daughters." The poet made the following inscription on the book:

EDIN., 23d April, 1787.

THIS book, a present from the truly worthy and learned DR GREGORY, I shall preserve to my latest hour, as a mark of the gratitude, esteem, and veneration I bear the Donor. So help me God!

ROBERT BURNS.

\* The answer to this letter is dated May 23, and is, although long, of considerable literary interest. We therefore print it in the Appendix to this volume, Article H.

(<sup>5</sup>) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

\* \* \* \* \*

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 possessed 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, &c., 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.

EDINBURGH, 30th April, 1787.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR WILLIAM DUNBAR, W.S.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

DEAR SIR,—In justice to Spenser, I must acknowledge that there is scarcely a poet in the language could have been a more agreeable present to me ; and in justice to you, allow me to say, Sir, that I have not met with a man in Edinburgh to whom I would so willingly have been indebted for the gift. The tattered rhymes I herewith present you, and the handsome volumes of Spenser for which I am so

much indebted to your goodness, may perhaps be not in proportion to one another ; but be that as it may, my gift, though far less valuable, is as sincere a mark of esteem as yours.

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

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

I have the honor to be, with the warmest sincerity, Dear  
Sir, yours ever, ROBT. BURNS.

LAWNMARKET, *Monday Morning.*

[*April 30th, 1786.*]

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On Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd May Burns was absent from Edinburgh on a private visit to the little circle of friends who had entertained him so heartily at Covington near Biggar, on his journey to Edinburgh in November previous. This fact was communicated to Mr Robert Chambers by a descendant of the farmer at Covington Mains, Mr Archibald Prentice, already noticed. It appears that the careful husbandman had made an entry of that visit in his private journal, among his agricultural notes.

Who may venture to guess what errand the bard went upon ?

It is enough that in an off-hand, but very natural song, he has described that locality most minutely, and recorded a sufficient motive for revisiting it.

“Not Gowrie’s rich valley, nor Forth’s sunny shores,  
To me hae the charms o’ yon wild mossy moors ;  
For there, by a lonely sequesterèd stream,  
Resides a sweet lassie, my thought and my dream :  
She is not the fairest, altho’ she is fair,  
O’ nice education but sma’ is her share,  
Her parentage humble as humble can be,  
But I loe the dear lassie because she loes me.”

*See Poems, p. 37, Vol. II.*

(4) TO THE REV. DR HUGH BLAIR.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

LAWNMARKET, *Edinburgh*, 3d May, 1787.

REV. AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR,—I leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship, you have shewn me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation ; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark ; and honored by the notice of those illustrious names of my country, whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honor me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man ; I knew very well, that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character, when once the novelty was over : I have made up my mind that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprize me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof impression of Beugo’s work for me, done on India paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c.

On Friday 4th May, the poet sent to his venerated friend, Mr William Tytler of Woodhouselee, a similar proof impression of his engraved portrait, accompanied by the well-known poetical address to that gentleman, beginning—

“Reverèd defender of beauteous Stuart.”

*See page 70, Vol. II.*

At the close of the poem he added as follows :—

MY muse jilted me here, and turned a corner on me, and I have not got again into her good graces.

Do me the justice to believe me sincere in my grateful remembrance of the many civilities you have honored me with since I came to Edinburgh, and in assuring you that I have the honor to be, revered Sir, your obliged and very humble servant

ROBERT BURNS.

LAWNMARKET, *Friday, noon.*

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, MUSIC ENGRAVER,  
EDINBURGH.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

DEAR SIR,—I have sent you a song never before known, for your collection ; the air by Mr M’Gibbon, but I know not the author of the words, which I got from Dr Blacklock.

Farewell, my dear Sir ! I wished to have seen you, but I have been dreadfully throng, as I march to-morrow.

Had my acquaintance with you been a little older, I would have asked the favour of your correspondence ; as I have met with few people whose company and conversation gave me so much pleasure, because I have met with few whose sentiments are so congenial to my own.

When Dunbar and you meet, tell him I left Edinburgh with the idea of him hanging somewhere about my heart.

Keep the original of this song till we meet again, whenever that may be.

R. B.

LAWNMARKET, *4th May, 1787.*

## (2) TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

(DR WADDELL'S EDITION, 1869.)

MY LORD,—I go away to-morrow morning early, and allow me to vent the fulness of my heart in thanking your Lordship for all that patronage, that benevolence, and that friendship with which you have honored me. With brimful eyes, I pray that you may find, in that great Being whose image you so nobly bear, that Friend which I have found in you. My gratitude is not selfish design—that I disdain; it is not dodging after the heel of greatness—that is an offering you disdain. It is a feeling of the same kind with my devotion.

R. B.

LAWNMARKEET, *Friday, noon.*


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 THE BORDER TOUR.

Our poet, in the course of his first winter in Edinburgh, had formed an intimate acquaintance with Robert Ainslie, the son of a substantial farmer at Berrywell, near Dunse, in Berwickshire. This young man, then only in his twenty-first year, had been serving his apprenticeship with a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, and his name appears on the list of subscribers for two copies of the author's new edition. Burns having now resolved to enjoy an excursion of considerable scope through the south and south-eastern counties of Scotland, on his return journey to Ayrshire, left the city on Saturday 5th May. It had been arranged that Mr Ainslie should be his fellow-traveller through the earlier stages of the circuit, and accordingly they proceeded on horseback by way of Haddington and Gifford, crossing the Lammermuirs, and reaching Berrywell in the evening. Burns had purchased at Edinburgh for the occasion, a spirited mare which he had christened "Jenny Geddes," after the heroine of orthodoxy who fired the first shot in the Scotch ecclesiastical warfare of 1637. The reader as he progresses will find the poet from time to time making honourable mention of this mare both in verse and prose.



The Journal which follows, only partially given by Currie, was first published entire by Cunningham.

LEFT Edinburgh [May 5, 1787]—Lammermuir Hills miserably dreary, but at times very picturesque. Langton-edge, a glorious view of the Merse—Reach Berrywell. Old Mr Ainslie an uncommon character; his hobbies, agriculture, natural philosophy, and politics. In the first, he is unexceptionably the clearest-headed, best-informed man I ever met with; in the other two, very intelligent: as a man of business he has uncommon merit, and by fairly deserving it, has made a very decent independence.\* Mrs Ainslie, an excellent, sensible, cheerful, amiable old woman. Miss Ainslie—her person a little *embonpoint*, but handsome; her face, particularly her eyes, full of sweetness and good humour: she unites three qualities rarely to be found together; keen, solid, penetration; sly, witty observation and remark; and the gentlest, most unaffected female modesty. Douglas, a clever, fine, promising young fellow.—The family-meeting with their brother, my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister. The whole family remarkably attached to their menials—Mrs A. full of stories of the sagacity and sense of the little girl in the kitchen. Mr A. high in the praises of an African, his house-servant—all his people old in his service—Douglas's old nurse came to Berrywell yesterday, to remind them of its being his birthday.†

A Mr Dudgeon, a poet at times, a worthy remarkable

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\* We have just been shewn a copy of the "Letters of Junius," in one vol. (London 1783), bearing the signature of Burns on its title page, thus:—"Robt. Burns, Poet." On the fly-leaf is the following presentation inscription in the handwriting of old Mr Ainslie:—"In Testimony of the most sincere Friendship and Esteem, this book is presented to Mr Robert Burns by  
ROBERT AINSLIE."

BERRYWELL, 18th May 1787.

† "Died at Eden, near Bauff, Aberdeenshire, 19th September 1850, Douglas Ainslie, Esq. of Cairnbank, Berwickshire, in the 80th year of his age."—*Newspaper Obituary*.

character—natural penetration, a great deal of information, some genius, and extreme modesty.\*

*Sunday 6th.*—Went to church at Dunse—Dr Bowmaker a man of strong lungs and pretty judicious remark; but ill-skilled in propriety, and altogether unconscious of his want of it.

*Monday [7th.]*—Coldstream—went over to England†—Cornhill—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge. Dine at Coldstream with Mr Ainslie and Mr Foreman—beat Mr F. in a dispute about Voltaire. Tea at Lennel House with Mr Brydone§—Mr Brydone a most excellent heart, kind, joyous, and benevolent; but a good deal of the French indiscriminate complaisance—from his situation past and present, an admirer of every thing that bears a splendid title, or that possesses a large

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\* Author of Scottish song “Up amang yon cliffy rocks,” of which popular lyric he is said to have also composed the pretty melody. He died at Newmains, Whitekirk, 23rd October, 1795.

† See Epigram then produced, page 72, Vol. II.

‡ “When we arrived at Coldstream, where the dividing line between Scotland and England is the Tweed, I suggested our going across to the other side by the Coldstream bridge, that Burns might have it to say he *had been in England*. We did so, and were pacing slowly along on English ground, enjoying our walk, when I was astonished to see the poet throw away his hat, and, thus uncovered, look towards Scotland kneeling and with uplifted hands, in an attitude of reverence. I kept silence, while he with extreme emotion and an expression of countenance which I will never forget, prayed for, and blessed his native land most solemnly, by repeating with fine emphasis the two closing stanzas of his *Cottar’s Saturday Night*.

“O Scotia! my dear, my native soil,

For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent! &c.”

*Letter of Robert Ainslie to James Hogg, April 20th, 1834.*

§ Burns in “The Vision,” referring to Col. Fullarton, calls him “Brydone’s brave ward,” because he had travelled under the care of the distinguished gentleman now visited by the poet. Patrick Brydone, Esq., was well-known as author of a “Tour in Sicily and Malta;” Mrs Brydone was a daughter of Dr Robertson, the historian; and Miss Brydone, their daughter, a woman of great accomplishments, became Countess of Minto.

estate—Mrs Brydone a most elegant woman in her person and manners; the tones of her voice remarkably sweet—my reception extremely flattering—sleep at Coldstream.

*Tuesday [8th]*—Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of Kelso—fine bridge over the Tweed—enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, particularly the Scotch side; introduced to Mr Scott of the Royal Bank—an excellent, modest fellow—fine situation of it—ruins of Roxburgh Castle—a holly-bush growing where James II. of Scotland was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin, and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by an English Hottentot, a *maître d'hotel* of the Duke's, a Mr Cole. Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads. Turnip and sheep husbandry, their great improvements—Mr M'Dowal, at Caver-ton Mill, a friend of Mr Ainslie's, with whom I dined to-day, sold his sheep, ewe and lamb together, at two guineas a piece.—Wash their sheep before shearing—seven or eight pounds of washen wool in a fleece—low markets, consequently low rents—fine lands not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre—magnificence of farmers and farm-houses—come up Teviot and up Jed to Jedburgh to lie, and so wish myself a good night.

*Wednesday [9th.]*—Breakfast with Mr —, in Jedburgh—a squabble between Mrs —, a crazed, talkative slattern, and a sister of her's, an old maid, respecting a Relief minister. Miss gives Madam the lie; and Madam, by way of revenge, upbraids her that she laid snares to entangle the said minister, then a widower, in the net of matrimony. Go about two miles out of Jedburgh to a roup of parks—meet a polite, soldier-like gentleman, a Captain Rutherford, who had been many years through the wilds of America, a

prisoner among the Indians. Charming, romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens, orchards, &c., intermingled among the houses—fine old ruins—a once magnificent cathedral, and strong castle. All the towns here have the appearance of old, rude grandeur, but the people extremely idle—Jed a fine romantic little river.

Dine with Captain Rutherford—the Captain a polite fellow, fond of money in his farming way; showed a particular respect to my bardship—his lady exactly a proper matrimonial second part for him. Miss Rutherford a beautiful girl, but too far gone woman to expose so much of a fine swelling bosom—her face very fine.

Return to Jedburgh—walk up Jed with some ladies to be shown Love-lane and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr Potts, writer, a very clever fellow; and Mr Somerville, the clergyman of the place, a man, and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning\*—The walking-party of ladies, Mrs —— and Miss ——, her sister, before mentioned.—*N.B.*—These two appear still more comfortably ugly and stupid, and bore me most shockingly. Two Miss ——, tolerably agreeable. Miss Hope, a tolerably pretty girl, fond of laughing and fun. Miss Lindsay, a good-humoured, amiable girl: rather short *et embonpoint*, but handsome, and extremely graceful—beautiful hazel eyes, full of spirit, and sparkling with delicious moisture—an engaging face *un tout ensemble* that speaks her of the first order of female minds—her sister, a bonie, strappin, rosy, sonsie lass. Shake myself loose, after several unsuccessful efforts, of Mrs and Miss ——, and somehow or other, get

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\* Dr Somerville was distinguished as a literary man. It is said that after the appearance of this passage in Currie's life of the Poet, he entirely abandoned the habit of punning. He died in May 1830, aged ninety years, sixty-four of which had been passed in the clerical profession. His son married a lady distinguished in the scientific world.

hold of Miss Lindsay's arm. My heart is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. Miss seems very well pleased with my bardship's distinguishing her; and after some slight qualms, which I could easily mark, she sets the titter round at defiance, and kindly allows me to keep my hold: and when parted by the ceremony of my introduction to Mr Somerville, she met me half, to resume my situation. *Nota Bene*—The poet within a point and a half of being d-mnably in love—I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as much tinder as ever.

The old, crossed-grained, whiggish, ugly, slanderous Miss —, with all the poisonous spleen of a disappointed, ancient maid, stops me very unseasonably to ease her bursting breast, by falling abusively foul on the Miss Lindsays, particularly on my Dulcinea;—I hardly refrain from cursing her to her face for daring to mouth her calumnious slander on one of the finest pieces of the workmanship of Almighty Excellence! Sup at Mr —'s; vexed that the Miss Lindsays are not of the supper-party, as they only are wanting. Mrs — and Miss — still improve infernally on my hands.

Set out next morning [10th.]—for Wauchope, the seat of my correspondent, Mrs Scott—breakfast by the way with Dr Elliot, an agreeable, good-hearted, climate-beaten old veteran, in the medical line; now retired to a romantic, but rather moorish place, on the banks of the Roole—he accompanies us almost to Wauchope—we traverse the country to the top of Bochester, the scene of an old encampment, and Woolee Hill.

Wauchope.—Mr Scott exactly the figure and face commonly given to Sancho Panza—very shrewd in his farming



matters, and not unfrequently stumbles on what may be called a strong thing rather than a good thing. Mrs Scott all the sense, taste, intrepidity of face, and bold, critical decision, which usually distinguish female authors.\* Sup with Mr Potts—agreeable party. Breakfast next morning [11th] with Mr Somerville—the *bruit* of Miss Lindsay and my bardship, by means of the invention and malice of Miss —. Mr Somerville sends to Dr Lindsay, begging him and family to breakfast if convenient, but at all events to send Miss Lindsay; accordingly, Miss Lindsay only comes,—I find Miss Lindsay would soon play the devil with me—I met with some little flattering attentions from her. Mrs Somerville an excellent, motherly, agreeable woman, and a fine family. Mr Ainslie and Mrs S—, junr., with Mr —, Miss Lindsay, and myself, go to see *Esther*, a very remarkable woman for reciting poetry of all kinds, and sometimes making Scotch doggerel herself—she can repeat by heart almost everything she has ever read, particularly Pope's *Homer* from end to end—has studied *Euclid* by herself, and, in short, is a woman of very extraordinary abilities.—On conversing with her I find her fully equal to the character given of her. She is very much flattered that I send for her, and that she sees a poet who has *put out a book*, as she says.—She is, among other things, a great florist, and is rather past the meridian of once celebrated beauty.†

I walk in *Esther's* garden with Miss Lindsay, and after some little chit-chat of the tender kind, I presented her with a proof print of my *nob*, which she accepted with something more tender than gratitude. She told me many

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\* It was this lady who sent him a rhyming epistle in February preceding, which elicited the beautiful poetic reply printed at page 52, Vol. II. She died in February, 1789.

† Esther Easton, a woman of extraordinary gifts, was the wife of a common working gardener. She subsequently taught a school, and was ultimately dependent on charity.



little stories which Miss —— had retailed concerning her and me, with prolonging pleasure—God bless her! Was waited on by the Magistrates, and presented with the freedom of the burgh.

Took farewell of Jedburgh, with some melancholy, disagreeable sensations.—Jed, pure be thy crystal streams, and hallowed thy sylvan banks! Sweet Isabella Lindsay, may peace dwell in thy bosom, uninterrupted, except by the tumultuous throbbings of rapturous love! That love-kindling eye must beam on another, not on me—that graceful form must bless another's arms, not mine!\*

Kelso.—Dine with the Farmer's Club—all gentlemen, talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from thirty to fifty pounds value, and attends the fox-huntings in the county—go out with Mr Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr Ainslie's to lie. [12th]—Mr Ker a most gentlemanly, clever, handsome fellow, a widower with some fine children—his mind and manners astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir, in Kilmarnock—everything in Mr Ker's most elegant—he offers to accompany me in my English tour. Dine with Sir Alexander Don—a pretty clever fellow, but far from being a match for his divine lady.†

A very wet day . . .—Sleep at Stodrig again; and [Sunday 13th] set out for Melrose—visit Dryburgh, a fine old ruined abbey—still bad weather—cross Leader, and come up Tweed to Melrose—dine there, and visit that far-famed, glorious ruin—come to Selkirk, up Ettrick;‡—the whole

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\* Isabella Lindsay, sister of Dr Lindsay, we learn from Mr Chambers, married afterwards a Mr Adam Armstrong, an employé of the Russian government. "She died young, leaving four children: the youngest is General Robert Armstrong, now [1856] Director of the Imperial Mint at St Petersburg. Peggy, the younger sister, died not long after the poet's visit, at the age of twenty-two."

† Lady Harriet Don, sister to the Earl of Glencairn.

‡ Here Burns penned his famous Lament for Mr Creech's absence from Edinburgh,—“Willie's Awa.”

country hereabout, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony.

*Monday [14th].*—Come to Inverleithen, a famous Spa, and in the vicinity of the palace of Traquhair, where having dined, and drank some Galloway-whey, I here remain till to-morrow—saw “Elibanks and Elibraes,” on the other side of the Tweed.\*

*Tuesday, [15th].*—Drank tea yesternight at Pirn, with Mr Horsburgh.—Breakfasted to day with Mr Ballantine of Hollylee.—Proposal for a four-horse team to consist of Mr Scott of Wauchope, Fittieland: Logan of Logan, Fittiefur: Ballantine of Holly-lee, Forewynd: Horsburgh of Horsburgh. Dine at a country inn, kept by a miller in Earlstoun,† the birth-place and residence of the celebrated Thomas the Rhymer—saw the ruins of his castle—come to Berrywell.

*Wednesday, [16th].*—Dine at Dunse with the Farmers' Club—company, impossible to do them justice—Rev. Mr. Smith, a famous punster, and Mr Meikle a celebrated mechanic, and inventor of the threshing-mill.—*Thursday [17th]*, breakfast at Berrywell, and walk into Dunse to see a famous knife made by a cutler there, and to be presented to an Italian prince.—A pleasant ride with my friend Mr Robert Ainslie and his sister, to Mr Thomson's, a man who has newly commenced farmer, and has married a Miss Patty Grieve, formerly a flame of Mr. Robert Ainslie's. Company—Miss Jacky Grieve, an amiable sister of Mrs. Thomson's, and Mr. Hood, an honest, worthy, facetious farmer, in the neighbourhood.‡

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\* An old free-spoken song which celebrates this locality would be enough in itself to bring the poet twenty miles out of his road to see it.

† Undoubtedly Burns' reason for making this detour was to see the song-celebrated Cowdenknowes.

‡ A young man named Symon Gray, the son of a respected citizen of Dunse, who was in the practice of stringing rhymes together which he

*Friday* [18th].—Ride to Berwick—an idle town, rudely picturesque.—Meet Lord Errol in walking round the walls—his lordship's flattering notice of me.—Dine with Mr. Clunyie, merchant—nothing particular in company or conversation.—Come up a bold shore, and over a wild country to Eyemouth—sup and sleep at Mr. Grieve's.

*Saturday* [19th].—Spend the day at Mr. Grieve's—made a Royal-arch mason of St. Abb's Lodge.\*—Mr. William Grieve, the eldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow—takes a hearty glass, and sings a good song. Mr. Robert, his brother, and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little. Take a sail after dinner. Fishing of all kinds pays tithes at Eyemouth.

fancied were meritorious, sent packet after packet of his trash to Berrywell, to elicit Burns's opinion of them. The poet good-humouredly scribbled his judgment of their value by imitating Symon's own style thus:—

"Dear Symon Gray,	Tried all my skill,
The other day,	But find I'm still
When you sent me some rhyme,	Just where I was before.
I could not then	We auld wives' minions
Just ascertain	Give our opinions,
Its worth, for want of time ;	Solicited or no ;
But now, to day,	Then of its fau'ts
Good Master Gray,	My honest thoughts
I've read it o'er and o'er,	I'll give, and here they go:—"

Chambers assures us that so rough is the expression of Burns's opinion which follows this introduction, it is not presentable before good company.

\* We quote the following entry from Cunningham's edition :—

"EYEMOUTH, 19th May, 1787.

"At a general encampment held this day, the following brethren were made Royal-arch Masons—namely, Robert Burns, from the Lodge of St. James's, Tarbolton, Ayrshire, and Robert Ainslie, from the Lodge of St. Luke's, Edinburgh, by James Carmichael, Wm. Grieve, Daniel Dow, John Clay, Robert Grieve, &c., &c. Robert Ainslie paid one guinea admission dues; but on account of R. Burns's remarkable poetical genius, the encampment unanimously agreed to admit him gratis, and consider themselves honoured by having a man of such shining abilities for one of their companions.

"Extracted from the Minute Book of the Lodge by THOS. BOWHILL."

*Sunday [20th].*—A Mr. Robinson, brewer at Ednam, sets out with us to Dunbar.

The Miss Grieves very good girls.—My bardship's heart got a brush from Miss Betsey.

Mr William Grieve's attachment to the family circle so fond, that when he is out, which by the bye is often the case, he cannot go to bed till he sees if all his sisters are sleeping well—Pass the famous Abbey of Coldingham, and Pease-bridge.—Call at Mr. Shireff's, where Mr. A. and I dine.—Mr. S. talkative and conceited. I talk of love to Nancy the whole evening, while her brother escorts home some companions like himself.—Sir James Hall of Dunglass,\* having heard of my being in the neighbourhood, comes to Mr. Shireff's to breakfast—[21st] takes me to see his fine scenery on the stream of Dunglass—Dunglass the most romantic, sweet place I ever saw—Sir James and his lady a pleasant happy couple. He points out a walk for which he has an uncommon respect, as it was made by an aunt of his, to whom he owes much.

Miss —— will accompany me to Dunbar, by way of making a parade of me as a sweetheart of hers, among her relations. She mounts an old cart horse, as huge and as lean as a house; a rusty old side-saddle without girth or stirrup, but fastened on with an old pillion-girth—herself as fine as hands could make her, in cream-coloured riding clothes, hat and feather, &c.—I, ashamed of my situation, ride like the devil, and almost shake her to pieces on old Jolly—get rid of her by refusing to call at her uncle's with her.

Past through the most glorious corn-country I ever saw, till I reach Dunbar, a neat little town.—Dine with Provost Fall, an eminent merchant, and most respectable character,

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\* He was the father of Captain Basil Hall, so well known by his many popular works.

but undescribable, as he exhibits no marked traits. Mrs. Fall, a genius in painting; fully more clever in the fine arts and sciences than my friend Lady Wauchope, without her consummate assurance of her own abilities.—Call with Mr. Robinson (whom, by the bye, I find to be a worthy, much respected man, very modest; warm, social heart, which with less good sense than his would be perhaps with the children of prim precision and pride, rather inimical to that respect which is man's due from man)—with him I call on Miss Clarke, a maiden in the Scotch phrase, "*Guid enough, but no brent new.*" a clever woman, with tolerable pretensions to remark and wit; while time had blown the blushing bud of bashful modesty into the flower of easy confidence. She wanted to see what sort of *raree show* an author was; and to let him know, that though Dunbar was but a little town, yet it was not destitute of people of parts.

Breakfast next morning [22nd] at Skateraw, at Mr. Lee's, a farmer of great note.—Mr. Lee, an excellent, hospitable, social fellow, rather oldish—warm-hearted and chatty—a most judicious, sensible farmer. Mr. Lee detains me till next morning—Company at dinner—my rev. acquaintance Dr. Bowmaker, a reverend, rattling old fellow; two sea lieutenants; a cousin of the landlord's, a fellow whose looks are of that kind which deceived me in a gentleman at Kelso, and has often deceived me—a goodly handsome figure and face, which incline one to give them credit for parts which they have not; Mr. Clarke, a much cleverer fellow, but whose looks a little cloudy, and his appearance rather ungainly, with an every-day observer may prejudice the opinion against him; Dr. Brown, a medical young gentleman from Dunbar, a fellow whose face and manners are open and engaging.—Leave Skateraw for Dunse next day [23], along with Collector ——, a lad of slender abilities and bashfully diffident to an extreme.

Found Miss Ainslie, the amiable, the sensible, the good-humoured, the sweet Miss Ainslie, all alone at Berrywell.—Heavenly powers who know the weakness of human hearts, support mine! What happiness must I see only to remind me that I cannot enjoy it!

Lammermuir Hills, from East Lothian to Dunse very wild.—Dine with the Farmers' Club at Kelso. Sir John Hume and Mr. Lumsden there, but nothing worth remembrance when the following circumstance is considered—I walk into Dunse before dinner, and out to Berrywell in the evening with Miss Ainslie—how well-bred, how frank, how good she is! Charming Rachel! may thy bosom never be wrung by the evils of this life of sorrows, or by the villainy of this world's sons!\*

*Thursday [24th].*—Mr. Ker and I set out to dine at Mr. Hood's on our way to England.

I am taken extremely ill with strong feverish symptoms, and take a servant of Mr. Hood's to watch me all night—embittering remorse scares my fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death.—I am determined to live for the future in such a manner as not to be scared at the approach of Death—I am sure I could meet him with indifference, but for “the something beyond the grave.”—Mr. Hood agrees to accompany us to England if we will wait till Sunday.

*Friday [25th].*—I go with Mr Hood to see a roup of an unfortunate farmer's stock—rigid economy, and decent industry, do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis persona* in such a scene of horror.

Meet my good old friend Mr Ainslie, who calls on Mr Hood in the evening to take farewell of my bardship. This

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\* [Miss Ainslie died unmarried—a good-looking, elderly lady, of very agreeable manners.—*Chambers.*]



day I feel myself warm with sentiments of gratitude to the Great Preserver of men, who has kindly restored me to health and strength once more.

A pleasant walk with my young friend Douglas Ainslie, a sweet, modest, clever young fellow.

*Sunday, 27th May.*—Cross Tweed, and traverse the moors through a wild country till I reach Alnwick—Alnwick Castle a seat of the Duke of Northumberland, furnished in a most princely manner.—A Mr Wilkin, agent of His Grace's, shows us the house and policies. Mr Wilkin, a discreet, sensible ingenious man.

*Monday [28th].*—Come, still through by-ways, to Warkworth, where we dine.—Hermitage and old castle. Warkworth situated very picturesque, with Coquet Island, a small rocky spot, the seat of an old monastery, facing it a little in the sea; and the small but romantic river Coquet, running through it.—Sleep at Morpeth, a pleasant enough little town, and on next day [29], to Newcastle.—Meet with a very agreeable, sensible fellow, a Mr Chattox, who shows us a great many civilities, and who dines and sups with us.

*Wednesday [30th].*—Left Newcastle early in the morning, and rode over a fine country to Hexham to breakfast—from Hexham to Wardrue, the celebrated Spa, where we slept.

*Thursday [31st].*—Reach Longtown to dine, and part there with my good friends Messrs Hood and Ker—A hiring day in Longtown—I am uncommonly happy to see so many young folks enjoying life.—I come to Carlisle. (Meet a strange enough romantic adventure by the way, in falling in with a girl and her married sister—the girl, after some overtures of gallantry on my side, sees me a little cut with

the bottle, and offers to take me in for a Gretna-green affair. I not being such a gull as she imagines, make an appointment with her, by way of *vive la bagatelle*, to hold a conference on it when we reach Town.—I meet her in town and give her a brush of caressing, and a bottle of cyder, but finding herself *un peu trompée* in her man she sheers off.) Next day [1st June,] I meet my good friend, Mr Mitchell, and walk with him round the town and its environs, and through his printing works, &c.—four or five hundred people employed, many of them women and children. Dine with Mr Mitchell, and leave Carlisle. Come by the coast to Annan. Overtaken on the way by a curious old fish of a shoemaker, and miner, from Cumberland mines.

*[Here the Manuscript abruptly terminates. The Journal includes a period of twenty-six days.]*

In connexion with the foregoing Journal, we must not omit the following items of correspondence :—

(1) TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ., LONDON.

ENCLOSING POEM, "WILLIE'S AWA." (page 73. Vol. II.)

(CROMEK, 1808.)

SELKIRK, 13th May 1787.

MY HONORED FRIEND,—The enclosed I have just wrote, nearly extempore, in a solitary Inn in Selkirk, after a miserable, wet day's riding. I have been over most of East Lothian, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirk shires, and next week I begin a tour through the north of England. Yesterday, I dined with Lady Harriot, sister to my noble Patron—*Quem Deus conservit!*—I would write till I would tire you as much with dull prose, as I dare say by this time you are with wretched verse; but I am jaded to death; so, with a grateful farewell, I have the honor to be,  
good Sir, yours sincerely,

R. B.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR PETER HILL,  
CARE OF MR CREECH, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.\**)

D<sup>R</sup>. SIR,—If Mr Alex<sup>r</sup>. Pattison, or Mr Cowan, from Paisley, or in general, any other of those to whom I have sent copies on credit before, apply to you, you will give them what number they demand, when they require it, provided always that those who are non-subscribers shall pay one shilling more than subscribers. This I write to you when I am miserably fou, consequently it must be the sentiments of my heart.

ROBERT BURNS.

May 17th 1787.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR PATTISON, *BOOKSELLER*, PAISLEY.†

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

BERRYWELL, near DUNSE, May 17th, 1787.

DEAR SIR,—I am sorry I was out of Edinburgh, making a slight pilgrimage to the classic scenes of this country, when I was favored with yours of the 11th instant, enclosing an order of the Paisley Banking Company on the Royal Bank, for Twenty-two pounds, seven shillings sterling, payment in full, after carriage deducted, for ninety copies of my book I sent you. According to your motions, I see you will have

\* The original of this note is in the Poet's monument at Edinburgh : the upper portion of the address is torn off, but it is clear from the next letter that this was addressed to Mr Hill.

† Chambers informs us that this individual was not a "bookseller," but a manufacturer, and suggests that the bard's addressing him as such, was a playful allusion to his friendly activity in disposing of copies of the book. The number of copies subscribed for in Paisley was eighty-four. A careful list of the subscribers, with biographical notes, was published in 1871 by Mr David Semple, F.S.A., Paisley. Among these we find Alex. Wilson, the poet and ornithologist, who took two copies. Another of the subscribers was John Wilson, merchant, father of Professor John Wilson of Edinburgh.

left Scotland before this reaches you, otherwise I would send you "Holy Willie" with all my heart. I was so hurried that I absolutely forgot several things I ought to have minded, among the rest, sending books to Mr Cowan, but any order of yours will be answered at Creech's shop. You will please remember that non-subscribers, pay six shillings, this is Creech's profit; but those who have subscribed, though their names have been neglected in the printed list, which is very incorrect, are supplied at the subscription-price. I was not at Glasgow, nor do I intend for London; and I think Mrs Fame is very idle to tell so many lies on a poor poet. When you or Mr Cowan write for copies, if you should want any, direct to Mr Hill, at Mr Creech's shop, and I write to Mr Hill by this post, to answer either of your orders. Hill is Mr Creech's first clerk, and Creech himself is presently in London. I suppose I shall have the pleasure, against your return to Paisley, of assuring you how much I am, dear Sir, your obliged humble servant. R. B.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR WILLIAM NICOL.

CLASSICAL MASTER, HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.\*

(CROMEK, 1808.)

CARLISLE, *June 1st, 1787,*

(*or, I believe, the 31st o' May, rather.*)

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE,—I'm sitten down here, after seven and forty miles ridin, e'en as forjesket and for-

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\* "Nicol," writes Lockhart, "was a man of quick parts and considerable learning, who had risen from a rank as humble as Burns's: from the beginning an enthusiastic admirer, and, ere long, a constant associate of the poet, and a most dangerous associate; for, with a warm heart, the man united a fierce irascible temper, a scorn of many of the decencies of life, a noisy contempt of Religion, at least of the religious institutions of his country, and a violent propensity for the bottle. He was one of those who would fain believe themselves to be men of genius; and that genius is a sufficient

niaiw'd as a forfough'en cock, to gie you some notion o' my land-lower-like stravaguin sen the sorrowful hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' *Auld Reekie*.

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

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dunbar to Selcraig, and hae forgather'd wi' mony a guid fallow and monie a weelfar'd hizzie. I met wi' twa dink quines in particular, ane o' them a sonsie, fine, fodgel lass, baith braw and bonie; the tither was a clean-shankit, straught, tight, weelfar'd winch, as blythe's a lintwhite on a flowerie thorn, and as sweet and modest's a new blawn plumrose in a hazle shaw. They were baith bred to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane o' them had as muckle smeddum and rumblgumtion as the half o' some presbytries that you and I baith

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apology for trampling under foot all the old vulgar rules of prudence and sobriety—being on both points equally mistaken. Of Nicol's letters to Burns, and about him, I have seen many that have never been, and probably that never will be, printed—cumbrous and pedantic effusions, exhibiting nothing that one can imagine to have been pleasing to the poet, except what was enough to redeem all imperfections—namely, a rapturous admiration of Burns's genius."

ken. They play'd me sik a deevil o' a shavie that I daur say if my harigals were turn'd out, ye wad see twa nicks i' the heart o' me like the mark o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

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

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

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

Amen !—

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Currie has remarked concerning the Border excursion, "That on the banks of the Tweed and the Teviot, our bard should find nymphs that were beautiful is what might be confidently presumed. Two of these are particularly described in his Journal. But it does not appear that the scenery or its inhabitants produced any effort of his muse, as was to have been wished and expected. From Annan, Burns proceeded to Dumfries, and thence through Sanquhar, to Mauchline in Ayrshire, where he arrived about the 8th of June 1787, after a long absence of six busy and eventful months." After all, however, Burns had one object of worldly business in his journey ; namely, to examine the farms on the estate of Dalswinton, near Dumfries, the proprietor of which had, on learning that the poet designed to return to his original calling, expressed a strong wish to have him for his tenant.

"It will be easily conceived," adds Currie, "with what pleasure and pride he was received by his mother, his brothers, and sisters. He had left them poor, and comparatively friendless : he returned to them high in public estimation, and easy in his circumstances. He returned to them unchanged in his ardent affections, and ready to share with them to the uttermost farthing, the

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\* Louis Cauvin, French teacher?



pittance that Fortune had bestowed." From the following letter, penned three days after his arrival, it appears that he did not at once proceed to Mossiel, but slept one or more nights at his old howff, the Whitefoord Arms. A twelvemonth after this period, his words to Mrs Dunlop, in reference to a domestic event which occurred in March 1788, tell the fact as delicately as language can express it:—"On my *ecclatant* return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl, and the usual circumstances began to betray her, at the time I was laid up a cripple in Edinburgh."

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(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR JAMES SMITH,

AT MILLER AND SMITH'S OFFICE, LINLITHGOW.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MAUCHLINE, 11th June 1787.

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

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

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

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

compensate my little ones, for the stigma I have brought on their names.

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

R. B.

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

“He returned,” writes Lockhart thus powerfully, “the whole country ringing with his praises from a capital in which he was known to have formed the wonder and delight of the polite and the learned ; if not rich, yet with more money already than any of his kindred had ever hoped to see him possess, and with prospects of future patronage and permanent elevation in the scale of society which might have dazzled steadier eyes than those of maternal and fraternal affection. The prophet had at last honour in his own country ; but the haughty spirit that had preserved its balance in Edinburgh was not likely to lose it in Mauchline, and we have him writing from the *Auld Clay biggin* on the 18th of June, in terms as strongly expressive as any that ever came from his pen, of that jealous pride which formed the groundwork of his character ; that dark suspiciousness of fortune, which the subsequent course of his history too well justified ; that nervous intolerance of condescension, and consummate scorn of meanness which attended him through life, and made the study of his species, for which Nature had given him such extraordinary qualifications, the source of more pain than was ever counterbalanced by the exquisite capacity for enjoyment with which he was also

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\* Snuff-boxes are often made of polished sheep-cloots, or hoofs. The horn which the poet procured and mounted as a snuff-box at this time was probably the same one he afterwards presented to Mr Bacon, the landlord of Brownhill inn. It is a curious fact that Chambers not only omits this postscript, but his version of the letter differs in some points from that supplied by Cunningham.

endowed. There are few of his letters in which more of the dark places of his spirit come to light."

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

*Mauchline, 18th June, 1787.*

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

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

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks. Mr Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, gude forgie me! I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account. Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good humour, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart; in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding, independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of

hardship, in that great personage, SATAN. 'Tis true, I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith; that noxious planet so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hare-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop, "he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again." God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me; but should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have, in life, I have felt along the lines, and, damn them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear Sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me "through good report and bad report"—the love which Solomon emphatically says "is strong as death." My compliments to Mrs Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

R. B.

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

Attached as Burns was to his only remaining parent, and to his brothers and sisters, and desirous as he may have been to make them partakers of his good fortune, we are not to wonder, says Lockhart, "after his exciting winter and spring, he should, just at this time have found himself incapable of sitting down contentedly for any considerable period together in so humble and

quiet a circle as that of Mossgiel. His appetite for wandering appears to have been only sharpened by his Border excursion."

Dr Currie tell his readers that after remaining with his relations a few days, Burns set out on a journey to the West Highlands, but that no particulars of the tour have been found among his manuscripts, except the following fragment of a letter written during his progress, and a portion of another letter addressed to a friend after his return, giving some account of the latter stages of his excursion. Rumour and Tradition, however, have not been backward in their endeavours to fill up the blanks in the narrative. First we have the ill-natured Epigram at Inverary—

"Whoe'er he be that sojourn here,  
I pity much his case,  
Unless he comes to wait upon  
The Lord *their* God, "His Grace."  
There's naething here but Highland pride,  
And Highland scab and hunger:  
If Providence has sent me here,  
'Twas surely in an anger."

"His Grace" at that period was John V., Duke of Argyll, about sixty-four years old, and the Duchess was Elizabeth Gunning, who had been formerly Duchess of Hamilton, mother of Douglas, Duke of Hamilton, one of the competitors in the great Douglas cause, but who was unsuccessful in his suit. The poet was mounted on his favourite mare "Jenny Geddes," and deemed himself as good as any of the host of tourists who applied for accommodation at the principal Inn, and could ill brook to be told that every stall in the stables and all the corners of the house were filled. We can only conjecture in what mood he clapped his spurs to Jenny's groin and scampered off.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ARROCHAR, NEAR CROCHAIRBAS, BY LOCH LONG,  
*June 28th, 1787.*

MY DEAR SIR, I write you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains,

thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage, Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins.

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It is certain that during this excursion Burns picked up some acquaintanceship with Mr John M'Auley, Town Clerk of Dumbarton, to whom we find him addressing an excellent letter about two years after this period. There are some retailers of gossip who are fain to make believe that the Poet was publicly entertained at Dumbarton on this occasion and presented with the freedom of the town. However, official and all other records are silent on this subject, which circumstance is attempted to be explained by suggesting that the Rev. James Oliphant, parish minister there, had influence enough with the public authorities to cause the record of that transaction to be suppressed. A motive for this supposed clerical interference is pointed to in the fact that Burns in his poem called "The Ordination" had referred to Oliphant as an enemy to Common-sense. The poet in fact never saw Oliphant; for he was but a youth of fifteen, when the latter was translated from Kilmarnock to Dumbarton.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO MR JAMES SMITH, LINLITHGOW.

(CURRIE'S 4th ED., 1803.)

*June 30th, 1787.*

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On our return, at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid formal movements; the ladies sung Scotch songs like angels, at intervals; then we flew at *Bab at the Bowster, Tullochgorum, Loch Erroch-side, &c.*, like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or craws



prognosticating a storm in a hairst day. When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six; except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Ben-lomond. We all kneeled; our worthy landlord's son held the bowl; each man a full glass in his hand, and I as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense, like Thomas-a-Rhymer's prophecies I suppose. After a small refreshment of the gifts of Somnus, we proceeded to spend the day on Lochlomonnd, and reach Dumbarton in the evening. We dined at another good fellow's house, and consequently push'd the bottle: when we went out to mount our horses, we found ourselves "No verra fou but gaylie yet." My two friends and I rode soberly down the Loch side, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gayly mounted, fell sadly astern; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, she strained past the Highlandman in spite of all his efforts with the hair halter: just as I was passing him Donald wheeled his horse as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's breechless a—e in a clipt hedge; and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny Geddes trod over me with such cautious reverence that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future.

I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, rattling, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall

somewhere have a farm soon. I was going to say a wife too ; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of Parnassus, and like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry.

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

As for the rest of my acts, and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes ; they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by

ROBERT BURNS.

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

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 7th July 1787.

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

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

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

Not one new thing under the sun has happened in Mauchline since you left it. I hope this will find you as comfortably situated as formerly, or, if Heaven pleases, more so;

but, at all events, I trust you will let me know of course how matters stand with you, well or ill. 'Tis but poor consolation to tell the world when matters go wrong; but you know very well your connection and mine stands on a different footing,—I am ever, my dear friend, yours,

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

We have thought it well not to interrupt the narrative supplied by the foregoing three letters, to point out that Chambers throws out the reasonable suggestion that on this occasion Burns may have been drawn towards Greenock and the West Highlands by his feelings towards the lately deceased Mary Campbell. "Imagination," he says, "fondly pauses to behold him stretched on her grave in the West Kirk Yard, bewailing her untimely severance from his arms. On these points, however, we have only conjecture, and the somewhat remarkable circumstance that this tour commences with a sort of mystery much like that with which he has contrived to invest the whole story of Highland Mary."

The latter portion of his letter to James Smith speaks very plainly regarding the disengaged state of his affections in love-matters—"My heart no more glows with feverish raptures. I have no paradisaical evening interviews, stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only . . . This last is one of your distant acquaintances. . . I do like her a good deal," &c. Chambers observes that "no safe conjecture can be formed as to the person here meant, beyond that of her being an Ayrshire lady." We would narrow the uncertainty, by saying that she must have been from the neighbourhood of Mauchline, if she was more or less known to James Smith, who was born there, and had only recently and for the first time left the district. And moreover, when she is described as possessing "a fine figure and elegant manners, and in the train of some great folks (known to Smith) has seen the politest quarters of Europe," we are shut up to the belief that Burns here refers to none of the "Belles of Mauchline" already celebrated by "Rob Moss-giel," but to a lady of some quality, perhaps Peggy Chalmers, daughter of Mr Chalmers of Fingland, sometime a farmer in the neighbourhood of Mauchline, where indeed Miss Chalmers had lived prior

to her removal to Edinburgh, on the death of her father. That she had passed some period of her youth on the Continent with her elder sister Lady Mackenzie, may be presumed from the fact, that she herself spent the latter years of her long widowhood at Pau in the South of France. Her mother was a sister of Gavin Hamilton's stepmother, and also a sister of Mrs Tait of Harvieston: of the poet's intercourse with that circle the reader will learn more in due course.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ., AYR.

WITH COPY OF ELEGY FOR SIR JAMES HUNTER BLAIR.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

MAUCHLINE, [14th July 1787.]

MY HONORED FRIEND,—The melancholy occasion of the foregoing Poem affects not only individuals but a country. That I have lost a friend, is but repeating after Caledonia. This copy, rather an incorrect one, I beg you will accept, till I have an opportunity in person, which I expect to have on Tuesday first, of assuring you how sincerely I ever am, honored Sir, your oft obliged,

ROBT. BURNS.

MR HAMILTON'S OFFICE,  
*Saturday Evening.\**

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\* In supplement to what we have said in our note to this Elegy, p. 83, Vol. II., we may observe that its subject was a son of John Hunter, Esq., of Milneholm. He was born in 1740, and in 1770 assumed the name of Hunter Blair on his marriage to Jane, the daughter and heiress of Blair of Dunskey. As one of the partners of the banking house of Sir William Forbes & Co., he was well known and much esteemed. In June 1786 he was created a Baronet, while Lord Provost of Edinburgh and M.P. for that city. He died somewhat suddenly on 1st July 1787, and his eldest son and successor, Sir James, dying unmarried in 1800, the succession devolved on his second son, Sir David Hunter Blair of Blairquhan, Bart., who survived till 26th Dec. 1857. The latter was succeeded by his second son Sir Edward, born in 1818, who in 1850 married Miss Wauchope, granddaughter of Andrew Wauchope, Esq., of Niddry-Merschell, Midlothian.

The name of the late Sir David was long familiar to Protestant Scotland from the imprint on the title pages of its Bibles, as principal partner of the firm of "Sir D. Hunter Blair and J. Bruce, Printers to the King's most excellent Majesty."

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR PETER HILL, AT MR CREECH'S,  
EDINBURGH.

*(Here first published.)\**

D<sup>R</sup>. SIR,—I have just got a letter from Scot the Book-binder, where he tells me he needs a little money at present. I have written him to call on you ; and I beg you will pay him his acc<sup>t</sup>. or give him part payment, as you see proper.

When Mr Creech returns, I beg you will let me know by first convenient Post,—I am, dear Sir, your very humble serv<sup>t</sup>.

ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

MAUCHLINE, 19th July 1787.

(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, JUNR.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

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

\* From the original MS. in possession of John Adam, Esq., Greenock.



list of my friends will, after a decent share of pity, have forgot me.

“ Though in the morn comes sturt and strife,  
Yet joy may come at noon ;  
And I hope to live a merry, merry life,  
When a’ thir days are done.”

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

ROBT. BURNS.

MAUCHLINE, 23rd July 1787.

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Among the families of some position whom the poet was introduced to shortly after he reached Edinburgh was that of Macleod of Raasay, one of whose accomplished daughters had been married to Col. James Mure Campbell, of Rowallan, who, in 1782, succeeded to the Earldom of Loudoun. The lady having died in 1780, shortly after the birth of her first-born child—a daughter, Flora, became Countess of Loudoun on the death of her father in 1786, and the upbringing of the infant was committed to her aunts, the Misses Macleod, while Mr Gavin Hamilton had charge of the Loudoun estates. This explains how Burns became acquainted with the family. The old laird, John Macleod, who had Johnson and Boswell for his guests at Raasay in 1773, died at Edinburgh in December 1786, in his seventieth year; and his son, John Macleod, also died there on 20th July 1787. On this latter occasion Burns composed some beautiful consolatory verses (given at p. 81, Vol. II.), intended for the special comfort of Miss Isabella Macleod with whom he had contracted “a particular friendship” while in Edinburgh.

Reverting to a passage in the poet’s letter to James Smith of 30th June 1787, we are reminded of a masonic incident related by Professor Dugald Stewart in his beautiful reminiscences of

Burns, supplied to Dr Currie. The passage in the letter is this : —“I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life ; I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, aimless, idle fellow.” Our quotation from Professor Stewart is as follows :—“In summer 1787 I passed some weeks in Ayrshire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think he told me that he had made an excursion that season to the West Highlands, and that he also visited what Beattie calls the Arcadian ground of Scotland, upon the banks of the Teviot and the Tweed. In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a Mason Lodge in Mauchline where Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and everything he said was happily conceived, and forcibly, as well as fluently expressed. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution.”

From the books of St James's Tarbolton Lodge, we are happy to be enabled now to lay before the reader, a copy of the poet's own minute of the Lodge meeting above referred to by Professor Stewart. This was one of the occasions referred to by Burns at page 161 *supra*, on which he met the brother of “The Lass of Ballochmyle” on terms of some equality.

## MASON LODGE MINUTE.

(*Here first Published.*)

MAUCHLINE, 25th July 1787.

THIS night the Deputation of the Lodge met at Mauchline, and entered Brother Alexander Allison of Barnmuir an apprentice. Likewise admitted Brs. Professor Stuart of Cathrine, and Claude Alexander, Esq., of Ballochmyle ; Claude Neilson, Esq., Paisley ; John Farquhar Gray, Esq., of Gilmiscroft ; and Dr George Grierson, Glasgow, Honorary Members of the Lodge.

ROBT. BURNS, D.M.

We have now brought the reader down to 2nd August 1787, the date of the poet's autobiographical letter to Dr Moore, with which the Prose department of this work opened. On the 7th of that month Burns arrived in Edinburgh, which became again his head-quarters for even a more lengthened period than was embraced in his first sojourn there. He had in prospect an extensive tour to the North Highlands along with his friend, Mr William Nicol, the High School teacher, and he appears to have, for a fortnight or thereby, accepted a lodgement in Nicol's house.

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR ARCHIBALD LAWRIE.\*

(CHAMBERS' ED., 1856.)

EDINBURGH, 14th August 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,—Here am I—that is all I can tell you of that unaccountable being myself. What I am doing no mortal can tell ; what I am thinking, I myself cannot tell ; what I am usually saying, is not worth telling. The clock is just striking one, two, three, four, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, twelve, forenoon ; and here I sit, in the attic story, *alias* the garret, with a friend on the right hand of my standish—a friend whose kindness I shall largely experience at the close of this line—there—thank you—a friend, my dear Mr Lawrie, whose kindness often makes me blush ; a friend who has more of the milk of *human* kindness than all the human race put together, and what is highly to his honor, peculiarly a friend to the friendless as often as they come in his way ; in short, Sir, he is, without the least alloy, a universal philanthropist ; and his much beloved name is—a bottle of good old Port !

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\* This young man latterly succeeded his father, Dr George Lawrie, as minister of Loudoun, and married a sister of Dr James M'Kettrick Adair, who espoused Charlotte Hamilton.

In a week, if whim and weather serve, I shall set out for the north—a tour to the Highlands.

I ate some Newhaven broth, in other words, boiled mussels, with Mr Farquhar's family, t'other day. Now I see you prick up your ears. They are all well, and Mademoiselle is particularly well. She begs her respects to you all; along with which please present those of your humble servant. I can no more. I have so high a veneration, or rather idolatrisation, for the cleric character, that even a little *futurum esse vel fuisse Priestling*, in his *Penna pennae pennae*, &c., throws an awe over my mind in his presence, and shortens my sentences into single ideas.

Farewell, and believe me to be ever, my dear Sir, yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

A legal document, dated one day after the foregoing merry letter was penned, still exists, testifying strongly to the poet's inveterate proneness to indulge in "a passion remarkable for the humiliations to which it exposes its victims." It is a writ of discharge to the poet liberating him from the restraints of a caption, or warrant of imprisonment issued against him, as *in meditatione fugæ*, at instance of a young woman who alleged herself to be with child to him. That this document had been preserved and carried about by the poet for some time, is apparent from its condition, and a couple of verses of an old indecent song that are scribbled in pencil by his own hand on the back.

It would be an idle kind of industry were we to attempt to trace out the particular incident in the misdoings of the bard to which that document relates; the Clarinda correspondence speaks of one "Jenny Clow" in the Grassmarket, who bore him a son; and he himself, in the Thomson correspondence, tells of "a Highland wench in the Cowgate who bare him three bastards at a birth." The next letter tells of similar "donsie tricks" of his apt young pupil, Robert Ainslie. (See on this subject the note to "Robin shure in hairst," page 188, Vol. II.)

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, JUNR.,

BERRYWELL, DUNSE.

(ALDINE EDITION, 1839.)\*

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

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

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

Now for a modest verse of classical authority :—

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

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\* The original MS. of this letter is now in the South Kensington Museum. London. We are indebted to the kindness of the assistant keeper, Mr R. F. Sketchley, for supplying us with the nice corrections which our text exhibits.

If this does not please you, let me hear from you : if you write any time before the first of September, direct to Inverness, to be left at the Post Office till called for ; the next week at Aberdeen, the next at Edin<sup>h</sup>. The sheet is done, and I shall just conclude with assuring you that I am, and ever with pride shall be, My dear Sir,      ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

Call your boy what you think proper, only interject BURNS. What say you to a scripture name ; for instance, Zimri Burns Ainslie, or Achitophel, &c., &c. ; look your Bible for these two heroes. If you do this, I will repay the Compliment.

EDIN<sup>H</sup>. 23rd August 1787.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO ST JAMES'S LODGE, TARBOLTON.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

EDINBURGH, 23rd August 1787.

MEN AND BRETHREN.—I am truly sorry it is not in my power to be at your quarterly meeting. If I must be absent in body, believe me I shall be present in spirit. I suppose those who owe us monies, by bill or otherwise, will appear—I mean those we summoned. If you please, I wish you would delay prosecuting defaulters till I come home. The court is up, and I will be home before it sits down. In the meantime, to take a note of who appear and who do not, of our faulty debtors, will be right in my humble opinion ; and those who confess debt and crave days, I think we should spare them. Farewell !

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

ROB<sup>T</sup>. BURNS.

TO THE FREE MASONS OF ST JAMES'S LODGE,  
Care of H. MANSON, TARBOLTON.



## THE HIGHLAND TOUR.

THE earliest trace of the poet's personal memoranda of this tour which we can find, is in his *Life* by Lockhart, 1828. Dr Currie makes no reference to the *Journal*, and merely directs the reader to a letter in the correspondence addressed to Gilbert by his brother, on the day after returning to Edinburgh, giving a general outline of the journey. That biographer also gives a letter from Mr Josiah Walker of Perth, containing a few particulars of the visit to Blair Athole; followed by some information, sent by Dr Couper of Fochabers, about the visit to Castle Gordon.

Lockhart thus introduces his extracts from the poet's own record of his progress through the Highlands:—"Some fragments of his *Journal* have recently been discovered, and are now in my hands; so that I may hope to add some interesting particulars to the account of Dr Currie. The travellers hired a post-chaise for their expedition—the High School Master being probably no very skilful equestrian." The portions printed by Mr Lockhart correspond with the *Journal*, as afterwards published more fully by Cunningham, whose version has, since 1834, been frequently printed. Where that manuscript now is, we have been unable to ascertain; but it has been our good fortune to fall in with the identical note book carried by Burns, and used as a scroll-record of this Tour. An inspection of it proves that the manuscript referred to by Lockhart must have been an extended transcript from the rough original which we now allude to. The latter interesting relic of the bard is the property of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq., to whose kindness we are indebted for the use of it for this work. We are thus enabled to introduce a few happy variations, and to fill up some blanks that occur in the record as commonly printed.

EDINBURGH, 25th Aug. 1787.

[*Saturday*] I set out for the north in company with my good friend Mr N——. From Corstorphine, by Kirkliston and Winchburgh, fine, improven, fertile country: near Linlithgow the lands worse, light and sandy. LINLITHGOW, the appearance of rude, decayed, idle grandeur, charmingly

rural, retired situation. The old rough palace a tolerably fine but melancholy ruin—sweetly situated on a small elevation by the brink of a loch. Shown the room where the beautiful, injured Mary Queen of Scots was born—A pretty good old Gothic church—the infamous stool of repentance standing, in the old Romish way, in a lofty situation. What a poor, pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship! dirty, narrow, squalid; stuck in a corner of old popish grandeur such as Linlithgow, and much more Melrose. Ceremony and show, if judiciously thrown in, absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in religious and civil matters.

West Lothian.—The more elegance and luxury among the farmers, I always observe, in equal proportions, the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c.; and for this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste, a “man of feeling,” will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds of the peasantry in Ayrshire, (peasantry they are all below the Justice of Peace) than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when he at the same time considers the Vandalism of *their* plough-folks, &c. I carry this idea so far, that an unclosed, half-improven country is to me actually more agreeable, and gives me more pleasure as a prospect, than a country cultivated like a garden.\*

Dine.—Go to my friend Mr Smith’s at Avon Printfield—find nobody but Mrs Miller, an agreeable, sensible, modest, good body; as useful, but not so ornamental as Fielding’s Miss Western—not rigidly polite à la Française, but easy, hospitable, and housewifely.

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\* “It is hardly to be expected that Robert Burns should have estimated the wealth of nations entirely on the principles of a political economist.”—LOCKHART.

An old lady from Paisley, a Mrs Dawson, whom I promise to call for in Paisley—like old Lady Wauchope, and still more like Mrs C——, her conversation is pregnant with strong sense and just remark, but, like them, a certain air of self-importance and a *duresse* in the eye, seem to indicate, as the Ayrshire wife observed of her cow, that “she had a mind o’ her ain.”\*

Pleasant distant view of Dunfermline and the rest of the fertile coast of Fife as we go down to that dirty, ugly place, Borrowstouness. See a horse-race and call on a friend of Mr Nicol’s, a Bailie Cowan, of whom I know too little to attempt his portrait. Come through the rich carse of Falkirk to Falkirk to pass the night.

[*Sunday, 26th Aug.*] Falkirk nothing remarkable except the tomb of Sir John the Graham, over which, in the succession of time four stones have been laid.—Camelon, the ancient metropolis of the Picts, now a small village, in the neighbourhood of Falkirk.—Cross the grand canal to Carron. Breakfast—come past Larbert and admire a fine monument of cast-iron erected by Mr Bruce, the African traveller, to his wife. *N.B.*—He used her very ill, and I suppose he meant it as much out of gratitude to Heaven, as anything else.†

Pass Dunipace, a place laid out with fine taste—a charming amphitheatre bounded by Denny village, and pleasant seats of Herbertshire, Denovan, and down to Dunipace. The Carron running down the bosom of the whole makes it one of the most charming little prospects I have seen.

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\* By “Lady Wauchope,” is meant Mrs Scott of Wauchope, referred to in the poet’s *Border Tour*, page 232. “Mrs C——” may have been Mrs Cockburn of Crichton Street, Edinburgh.

† Bruce’s second wife, Mary, eldest daughter of Thos. Dundas, Esq., of Carronhall, whom he married 20th May 1776; he had three children by her, and she died in 1784. James Bruce of Kinnaird died 27th April 1794.

Dine at Auchenbowie—Mr Monro an excellent, worthy old man—Miss Monro an amiable, sensible, sweet young woman, much resembling Mrs Grierson.\* Come to Bannockburn—shewn the old house where James III. was murdered. The field of Bannockburn—the hole where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself that I see my gallant, heroic countrymen coming o'er the hill, and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers; noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, blood-thirsty foe. I see them meet in gloriously triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence.—Come to Stirling. [*See the Frontispiece to this volume.*]

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(<sup>6</sup>) TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

STIRLING, 26th August, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,—I intended to have written you from Edinburgh, and now write you from Stirling to make an excuse. Here am I, on my way to Inverness, with a truly original, but very worthy man, a Mr Nicol, one of the masters of the High School in Edinburgh. I left Auld Reekie yesterday morning, and have passed, besides by-excursions, Linlithgow, Borrowstounness, Falkirk, and here am I undoubtedly. This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for Old Caledonia, over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of

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\* The wife of George Grierson, Glasgow.

Bannockburn ; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen by the setting sun the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich carse of Falkirk. The crops are very strong, but so very late, that there is no harvest, except a ridge or two perhaps in ten miles, all the way I have travelled from Edinburgh.

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

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

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

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

ROBT. BURNS.

[*Monday, 27th August.*] Go to Harvieston—Mrs Hamilton and family—Mrs Chalmers—Mrs Shields—Go to see Cauldron linn, and Rumbling-brig, and the Deil's mill. Return in the evening to Stirling.

Supper—Messrs Doig (the Schoolmaster) and Bell ; Captain Forrester of the Castle—Doig a queerish figure, and something of a pedant—Bell a joyous, vacant fellow

\* Andrew Bruce, a shopkeeper on the North Bridge, Edinburgh, to whom the poet directed his letters to be addressed, appears to have been originally from Kilmarnock.

† Charles Samson, a brother of the celebrated "Tam."

‡ Mr Hugh Parker, then in terms of courtship with the lady mentioned.

who sings a good song—Forrester a merry, swearing kind of a man, with a dash of the Sodger.

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(<sup>4</sup>) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

STIRLING, 28th August, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,—Here am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly waving corps of wheat, barley, &c., but no harvest at all yet, except, in one or two places, an old wife's ridge. Yesterday morning I rode from this town up the meandering Devon's banks to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast we made a party to go and see the famous Caudron-linn, a remarkable cascade in the Devon, about five miles above Harvieston; and after spending one of the most pleasant days I ever had in my life, I returned to Stirling in the evening. They are a family, Sir, though I had not had any prior tie—though they had not been the brothers and sisters of a certain generous friend of mine—I would never forget them. I am told you have not seen them these several years, so you can have very little idea of what these young folks are now. Your brother\* is as tall as you are, but slender rather than otherwise; and I have the satisfaction to inform you that he is getting the better of those consumptive symptoms which I suppose you know were

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\* "Step-brother" is here meant. Mr John Hamilton, father of the poet's friend and patron, Gavin Hamilton, was twice married; his second wife (now a widow) was one of three sisters, namely, the deceased Mrs Tait of Harvieston, Mrs Chalmers (also a widow, the mother of Lady M'Kenzie and Miss Margaret Chalmers,) and herself, the mother of Charlotte and other children, who resided at Harvieston, by way of keeping house for Mr Tait.



threatening him. His make, and particularly his manner, resemble you, but he will have a still finer face. (I put in the word *still*, to please Mrs Hamilton.) Good sense, modesty, and at the same time a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact, are striking features in his character ; and, what with me is the Alpha and Omega, he has a heart that might adorn the breast of a poet ! Grace has a good figure, and the look of health and cheerfulness, but nothing else remarkable in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking a likeness as is between her and your little Beenie ; the mouth and chin particularly. She is reserved at first ; but as we grew better acquainted, I was delighted with the native frankness of her manner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Of Charlotte I cannot speak in common terms of admiration ; she is not only beautiful but lovely. Her form is elegant ; her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness and the settled complacency of good nature in the highest degree ; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr Donne's mistress :—

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

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

I do not give you all this account, my good Sir, to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. Such relations the first peer in the realm might own with pride ; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks ? I had a thousand questions to answer about you. I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them

that John\* was so good a boy, and so fine a scholar, and that Willie† was going on still very pretty; but I have it on commission to tell her from them that beauty is a poor silly bauble, without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh, but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs Chalmers, only Lady Mackenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat somewhat marred our enjoyment.

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

ROBT. BURNS.

*Tuesday Morning, [28th Aug.]* Breakfast with Captain Forrester—leave Stirling—Ochil Hills—Devon River—Forth and Teith—Allan River—Strathallan, a fine country but little improven—Ardoch Camp—Cross Earn to Crieff—Dine, and go to Arbruchil; cold reception at Arbruchil—A most romantically pleasant ride up Earn, by Auchertyre and Comrie—Sup at Crieff.

*Wednesday Morning, [29th Aug.]* Leave Crieff—Glen Almond—Almond River—Ossian's Grave—Loch Frioeh—Glenquaich—Landlord and landlady remarkable characters—Taymouth—described in rhyme—Meet the Hon. Charles Townshend.

*Thursday, [30th Aug.]* Come down Tay to Dunkeld—Glenlyon House—Lyon River—Druid's Temple—three circles of stones, the outermost sunk; the second has thirteen stones remaining; the innermost has eight; two large detached ones like a gate, to the south-east—Say

\* The "wee curlie Johnie" of the *Dedication to G. H.*

† Miss Wilhelmina, then nine years old, married, on 3rd March 1806, the Rev. John Tod of Mauchline, successor to "Daddie Auld." In the announcement she is styled "Miss W. Kennedy Hamilton, daughter of the late Gavin Hamilton, Esq." Mrs Tod died in March 1838.

prayers in it—Pass Tay Bridge—Aberfeldy—described in rhyme—Castle Menzies, beyond Grandtully—Balleighan—Logierait—Inver—Dr Stewart—Sup.

*Friday, [31st Aug.]* Walk with Mrs Stewart and Beard to Birnam top—fine prospect down Tay—Craigiebarns Hills—Hermitage on the Bran Water, with a picture of Ossian—Breakfast with Dr Stewart—Neil Gow plays; a short, stout-built Highland figure, with his greyish eyes shed on his honest social brow—an interesting face, marking strong sense, kind open-heartedness, mixed with unmistrusting simplicity—visit his house—Margaret Gow. Ride up Tummel River to Blair. Fascally, a beautiful, romantic nest—wild grandeur of the pass of Gillibrankie—visit the gallant Lord Dundee's stone. Blair—Sup with the Duchess—easy and happy from the manners of that family—confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker.

[Excerpt from a letter addressed to Mr Alex. Cunningham by Mr Josiah Walker, dated Perth, 24th Oct. 1797.—“On reaching Blair, Burns sent me notice of his arrival, and I hastened to meet him at the inn. The Duke, to whom he brought a letter of introduction, was from home; but the Duchess, being informed of his arrival, gave him an invitation to sup and sleep at Athole House. He accepted the invitation, but as the hour of supper was at some distance, begged I would, in the interval, be his guide through the grounds. It was already growing dark; yet the softened, though faint and uncertain view of their beauties, which the moonlight afforded us, seemed exactly suited to the state of his feelings at the time. I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. I cannot help thinking it might have been here that he

conceived the idea of the following lines, which he afterwards introduced into his poem on *Bruar Water*, when only fancying such a combination of objects as were now present to his eye—

“ Or, by the reaper’s nightly beam,  
Mild, chequering thro’ the trees,  
Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,  
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze.”

It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time to supper.

“ My curiosity was great to see how he would conduct himself in company so different from what he had been accustomed to. His manner was unembarrassed, plain and firm. He appeared to have complete reliance on his own native good sense for directing his behaviour. He seemed at once to perceive and to appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but when led to it, he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The Duke’s fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as “ honest men and bonie lasses,” an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed the poem alluded to.

“ Next day [Saturday, 1st Sep.] I took a ride with him through some of the most romantic parts of that neighbourhood, and was highly gratified by his conversation. As a specimen of his happiness of conception and strength of expression, I will mention a remark which he made on his fellow-traveller, who was engaged in fishing at the time, a few paces from us.\* He was a man of robust but clumsy person; and while Burns was expressing to me the value he entertained for him, on account of his vigorous talents, although they were clouded at times by

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\* The writer of this letter afterwards produced a Memoir of Burns, in which he explains how deftly he had managed to separate Nicol from Burns without offence, during the visit to Blair. This was accomplished by furnishing the schoolmaster with a rod and tackle, and engrossing his attention with fishing—a sport which he was very partial to.

coarseness of manners; 'in short,' he added, 'his mind is like his body, he has a confounded strong in-knee'd sort of a soul.'

"Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the Duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted. After leaving Blair, he, by the Duke's advice, visited the *Falls of Bruar*, and in a few days I received a letter from Inverness in which he inclosed the poem on "*Bruar Water*."]'

*Saturday, [1st Sept.]* Visit the scenes round Blair—fine, but spoilt with bad taste—Tilt and Garrie rivers—Falls on the Tilt—Heather seat—Ride in company with Sir William Murray and Mr Walker, to Loch Tummel—meanderings of the Rannoch, which runs thro' *quondam* Struan Robertson's estate from Loch Rannoch to Loch Tummel—Dine at Blair—Company—General Murray, Orien. Capt. Murray, an honest Tar; Sir William Murray, an honest, worthy man, but tormented with the hypochondria; Mrs Graham, *belle et amiable*; Miss Cathcart; Mrs Murray, a painter; Mrs King; Duchess and fine family, the Marquis, Lords James, Edward, and Robert; Ladies Charlotte, Emelia, and children—Dance—Sup—Duke; Mr Graham of Fintray; Mr Mc'Laggan; Mr and Mrs Stewart.\*

*Sunday, [2d Sep.]* Come up the Garrie—Falls of Bruar—Allecairoch—Dalwhinnie—Dine—Snow on the hills, 17 feet deep; no corn from Loch Gairie to Dalwhinnie—cross the Spey, and come down the stream to Pitnim—Straths rich; *les environs* picturesque—Craigow hill—

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\* It seems evident that the poet and Nicol started from Athole House after breakfast on Sunday morning. It also appears that Burns had carried with him his Autobiographical letter to Moore, and favoured the Duchess with a reading of it. We learn this fact from Mr Walker's letter to Burns of 13th Sept. 1787: "The Duchess would give any consideration for another sight of your letter to Dr Moore."

Ruthven of Badenoch—Barrack ; wild and magnificent. Rothemurche on the other side, and Glenmore—Grant of Rothemurche's poetry—told me by the Duke of Gordon ; Strathspeys rich and romantic.

*Monday, [3d Sep.]* Breakfast at Aviemore, a wild romantic spot—Snows in patches on the hills 18 feet deep—Enter Strathspey—come to Sir James Grant's—dine—company—Lady Grant a sweet pleasant body—Mr and Miss Bailie ; Mrs Bailie ; Dr and Mrs Grant—Clergymen—Mr Hepburn—come through mist and darkness to Dulsie to lie.

*Tuesday, [4th Sep.]* Findhorn river—rocky banks—come on to Castle Cawdor where Macbeth murdered King Duncan—saw the bed in which King Duncan was stabbed—dine at Kilraik, Mrs Rose, *seur.*, a true chieftain's wife, a daughter of Clephane—Mrs Rose, *junr.*—Fort George—Inverness.

(<sup>6</sup>) TO MR JAMES BURNES, WRITER, MONTROSE.

*(Here first published.)*

D<sup>r</sup>. COUSIN,—I wrote you from Edin<sup>r</sup>. that I intended being north. I shall be in Stonhivie sometime on Monday the 10th inst., and I beg the favor of you to meet me there. I understand there is but one Inn at Stonhivie, so you cannot miss me. As I am in the country I certainly shall see any of my father's relations that are any way near my road ; but I do not even know their names, or where one of them lives, so I hope you will meet me and be my guide. Farewell ! till I have the pleasure of meeting you.—I am ever,  
d<sup>r</sup>. Sir, yours. ROBT. BURNS.\*

INVERNESS, 4th Sept. 1787.

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\* The original letter is in the Poet's Monument at Edinburgh, and Mr Burnes has appended the following note below :—"The signature of this letter cut off and presented to Robt. Caddell, Esq., Bookseller, Edinburgh, 18th Dec. 1829.—J. B."



## (1) TO WILLIAM INGLIS, ESQ., INVERNESS.

(DR HATELY WADDELL'S ED.)

MR BURNS presents his most respectful compliments to Mr Inglis—would have waited on him with the inclosed,\* but is jaded to death with the fatigue of to-day's journey—won't leave Inverness till Thursday morning.

ETTLES HOTEL, *Tuesday Evening.*

*Wednesday, [5th Sep.]* Loch Ness—Braes of Ness—General's hut—Fall of Fyers—Urquhart Castle and Strath. Dine at ——, Sup at Mr Inglis's — Mr Inglis and Mrs Inglis: three young ladies.

## (1) TO MR WALKER, BLAIR OF ATHOLE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

INVERNESS, *5th Dec. 1787.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have just time to write the foregoing,† and to tell you that it was (at least most part of it) the effusion of an half-hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it was *extempore*, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well as Mr N—'s chat, and the jogging of the chaise would

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\* The enclosure was a letter of introduction to that gentleman (then Provost of Inverness) from the poet's friend, William Dunbar, Esq., W.S. "Colonel of the Crochallan Club" in the following terms:—"Dear Sir,—The gentleman by whom this will be delivered to you is Mr Burns of Airshire, who goes on an excursion to the North, personally unacquainted, excepting in so far as his elegant and simple Poems may have caught your attention. To men of such liberal and disinterested feelings as I know the citizens of Inverness to be, little seemed necessary as recommendatory of the Bard of Nature. Yet I thought it unworthy of me to permit him to migrate without mentioning him to you as my friend, and consigning him to you for that civility which distinguishes you among all ranks of *migrants*. I offer my best respects to Mrs Inglis, and am always, dear Sir, your most obed<sup>t</sup>. serv<sup>t</sup>.  
WILLIAM DUNBAR."

"EDIN., *24th Aug. 1787.*"

† The poem, afterwards published as "The humble Petition of Bruar Water to the noble Duke of Athole." See pp. 92 to 96, Vol. II.

allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honor or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast ; what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need ! I shall never forget.

The “little angel-band !” I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the Fall of Fyers. I shall never forget the fine family piece I saw at Blair : the amiable, the truly noble Duchess, with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table : the lovely “olive plants,” as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother : the beautiful Mrs Grahame ; the lovely, sweet Miss Cathcart, &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice !\* My Lord Duke’s kind hospitality—markedly kind indeed. Mr Graham of Fintray’s charms of conversation : Sir W. Murray’s friendship : in short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company, raises an honest glow in my bosom.

R. B.

*Thursday [6th Sep.]* Come over Culloden muir—reflections on the field of battle—breakfast at Kilaick†—old Mrs Rose, sterling sense, warm heart, strong passion, honest pride, all in an uncommon degree—Mrs Rose jun., a little milder than the mother ; this perhaps owing to her being younger—Mr Grant, minister at Calder, resembles Mr Scott at Inverleithen—Mrs Rose and Mr Grant accompany us to Kildrummie—two young ladies, Miss Ross,

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\* The Mrs Grahame and Miss Cathcart whom the poet thus eulogises were daughters of Lord Cathcart, and sisters of the Duchess of Athole. The whole of these three fair sisters predeceased even our too short-lived poet. The portrait of Mrs Grahame by Gainsborough, is now the admired specimen of that artist’s work which adorns the walls of the Royal Scottish Academy at Edinburgh. Her husband, Thomas Grahame of Balgowan, distinguished himself as commander of the British troops at Barosso, and was raised to the peerage by the style of Lord Lynedoch. He survived till 1813, aged 94

† This is the local diminutive of *Kilravock*, Inverness-shire.

who sang two Gaelic songs, beautiful and lovely; Miss Sophie Brodie, not very beautiful, but most agreeable and amiable—both of them the gentlest, mildest, sweetest creatures on earth, and happiness be with them!

Dine at Nairn—fall in with a pleasant enough gentleman, Dr Stewart, who had been long abroad with his father in the *Forty-five*; and Mr Falconer, a spare, irascible, warm-hearted Norland, and a non-juror—wastes of sand—Brodie House to lie. Mr Brodie truly polite, but not just the Highland cordiality.

*Friday [7th Sep.]* Cross the Findhorn to Forres—Mr Brodie tells me that the muir where Shakespeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still so haunted, that the country folks won't pass it by night. Elgin to breakfast; meet with Mr —, Mr Dunbar's friend, a pleasant sort of a man; can come no nearer. Venerable ruins of Elgin Abbey—A grander effect at first glance than Melrose, but nothing near so beautiful.

Cross Spey to Fochabers—fine palace, worthy of the generous proprietor—dine—company—Duke and Duchess, Ladies Charlotte and Madeline;\* Colonel Abercrombie and Lady; Mr Gordon, and Mr —, a clergyman, a venerable, aged figure, and Mr Hoy, a clergyman, I suppose, a pleasant open manner. The Duke makes me happier than ever great man did—noble, princely; yet mild, condescending and affable, gay, and kind. The Duchess charming, witty, and sensible—God bless them!†

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\* Lady Charlotte, then nineteen years old, afterwards became Duchess of Richmond. Lady Madeline married Sir Robert Sinclair of Murkle.

† Burns had been introduced to the Duchess of Gordon during the preceding winter; and presuming on this acquaintance, he proceeded to Gordon Castle, leaving Mr Nicol at the Inn of Fochabers. At the castle he was received with the utmost hospitality and kindness, and the family being about to sit down to dinner, he was invited to take a place at table. This invitation he accepted; and after partaking a little and drinking a few glasses of wine, he intimated, that as a matter of necessity he must soon

[*Friday night, 7th Sep.*] Sleep at Cullen. Hitherto the country is sadly poor and unimproven; the houses, crops, horses, cattle, &c., all in unison with their cart-wheels; and these are of low, coarse, unshod, clumsy work, with an axle-tree which had been made with other design than to be a resting shaft between the wheels.

[*Saturday, 8th Sep.*] Breakfasted at Banff—Improvements over this part of the country—Portsoy Bay—pleasant ride along the shore—country almost wild again between Banff and Newbyth; quite wild as we come through Buchan to Old Deer; but near the village both lands and crops rich—lie.

[*Sunday, 9th Sep.*] Set out for Peterhead. Near Peterhead come along the shore by the famous Bullars of Buchan, and Blain's Castle. The soil rich; crops of wheat, turnips, &c.; but no inclosing: soil rather light. Come to Ellon and dine—Lord Aberdeen's seat: entrance denied to everybody owing to the jealousy of threescore over a kept country-wench. Soil and improvements as before, till [*Sunday night*] we come to Aberdeen to lie.

[*Monday, 10th Sep.*] Meet with Mr Chalmers, printer,

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withdraw to join his fellow-traveller. His noble host offered to send a servant to conduct Mr Nicol to the castle, but Burns insisted on undertaking that office himself. A gentleman from the castle was sent on the part of the Duke, who delivered the invitation to Mr Nicol in all the forms of politeness. The invitation came too late; the pride of the Schoolmaster had already been inflamed to a high pitch under the imagined neglect: he had ordered the horses to be put in the chaise, being determined to proceed on his journey alone; and they found him parading before the door of the inn venting his anger on the postilion for his slowness in executing his commands. Burns therefore seated himself beside Nicol in the post chaise, and turned his back on Castle Gordon with mortification and regret. He afterwards wrote to Mr Hoy, the Duke's librarian, in these terms:—"I shall certainly, among my legacies, leave my latest curse to that unlucky predicament which hurried—tore me away from Castle Gordon. May that obstinate son of Latin prose be curst to Scotch-mile periods, and damned to seven-league paragraphs; while Declension and Conjugation, Gender, Number, and Tense, under the ragged banners of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile array."

a facetious fellow ; Mr Ross, a fine fellow, like Professor Tytler ; Mr Marshall, one of the *poetæ minores*. Mr Sheriffs, author of “Jamie and Bess,” a little decrepid body, with some abilities. Bishop Skinner, a non-juror, son of the author of “Tullochgorum,” a man whose mild venerable manner is the most marked of any in so young a man—Professor Gordon, a good-natured, jolly-looking professor—Aberdeen, a lazy town—near Stonehive, the coast a good deal romantic. Meet my relations.\* Robert Burnes, Writer in Stonehive,† one of those who love fun, a gill, a punning joke, and have not a bad heart—his wife a sweet hospitable body, without any affectation of what is called town-breeding.

[*Tuesday, 11th Sep.*] Breakfast with Mr Burnes—lie at Laurencekirk—Album—Library—Mrs ———, a jolly, frank, sensible, love-inspiring widow—Howe of the Mearns, a rich, cultivated, but still uninclosed, country.

[*Wednesday, 12th Sep.*] Cross North Esk river and a rich country, to Craigow. Go to Montrose, that finely-situated handsome town. . . . .

[*Thursday, 13th Sep.*] Leave Montrose—breakfast at Auchmuthie, and sail along that wild rocky coast and see the famous caverns, particularly the Gariepot.

(*i*) TO MR JAMES BURNES, WRITER, MONTROSE.

(*Here first published.*)

TOWNFIELD, *six o'clock morning.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,—Mr Nicol and Mr Carnegie have taken some freak in their head, and have wakened me just now

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\* Here, by appointment, his cousin and correspondent, Mr James Burnes, joined him from Montrose.

† This “Robert Burnes,” seems to have been an elder brother of John Burnes, the author of “Thrummy Cap,” who was then a lad of sixteen.

with the rattling of the chaise to carry me to meet them at Craigie to go on our journey some other road, and breakfast by the way. I must go, which makes me very sorry. I beg my kindest, best compliments to your wife and all the good friends I saw yesternight. Write me to Edin<sup>r</sup>. in this week, with a direction for your nephew in Glasgow. Direct to me—care of Mr Creech, Edin<sup>r</sup>.—I am ever, my dear Cousin,—Yours truly,

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

[MONTROSE, 13th Sep.]\*

[*Thursday.*] Land, and dine at Arbroath—stately ruins of Arbroath Abbey—come to Dundee through a fertile country. Dundee, a low-lying but pleasant town—old steeple—Tayfirth—Broughty Castle, a finely situated ruin, jutting into the Tay.

[*Friday, 14th Sep.*] Breakfast with the Miss Scotts—Mr Mitchell, an honest clergyman—Mr Bruce another, but pleasant, agreeable and engaging ; the first from Aberlemno, the second from Forfar. Dine with Mr Anderson, a brother-in-law of Miss Scotts. Miss Bess Scott like Mrs Greenfield—my bardship almost in love with her. Come through the rich harvests and fine hedge-rows of the carse of Gowrie, along the romantic margin of the Grampian Hills, to Perth—Castle Huntley—Sir Stewart Thriepland.

[*Saturday, 15th Sep.*] Perth—Scoon—picture of the Chevalier and his sister ; Queen Mary's bed, the hangings wrought with her own hands—Fine, fruitful, hilly, woody, country round Perth. Taybridge. Mr and Mrs Hastings—Major Scott—Castle Gowrie.

Leave Perth—come to Strathearn to Endermay to dine. Fine fruitful, cultivated strath—the scene of “Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,” near Perth—fine scenery on the banks of

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\* The original MS. is in the poet's Monument at Edinburgh. The date at bottom is in the handwriting of Mr Burness.



the May—Mrs Belches, gawdie, frank, affable, fond of rural sports, hunting, &c. Mrs Stirling, her sister, *en verite*. Come to Kinross to lie—reflections in a fit of the colic.

[*Sunday, 16th Sep.*] Come through a cold, barren country to Queensferry—dine—cross the ferry and come to Edinburgh.

### TO MR GILBERT BURNS, MOSSGIEL.

EDINBURGH, 17th Sept. 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,\*—I arrived here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near 600 miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went thro' the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of Lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and Druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the Duke of Athole; thence across Tay, and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the Duke's seats, where I had the honor of spending nearly two days† with his Grace and family: thence many miles through a wild country, among cliffs grey with eternal snows, and gloomy savage glens, till I crossed Spey and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music; Badenoch, &c. till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort-George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed in which tradition says King Duncan was murdered; lastly, from Fort-George to Inverness.

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\* This may appear a singular term for the poet to employ, in addressing his brother, but so it is in the MS.

† Part of Friday and whole of Saturday (Aug. 31, and Sep. 1.) It is strange that Chambers could fall into the mistake of supposing that Burns and Nicol stayed over Sunday at Athole House.

I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen, thence to Stonehive, where James Burness, from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts, Jean and Isabel, still alive, and hale old women.\* John Caird, though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can: they have had several letters from his son in New York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay till I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing; warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his very grave, what cared I for fishing-towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon Castle next day, with the Duke, Duchess, and family. I am thinking to cause my old mare to meet me, by means of John Ronald, at Glasgow; but you shall hear farther from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty and many compliments from the north to my mother; and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a berth for William, but am not likely to be successful.—Farewell.

R. B.

(<sup>8</sup>) TO MR JAMES BURNES, WRITER, MONTROSE.

*(Here first published.)*

MY DEAR SIR,—I send you, along with this, nine copies† which you will transmit as marked on the blank leaves. The one to Lord Gardenstone you will transmit as soon as possible. Your hints about young Hudson I shall carefully remember when I call for him.

Any thing you send me, direct to the care of Mr Andrew Bruce, Merch<sup>t</sup>., Bridge Street, Edin., but I am afraid that

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\* See the Table at page 3, *supra*.

† Of his printed Poems.

your kind offer of the dry fish will cost more than they are worth to carriers. My compliments to your wife and all friends, and excuse this brevity in,—Yours ever,

ROBT. BURNS.\*

EDIN., 19th Sep. 1787.

On 23d September, as the reader has seen at page 19, *supra*, the poet dispatched to Dr Moore his celebrated Autobiographical letter. It had been, as he explains, “unluckily forgot among other papers at Glasgow” on his way to Edinburgh, and was not recovered till his return from the great Highland Tour. About the same time, Burns received, by the hands of Dr Blacklock, a letter from Mr Josiah Walker, dated 13th September, in which he says,—“I still think with vexation on that ill-timed indisposition which lost me a day’s enjoyment of a man possessed of those very dispositions and talents I most admire. . . . You know how anxious the Duke was to have another day of you, and to let Mr Dundas have the pleasure of your conversation as the best dainty with which he could entertain an honoured guest. . . . The Duchess would give any consideration for another sight of your letter to Dr Moore; we must fall upon some method of procuring it for her.”

Thus we see that Burns, by the excuse, real or pretended, of indisposition, broke away from Athole House on the Sunday morning. We fear that the temper of Nicol had something to do in that matter, as he could not well be employed in his angling sport on that day, and Burns might be afraid to risk his companion *in doors*. The poet very happily compared himself during that excursion to “a man travelling with a loaded blunderbuss at full cock.”

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\* The original MS. is preserved in the Poet’s monument at Edinburgh. Mr Burness has appended the following note :—“The signature cut out by Mr Burness and presented to the Hon. W<sup>m</sup>. Maule of Panmure, 1821.”

## (4) TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ., DALSWINTON.

(CHAMBERS' ED., 1852.)

EDINBURGH, 28th September, 1787.

SIR,—I have been on a tour through the Highlands, and arrived in town but the other day, so could not wait on you at Dalswinton about the latter end of August, as I had promised and intended.

Independent of any views of future connections, what I owe you for the past, as a friend and benefactor (when friends I had few, and benefactors I had none), strongly in my bosom prohibits the most distant instance of ungrateful disrespect. I am informed you do not come to town for a month still, and within that time I shall certainly wait on you, as by this time I suppose you will have settled your scheme with respect to your farms.

My journey through the Highlands was perfectly inspiring, and I hope I have laid in a good stock of new poetical ideas from it. I shall make no apology for sending you the enclosed: it is a small but grateful tribute to the memory of our common countryman.\*—I have the honor to be, with the most grateful sincerity, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

*P.S.*—I have added another poem, partly as it alludes to some folks nearly and dearly connected with Ayrshire, and partly as rhymes are the only coin in which the poor poet can pay his debts of gratitude. The lady alluded to is Miss Isabella M'Leod, aunt to the young Countess of Loudon.

As I am determined not to leave Edinburgh till I wind up my matters with Mr Creech, which I am afraid will be

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\* The Elegy on Sir James Hunter Blair. Mr Miller's family (of Barskimming and Glenlee) belonged to Ayrshire.

a tedious business, should I unfortunately miss you at Dalswinton, perhaps your factor will be able to inform me of your intentions with respect to Elesland farm, which will save me a jaunt to Edinburgh again.

There is something so suspicious in the profession of attachment from a little man to a great man, that I know not how to do justice to the grateful warmth of my heart, when I would say how truly I am interested in the welfare of your little troop of angels, and how much I have the honor to be again, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

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#### EXCURSIONS IN OCTOBER 1787.

IN consequence of a slip in the memory of Dr James M'Kittrick Adair, a young relative of Mrs Dunlop to whom Burns was introduced in Edinburgh this autumn, great confusion has prevailed among the poet's biographers and annotators in their attempts to chronicle his various wanderings during the summer of 1787. Adair supplied Dr Currie with a lively enough account of a journey he and Burns had together, specially to visit the conjoined families of Mr John Tait, W.S., Mrs Hamilton, and Mrs Chalmers, at Harvieston; but he made the mistake of stating that the excursion was undertaken "in August 1787." The reader has been already made aware how Burns was engaged between the date of his arrival in Edinburgh on the 7th, and his leaving it in company with Nicol on the 25th of that month. It is evident from Dr Adair's narrative that Burns had previously visited Harvieston; and it is equally apparent from the terms of the poet's letter to Gavin Hamilton, of 28th August 1787, that he had seen that gentleman's relatives there for the *first* time, on the 27th of that month.

As Dr Adair's narrative must of necessity form a portion of the Biography of Burns, we here record it with some desirable abridgement:—"We rode by Linlithgow and Carron to Stirling. We visited the iron-works at Carron, with which the poet was forcibly struck. The resemblance between that place and its

inhabitants to the cave of the Cyclops, which must have occurred to every classical reader, presented itself to Burns. At Stirling the prospects from the Castle strongly interested him; his national feelings had, in a former visit, been powerfully excited by the ruinous and roofless state of the hall in which the Scottish Parliaments had frequently been held. His indignation had vented itself in some imprudent, but not unpoetical lines, which had given much offence, and which he took this opportunity of erasing, by breaking the pane of the window at the inn on which they were written.

“From Stirling we went next morning through the romantic and fertile vale of Devon to Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, then inhabited by Mrs Hamilton, with the younger part of whose family Burns had been previously acquainted. He introduced me to the family, and then was formed my first acquaintance with Mrs Hamilton’s eldest daughter to whom I have been married for nine years.\* Thus was I indebted to Burns for a connexion from which I have derived, and expect further to derive, much happiness.

“During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest; particularly Castle Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyll; and the famous cataract of the Devon, called the *Caldron-ling*; and the *Rumbling Bridge*, a single broad arch, thrown by the devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at the height of about one hundred feet above its bed.

“A visit to Mrs Bruce of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings powerfully. This venerable dame, with characteristic dignity informed me on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. Though almost deprived of speech by a paralytic affliction, she preserved her hospitality and urbanity. She was in posses-

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\* Marriage—16th November 1789. At Harvieston, Dr James M<sup>r</sup> Kittrick Adair, to Miss Charlotte Hamilton. Dr Adair died at Harrowgate in 1802, and his widow in 1806.



sion of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honour of knighthood, remarking that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people*.\* You will of course conclude that the old lady's political tenets were as Jacobital as the poet's, a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception and entertainment. She gave us her first toast after dinner, "Awa' Uncos," or Away with the Strangers! Who these strangers were, you will readily understand.

"At Dunfermline we visited the ruined abbey, and the abbey church, now consecrated to Presbyterian worship. Here I mounted the cutty stool, or stool of repentance, assuming the character of a penitent for fornication; while Burns, from the pulpit addressed to me a ludicrous reproof and exhortation, parodied from that which had been delivered to himself in Ayrshire, where he had, as he assured me, once been one of seven who mounted the *seat of shame* together.

"In the church, two broad flag-stones marked the grave of Robert Bruce for whose memory Burns had more than common veneration. He knelt and kissed the stone with sacred fervour, and heartily (*suis ut mos erat*) execrated the worse than Gothic neglect of the first of Scottish heroes."

Dr Adair makes no reference to two little excursions which Burns performed on his own account at this period, while Harvieston formed his head-quarters. A forenoon's ride would bring him to the Tusculum of Mr J. Ramsay of Auchtertyre on the Teith, to whom he carried a letter of introduction from Dr Blacklock. After a short visit to that gentleman, he departed under the promise to return in a few days and make a longer stay. The poet then proceeded to Ochtertyre in Strathearn, to accomplish a pre-concerted visit to Sir William Murray, whom he had met at Athole House. It was during his stay as guest of Sir William that he composed the fine verses "On scaring some water-fowl in Loch Turrit," and there also he produced the admired song

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\* This old lady lived in the ancient and now ruined fortalice called "Clackmannan Tower," overlooking the Firth of Forth at Alloa. She died in 1791, and the sword and helmet of Bruce fell appropriately into the hands of her kinsman, the Earl of Elgin, at whose mansion of Broomhall they are now preserved.

"Blythe, blythe, and merry was she,"\* in compliment to Miss Euphemia Murray of Lintrose, a young cousin of his host, who then lived at Ochtertyre House. He addressed a letter to each of his two friends, the classical teachers of the High School, from this beautiful retreat, both bearing the same date.

(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

OCHTERTYRE, *Monday* [Oct. 15th, 1787.]

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

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

R. B.

(<sup>4</sup>) MR WILLIAM CRUICKSHANK, EDINBURGH.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

OCHTERTYRE, *Monday* [Oct. 15th, 1787.]

I HAVE nothing, my dear Sir, to write to you, but that I feel myself exceedingly comfortably situated in this good family—just notice enough to make me easy but not to embarrass me. I was storm-stayed two days at the foot of the Ochil Hills, with Mr Tait of Harvieston and Mr

\* Marriage—"Aug. 2, 1794. At Lintrose, the Hon. David Smyth of Methven, one of the Senators of the College of Justice, to Miss Euphemia Murray, daughter of Mungo Murray, Esq., of Lintrose."—*Scots Mag.*

Johnston of Alva ; but was so well pleased that I shall certainly spend a day on the banks of the Devon as I return. I leave this place, I suppose, on Wednesday, and shall devote a day to Mr Ramsay of Auchtertyre near Stirling—a man to whose worth I cannot do justice. My respectful kind compliments to Mrs Cruikshank, and my dear little Jeanie ; and if you see Mr Masterton, please remember me to him. I am ever, my dear Sir, &c. R. B.

After eight or ten luxurious days thus enjoyed in high society, amid scenery of the most inviting kind, the poet proceeded to fulfil his promise made to Mr Ramsay, taking Harvieston by the way ; for the attractions there—as shall afterwards appear—were more powerful than he cared to express. Tearing himself away, as we may suppose, from his interesting entertainers on the banks of the Devon, he made his way to the beautiful retreat of his lately acquired friend on the banks of the Teith. That gentleman, according to Mr Lockhart, was “among the last of that old Scottish line of Latinists, which began with Buchanan, and (I fear) may be said to have ended with Gregory. Mr Ramsay, among other eccentricities, had sprinkled the walls of his house with Latin inscriptions, some of them highly elegant, and these particularly interested Burns, who asked and obtained copies and translations of them. This amiable man (whose manners and residence were not, I take it, out of the novelist’s recollection, when he painted ‘Monkbarns,’) was deeply read in Scottish antiquities, and the author of some learned essays on the elder poetry of his country. His conversation must have delighted any man of talents ; and Burns and he were mutually charmed with each other.”\*

“When I asked him,” wrote Mr Ramsay to Dr Currie, “whether the Edinburgh *literati* had mended his poems by their

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\* “March 2nd, 1814.—Died John Ramsay of Auchtertyre”—*Scots Mag.* The Latin inscription above the door of his house, written in 1775, thus reads in English “On the banks of the Teith, in the small but sweet inheritance of my fathers, may I and mine live in peace, and die in joyful hope !” The little estate passed into the hands of Sir David Dundas, Q.C. whose death occurred on 30th March, 1877.

criticisms—‘Sir,’ said he, ‘those gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country who spin their thread so fine that it is fit for neither weft nor woof!’ . . . I have been in the company of many men of genius, some of them poets; but I never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him, the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire! I was never more delighted than with his company, two days tête-à-tête on this occasion.”

From the letter which follows we learn that Burns arrived in Edinburgh after his little tour, on 20th October, ill with a cold contracted during the journey.

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(2) TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ., DALSWINTON.

(CHAMBERS, 1851.)

EDINBURGH, 20th October 1787.

SIR,—I was spending a few days at Sir William Murray’s, Ochertyre, and did not get your obliging letter till to-day I came to town. I was still more unlucky in catching a miserable cold, for which the medical gentlemen have ordered me into close confinement, “under pain of death”—the severest of penalties. In two or three days, if I get better, and if I hear at your lodgings that you are still at Dalswinton, I will take a ride to Dumfries directly. From something in your last, I would wish to explain my idea of being your tenant. I want to be a farmer in a small farm, about a plough-gang, in a pleasant country, under the auspices of a good landlord. I have no foolish notion of being a tenant on easier terms than another. To find a farm where one can live at all is not easy—I only mean living soberly, like an old-style farmer, and joining personal industry. The banks of the Nith are as sweet poetic ground as any I ever saw; and besides, Sir, ’tis but justice to the feelings of my own heart, and the opinion of my best friends, to say that I would wish to call you landlord sooner than any landed gentleman I know. These

are my views and wishes ; and in whatever way you think best to lay out your farms, I shall be happy to rent one of them. I shall certainly be able to ride to Dalswinton about the middle of next week, if I hear that you are not gone,—I have the honor to be, Sir,—Your obliged humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

The poet's lodging in Edinburgh was now in St James's Square, in the house of Nicol's High School colleague, Mr William Cruikshank ; and there he resided throughout his second winter in the city. His time was now much occupied in preparing songs for Vol. II. of Johnson's Museum, which appeared about the middle of February following. The following incident related by Professor Walker in his Memoir of Burns, refers to this period :—"About the end of October, I called for him at the house of a friend, whose daughter, though not more than twelve, was a considerable proficient in music. I found him seated by the harpsichord of this young lady, listening with the keenest interest to his own verses, which she sung and accompanied, and adjusting them to the music by repeated trials of the effect. In this occupation he was so totally absorbed, that it was difficult to draw his attention from it for a moment." The letter which follows, addressed to Mr Hoy, the Duke of Gordon's Librarian (referred to in the journal of the Highland Tour), is another illustration of his eagerness to help Johnson's musical work.

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(1) TO JAMES HOY, ESQ., GORDON CASTLE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, 20th October 1787.

SIR,—I will defend my conduct in giving you this trouble, on the best of Christian principles,—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.” I shall certainly, among my legacies, leave my latest curse to that unlucky predicament which hurried—

tore me away from Castle Gordon. May that obstinate son of Latin prose be curst to Scotch-mile periods, and damned to seven-league paragraphs; while Declension and Conjugation, Gender, Number, and Tense, under the ragged banners of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile array.

Allow me, Sir, to strengthen the small claim I have to your acquaintance, by the following request. An engraver, James Johnson, in Edinburgh, has, not from mercenary views, but from an honest Scotch enthusiasm, set about collecting all our native songs and setting them to music; particularly those that have never been set before. Clarke, the well-known musician, presides over the musical arrangement, and Drs Beattie and Blacklock, Mr Tytler of Woodhouselee, and your humble servant to the utmost of his small power, assist in collecting the old poetry, or sometimes for a fine air make a stanza, when it has no words. The brats (too tedious to mention) which claim a parental pang from my bardship, I suppose will appear in Johnson's second number—the first was published before my acquaintance with him. My request is—"Cauld Kail in Aberdeen" is one intended for this number, and I beg a copy of his Grace of Gordon's words to it, which you were so kind as to repeat to me. You may be sure we won't prefix the author's name, except you like, though I look on it as no small merit to this work that the names of so many of the authors of our old Scotch songs, names almost forgotten, will be inserted. I do not well know where to write to you—I rather write at you: but if you will be so obliging, immediately on receipt of this, as to write me a few lines I shall perhaps pay you in kind, though not in quality. Johnson's terms are:—each number a handsome pocket volume, to consist of a hundred Scotch songs, with basses for the harpsichord, &c. The price to subscribers, 5s.;



to non-subscribers, 6s. He will have three numbers, I conjecture.

My direction, for two or three weeks, will be at Mr William Cruikshank's, St James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh,—I am, Sir, yours to command, R. B.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO REV. JOHN SKINNER.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

EDINBURGH, *October 25, 1787.*

REVEREND AND VENERABLE SIR,—Accept, in plain dull prose, my most sincere thanks for the best poetical compliment I ever received. I assure you, Sir, as a poet, you have conjured up an airy demon of vanity in my fancy, which the best abilities in your other capacity would be ill able to lay. I regret, and while I live I shall regret, that when I was in the north, I had not the pleasure of paying a younger brother's dutiful respects to the author of the best Scotch song ever Scotland saw—"Tullochgorum's my delight!" The world may think slightly of the craft of song-making if they please, but, as Job says—"O that mine adversary had written a book!"—let them try. There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought and expression, which peculiarly marks them not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of song-wrights, in our native manner and language. The only remains of this enchantment, these spells of the imagination, rest with you. Our true brother, Ross of Lochlee, was likewise "owre cannie"—"a wild warlock"—but now he sings among the "sons of the morning."

I have often wished, and will certainly endeavour to form a kind of common acquaintance among all the genuine sons of Caledonian song. The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us; but "reverence thyself."

The world is not our *peers*, so we challenge the jury. We can lash that world, and find ourselves a very great source of amusement and happiness independent of that world.

There is a work going on in Edinburgh just now which claims your best assistance. An engraver in this town has set about collecting and publishing all the Scotch songs, with the music, that can be found. Songs in the English language, if by Scotchmen, are admitted, but the music must all be Scotch. Drs Beattie and Blacklock are lending a hand, and the first musician in the town presides over that department. I have been absolutely crazed about it, collecting old stanzas, and every information remaining respecting their origin, authors, &c., &c. This last is but a very fragment-business; but at the end of his second number—the first is already published—a small account will be given of the authors, particularly to preserve those of later times. Your three songs “Tullochgorum,” “John of Badenyon,” and “Ewie wi’ the Crookit Horn,” go into this second number. I was determined, before I got your letter, to write you, begging that you would let me know where the editions of these pieces may be found, as you would wish them to continue in future times; and if you be so kind to this undertaking as send any songs, of your own or others, that you would think proper to publish, your name will be inserted among the other authors,—“Nill ye, will ye.” One half of Scotland already give your songs to other authors. Paper is done. I beg to hear from you; the sooner the better, as I leave Edinburgh in a fortnight or three weeks.—I am, with the warmest sincerity, Sir,—  
Your obliged humble servant, R. B.

The poetical compliment referred to in the opening sentence of the preceding letter was dated Linshart, 25th Sep., 1787, and consisted of eighteen stanzas and a “Postscript” in Scotch verse, which the worthy clergyman had penned after hearing from his

son in Aberdeen that he had met with Burns at the house of Mr Chalmers, printer there, on 10th September. We shall quote only one stanza, as the piece is well known :—

“Sae proud’s I am that ye hae heard  
 O’ my attempts to be a bard,  
 And think my muse nae that ill-faur’d,  
     Seil o’ your face !  
 I wadna wish for mair reward,  
     Than your good grace.”

The next of the bard’s letters in our programme bears date “September” in *Cromek’s Reliques*, through some mistake ; but our date by internal evidence, must be the true one. It is the first that has been preserved of an extensive series of such interesting communications addressed by Burns to Miss Margaret, or rather, “Peggy” Chalmers, as he preferred to call her. The familiar style of this letter goes far to prove that it was not the beginning of such correspondence ; and the reference to *Smeaton of Kilmours*, and to a “Mauchline sacrament” very significantly indicates that his correspondent was familiar with those localities and their peculiarities. (*See letter to James Smith, p. 253 supra.*) In thus addressing Miss Chalmers the poet writes as if his letters were intended for Charlotte Hamilton’s, as much as for Peggy’s perusal, writing to the latter individually as a matter of form, as if she were merely secretary of the Harvieston sisterhood. But a close observer will detect in these letters that Peggy has the soft side of his heart ; while his admiration for Charlotte is (to use his own simile) of that kind “with which one regards the starry sky in a frosty December.” There is not a trace of his great ruling passion in the *one* song he composed in honour of Charlotte while the “native grace” and “immortal charms” of Peggy are set off in his happiest manner in the three lyrics dedicated to her.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDIN<sup>B</sup>. Oct. 26, 1787.

I SEND Charlotte the first number of the songs ; I would not wait for the second number ; I hate delays in little

marks of friendship, as I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart. I am determined to pay Charlotte a poetic compliment, if I could hit on some glorious old Scotch air, in number second. You will see a small attempt on a shred of paper in the book ; but though Dr Blacklock commended it very highly, I am not just satisfied with it myself. I intend to make it *description* of some kind : the whining cant of love, except in real passion, and by a masterly hand, is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant of old Father Smeaton, Whig-minister at Kilmaurs. Darts, flames, cupids, loves, graces, and all that farrago, are just a Mauchline sacrament—a senseless rabble.

I got an excellent poetic epistle yesternight from the old, venerable author of Tullochgorum, John of Badenyon, &c. I suppose you know he is a clergyman. It is by far the finest poetic compliment I ever got. I will send you a copy of it.

I go on Thursday or Friday to Dumfries to wait on Mr Miller about his farms.—Do tell that to Lady Mackenzie, that she may give me credit for a little wisdom. “I Wisdom dwell with Prudence.” What a blessed fire-side ! How happy should I be to pass a winter evening under their venerable roof ! and smoke a pipe of tobacco, or drink water-gruel with them ! What solemn, lengthened, laughter-quashing gravity of phiz ! What sage remarks on the good-for-nothing sons and daughters of indiscretion and folly ! And what frugal lessons, as we straitened the fire-side circle, on the uses of the poker and tongs !

Miss Nimmo is very well, and begs to be remembered in the old way to you. I used all my eloquence, all the persuasive flourishes of the hand, and heart-melting modulation of periods in my power, to urge her out to Harvieston, but all in vain. My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind. I have seen the day

—but that is a “tale of other years.”—In my conscience I believe that my heart has been so oft on fire that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night. I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship ; I am charmed with the wild but graceful eccentricity of their motions, and—wish them good night. I mean this with respect to a certain passion *dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'être un miserable esclave* : as for friendship, you and Charlotte have given me pleasure, permanent pleasure “which the world cannot give, nor take away,” I hope ; and which will outlast the heavens and the earth.

R. B.

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR JAMES CANDLISH, GLASGOW.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDINBURGH, Nov. 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—If once I were gone from this scene of hurry and dissipation, I promise myself the pleasure of that correspondence being renewed which has been so long broken. At present I have time for nothing. Dissipation and business engross every moment. I am engaged in assisting an honest Scotch enthusiast, a friend of mine, who is an engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste. I have collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen, all the songs I could meet with. “Pompey's Ghost,” words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number : the first is already published. I shall shew you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a

fortnight or less. Do be so kind as to send me the song in a day or two: you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

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

The above letter we have every confidence in dating as above, from internal evidence, although the original is undated, and Chambers has placed it under February 1788. The song requested by Burns from his correspondent was apparently one which the latter used to sing while both were attending the Grammar School at Ayr, under John Murdoch in 1773, when neither of them were above fifteen years old. Burns had been led to believe that its author was John Lowe, the composer of "Mary's Dream;" but as we find the words in print at a period when Lowe was only emerging from boyhood, the claim of the latter to its authorship must be denied. Lowe was born in 1750, and died in 1798. He went to Edinburgh to attend the University in 1771, when he would find the piece called "Pompey's Ghost" in a standard collection styled "THE BLACK-BIRD," edited by William Hunter, and bearing this imprint:—"Edinburgh. Printed by J. Bruce and Company: and sold by John Moir, Bookbinder in Bell's Wynd.—MDCCLXIV."

Mr Candlish forwarded the words to Burns in reply, but regretted his inability to note down the music. He wrote thus:—"It is with the greatest sincerity I applaud your attempt to give the world a more correct and elegant collection of Scotch songs than has hitherto appeared . . . If it is to be published by subscription, put down my name for a copy. My time this winter is very much employed—no less than ten hours a day. Expecting to see you soon, I am yours most sincerely

JAMES CANDLISH."

About this period, Burns received a letter from his old preceptor John Murdoch, dated from London on 28th October 1787. The poems of Robert Burns had been for some months the subject of admiration in London, before the worthy man could realize the fact that these were actually the work of the poor boy of that name who had been his pupil at Mount Oliphant. He wrote thus:—"If ever you come hither, you will have the



satisfaction of seeing your poems relished by the Caledonians in London fully as much as they can be by those of Edinburgh. We frequently repeat some of your verses in our Caledonian Society; and you may believe that I am not a little vain that I have had some share in cultivating such a genius. I was not absolutely certain that you were the author till a few days ago, when I made a visit to a Scotch lady resident here, a daughter of Dr M'Comb, who told me that she was informed of it by a letter from her sister in Edinburgh, with whom you had been in company when in that capital. . . .

"May the father of the Universe bless you with all those principles and dispositions that the best of parents took such uncommon pains to instil into your mind from your earliest infancy! It is one of the greatest pleasures I promise myself before I die, that of seeing the family of a man whose memory I revere more than that of any person that ever I was acquainted with.—I am, my dear friend, yours sincerely. JOHN MURDOCH."

Another Scotchman resident in London, Sir Gilbert Elliot (afterwards the first Earl of Minto), about this time wrote to his sister at Minto, on the same subject, thus:—"I have read about half of Burns's Poems, and am in the highest degree of admiration. I admire and wonder at his general knowledge of human character—of the manner, merits, and defects, of all ranks, and of many countries; the great justness, and also the great liberality of his judgement; and (what is most to be stared at) the uncommon refinement of his mind in all his views and opinions, and the uncommon refinement of his taste in composition. This, I say, seems more wonderful than genius, because one is apt to suppose Genius is *born* and Refinement is *acquired*. Now, granting his access to good books, yet consider the company he has lived in, and in how much worse than total solitude his mind has had to work and purify itself; consider how severe labour blunts the edge of every mind, and how the discomforts of poverty in a Scotch climate must cripple even Genius, and what a sedative it must be to imagination—nay, how much nearer even the *pleasures* of his rank must lead to sottishness than to elegance and wit! Thus we see what a victory mind has over matter, and how, in this prodigy, Will has dung Fate!"—*Life and letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot*, 1874.

## (6) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP,

DUNLOP HOUSE, STEWARTON.

*(Here first published.)\**

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 exertion of good sense and philosophy in persons of elevated rank, to keep a friendship properly alive with one much their inferior. Externals, 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-

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\* From the poet's holograph in possession of Frederick Locker, Esq., London, to whose kindness we are indebted for its appearance here.

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;\* 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 Cleric character I ever saw was a Roman Catholic.

I ever could ill endure those surly cubs of “chassard 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,† 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 Edin<sup>r</sup>. 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,

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

EDIN<sup>a</sup>. 4th Nov. 1787.

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\* This was Dr John Geddes, coadjutor Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in Edinburgh, who had procured subscriptions for the author's Edinburgh edition from five foreign Catholic seminaries, beginning with the Scots College at Valladolid, of which he had been for many years Rector. He had been introduced to Burns by Lord Monboddo.

† This is the first we hear of the poet's interest in the ecclesiastical prosecution of Dr M'Gill, for alleged heresy, which afterwards occasioned the poem called “the Kirk's Alarm.”

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## (2) TO JAMES HOY, ESQ., GORDON CASTLE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDINBURGH, *6th November, 1787.*

DEAR SIR,—I would have wrote you immediately on receipt of your kind letter, but a mixed impulse of gratitude and esteem whispered to me that I ought to send you something by way of return. When a poet owes anything, particularly when he is indebted for good offices, the payment that usually recurs to him—the only coin indeed in which he probably is conversant—is rhyme. Johnson sends the books by the fly, as directed, and begs me to enclose his most grateful thanks : my return I intended should have been one or two poetic bagatelles which the world have not seen, or, perhaps, for obvious reasons, cannot see. These I shall send you before I leave Edinburgh. They may make you laugh a little, which, on the whole, is no bad way of spending one's precious hours and still more precious breath : at any rate, they will be, though a small, yet a very sincere mark of my respectful esteem for a gentleman whose further acquaintance I should look upon as a peculiar obligation.

The Duke's song, independent totally of his dukeship, charms me. There is I know not what of wild happiness of thought and expression peculiarly beautiful in the old Scottish song style, of which his Grace, old venerable Skinner, the author of "*Tullochgorum*," &c., and the late Ross, at Lochlee, of true Scottish poetic memory, are the only modern instances that I recollect, since Ramsay with his contemporaries, and poor Bob Fergusson went to the world of deathless existence and truly immortal song. The mob of mankind, that many-headed beast, would laugh at so serious a speech about an old song ; but, as Job says, "O that mine adversary had written a book !" Those who

think that composing a Scotch song is a trifling business—let them try it.

I wish my Lord Duke would pay a proper attention to the Christian admonition—"Hide not your candle under a bushel," but "let your light shine before men." I could name half a dozen dukes that I guess are a devilish deal worse employed : nay, I question if there are half a dozen better : perhaps there are not half that scanty number whom Heaven has favored with the tuneful, happy, and, I will say, glorious gift. —I am, dear Sir,—Your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDIN<sup>B</sup>. 6th Nov. 1787.\*

MY DEAR MADAM,—I just now have read yours. The poetic compliments I pay cannot be misunderstood. They are neither of them so particular as to point you out to the world at large ; and the circle of your acquaintances will allow all I have said. Besides, I have complimented you chiefly, almost solely, on your mental charms. Shall I be plain with you ? I will ; so look to it. Personal attractions, Madam, you have much above par ; wit, understanding, and worth, you possess in the first class. This is a cursed flat way of telling you these truths, but let me hear no more of your sheepish timidity. I know the world a little. I know what they will say of my poems (by second sight, I suppose, for I am seldom out in my conjectures) ; and you may believe me, my dear Madam, I would not run any risk of hurting you by an ill-judged compliment. I wish to show to the world, the odds between

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\* Cromeek has dated this letter "Dec. 1787." We suspect he has put in "Dec." through the reference to "Christmas days" in the text.

a poet's friends and those of simple prosemen. More for your information, *both* the pieces go in. One of them, "Where braving angry winter's storms," is already set—the tune is Neil Gow's lamentation for Abercarny; the other is to be set to an old Highland air in Daniel Dow's "Collection of ancient Scotch music;" the name is *Ha a Chaillich air mo Dheidh*. My treacherous memory has forgot every circumstance about *Les Incas*, only I think you mentioned them as being in Creech's possession. I shall ask him about it. I am afraid the song of "Somebody" will come too late—as I shall, for certain, leave town in a week for Ayrshire, and from that to Dumfries, but there my hopes are slender. I leave my direction in town, so any thing, wherever I am, will reach me.

I saw your's to ——; it is not too severe, nor did he take it amiss. On the contrary, like a whipt spaniel he talks of being with you in the Christmas days. Mr Tait has given him the invitation, and he is determined to accept of it. O selfishness! he owns in his sober moments, that from his own volatility of inclination, the circumstances in which he is situated, and his knowledge of his father's disposition, the whole affair is chimerical—yet he *will* gratify an idle *penchant* at the enormous, cruel expense of perhaps ruining the peace of the very woman for whom he professes the generous passion of love! He is a gentleman in his mind and manners—*tant pis!* He is a volatile school-boy: the heir of a man's fortune who well knows the value of two times two!

Perdition seize them and their fortunes, before they should make the amiable, the lovely —— the derided object of their purse-proud contempt.

I am doubly happy to hear of Mrs ——'s recovery, because I really thought all was over with her. There are days of pleasure yet awaiting her.



"As I cam in by Glenap;  
 I met with an aged woman;  
 She bade me cheer up my heart,  
 For the best o' my days was comin'."\*

This day will decide my affairs with Creech. Things are, like myself, not what they ought to be; yet better than what they appear to be.

"Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings but Himself—  
 That hideous sight—a naked human heart."

Farewell! remember me to Charlotte.

R. B.

After the first week in November had passed, the poet seems to have made a second journey to Dumfriesshire to inspect Mr Miller's farms, taking Ayrshire by the way. He mentions his return in the following letter to Miss Chalmers, which has no date attached to it in Cromek's Collection, where it first appeared. He was back to Edinburgh about the 17th of same month.

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(<sup>3</sup>) TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDIN., (*Nov.* 18,) 1787.

I HAVE been at Dumfries, and at one visit more shall be decided about a farm in that country. I am rather hopeless in it; but as my brother is an excellent farmer, and is, besides, an exceedingly prudent, sober man (qualities which are only a younger brother's fortune in our family), I am determined, if my Dumfries business fail me, to return into partnership with him, and at our leisure take another farm in the neighbourhood. I assure you I look for high compliments from you and Charlotte on this very sage instance of my unfathomable, incomprehensible wisdom. Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my

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\* Here the letter closes in Cromek's copy. The remainder first appeared in Cunningham's edition.

power, paid her a poetic compliment, now completed.\* The air is admirable: true old Highland. It was the tune of a Gaelic song which an Inverness lady sung me when I was there; and I was so charmed with it that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing; for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first-rate; though I am convinced it is very well: and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies, it is not only *sincere*, but *just*. R. B.

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(<sup>4</sup>) TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

(CROMEK, 1808).

EDIN., Nov. 21, 1787.

I HAVE one vexatious fault to the kindly-welcome, well-filled sheet which I owe to your and Charlotte's goodness—it contains too much sense, sentiment, and good-spelling. It is impossible that even you two, whom I declare to my God I will give credit for any degree of excellence the sex are capable of attaining, it is impossible you can go on to correspond at that rate; so like those who, Shenstone says, retire because they have made a good speech, I shall, after a few letters, hear no more of you. I insist that you shall write whatever comes first: what you see, what you read, what you hear, what you admire, what you dislike, trifles, bagatelles, nonsense; or to fill up a corner, e'en put down a laugh at full length. Now none of your polite hints about flattery: I leave that to your lovers, if you have or shall have any; though, thank heaven, I have found at last two girls who can be luxuriantly happy in their own minds and

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\* See "The Banks of the Devon," Vol. I. p. 111.

with one another, without that commonly necessary appendage to female bliss, A LOVER.

Charlotte and you are just two favourite resting-places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world—God knows I am ill-fitted for the struggle: I glory in being a Poet, and I want to be thought a wise man—I would fondly be generous, and I wish to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. “Some folk hae a hantle o’ fauts, an’ I’m but a ne’er-do-weel.”

*Afternoon.*—To close the melancholy reflections at the end of last sheet, I shall just add a piece of devotion commonly known in Carrick by the title of the “Wabster’s grace:”

“Some say we’re thieves, and e’en sae are we!  
Some say we lie, and e’en sae do we!  
Gude forgie us, and I hope sae will He!  
Up and to your looms, lads.”

R. B.

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TO MR ROBT. AINSLIE, ST. JAMES’ SQUARE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

SUNDAY MORNING, Nov. 25, 1787.\*

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

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence.—You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of

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\* The poet’s MS. of this note is in the possession of Frederick Locker, Esq., author of “London Lyrics,” &c.

† This was Mr Ainslie, Bookseller, a relative of Burns’s correspondent.

blue-devilism, and you laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my good things. I don't know, upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God's world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now, in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may perhaps sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be your friend,

R. B.

(<sup>1</sup>) TO MR BEUGO, ENGRAVER, PRINCES STREET.

(*Here first published.*)

MY DEAR SIR,—A certain sour-faced old acquaintance called "Glauber's Salts" hinders me from my lesson to-night. To-morrow night I will not fail.

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

ST. JAMES' SQUARE, *Tuesday Even.*

The original of the above little note is possessed by W. F. Watson, Esq., Edinburgh, who supposes that the date might be about March 1787, when Burns gave Beugo a few sittings while the engraving of his portrait was in progress. The address "St. James' Square," however, would imply a date considerably later; we suspect that he and Beugo had arranged to take an evening lesson together in Latin or French—most probably the latter, from Mr Louis Cauvin, who resided near Jock's Lodge, and had a class-room in the city.

In regard to the short letter to Ainslie, the following extract from a communication which that gentleman addressed to the Ettrick Shepherd in 1834 will afford a full explanation:—"While the Poet was staying with Mr Cruikshank in St James' Square, I had then a small bachelor-house on the north side of the Square, and, intimate as we were, it may be supposed we spent many an hour together, and to me most agreeable they were. I remember one pleasant afternoon he came over to me after dinner: I was then but a Writer to the Signet's apprentice, but had already a cellar, though certainly not an extensive one; for it was no more than a

window-bunker, and consisted but of five bottles of port—all that remained of a dozen which had been my last laid-in store. I was too hospitable not to offer a bottle to my friend—‘No, no,’ said Burns, giving me a kindly slap on the shoulder, ‘we’ll hae nae wine the day; we’ll take a walk to Arthur Seat, and come in to a late tea.’ We did so, and I almost never found the poet so amusing, so instructive, and altogether so delightful, as he was in the charming stroll which we had together, and during the sober tea-drinking which followed it.”

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO MISS MABANE,\* EDINBURGH.

(STEWART’S “LETTERS OF BURNS TO CLARINDA,” 1802.)

HERE have I sat, my dear Madam, in the stony attitude of perplexed study for fifteen vexatious minutes, my head askew, bending over the intended card, my fixed eye insensible to the very light of day poured around; my pendulous goose-feather, loaded with ink, hanging over the future letter; all for the important purpose of writing a complimentary card to accompany your trinket.

Compliment is such a miserable Greenland expression, and lies at such a chilly polar distance from the torrid zone of my constitution that I cannot, for the very soul of me, use it to any person for whom I have the twentieth part of the esteem every one must have for you who knows you.

As I leave town in three or four days, I can give myself the pleasure of calling on you only for a minute. Tuesday evening, sometime about seven or after, I shall wait on you for your farewell commands.

The hinge of your box I put into the hands of the proper connoisseur. The broken glass likewise went under review; but deliberative wisdom thought it would too much en-

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\* This lady became Mrs Colonel Wright, but there is no tradition of any connecting link between her and Burns, except this short letter.

danger the whole fabric [to replace it].—I am, dear Madam, with all sincerity of enthusiasm,—Your very obed<sup>t</sup>. servant,

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

*Saturday Noon,*  
NO. 2 ST JAMES' SQUARE,  
NEW TOWN, EDINBURGH. [1st Decem. 1787.]

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Burns had at length, early in December 1787 (after having in vain waited for a final settlement with Mr Creech,) resolved on leaving Edinburgh, when an accident occurred which had the effect of detaining him for at least three months longer. A Miss Nimmo, residing in Allison Square, Potterrow, of whom the poet was an occasional visitor, (in respect she was the intimate friend of his correspondent Miss Chalmers), had a small tea-party in her house about the beginning of December, where he was a principal guest. Another "principal guest" on that occasion was Mrs M'Lehose, a familiar acquaintance of Miss Nimmo, who after reading Burns's poems and hearing him so greatly spoken of, had earnestly pressed her friend to make them acquainted. The lady "had a presentiment that both should derive pleasure from the society of each other," and the result of the interview was no disappointment. A "return" tea-party was arranged to take place in the house of Mrs M'Lehose, which was only two hundred paces distant, at the opposite side of the Potterrow. Burns accepted the invitation to be present on the evening fixed—Thursday, 6th December—but the poet preferred a *tête-à-tête* interview; so instead of making appearance then, a letter came as his substitute, pleading that unforeseen necessity frustrated his intention; but that on Saturday evening he would make up for his own disappointment by waiting on her. However, as accident would have it, on the afternoon of Saturday, an unlucky fall from a coach seriously bruised one of his knees, making him a cripple, and thus occasioned the long series of letters known as the "Correspondence with Clarinda." We have resolved to keep that correspondence apart from the poet's other letters, as forming a distinct episode in his history, the effect of which would be marred if in-



terwoven with the general correspondence, which we shall therefore go on with, and introduce the "Clarinda Correspondence" entire, by way of interlude, at the first favourable opportunity.

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(<sup>5</sup>) TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDINBURGH, *Dec. 12, 1787.*

I AM here under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion; and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself, have formed a "Quadruple Alliance" to guarantee the other. I got my fall on Saturday (Dec. 8), and am getting slowly better.

I have taken tooth and nail to the Bible, and am got through the five books of Moses, and half way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book.\* I sent for my book binder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town; and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

I would give my best song to my worst enemy, I mean the merit of making it, to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit.

I inclose you a proof copy of the "Banks of the Devon," which present with my best wishes to Charlotte. The "Ochil-hills" you shall probably have next week for yourself. None of your fine speeches! R. B.

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\* His poems composed before this date display an intimate familiarity with these books. Little did he dream of the future Bishop Colenso, and of Dr Kuenen.

## TO MR FRANCIS HOWDEN,

JEWELLER, PARLIAMENT SQUARE.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

THE bearer of this will deliver you a small shade to set ; which, my dear Sir, if you would highly oblige a poor cripple devil as I am at present, you will finish at furthest against to-morrow evening. It goes a hundred miles into the country ; and if it is at me by five o'clock to-morrow evening, I have an opportunity of a private hand to convey it ; if not, I don't know how to get it sent. Set it just as you did the others you did for me—"in the neatest and cheapest manner ; both to answer as a breast-pin, and with a ring to answer as a locket. Do despatch it ; as it is, I believe, the pledge of love, and perhaps the prelude to ma-tri-mo-ny. Everybody knows the auld wife's observation when she saw a poor dog going to be hanged—"God help us ! it's the gate we ha'e a' to gang !"

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

"Leuk twice or ye loup ance."

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

ST JAMES' SQUARE, No. 2, Attic Storey.

Chambers remarks that the preceding "business note" shews how apt the mind of Burns was, "even on the most trivial subjects, to scintillate out vivid expressions and droll or fanciful ideas."

On 13th December 1787 Lord President Dundas, of the Court of Session, died somewhat suddenly, and Burns was pressed by Mr Charles Hay, advocate, (afterwards Lord Newton) one of the members of the Crochallan Club, to compose some elegiac verses on the occasion. Dr Alexander Wood, the kind surgeon who attended to the poet's bruised limb at that time, warmly seconded that proposal; suggesting that the poetic compliment might lead to some beneficial results, through the powerful political influence of the Dundas family.

The poem was executed, and forwarded by the hands of Dr Wood to the son of the deceased with the result which the reader will find narrated at Vol. II., page 119.

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#### TO CHARLES HAY, ESQ., ADVOCATE.

(CHAMBERS' PEOPLE'S ED., 1840.)

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

R. B.

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(<sup>6</sup>) TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDINBURGH, Dec. 19, 1787.

I BEGIN this letter in answer to yours of the 17th current, which is not yet cold since I read it. The atmosphere of my soul is vastly clearer than when I wrote you last. For the first time, yesterday I crossed the room on crutches. It would do your heart good to see my bardship, not on my poetic, but on my oaken stilts ; throwing my best leg with an air ! and with as much hilarity in my gait and countenance, as a May frog leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long expected shower !

I can't say I am altogether at my ease when I see anywhere in my path that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre—Poverty ; attended as he always is by iron-fisted Oppression, and leering Contempt ; but I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-laboured day already, and still my motto is—I DARE ! My worst enemy is *moi même*. I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of Imagination, Whim, Caprice, and Passion ; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of Wisdom, Prudence, and Forethought move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and, alas ! frequent defeat. There are just two creatures I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear.

R. B.

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## (1) TO MR RICHARD BROWN, IRVINE.

(WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

EDINBURGH, 30th Dec. 1787.

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

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

blow me into Chaos. Almighty Love still reigns and revels in my bosom; and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow, who has wit and wisdom more murderously fatal than the assassinating stiletto of the Sicilian bandit, or the poisoned arrow of the savage African. My highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command, in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the following verses which she sent me the other day. My best compliment to my friend, Allan.—Adieu !

R. B.

The “Edinburgh widow” referred to in the above letter was, of course, Mrs M’Lehose, who although not a widow, was a deserted wife. The verses given by Dr Walker, who first published the letter, are those which appear in the *Clarinda* correspondence beginning,

“Talk not of Love, it gives me pain.”

These stanzas, however, were not composed until after the date of the letter to Brown, so that we must infer they were introduced by Walker at hap-hazard from Johnson’s Museum, where they were published in Feb. 1788. The reader will find the verses really forwarded to Brown, at Vol. II. page 122, of this edition.

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### (7) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

. . . . . 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 his 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.

EDINBURGH, 21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1788 [*Monday*.]

(*i*) TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[TUESDAY, 22<sup>d</sup> Jan. 1788.]

Now for that wayward, unfortunate thing, *myself*. I have broke measures with Creech, and last week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me upon his honor that I shall have the account on Monday ; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me ! a poor, damned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool ! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonising sensibility, and bedlam passions !

“ I wish that I were dead, but I’m no like to die ! ” I had lately “ a hairbreadth ’scape in the imminent deadly breach,” of love too. Thank my stars, I got off heart-whole, “ waur fleyed than hurt.”—Interruption.

I have this moment got a hint. . . . I fear I am some-

thing like—undone ;\* but I hope the best. Come stubborn Pride and unshrinking Resolution, accompany me through this, to me, miserable world ! You must not desert me. Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching Regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn-hope. Seriously though, life presents me with but a melancholy path : but—my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on.

R. B.

(<sup>3</sup>) TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

(CURRIE, 1801.)

[EDIN<sup>R</sup>. *Jan.* 1788.]

I KNOW your Lordship 'will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you ; but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes, and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the Excise : I am told that your Lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners ; and your Lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruc-

\* It is not, for certainty, known what was the unexpected, and disheartening intelligence that so seriously affected Burns at this time. Cunningham suggests "a rumour of Creech's insolvency," but Chambers, who holds that Creech's affairs did not then, nor at any time, justify suspicion of financial difficulties, is inclined to think that distressing news from home regarding Jean Armour's predicament raised the present alarm in the poet's mind. His letter to Mrs Dunlop in August following, seems to support this theory : "The time I was laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her till my return."

tion. There, my Lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude.

My brother's farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it; and after the assistance which I have given and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds; and instead of seeking, what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age. . . . .

These, my Lord, are my views: I have resolved from the maturest deliberation; and now I am fixed, I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your Lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes; nor have I yet applied to anybody else. Indeed, my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the Great who have honored me with their countenance. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial; but to your Lordship I have not only the honor, the comfort, but the pleasure of being—Your Lordship's much obliged and deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

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(<sup>1</sup>) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[EDIN<sup>R</sup>. *Jan.* 1788.]

SIR,—When I had the honor of being introduced to you at Athole-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakspeare, asked Old

Kent why he wished to be in his service, he answers, "Because you have that in your face which I would fain call master." For some such reason, Sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of Excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I give in his certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business, except manual labor, I am totally unacquainted. . . . .

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

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

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Towards the middle of January the poet's limb was so far healed that he could go up and down stairs without the aid of a staff. He had consulted his kind medical attendant, Dr Alex. Wood, in regard to his favourite scheme of entering into the Excise business, and that gentleman being on an intimate footing with several of the Commissioners, promised to help his views to

the extent of his power. The above letters were accordingly written and delivered to the patrons to whom they are addressed ; and patronage hunting occupied the poet's attention for a few days, with results such as might be anticipated. On Sunday 27th January, we have these results communicated to Clarinda, thus :—"I have almost given up the Excise idea. I have been just now to wait on a great person . . . I have been questioned like a child about my matters, and blamed and schooled for my inscription on Stirling window. Come Clarinda ! 'Come, curse me, Jacob ; come, defy me, Israel !' "

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(<sup>8</sup>) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

EDIN<sup>B</sup>. 12th Feb. 1788.

SOME things 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 dependence, 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. . . . .

R. B.

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO REV. JOHN SKINNER.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

EDINBURGH, Feb. 14th, 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—I have been a cripple now near three months, though I am getting vastly better, and have been very much hurried besides, or else I would have wrote you sooner. I must beg your pardon for the epistle you

sent me appearing in the Magazine. I had given a copy or two to some of my intimate friends, but did not know of the printing of it till the publication of the Magazine. However, as it does great honour to us both, you will forgive it.

The second volume of the songs I mentioned to you in my last is published to-day. I send you a copy, which I beg you will accept as a mark of the veneration I have long had, and shall ever have, for your character, and of the claim I make to your continued acquaintance. Your songs appear in the third volume, with your name in the index; as I assure you, Sir, I have heard your "*Tullochgorum*," particularly among our west country-folks given to many different names, and most commonly to the immortal author of "*The Minstrel*," who, indeed, never wrote anything superior to "*Gie's a sang, Montgomery cried*." Your brother\* has promised me your verses to the Marquis of Huntly's reel, which certainly deserve a place in the collection. My kind host, Mr Cruikshank, of the High School here, and said to be one of the best Latins in this age, begs me to make you his grateful acknowledgments for the entertainment he has got in a Latin publication of yours, that I borrowed for him from your acquaintance and much respected friend in this place, the Reverend Dr. Webster.† Mr Cruikshank maintains that you write the best Latin since Buchanan. I leave Edinburgh to-morrow, but shall return in three weeks. Your song you mentioned in your last, to the tune of "*Dumbarton Drums*," and the other, which you say was done by a brother in trade of mine, a ploughman, I shall thank you for a copy of each.—I am

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\* Mr James Skinner, W.S., half-brother of the author of *Tullochgorum*, and thirty years his junior. He died about 1848.

† An Episcopal clergyman in Edinburgh.



ever, Reverend Sir, with the most respectful esteem and sincere veneration, yours,

R. B.

PREFACE TO VOL. II. OF JOHNSON'S MUSICAL MUSEUM.

"The Songs contained in this Volume, both music and poetry, are all of them the work of Scotsmen. Wherever the old words could be recovered, they have been preferred; both as generally suiting better the genius of the tunes, and to preserve the productions of these earlier Sons of the Scottish Muse, some of whose names deserved a better fate than has befallen them—"Buried 'midst the wreck of things which were." Of our more modern Songs, the Editor has inserted the Author's names, as far as he could ascertain them; and as that was neglected in the first Volume, it is annexed here. If he have made any mistakes in this affair, which he possibly may, he shall be very grateful at being set right.

"Ignorance and Prejudice may perhaps affect to sneer at the simplicity of the poetry or music of some of these pieces; but their having been for ages the favorites of Nature's Judges—the Common People, was to the Editor a sufficient test of their merit."

"EDIN., *March 1, 1788.*"

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR RICHARD BROWN, GREENOCK.

(WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

EDIN., *15th Feb. 1788.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I received yours with the greatest pleasure. I shall arrive at Glasgow on Monday evening; and beg, if possible, you will meet me on Tuesday. I shall wait on you Tuesday all day. I shall be found at Durie's Black Bull Inn. I am hurried as if hunted by fifty devils, else I should go to Greenock; but if you cannot possibly come, write me, if possible, to Glasgow on Monday; or direct to me at Mossgiel by Mauchline; and name a day

and place in Ayrshire, within a fortnight from this date, where I may meet you. I only stay a fortnight in Ayrshire, and return to Edinburgh.—I am ever, my dearest friend, yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

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(<sup>8</sup>) TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

EDIN., Sunday, [Feb. 17, 1788.]

TO-MORROW, my dear Madam, I leave Edinburgh. I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in, I could not find; and indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of the family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken: I have entered into the Excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plait à Dieu—et mon roi*. I have chosen this, my dear Friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of Fortune's palace shall we enter in, but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get anything to do. I wanted *un bât*, which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread; and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life; besides, the Commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends.

R. B.

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## (1) TO MRS ROSE, OF KILRAVOCK.\*

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

EDINBURGH, 17th February 1788.

MADAM,—You are much indebted to some indispensable business I have had on my hands, otherwise, my gratitude threatened such a return for your obliging favour as would have tired your patience † It but poorly expresses my feelings to say, that I am sensible of your kindness ; it may be said of hearts such as yours is, and such, I hope, mine is, much more justly than Addison applies it,—

“Some souls by instinct to each other turn.”

There was something in my reception at Kilravock so different from the cold, obsequious, dancing-school bow of politeness, that it almost got into my head that friendship had occupied her ground without the intermediate march of acquaintance. I wish I could transcribe, or rather transfuse into language, the glow of my heart when I read your letter. My ready fancy, with colours more mellow than life itself, painted the beautifully wild scenery of Kilravock—the venerable grandeur of the castle—the spreading woods—the winding river, gladly leaving his

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\* Mrs Rose, a most accomplished amiable woman, was the representative of a very ancient Inverness family ; with which, by his mother's side, Henry Mackenzie, author of “The Man of Feeling,” was connected. The “dear little angel” referred to was Hugh, who lived to be twentieth laird of Kilravock ; “my venerable friend,” Mrs Rose's mother ; and the “two fair spirits of the hill,” Miss Ross and a Miss Brodie.—See page 277, *supra*.

† Dr. Currie printed a letter addressed to Burns by this lady (Mrs Rose, jun.), dated 30th Nov. 1787. The poet's allusions throughout the text are a reply to that letter. She had enclosed some Gaelic airs with the native words which were supplied by “one of the fair spirits of the hill of Kildrummie.” These, although in Gaelic, are not inscribed in a language “unknown” to you. “The language of love is a universal one, which seems to have escaped the confusion of Babel, and to be understood by all nations.”

unsightly, heathy source, and lingering with apparent delight as he passes the fairy walk at the bottom of the garden ;—your late distressful anxieties—your present enjoyments—your dear little angel, the pride of your hopes ;—my aged friend, venerable in worth and years, whose loyalty and other virtues will strongly entitle her to the support of the Almighty Spirit here, and His peculiar favour in a happier state of existence. You cannot imagine, Madam, how much such feelings delight me : they are my dearest proofs of my own immortality. Should I never revisit the north, as probably I never will, nor again see your hospitable mansion, were I, some twenty years hence, to see your little fellow's name making a proper figure in a newspaper paragraph, my heart would bound with pleasure.

I am assisting a friend in a collection of Scottish songs, set to their proper tunes ; every air worth preserving is to be included : among others I have given “Morag,” and some few Highland airs which pleased me most, a dress which will be more generally known, though far, far inferior in real merit. As a small mark of my grateful esteem, I beg leave to present you with a copy of the work so far as it is printed : the “Man of Feeling,” that first of men, has promised to transmit it by the first opportunity.

I beg to be remembered most respectfully to my venerable friend, and to your little Highland chieftain. When you see the “two fair spirits of the hill,” at Kildrummie, tell them that I have done myself the honor of setting myself down as one of their admirers for at least twenty years to come, consequently they must look upon me as an acquaintance for the same period ; but as the Apostle Paul says, “this I ask of grace, not of debt.”—I have the honor to be, Madam, &c.,

ROB<sup>r</sup>. BURNS.

Burns was at length enabled to leave Edinburgh, at this time, on Monday 18th February. At Glasgow he met Mr Richard Brown, and also William Burns, his youngest brother. In Paisley he spent a day with Mr Pattison, his correspondent of the preceding May, from which town he proceeded to Dunlop House, where he remained nearly two days. He then took Kilmarnock by the way, tarrying with Mr Robert Muir and other friends there over Friday, and reached Mossiel on Saturday the 23rd.

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(<sup>3</sup>) TO MR RICHARD BROWN, GREENOCK.

(WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

MOSSGIEL, *24th February* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,—I cannot get the proper direction for my friend in Jamaica, but the following will do :—To Mr Jo. Hutchinson, at Jo. Brownrigg's, Esq., care of Mr Benjamin Henriquez, merchant, Orange Street, Kingston. I arrived here, at my brother's, only yesterday, after fighting my way through Paisley and Kilmarnock, against those old powerful foes of mine, the devil, the world, and the flesh—so terrible in the fields of dissipation. I have met with few incidents in my life which gave me so much pleasure as meeting you in Glasgow. There is a time of life beyond which we cannot form a tie worth the name of friendship. "O youth! enchanting stage, profusely blest."\* Life is a fairy scene; almost all that deserves the name of enjoyment or pleasure is only a charming delusion; and in comes repining age in all the gravity of hoary wisdom, and wretchedly chases away the bewitching phantom. When I think of life, I resolve to keep a strict look-out in the course of economy, for the sake of worldly convenience and independence of mind: to cultivate intimacy with a few of

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\* This was, to the last, a favourite quotation of Clarinda.

the companions of youth, that they may be the friends of age; never to refuse my liquorish humour a handful of the sweetmeats of life, when they come not too dear; and, for Futurity—

“The present moment is our ain,  
The niest we never saw!”

How like you my philosophy? Give my best compliments to Mrs B., and believe me to be,—My dear Sir,  
yours most truly,  
ROBT. BURNS.

On Monday, 25th February, the poet, in company with Mr John Tennant of Glenconner, “his own and his father’s friend,” proceeded to Dumfries to inspect Mr Miller’s farms in the neighbourhood of Dalswinton; and under his advice, he selected Ellisland. At Cumnock in his homeward route he wrote to Clarinda on Sunday, 2nd March, assuring her that he would be in Edinburgh on the following week.

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(<sup>2</sup>) TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MAUCHLINE, 3rd March 1788.

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

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

I should return my thanks for your —— hospitality (I leave a blank for the epithet, as I know none can do it justice) to a poor, wayfaring bard, who was spent and almost



overpowered fighting with prosaic wickedness in high places ; but I am afraid lest you should burn the letter whenever you come to the passage, so I pass over it in silence. I am just returned from visiting Mr Miller's farm. The friend whom I told you I would take with me was highly pleased with the farm ; and as he is, without exception, the most intelligent farmer in the country, he has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans of life before me ; I shall balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. I have written Mr Miller, and shall wait on him when I come to town, which shall be the beginning or middle of next week ; I would be in sooner, but my unlucky knee is rather worse, and I fear for some time will scarcely stand the fatigue of my Excise instructions. I only mention these ideas to you ; and, indeed, except Mr Ainslie, whom I intend writing to to-morrow, I will not write at all to Edinburgh till I return to it. I would send my compliments to Mr Nicol, but he would be hurt if he knew I wrote to anybody and not to him : so I shall only beg my best, kindest, kindest compliments to my worthy hostess and the sweet little Rose-bud.\*

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

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

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

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\* This is a reference to the song—"A rosebud, by my early walk," of which his correspondent's youthful daughter was the heroine. It had been just published in the *Museum*.

(<sup>5</sup>) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE,

AT MR SAM<sup>L</sup>. MITCHELSON'S, W.S., CARRUBBER'S CLOSE,  
EDINBURGH.

(*Partially published by CUNNINGHAM, 1834.*)

MAUCHLINE, 3rd March 1788.

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

I have been through sore tribulation, and under much buffeting of the Wicked One, since I came to this country. JEAN I found banished, like a martyr—forlorn, destitute, and friendless; all for the good old cause: I have reconciled her to her fate: I have reconciled her to her mother: I have taken her a room: I have taken her to my arms: I have given her a mahogany bed: I have given her a guinea; and I have embraced her till she rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But—as I always am on every occasion—I have been prudent and cautious to an astounding degree; I swore her, privately and solemnly, never to attempt any claim on me as a husband, even though any body should persuade her she had such a claim, which she had not, neither during my life, nor after my death. She did all this like a good girl, and . . . . . O! what a peace-maker is &c., &c. . . . .

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

ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

The above letter may cause some surprise to the reader who has hitherto seen no more of it than Cunningham ventured to publish. Mr Ainslie, to whom it is addressed, lived a few years after placing it in that biographer's hands to be used as discretion might dictate. Ainslie, as we have already seen, became a very pious man after sowing his wild oats : and it is almost a pity he did not evince the sincerity of his new professions by destroying this letter after transcribing its innocent paragraphs. Unfortunately however, the holograph was allowed to get into the market, suffered to be privately printed and widely circulated, and it would be weak affectation now-a-days for any editor of Burns to ignore its existence. Chambers did not scruple to publish that portion of it which is most damaging to the poet's reputation, giving countenance to the idea that he never really respected Mrs Burns, whom he has in more than one of his letters charged with "vulgarity of soul, and mercenary fawning." "I feel, for my part," says Chambers, "that this is one of the points of the poet's story in which he appears to the least advantage, and I cannot but rejoice on his account that he finally, and in no long time, adopted better views regarding Jean."

Before leaving Edinburgh on 18th Feb., the poet had communicated to Clarinda the fact that his Ayrshire mistress was again about to publish proofs of her fatal intimacy with him. He had to confess to that object of his temporary worship that in the previous June, on his eclatant return from the city, "he

flew," as John Wilson waggishly expresses it, "somewhat too fervently to

'Love's willing fetters, the *arms* of his Jean.'"

On learning the fact that in mid-winter the poor girl had been ejected from her father's house, when her second transgression in that forbidden direction became manifest, Burns procured a temporary shelter for her under the roof of his kind friend Wm. Muir, the miller at Tarbolton. He had now (February 1788) established Jean in a lodging in Mauchline, and succeeded in obtaining the benefit of her mother's attendance in her delicate condition. His first care on reaching Mauchline on the morning of Saturday, 23rd Feb., was to visit the poor sufferer in that secret place of retirement; and his first leisure moments after arriving at Mossgiel were devoted to writing a letter to Clarinda describing his impressions resulting from the interview. That letter (which Chambers tells his readers "has not been preserved") we shall give in its proper connexion in "The Clarinda Episode." Jean's confinement occurred about 13th March, a few days after the poet's return to Edinburgh, to execute his lease of Ellisland, and to obtain an order for his Excise instructions. The result was a safe delivery of twin girls, who lived only a few days. The birth is not recorded in the parish books: but an entry in the poet's family register records the fact under a date, "3rd March," which this and the following letter prove to be an impossible one. Chambers does not conceal his surprise that "even under the temptation of a fondness which had risen to extravagant altitudes, two persons so generous and upright in all the relations of life as Burns and Mrs M'Lehose, should have been able to reconcile themselves to the sacrifice of this poor village girl."

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(4) TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

(WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

MAUCHLINE, 7th March 1788.

I HAVE been out of the country, my dear Friend, and have not had an opportunity of writing till now, when I am afraid you will be gone out of the country too. I have

been looking at farms, and, after all, perhaps I may settle in the character of a farmer. I have got so vicious a bent to idleness, and have ever been so little a man of business, that it will take no ordinary effort to bring my mind properly into the routine : but you will say a “great effort is worthy of you.” I say so myself, and butter up my vanity with all the stimulating compliments I can think of. Men of grave, geometrical minds, the sons of “which was to be demonstrated,” may cry up reason as much as they please ; but I have always found an honest passion, or native instinct, the truest auxiliary in the warfare of this world. Reason almost always comes to me like an unlucky wife to a poor devil of a husband—just in sufficient time to add her reproaches to his other grievances.

I found Jean with her cargo very well laid in, but unfortunately moored almost at the mercy of wind and tide. I have towed her into a convenient harbour, where she may lie snug till she unload, and have taken the command myself, not ostensibly, but for a time in secret. I am gratified with your kind inquiries after her ; as, after all, I may say with Othello—

“ “————— Excellent wretch,

Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee !’

I go for Edinburgh on Monday.—Yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

### (<sup>9</sup>) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MOSSGIEL, 7th March, 1788.

MADAM,—The last paragraph in yours of the 30th February affected me most,\* so I shall begin my answer where you

\* Mrs Dunlop had addressed a letter to Burns at that date intimating that she had been informed the latter had ridiculed her.—*Currie*.

ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with any 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 choose 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 honour, as Dr Beattie says to Ross the poet, of his muse Scota, from which, by the bye, I took the idea of Coila : 'Tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scots dialect, which perhaps you have never seen.

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

R. B.

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(C) TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

(STEWART, 1801.)

MOSSGIEL, 7th March 1788.

I HAVE partly changed my ideas, my dear friend, since I saw you. I took old Glenconner with me to Mr Miller's

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\* A lady (daughter of Mrs Dunlop) was making a picture from the description of Coila in the Vision. —*Currie*.



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

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

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broke machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so; at least there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants: if that part of us called Mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with the old-wife prejudices and tales! Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence, they have often, perhaps always, been deceived: a man conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow-creatures—even granting that he may have been the sport

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\* April 22, 1788.—Died at Kilmarnock, Mr Robert Muir of Loanfoot.—*Scots Mag.* See footnote, p. 110, *supra*.

at times of passions and instincts—he goes to a great unknown Being, who could have no other end in giving him existence but to make him happy ; who gave him those passions and instincts, and well knows their force.

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

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

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

ROB<sup>r</sup>. BURNS.

(<sup>4</sup>) TO MR WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH (?)\*

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MAUCHLINE, 7th March 1788.

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

I have been looking over several farms in this country ;

\* The address on back of this letter has been torn off, and there is some doubt as to the individual correspondent to whom it was written. Cunningham assigned it to Robert Ainslie ; but on 3d of same month, as we have seen, Burns addressed a letter to that gentleman, communicating much the same information as is here conveyed. The recipient may have been either Nicol, Dunbar, Cleghorn, or Alexander Cunningham. See letter to Cruikshank, 3d March 1788.

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

I set out for Edin<sup>r</sup>., on Monday morning; how long I stay there is uncertain, but you will know so soon as I can inform you myself. However, I determine poesy must be laid aside for some time; my mind has been vitiated by idleness, and it will take a good deal of effort to habituate it to the routine of business.—I am ever, my Dear Sir,  
Yours sincerely, ROB<sup>t</sup>. BURNS.

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The poet seems to have left Ayrshire on 10th March, according to the intention expressed above. It is not known if he tarried by the way in the neighbourhood of Biggar; but it is certain that he signed the lease of Ellisland on 13th March, and forthwith set about the completion of his arrangements for entering on Excise work. Besides settling accounts with Mr Creech, a good deal of intercourse and correspondence with Clarinda occupied the remaining portion of his ten days' stay in the city on that occasion.

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(<sup>v</sup>) MISS MARGARET CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

(CROMEK 1808.)

EDINBURGH, 14th March 1788.

I KNOW, my ever dear friend, that you will be pleased with the news when I tell you, I have at last taken a lease of a farm. Yesternight I completed a bargain with Mr Miller, of Dalswinton, for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles above Dumfries. I begin at Whitsunday to build a house, drive lime, &c., and heaven be my help! for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business. I have discharged

all the army of my former pursuits, fancies and pleasures ; a motley host ! and have literally and strictly retained only the ideas of a few friends, which I have incorporated into a life-guard. I trust in Dr Johnson's observation, " Where much is attempted, something is done." Firmness both in sufferance and exertion, is a character I would wish to be thought to possess ; and have always despised the whining yelp of complaint, and the cowardly, feebly resolve. . . .

Poor Miss K.\* is ailing a good deal this winter, and begged me to remember her to you the first time I wrote to you. Surely woman, amiable woman, is often made in vain ! Too delicately formed for the rougher pursuits of ambition ; too noble for the dirt of avarice, and even too gentle for the rage of pleasure : formed indeed for and highly susceptible of enjoyment and rapture ; but that enjoyment, alas ! almost wholly at the mercy of the caprice, malevolence, stupidity, or wickedness of an animal at all times comparatively unfeeling, and often brutal. R. B.

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After a farewell interview with Clarinda on the night of Saturday 22nd March, which may be regarded as the close of that eccentric interlude in the drama of his life, Burns left Edinburgh on Monday 24th March, proceeding to Dumfriesshire by way of Glasgow, where he tarried two days, waiting (as we suppose) the arrival of his mare, Jenny Geddes. The object of his journey was to complete some arrangements concerning his future farm ; and so rapid were his movements, that he was back to Mauchline within a week from the day he left Edinburgh. His new landlord, Mr Patrick Miller (brother of the Lord Justice Clerk) had purchased the estate of Dalswinton in 1785. Besides the grounds in connexion with the mansion house, it embraced several small farms ; three of which were respectively named

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\* Miss Kennedy was a sister of Mrs Gavin Hamilton, and survived Burns nearly forty years. She was considerably upwards of ninety when she died.

Bankhead, Foregirth, and Ellisland. Burns had his choice of these; but, as we have seen, he was advised to take Ellisland, on the opposite side of the Nith from Dalswinton. Allan Cunningham has recorded his opinion, that if the poet had selected Foregirth, the speculation might have proved a profitable one; as the tenant who afterwards possessed it became wealthy by his farming of it. Mr Miller himself, however, gave no very flattering account of the soil which composed his estate. In a letter, dated 24th Sep. 1810, which was published in a "General View of the Agriculture of Dumfriesshire," he thus wrote:—"When I purchased the estate, I had not seen it; and when I went to view my purchase, I found it in the most miserable state of exhaustion, and all the tenants in poverty. I was so much disgusted for eight or ten days, that I then never meant to return to that county."

The poet's lease of Ellisland extended to seventy-six years, at an annual rent of £50 for the first three years, and £70 per annum during the remainder; at same time a sum of £300 was stipulated to be granted by the landlord to build a new farmstead, and to enclose the fields. Four harvests, however, were all that Burns was fated to reap from that soil. From the beginning he had his misgivings—"I daresay Mr Miller means to favour me; yet it may turn out an advantageous bargain that may ruin me." And even when by old Glenconner's advice he selected Ellisland, he informed Ainslie that "the advice had staggered him a good deal." It was this feeling of insecurity which made him cling so eagerly to the notion of being an exciseman.

The letter of instruction by the Board of Excise to the officer who trained Burns for his forthcoming duties was dated 31st March 1788, and the poet steadily engaged in his course of drill at Tarbolton or its neighbourhood, so as to enable him to remove to Ellisland early in June.

The ground being thus cleared for perusing the correspondence betwixt "Sylvander and Clarinda" without interruption, we shall open the next volume by retracing our steps, to afford the reader an undisturbed view of the "Clarinda Episode."

## APPENDIX.

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### ARTICLE A.—Page 23.

#### A MANUAL OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF, IN FORM OF A DIALOGUE BETWEEN FATHER AND SON.

*Compiled by Wm. Burness, farmer at Mount Oliphant, Ayrshire, and transcribed, with grammatical corrections, by John Murdoch, Teacher.*

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*Son.* Dear Father, you have often told me, while you were initiating me into the Christian Religion, that you stood bound for me, to give me a Christian education, and recommended a religious life to me. I would therefore, if you please, ask you a few questions that may tend to confirm my faith, and clear its evidences to me.

*Father.* My Dear Child, with gladness I will resolve to you (so far as I am able), any question you shall ask, only with this caution, that you will believe my answers, if they are founded in the Word of God.

*Question.* How shall I evidence to myself that there is a God?

*Answer.* By the works of creation: for nothing can make itself; and this fabric of Nature demonstrates its Creator to be possessed of all possible perfection, and for that cause we owe all that we have to Him.

*Question.* If God be possessed of all possible perfection, ought not we then to love Him as well as fear Him?

*Answer.* Yes; we ought to serve Him out of love, for His perfections give us delightful prospects of His favour and friendship, for if we serve Him out of love, we will endeavour to be like Him, and God will love His own image, and if God love us, He will rejoice over us and do us good.

*Question.* Then one would think this were sufficient to determine all men to love God; but how shall we account for so much wickedness in the world?



*Answer.* God's Revealed Word teaches us that our first parents brake His Covenant, and deprived us of the influences of His Grace that were to be expected in that state, and introduced Sin into the world; and the Devil, that great enemy of God and man, laying hold on this instrument, his kingdom has made great progress in the world.

*Question.* But has God left His own rational offspring thus, to the tyranny of His and their enemy?

*Answer.* No: for God hath addressed His rational creatures, by telling them in His Revealed Word, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the Serpent, or Devil, or in time destroy his kingdom; and in the meantime, every one oppressed with the tyranny of the Devil, should, through the promised seed, by faith in Him, and humble supplication, and a strenuous use of their own faculties, receive such measures of Grace, in and through this method of God's conveyance, as should make them able to overcome.

*Question.* But by what shall I know that this is a revelation of God, and not a cunningly devised fable?

*Answer.* A revelation of God must have these four marks. 1. It must be worthy of God to reveal; 2. It must answer all the necessities of human nature; 3. It must be sufficiently attested by miracles; and 4. It is known by prophecies and their fulfilment. That it is worthy of God is plain, by its addressing itself to the reason of men, and plainly laying before them the dangers to which they are liable, with motives and arguments to persuade them to their duty, and promising such rewards as are fitted to promote the happiness of a rational soul. Secondly, it provides for the guilt of human nature, making an atonement by a Mediator; and for its weakness by promising the assistance of God's Spirit; and for its happiness, by promising a composure of mind, by the regulation of its faculties, and reducing the appetites and passions of the body unto the subjection of reason enlightened by the Word of God, and by a resurrection of the body, and a glorification of both soul and body in heaven, and that to last through all eternity. Thirdly, as a miracle is a contradiction of known laws of Nature, demonstrating that the worker has the power of Nature in his hands, and consequently must be God, or sent by His commission and authority from Him, to do such and such things. That this

is the case in our Scriptures is evident both by the prophets, under the Old, and our Saviour under the New Testament. Whenever it served for the glory of God, or for the confirmation of their commissions, all Nature was obedient to them; the elements were at their command, also the sun and moon, yea, Life and Death. Fourthly, that prophecies were fulfilled at the distance of many hundreds of years is evident by comparing the following texts of Scripture:—Gen. xlix. 10, 11; Matt. xxi. 5; Isa. vii. 14; Matt. i. 22, 23; Luke i. 34; Isa. xl. 1; Matt. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4; John i. 23; Isa. xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4. A description of the character of Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures is fulfilled in all the Evangelists. In Isa. l. 5, His sufferings are prophesied, and exactly fulfilled in the New Testament, Matt. xxvi. 67, and xxvii. 26; and many others, as that Abraham's seed should be strangers in a strange land, four hundred years, and being brought to Canaan, and its accomplishment in the days of Joseph, Moses, and Joshua.

*Question.* Seeing the Scriptures are proven to be a revelation of God to His creatures, am not I indispensably bound to believe and obey them?

*Answer.* Yes.

*Question.* Am I equally bound to obey all the laws delivered to Moses upon Mount Sinai?

*Answer.* No: the laws delivered to Moses are of three kinds: first, the Moral Law, which is of eternal and indispensable obligation on all ages and nations; Secondly, the law of Sacrifices and ordinances were only Ordinances in which were couched types and shadows of things to come, and when that dispensation was at an end, this law ended with them, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; Thirdly, laws that respected the Jewish commonwealth can neither be binding on us, who are not of that commonwealth, nor on the Jews, because their commonwealth is at an end.

*Question.* If the Moral Law be of indispensable obligation, I become bound to perfect and perpetual obedience, of which I am incapable, and on that account cannot hope to be justified and accepted with God.

*Answer.* The Moral Law as a rule of life, must be of indispensable obligation, but it is the glory of the Christian religion, that

if we be upright in our endeavours to follow it and sincere in our repentance, upon our failing or shortening, we shall be accepted according to what we have, and shall increase in our strength, by the assistance of the Spirit of God co-operating with our honest endeavours.

*Question.* Seeing the assistance of the Spirit of God is absolutely necessary for salvation, hath not God clearly revealed by what means we may obtain this great blessing?

*Answer.* Yes : the Scriptures tell us that the Spirit of God is the purchase of Christ's mediatorial office ; and through faith in Him, and our humble prayers to God through Christ, we shall receive such measures thereof as shall answer our wants.

*Question.* What do you understand by Faith?

*Answer.* Faith is a firm persuasion of the Divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, and complete redemption ; or as He is represented to us under the notion of a root, and we the branches, deriving all from Him ; or as the head, and we the members of His body ; intimating to us that this is the way or channel through which God conveys His blessings to us, and we are not to expect them but in God's own way. It is therefore a matter of consequence to us, and therefore we ought with diligence to search the Scriptures, and the extent of His commission, or what they declare Him to be, and to receive Him accordingly, and to acquiesce in God's plan of our salvation.

*Question.* By what shall I know that Jesus Christ is really the person that was prophesied of in the Old Testament ; or that He was that seed of the woman that was to destroy the kingdom of Sin ?

*Answer.* Besides the Scriptures fore-cited, which fully prove Him to be that blessed person, Christ did many miracles : He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, raised the dead, and fed thousands with a few loaves, &c. He foretold His own death and resurrection, and the wonderful progress of His religion, in spite of all the power of the Roman Empire—and that, by means of His disciples, a few poor illiterate fishermen.

*Question.* You speak of repentance as absolutely necessary to salvation—I would like to know what you mean by repentance?

*Answer.* I not only mean a sorrowing for sin, but a labouring

to see the malignant nature of it ; as setting nature at variance with herself, by placing the animal part before the rational, and thereby putting ourselves on a level with the brute beasts, the consequence of which will be an intestine war in the human frame, until the rational part be entirely weakened, which is Spiritual Death, and which in the nature of the thing renders us unfit for the society of God's spiritual kingdom, and to see the beauty of holiness. On the contrary, setting the rational part above the animal, though it promote a war in the human frame, every conflict and victory affords us grateful reflection, and tends to compose the mind more and more, not to the utter destruction of the animal part, but to the real and true enjoyment of both, by placing Nature in the order that its Creator designed it, which, in the natural consequences of the thing, promotes Spiritual Life, and renders us more and more fit for Christ's spiritual kingdom ; and not only so, but gives to animal life pleasure and joy that we never could have had without it.

*Question.* I should be glad to hear you at large upon religion, giving pleasure to animal life ; for it is represented as taking up our cross and following " Christ."

*Answer.* Our Lord honestly told His disciples of their danger, and what they were to expect by being His followers, that the world would hate them, and for this reason, because they were not of the world, even as He also was not of the world ; but He gives them sufficient comfort, showing that He had overcome the world : as if He had said, " you must arm yourself with a resolution to fight, for if you be resolved to be My disciples, you expose the world, by setting their folly in its true light, and therefore every one who is not brought over by your example, will hate and oppose you as it hath Me ; but as it hath had no advantage against Me, and I have overcome it, if you continue the conflict, you, by My strength, shall overcome likewise ;" so that this declaration of our Lord cannot damp the pleasures of life when rightly considered, but rather enlarges them. The same revelation tells us, that a religious life hath the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come ; and not only by the well regulated mind described in my last answer, as tending to give pleasure and quiet, but by a firm trust in the providence of God, and by the help of an honest calling industriously pursued, we shall receive

such a portion of the comfortable things of this life as shall be fittest for promoting our eternal interest, and that under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness; and that we shall overcome all our difficulties by being under the protection of infinite power. These considerations cannot fail to give a relish to all the pleasures of life. Besides the very nature of the thing giving pleasure to a mind so regular as I have already described, it must exalt the mind above those irregular passions that jar and are contrary one to another, and distract the mind by contrary pursuits, which is described by the Apostle with more strength in his Epistle to the Romans (Chap. i., from 26 to the end) than any words I am capable of framing; especially if we take our Lord's explanation of the parable of the tares in the field as an improvement of these doctrines, as it is in Matt. xiii., from the 37 to 44 verse; and Rev. xx., from verse 11 to the end. If these Scriptures, seriously considered, can suffer any man to be easy, judge ye, and they will remain truth, whether believed or not. Whereas, on a mind regular, and having the animal part under subjection to the rational, in the very nature of the thing gives uniformity of pursuits. The desires, rectified by the Word of God, must give clearness of judgment, soundness of mind, regular affections, whence will flow peace of conscience, good hope, through grace, that all our interests are under the care of our Heavenly Father. This gives a relish to animal life itself, this joy that no man intermeddleth with, and which is peculiar to a Christian or holy life; and its comforts and blessings the whole Scripture is a comment upon, especially our Lord's sermon upon the Mount, Matt. v., 1—13, and its progress in the parable of the Sower in the thirteenth of Matthew.

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ARTICLE B.—Page 26.

JOHN MURDOCH'S NARRATIVE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF

WILLIAM BURNES.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

William Burnes, the father of the Poet, was born in the shire of Kincardine, and bred a gardener. He had settled in Ayrshire ten or twelve years before I knew him, and had been in the



service of Mr Crawford of Doonside. He was afterwards employed as a gardener and overseer, by Provost Fergusson of Doonholm, in the parish of Alloway, which is now united with that of Ayr. In this parish, on the road-side, a Scots mile and a half from the town of Ayr, and half a mile from the bridge of Doon, William Burnes took a piece of land, consisting of about seven acres, part of which he laid out in garden ground, and part of which he kept to graze a cow, &c., still continuing in the employ of Provost Fergusson. Upon the little farm was erected a humble dwelling, of which William Burnes was the architect. It was, with the exception of a little straw, literally a tabernacle of clay. In this mean cottage, of which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe there dwelt a larger portion of content than in any palace of Europe. The "Cottar's Saturday Night" will give some idea of the temper and manners that prevailed there.

In 1765, about the middle of March, Mr W. Burnes came to Ayr, and sent to the school, where I was improving in writing under my good friend Mr Robinson, desiring that I would come and speak to him at a certain Inn, and bring my writing-book with me. This was immediately complied with. Having examined my writing, he was pleased with it (you will allow he was not difficult); and told me that he had received very satisfactory information from Mr Tennant, the Master of the English School, concerning my improvement in English, and in his method of teaching.\* In the month of May following, I was engaged by Mr Burnes, and four of his neighbours, to teach, and accordingly began to teach the little school at Alloway, which was situated a few yards from the argillaceous fabric above-mentioned. My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum.

My pupil, Robert Burns, was then between six and seven years of age; his preceptor about eighteen. Robert and his younger brother, Gilbert, had been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading; and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing

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\* This was Mr David Tennant, a brother of Mr John Tennant, latterly of Glenconner, referred to at page 20 of this Vol.



words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentencees etc., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were, the *Spelling Book*, the *New Testament*, the *Bible*, *Mason's Collection of Prose and Verse*, and *Fisher's English Grammar*. They committed to memory the hymns, and other poems of that collection, with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence, that was to be committed to memory. By the bye, this may be easier done, and at an earlier period, than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.

Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said "Mirth with thee I mean to live," and certainly, if any person who knew the boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the Muses, he would surely have never guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.

In the year 1767, Mr Burnes quitted his mud edifice, and took possession of a farm (Mount Oliphant) of his own improving, while in the service of Provost Fergusson. This farm being at a considerable distance from the school, the boys could not attend regularly; and some changes taking place among the other supporters of the school, I left it, having continued to conduct it for nearly two years and a half.

In the year 1772, I was appointed (being one of five

candidates who were examined) to teach the English School at Ayr; and in 1773, Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising English grammar, etc., that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week I told him that as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, etc., I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation, that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage. Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, etc. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects as they presented themselves in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business, and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the "Adventures of Telemachus," in Fénelon's own words.

But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and, armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalising himself in the fields of Ceres—and so he did; for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and consequently, agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English, and the other two chiefly in that of French. I did not, however, lose sight of him; but was a frequent visitant at his father's house when I had my half holiday, and very often went accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself, that good William Burnes might enjoy a mental feast. Then the labouring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation, wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and a moderate seasoning of jocularity, were so nicely blended, as

to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about the French, etc., and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs Burnes too was of the party as much as possible :—

“ But still the house affairs would draw her thence,  
Which, even as she could with haste dispatch,  
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear  
Devour up their discourse,”

and particularly that of her husband. At all times, and in all companies, she listened to him with a more marked attention than to any body else. When under the necessity of being about while he was speaking, she seemed to regret as a real loss, that she had missed what the good man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him; for I myself have always considered William Burnes as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with—and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph—borrowed from Goldsmith :—

“ And ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.”

He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner; and from her affectionate behaviour to him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue; not in driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but seldom; and therefore when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a strip of the *tawz*, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heart-felt pain, produced a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

He had the art of gaining the esteem and good-will of those that were labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry

but twice; the one time, it was with the foreman of the band, for not reaping the field as he desired; and the other time, it was with an old man for using smutty innuendoes and *double entendres*. Were every foul-mouthed old man to receive a seasonable check in this way, it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that passive, pitiful, paltry spirit, that induces some people to keep "booing and booing" in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with a becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arrogance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burnes. Time would fail me. I shall only add that he carefully practised every known duty, and avoided every thing that was criminal, or, in the apostle's words—"Herein did he exercise himself in living a life void of offence towards God, and towards man." O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions:—then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive from these few particulars, what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety (both with respect to diction and pronunciation) than any man I ever knew, with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men much sooner than their neighbours. I do not recollect any of their cotemporaries at my little seminary, who afterwards made any great figure or literary character, except Dr Tennant, who was Chaplain to Colonel Fullerton's Regiment, and who is now in the East Indies.\*

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\* This was Wm. Tennant, nephew of the David Tennant, predecessor of Murdoch as Rector of the Ayr Academy. He was a son of John Tennant (latterly of Glenconner) witness at the poet's baptism, and is mentioned in Burnes's epistle to his half-brother *James Tennant*, as "Preacher Willie," referring to his Chaplaincy in the army. The degree of LL.D. was

He was a man of genius and learning ; yet affable and free from pedantry.

Mr Burnes in a short time found that he had over-rated Mount Oliphant, and that he could not rear his numerous family upon it. After being there several years, he removed to Lochlie, in the parish of Tarbolton, where I believe Robert wrote many of his poems.

But here, Sir, you will permit me to pause. I can tell you but little more relative to the poet. I shall, however, in my next, send you a copy of one of his letters to me, about the year 1783. I received one since, but it is mislaid.\*

JOHN MURDOCH.

HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY SQUARE, LONDON.

*Feb., 22, 1799.*

#### ARTICLE C.—Page 26.

##### NARRATIVE BY GILBERT BURNS OF HIS BROTHER'S LIFE.

I have often heard my father describe the anguish of mind he felt when he parted with his elder brother Robert on the top of a hill, on the confines of their native place, each going off his several way in search of new adventures, and scarcely knowing whither he went.† My Father undertook to act as a gardener and shaped his course to Edinburgh, where he wrought hard when he could get work, passing through a variety of difficulties. Still, however, he endeavoured to spare something for the support of an aged parent, and I recollect hearing him mention his having sent a bank-note for this purpose, when money of that kind was so scarce in Kincardineshire, that they hardly knew how to employ it when it arrived.

Passing from Edinburgh into Ayrshire, he lived for two years

conferred on him ; he produced several works of reputation, and among these, “Hindoo Recreations,” and a “History of Hindostan.” Another brother of his was “Wabster Charlie” of the *Epistle*, who founded the extensive works at St Rollox, Glasgow. See footnote, p. 20.

\* Both of the letters referred to appear in the Correspondence of the poet. The above memoir was addressed J. C. Walker, Esq., of Dublin, a friend of Dr Currie, who introduced it as part of his Biography of Burns.

† See footnote, page 3.



as gardener to the laird of Fairly in Dundonald parish, and then changed his service for that of Mr Crawford of Doonside in the parish of Alloway. At length, being desirous to settle in life, he took a perpetual lease of some acres of land from Dr Campbell, physician in Ayr, with a view to cultivate it as a nursery and meal-garden. With his own hands he built a house on part of this ground, and in December 1757, married Agnes Brown, belonging to respectable connexions near Maybole in Carrick. The first fruit of the marriage was the subject of this memoir, born on 25th January 1759. The education of my brother and myself was in common, there being only twenty months between us, in respect of age. Under Mr John Murdoch we learned to read English tolerably well, and to write a little. He taught us too the English grammar. I was too young to profit much from his lessons in grammar, but Robert made some proficiency in it, a circumstance of considerable weight in the unfolding of his genius and character; as he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader when he could get a book. Murdoch, whose library at that time had no great variety in it, lent him "The Life of Hannibal," which was the first book he read (the school books excepted) and almost the only one he had an opportunity of reading while he was at school; for the "Life of Wallace" which he classes with it in one of his letters, he did not see for some years afterwards, when he borrowed it from the blacksmith who shod our horses.

At Whitsunday 1766 we removed to Mount Oliphant, a farm of seventy acres (between 80 and 90 English statute measure) the rent of which was to be forty pounds annually for the first six years, and afterwards forty-five pounds. My Father endeavoured to sell the leasehold property in Alloway, for the purpose of stocking his farm, but at that time he was unable, and Mr Fergusson lent him a hundred pounds for that purpose. It was I think not above two years after this that Murdoch, our tutor and friend, left this part of the country, and there being no school near us, and our little services being useful on the farm, my Father undertook to teach us arithmetic in the winter evenings by candle-light, and in this way my two elder sisters got all the



education they received. I remember a circumstance that happened at this time, which, though trifling in itself, is fresh on my memory, and may serve to illustrate the early character of my brother. Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English Grammar, and the tragedy of "Titus Andronicus," and by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have but a confused recollection of it) had her hands chopt off, her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied that if it was left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness; but Murdoch interposed, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left the "School for love" a comedy (translated I think from the French) in its place.\*

Nothing could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw any body but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighbourhood. Indeed the greater part of the land in the vicinity was at that time possessed by shopkeepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm in the country at the same time that they followed business in the town. My father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us as if we had been men, and was at great pains, while we

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\* The scene to which Gilbert Burns alludes opens thus :

"Act II. Scene 5. Enter Demetrius and Chiron, with Lavinia ravished, her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out."

This silly play was attributed to Shakespeare, but his share in its authorship must have been very inconsiderable. There is nevertheless a sprinkling of eloquent passages in it; so it may be safest to assume that he revised it for the stage. It is given in the early quarto published during Shakespeare's lifetime in 1600.

accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm our virtuous habits. He borrowed Salmon's "Geographical Grammar" for us, and endeavoured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while, from a book-society in Ayr, he procured for us Durham's "Phisico and Astro-Theology," and Ray's "Wisdom of God in Creation," to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My Father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's "History of the Bible," then lately published by John Meuros in Kilmarnock: from this Robert collected a pretty competent knowledge of ancient history: for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches. A brother of my mother who had lived with us some time, and had learned some arithmetic by our winter evening's candle, went into a bookseller's shop in Ayr, to purchase "The Ready Reckoner, or Tradesman's sure Guide," and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in place of "The Complete Letter-Writer," he got by mistake a small collection of Letters by the most Eminent Writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. This book was to Robert of the greatest consequence. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language.

My brother was about thirteen or fourteen, when my father, regretting that we wrote so ill, sent us week about during a summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple, which, though between two and three miles distant, was the nearest to us, that we might have an opportunity of remedying this defect. About this time a bookish acquaintance of my father's procured us a reading of two volumes of Richardson's *Pamela*, which was the first novel we read, and the only part of Richardson's works my brother was acquainted with till towards the period of his commencing author. Till that time too he remained unacquainted with Fielding, with Smollett (two volumes of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and two volumes of *Peregrine Pickle* excepted), with Hume, with Robertson, and almost all our authors of eminence of the later times. I recollect indeed my father borrowed a volume

of English history from Mr Hamilton of Bourtree-hill's gardener. It treated of the reign of James the First, and his unfortunate son, Charles, but I do not know who was the author; all that I remember of it is something of Charles's conversation with his children. About this time (1772) Murdoch, our former teacher, after having been in different places in the country, and having taught a school some time in Dumfries, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr, a circumstance of considerable consequence to us. The remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do every thing in his power for our improvement. He sent us Pope's works, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in *The English Collection*, and in the volume of *The Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also *those excellent new songs* that are hawked about the country in baskets, or exposed on stalls in the streets.

The summer after we had been at Dalrymple school, my father sent Robert to Ayr, to revise his English grammar, with his former teacher. He had been there only one week, when he was obliged to return, to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over, he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter; some time afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirk-Oswald (where he lived with a brother of my mother's), to learn surveying.

During the two last weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French, and he communicated the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and, through the medium of Murdoch, procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at that time gabbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation.

Observing the facility with which he had acquired the French language, Mr Robinson, the established writing-master in Ayr,

and Mr Murdoch's particular friend, having himself acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin language by his own industry, without ever having learnt it at school, advised Robert to make the same attempt, promising him every assistance in his power. Agreeably to this advice, he purchased *The Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*, but finding this study dry and uninteresting, it was quickly laid aside. He frequently returned to his *Rudiments* on any little chagrin or disappointment, particularly in his love affairs; but the Latin seldom predominated more than a day or two at a time, or a week at most. Observing himself the ridicule that would attach to this sort of conduct if it were known, he made two or three humorous stanzas on the subject, which I cannot now recollect, but they all ended,

“So I'll to my Latin again.”

Thus you see Mr Murdoch was a principal means of my brother's improvement. Worthy man! though foreign to my present purpose, I cannot take leave of him without tracing his future history. He continued for some years a respected and useful teacher at Ayr, till one evening that he had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr he might as well have spoken blasphemy. He found it proper to give up his appointment. He went to London, where he still lives, a private teacher of French. He has been a considerable time married, and keeps a shop of stationery wares.

The father of Dr Paterson, now physician at Ayr, was, I believe, a native of Aberdeenshire, and was one of the established teachers in Ayr when my father settled in the neighbourhood. He early recognised my father as a fellow native of the north of Scotland, and a certain degree of intimacy subsisted between them during Mr Paterson's life. After his death, his widow, who is a very genteel woman, and of great worth, delighted in doing what she thought her husband would have wished to have done, and assiduously kept up her attentions to all his acquaintance. She kept alive the intimacy with our family, by frequently inviting my father and mother to her house on Sundays, when she met them at church.

When she came to know my brother's passion for books, she kindly offered us the use of her husband's library, and from her we got the *Spectator*, *Pope's Translation of Homer*, and several other books that were of use to us. Mount Oliphant, the farm my father possessed in the parish of Ayr, is almost the very poorest soil I know of in a state of cultivation. A stronger proof of this I cannot give, than that, notwithstanding the extraordinary rise in the value of lands in Scotland, it was, after a considerable sum laid out in improving it by the proprietor, let a few years ago five pounds per annum lower than the rent paid for it by my father thirty years ago. My father, in consequence of this, soon came into difficulties, which were increased by the loss of several of his cattle by accidents and disease. To the buffetings of misfortune, we could only oppose hard labour and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in threshing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years under these straits and difficulties was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty) broken down with the long continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances, these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life, was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits, with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed, in the night time.

By a stipulation in my father's lease, he had a right to throw it up, if he thought proper, at the end of every sixth year. He attempted to fix himself in a better farm at the end of the first six years, but failing in that attempt, he continued where he was for six years more. He then took the farm of Lochlea, of 130



acres, at the rent of twenty shillings an acre, in the parish of Tarbolton, of Mr —, then a merchant in Ayr, and now (1797) a merchant in Liverpool. He removed to this farm at Whitsunday 1777, and possessed it only seven years. No writing had ever been made out of the conditions of the lease; a misunderstanding took place respecting them; the subjects in dispute were submitted to arbitration, and the decision involved my father's affairs in ruin. He lived to know of this decision, but not to see any execution in consequence of it. He died on the 13th of February, 1784.

The seven years we lived in Tarbolton parish (extending from the nineteenth to the twenty-sixth of my brother's age) were not marked by much literary improvement; but, during this time, the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character, which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though when young he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he *fainted, sunk, and died away*: but the agitation of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great disparity between his fair captivator, and her attributes. One generally reigned paramount in his affections; but as Yorick's affections flowed out toward Madame de L—— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many under-plots in the drama of his love. As these connexions were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till he reached his twenty-third year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely



to be soon the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while. He began, therefore, to think of trying some other line of life. He and I had for several years taken land of my father for the purpose of raising flax on our own account. In the course of selling it, Robert began to think of turning flax-dresser, both as being suitable to his grand view of settling in life, and as subservient to the flax raising. He accordingly wrought at the business of a flax-dresser in Irvine for six months, but abandoned it at that period, as neither agreeing with his health nor inclination. In Irvine he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue which had hitherto restrained him. Towards the end of the period under review (in his twenty-sixth year), and soon after his father's death, he was furnished with the subject of his Epistle to John Rankin. During this period also he became a freemason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems to have misled his historians), I do not recollect, during these seven years, nor till towards the end of his commencing author, (when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company) to have ever seen him intoxicated; nor was he at all given to drinking. A stronger proof of the general sobriety of his conduct need not be required, than what I am about to give. During the whole of the time we lived in the farm of Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labour as he gave to other labourers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing manufactured in the family was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs grew near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Mossgiel, consisting of 118 acres, at the rent of £90 per annum (the farm on which I live at present), from Mr Gavin Hamilton, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was seven pounds per annum each. And during the whole time this

family concern lasted, which was four years,\* as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement in my brother's favour. His temperance and frugality were everything that could be wished.

The farm of Mossgiel lies very high, and mostly on a cold wet bottom. The first two years that we were on the farm were very frosty, and the spring was very late. Our crops in consequence were very unprofitable, and notwithstanding our utmost diligence and economy, we found ourselves obliged to give up our bargain, with the loss of a considerable part of our original stock. It was during these two years that Robert formed his connexion with Jean Armour, afterwards Mrs Burns. This connexion could no longer be concealed, about the time we came to a final determination to quit the farm. Robert durst not engage with a family in his poor unsettled state, but was anxious to shield his partner by every means in his power from the consequences of their imprudence. It was agreed therefore between them that they should make a legal acknowledgement of an irregular and private marriage, that he should go to Jamaica to push his fortune, and that she should remain with her father till it might please Providence to put the means of supporting a family in his power.

Mrs Burns was a great favourite of her father's. The intimation of a marriage was the first suggestion he received of her real situation. He was in the greatest distress, and fainted away. The marriage did not appear to him to make the matter any better. A husband in Jamaica seemed to him and to his wife little better than none, and an effectual bar to any other prospects of a settlement in life that their daughter might have. They therefore expressed a wish to her that the written papers which respected the marriage should be cancelled, and thus the marriage rendered void. In her melancholy state, she felt the deepest remorse at having brought such heavy affliction on parents that loved her so tenderly, and she submitted to their entreaties. This wish was mentioned to Robert, he felt the deepest anguish of

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\* Burns was connected with the Mossgiel farm little more than two years ; he left it at the close of the third harvest.

mind. He offered to stay at home and provide for his wife and family in the best manner that his daily labours could provide for them ; that being the only means in his power. Even this offer they did not approve of ; for humble as Miss Armour's station was, and great though her imprudence had been, she still, in the eyes of her partial parents, might look to a better connexion than with my friendless and unhappy brother, at that time without house or hiding-place. Robert at length consented to their wishes, but his feelings on this occasion were of the most distracting nature, and the impression of sorrow was not effaced, till by a regular marriage they were indissolubly united. In the state of mind which the separation produced, he wished to leave the country as soon as possible, and agreed with Dr Douglas to go out to Jamaica, as an assistant over-seer, or as I believe it is called, a book-keeper, on his estate. As he had not sufficient money to pay his passage, and the vessel in which Dr Douglas was to procure a passage for him was not expected to sail for some time, Mr Hamilton advised him to publish his poems in the meantime by subscription, as a likely way of getting a little money to provide him more liberally in necessaries for Jamaica. Agreeably to this advice, subscription bills were printed immediately, and the printing was commenced in Kilmarnock, his preparations going on at the same time for his voyage. The reception however which his poems met with in the world, and the friends they procured him, made him change his resolution of going to Jamaica, and he was advised to go to Edinburgh to publish a second edition. On his return in happier circumstances, he renewed his connexion with Mrs Burns, and rendered it permanent by an union for life.\*

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\* The foregoing article was originally in the form of a letter addressed to Mrs Dunlop. The MS. is still in existence, and was in 1852 in possession of Joseph Mayer, Esq., Liverpool.

## ARTICLE D., page 38.

COPIES OF EXISTING LETTERS PENNED BY WILLIAM BURNES, FATHER  
OF THE POET.

TO MR THOMAS OARE, AT PARK, NEAR KIRKOSWALD.

(FROM *fac-simile* IN "MANUAL," 1875.)

THOMAS,\*—Wee propose to begin to shear wheat on monday come eight days, being 18 of September, and wee expect [you] here on Saturday, because wee will begin on monday morning. I am, yours, &c.,

WILLIAM BURNES.

LOCHLIE, 8 Sept. 1780.

TO MR JAMES BURNES, MONTROSE.†

(*Here first Published*).

DEAR NEPHEW,—I received your affectionate letter by the bearer, who came 5 miles with it to my house. I received [it] with the same warmth you wrott it, and I am extremely glad you express yourself with so warm regard for your parents and friends. I wish much Joy in your wife and child.‡ I should have been glad had you sent me their names, with the name of your brother-in-law.

I have a family of four sons and three douthers: two of my sons and two of my douthers are men and women, and all with me in the farm-way: I have the happiness to hope they are virtuously inclined; my youngest douter is ten years of age:

\* See the Poet's letter to this individual, at page 50.

† The holograph of this letter is in the Poet's monument at Edinburgh. The reader will observe the peculiar spelling of the word "daughter" which occurs five times in this letter: the first of these is exactly as in our print; but the four that follow bear marks of clumsy erasure, and a blotted attempt at correction into proper spelling. This would likely be done by Gilbert or one of his sisters in a revisal before despatching the document.

‡ The reference here is to the birth of James Burnes, afterwards provost of Montrose—Born April 1st, 1780, Died February 15th, 1852. The correspondent addressed in the above letter was born in 1750 and died in 1837. His wife was Anne Greig, whom he married in 1777.

my eldest son is named Robert; the second Gilbert; the third William; the fourth John; my eldest daughter is named Agnes; the second Anna Bela; the third Isbal.

My Brother lives at Stewarton, by Kilmarnock; he hath two sons and one daughter, named John, William, and Fanny; their circumstances are very indifferent.

I shall be happy to hear from you when it is convenient, when I shall writt to you from time to time. Please give my respects to your Brother and Sister in the kindest manner, and to your Wife, which will greatly oblige your affectionate Uncle,

WILLIAM BURNES.

LOCHLIE, 14 *April* 1781.

ARTICLE E., page 38.

REMINISCENCE OF WILLIAM BURNES BY DR JOHN MACKENZIE, OF  
MAUCHLINE, LATTERLY OF IRVINE.

(*From WALKER'S "MEMOIR OF BURNS," 1811.*)

IRVINE, *April* 21, 1810.

DEAR SIR,—On reperusing the account of William Burnes, printed at page xxv. of your biography of Burns, I am satisfied of its correctness. The impression which his appearance made upon me, at my first interview with him, was exactly similar to the description there given. When I first saw William Burns, he was in very ill health, and his mind was suffering from the embarrassed state of his affairs. His appearance certainly made me think him inferior, both in manner and intelligence to the generality of those in his situation; but before leaving him, I found that I had been led to form a very false conclusion of his mental powers. After giving a short but distinct account of his indisposition, he entered upon a detail of the various causes that had gradually led to the embarrassment of his affairs; and this he did in such earnest language, and in so simple, candid, and pathetic a manner as to excite both my astonishment and sympathy. His wife spoke little, but struck me as being a very sagacious woman, without any appearance of forwardness, or any of that awkwardness in her manner, which many of these people

show in the presence of a stranger. Upon further acquaintance with Mrs Burnes, I had my first opinion of her character fully confirmed. Gilbert and Robert were certainly very different in their appearance and manner, though they both possessed great abilities and uncommon information. Gilbert, in the first interview I had with him at Lochlie, was frank, modest, well informed, and communicative. The poet seemed distant, suspicious, and without any wish to interest or please. He kept himself very silent in a dark corner of the room ; and before he took any part in the conversation, I frequently detected him scrutinising me during my conversation with his father and brother. But afterwards, when the conversation, which was on a medical subject, had taken the turn he wished, he began to engage in it, displaying a dexterity of reasoning, an ingenuity of reflection, and a familiarity with topics apparently beyond his reach, by which his visitor was no less gratified than astonished.

The remainder of the description contains so concise a statement, that I see nothing in it which requires to be altered or amended. From the period of which I speak, I took a lively interest in Robert Burns ; and, before I was acquainted with his poetical powers, I perceived that he possessed very great mental abilities, an uncommonly fertile and lively imagination, a thorough acquaintance with many of our Scottish poets, and an enthusiastic admiration of Ramsay and Fergusson. Even then, on subjects with which he was acquainted, his conversation was rich in well-chosen figures, animated and energetic. Indeed, I have always thought that no person could have a just idea of the extent of Burns's talents, who had not an opportunity to hear him converse. His discrimination of character was great beyond that of any person I ever knew ; and I have often observed to him that it seemed to be intuitive. I seldom ever knew him make a false estimate of character, when he formed the opinion from his own observation, and not from the representation of persons to whom he was partial. I recommended him to Sir John Whitefoord and the Hon. Andrew Erskine, who both became his patrons on his going to Edinburgh. I also had the pleasure of making his works known to Dr Blair, by shewing him the "Holy Fair," with which he was much pleased. He said it was a production of a great genius, and that it contained some of the finest and justest de-



scription he had ever seen. At that time, the Doctor was on a visit to Barskimming.—I remain, dear Sir, &c.

JOHN MACKENZIE.

To JOSIAH WALKER, Esq., Perth.

DESCRIPTION OF WILLIAM BURNES AT PAGE XXV. OF WALKER'S  
"MEMOIR OF BURNS," REFERRED TO IN THE PRECEDING LETTER.

The discipline of circumstances has often more influence in forming the mind than that of schools; and the peculiar character of William Burnes was certainly the circumstance which compensated to his son Robert the defects of his education. Of the father I have been fortunate to receive an account from one who had both opportunity to observe, and intelligence to comprehend, his peculiarities:—"To a stranger, at first sight, he had a chill, austere, and backward reserve, which appeared to proceed less from habitual manner, than from natural obtuseness and vacuity of intellect. But when he found a companion to his taste, with whom he could make a fair exchange of mind, he seemed to grow into a different being, or into one suddenly restored to its native element. His conversation became animated and impressive, and discovered an extent of observation, and a shrewdness and sagacity of remark, which occasioned the more gratification the less it had been expected; while the pleasing discovery made his associate eager to repair the injustice of his first impression, by imputing the repulsive manner of his reception to that series of troubles which had dulled the vivacity, and given a suspicious caution to this upright and intelligent rustic. I speak of him as he appeared at Lochlie, when misfortunes were clustering round him." It may indeed be conjectured (without much refinement) that his intellectual superiority had some share in those misfortunes. We have no evidence that William Burnes was negligent in his ordinary business; yet a constant succession of failures seldom occurs without a cause which exists, though it may exist imperceptibly in the unfortunate person. It is also to be observed, that intellectual superiority is, in many situations, a possession by no means popular. It renders us fastidious in our choice of associates; and it lowers disagreeably, in their own esteem, many with

whom we must mingle in daily intercourse, and on whom we may depend for assistance or advice.

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In the above interesting picture of the poet's father we have omitted one short sentence of Dr Mackenzie's communication, in which he expresses an *opinion*, rather than a fact. It is as follows:—"Gilbert Burns partook more of the manner and appearance of the father, and Robert of the mother." Had the *reverse* of this been expressed we should not have challenged it, for we think that, in many respects, Robert Burns was "the second self" of his father. The mother of Burns was an excellent example of the prudent cottage matrons of Scotland; but she had no pretensions to superior intellect; and as regards education, she had none, except what was derived from oral instruction, in tales of superstition, with scraps of minstrelsy and proverbial sayings. In fact, although she could manage to read a little from a printed book, she never was able to write her own name. In person, she was of a neat small figure; her complexion was clear, with expressive dark eyes, and her hair of a pale red colour. Her father, Gilbert Brown of Craigenton, in Carrick, was thrice married, and Agnes was the eldest child by the first marriage. Before she met with William Burnes, she had been matrimonially engaged to a farm-servant; but, at the mature age of twenty-six, she had the firmness to throw up the match in consequence of a moral lapse on his part such as a pure-minded woman could not forgive. At this juncture she happened to meet William Burnes at a Maybole fair, and he was smitten with affection for her after a short acquaintance. At the end of a year's courtship, he took her home to become the mother of Scotland's Poet. She died in the house of her son Gilbert, 14th January 1820, aged 87.

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## ARTICLE F.—p. 38.

BURNS IN 1781-82.\*—ACCOUNT BY DAVID SILLAR.

(FROM WALKER'S MEMOIR OF BURNS, 1811.)

Mr Robert Burns was sometime in the parish of Tarbolton, prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning, with which he and all poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied by its kindred attendant—suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his *principles*. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particular colour, I think *fillemot*, he wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders. These surmises, and his exterior, had such a magical influence on my curiosity, as made me particularly solicitous of his acquaintance. Whether my acquaintance with Gilbert was casual, or premeditated, I am not now certain. By him I was introduced not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where, in a short time I became a frequent, and I believe, not unwelcome visitant.

After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard, we frequently met upon Sundays at church, when, between sermons,

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\* “To Mr Robert Chambers we owe the following note of a conversation which he had, in June 1826, with a respectable old citizen of Irvine:— ‘Burns was, at the time of his residence among us, an older-looking man than might have been expected at his age—very darkly complexioned, with a strong dark eye—of a thoughtful appearance, amounting to what might be called a gloomy attentiveness; so much so, that when in company which did not call forth his brilliant powers of conversation, he might often be seen, for a considerable space together, leaning down on his palm, with his elbow resting on his knee. He was, in common, silent and reserved; but when he found a man to his mind, he constantly made a point of attaching himself to his company, and endeavouring to bring out his powers. It was among women alone that he uniformly exerted himself, and uniformly shone. People remarked even then, that when Robert Burns did speak, he always spoke to the point, and in general with a sententious brevity. His moody thoughtfulness and laconic style of expression were both inherited from his father, who, for his station in life, was a very singular person.’”—*Lockhart's Life of Burns*.

instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks I have frequently been struck by his facility in addressing the fair sex; and many times, when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them with the greatest ease and freedom; and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance. Some of the few opportunities of a noontide walk that a country life allows her laborious sons, he spent on the banks of the river, or in the woods in the neighbourhood of Stair, a situation peculiarly adapted to the genius of a rural bard. Some book (especially one of those mentioned in his letter to Mr Murdoch) he always carried, and read when not otherwise employed. It was likewise his custom to read at table. In one of my visits to Lochlie, in time of a sower supper, he was so intent on reading, I think "Tristram Shandy," that his spoon falling out of his hand, made him exclaim, in a tone scarcely imitable, "Alas, poor Yorick!"

"He had in his youth paid considerable attention to the arguments for and against the doctrine of original sin, then making considerable noise in the neighbourhood of Ayr; and having perused Dr Taylor's work on that subject, and also a book called 'Letters concerning the Religion essential to Man,'\* his opinions, when he came to Tarbolton, were consequently favourable to what you Ayr people call the 'moderate side.' The religion of the people of Tarbolton at that time was purely that of their fathers, founded on the Westminster Confession, and taught by one generation to another, uncontaminated by reading, reflection, and conversation; and, though divided into different sectaries, the Shorter Catechism was the line which bounded all their controversies. The slightest insinuation of Taylor's opinions made his neighbours suspect, and some even avoid him, as an heretical and dangerous companion. Such was Burns, and such were his associates, when, in May 1781, I was admitted a member of the Bachelors' Club."—*Letter to Robert Aiken, Esq., Ayr.*

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\* See page 180 for a reference to this book, which was presented by Burns to an old friend of his father, Mr John Tennant, ancestor of the present Charles Tennant, Esq., of The Glen, Peeblesshire.

## THE BACHELORS' CLUB AT TARBOLTON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

"Rule X.—Every man, proper for being a Member of this Society, must have a frank, honest, open heart, above anything dirty or mean, and must be a professed Lover of one or more of the female sex. No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the Club; and especially, no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall, upon any pretence whatever, be admitted."

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"The social, friendly, honest man,  
 Whate'er he be,  
 'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,  
 And none but he."

"We, the following lads in the parish of Tarbolton, namely, HUGH REID, ROBERT BURNES, GILBERT BURNES, ALEXANDER BROWN, WALTER MITCHELL, THOMAS WRIGHT, and WILLIAM M'GAVIN,—*Resolved*, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a Club, or Society, under such Rules and Regulations that, while we should forget our cares and labours in Mirth and Diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of Innocence and Decorum; and agreeing on these and other Regulations, we held our first meeting at Tarbolton, in the house of John Richard, upon the 11th November, 1780, commonly called 'Halloween,' and after choosing ROBERT BURNES president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question:—

'Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person, nor agreeable in conversation, yet who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them, a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune:—Which of them should he choose?'

"Finding ourselves very happy in our Society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month, in the same house, in the way and manner proposed.

"Shortly thereafter, we chose ROBERT RITCHIE for another

member. In May 1781, we brought in DAVID SILLAR, and in June, ADAM JAMIESON, as members. About the beginning of the year 1782, we admitted MATTHEW PATTERSON and JOHN ORR, and in June following we chose JAMES PATTERSON, all as proper Brothers for such a Society. The Club being thus increased, we resolved to meet at Tarbolton on the *Race* night, in July following, each with his partner, and have a dance in honour of our Society.”\*

The following are other samples of the questions debated by the same Club :—

“Whether is a young man, of the lower ranks of life, likeliest to be happy, who has got a good education, and his mind well informed ; or he who has just the education and information of those around him ?”

“Whether do we derive more happiness from Love or Friendship ?”

“Whether is the savage man, or the peasant of a civilized country, in the most happy situation ?”

“Whether, between friends who have no reason to doubt each other’s friendship, should there be any reserve ?”†

*Records of the Club.*

#### ARTICLE G.—Page 45.

LETTER OF ROBERT BURNES, BROTHER OF THE POET’S FATHER.

*(Here first published.)*

TO MR JAMES BURNES, SCHOOLMASTER IN MONTROSE.

LOCHLIE, 17 Feb. 1784.

D<sup>R</sup>. NEPHEW,—I had several times the hapiness to hear from you when you wrot to my brother, where I am just now at Lochlie

\* Mrs Begg, in 1850, made the following note in reference to this incident, introduced in a chronology of her brother’s early life submitted to her by the editor :—“Mrs Begg had the pleasure of dancing on that same night, with that same Club. She was attending the sewing school at Tarbolton, and when going home, she met her sister Annabella, who took her back with her, because a swain, by name Matthew Patterson, had lost his sweetheart, and was in despair for a partner : so, a girl of eleven years old supplied her place for one night.”

† “Ay free, aff-hand your story tell,

When wi’ a bosom crony ;

But still, keep something to yoursel,

You scarcely tell to ony.”



to pay my last respects by witnessing his interment. I have lost a good friend and a loving Brother, but his family greater. However, we must all put up with the dispensations of Providence; for he was a long time prisoner before he died, and I am now very frail myself, and do not expect it will be long till I follow him. But altho' he be gone, it is my desire that a correspondence should not fail betwixt us in this country, and relations of our nativity; and tho' I were gone off, believe our children will be desirous to keep up the dear correspondence which their fathers espoused.

My wife has been very tender this twelve months. I have only two sons and one doughter at home with their mother.

When you writ to me, direct to me in Stewarton, and if you have an opportunity, let my friends hear from me. This with my kind wishes to your wife and family. I am,—your loving Uncle,

ROBERT BURNES.

Excuse these mistakes in writin, by reason of host.

#### ARTICLE H.—Page 222.

##### LETTER FROM DR MOORE TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

CLIFFORD STREET, *May 23, 1787.*

DEAR SIR,—I had the pleasure of your letter by Mr Creech, and soon after he sent me the new edition of your poems. You seem to think it incumbent on you to send to each subscriber, a number of copies proportionate to his subscription money, but you may depend upon it, few subscribers expect more than one copy, whatever they subscribed; I must inform you, however, that I took twelve copies for those subscribers, for whose money you were so accurate as to send me a receipt, and Lord Eglintoun told me he had sent for six copies for himself, as he wished to give five of them in presents.

Some of the poems you have added in this last edition are very beautiful, particularly the "Winter Night," the "Address to Edinburgh," "Green grow the Rashes," and the two songs immediately following: the latter of which is exquisite. By the way, I imagine, you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge. No kind of poetry demands more

delicacy or higher polishing. Horace is more admired on account of his Odes than all his other writings. But nothing now added is equal to your "Vision," and "Cottar's Saturday Night." In these are united fine imagery, natural and pathetic description, with sublimity of language and thought. It is evident that you already possess a great variety of expression and command of the English language, you ought therefore to deal more sparingly, for the future, in the provincial dialect—why should you by using *that*, limit the number of your admirers to those who understand the Scottish, when you can extend it to all persons of taste who understand the English language. In my opinion you should plan some larger work than any you have as yet attempted. I mean, reflect upon some proper subject and arrange the plan in your mind, without beginning to execute any part of it till you have studied most of the best English poets, and read a little more of history.—The Greek and Roman stories you can read in some abridgement, and soon become master of the most brilliant facts, which must highly delight a poetical mind. You *should* also, and very soon *may*, become master of the heathen mythology, to which there are everlasting allusions in all the poets, and which in itself is charmingly fanciful. What will require to be studied with more attention, is modern history; that is the history of France and Great Britain, from the beginning of Henry the seventh's reign. I know very well you have a mind capable of attaining knowledge by a shorter process than is commonly used, and I am certain you are capable of making a better use of it when attained than is generally done.

I beg you will not give yourself the trouble of writing to me when it is *inconvenient*, and make no apology when you do write for having postponed it—be assured of this, however, that I shall always be happy to hear from you. I think my friend Mr —— told me that you had some poems in manuscript by you, of a satirical and humorous nature (in which by the way I think you very strong) which your prudent friends prevailed on you to omit; particularly one called *Somebody's Confession*; \* if you will entrust me with a sight of any of these, I will pawn my word to give no copies, and will be obliged to you for a perusal of them.

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\* "Holy Willie's Prayer," Vol. I. page 96.

I understand you intend to take a farm, and make the useful and respectable business of husbandry your chief occupation ; this, I hope, will not prevent your making occasional addresses to the nine ladies who have shewn you such favour, one of whom visited you in the “auld clay biggin.” Virgil, before you, proved to the world that there is nothing in the business of husbandry inimical to poetry ; and I sincerely hope that you may afford an example of a good poet being a successful farmer. I fear it will not be in my power to visit Scotland this season ; when I do, I shall endeavour to find you out, for I heartily wish to see and converse with you. If ever your occasions call you to this place, I make no doubt of your paying me a visit, and you may depend on a very cordial welcome from the family,—I am, dear Sir, your friend and obedient servant.

J. MOORE.

ARTICLE J.—Page 206.

ACCOUNT OF BURNS BY PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART,  
COMMUNICATED TO DR CURRIE.

“The first time I saw Robert Burns was on 23rd October 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayrshire together with our common friend, Mr John Mackenzie, surgeon in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. I am enabled to mention the date particularly, by some verses which Burns wrote after he returned home, and in which the day of our meeting is recorded. My excellent and much lamented friend, the late Basil, Lord Daer, happened to arrive at Catrine the same day, and by the kindness and frankness of his manners, left an impression on the mind of the Poet, which never was effaced. The verses I allude to are among the most imperfect of his pieces, but a few stanzas may perhaps be an object of curiosity to you, both on account of the character to which they relate, and of the light which they throw on the situation and feelings of the writer before his name was known to the public.\*

“I cannot positively say, at this distance of time, whether at the period of our first acquaintance, the Kilmarnock edition of his

\* See Vol. II., page 19, “Verses on dining with Lord Daer.”

poems had been just published, or was yet in the press. I suspect that the latter was the case, as I have still in my possession copies, in his own handwriting, of some of his favourite performances; particularly of his verses 'On the Mountain Daisy:' and 'The Lament.' On my return to Edinburgh, I showed the volume, and mentioned what I knew of the author's history to several of my friends, and among others, to Mr Henry Mackenzie who first recommended him to public notice in the 97th number of 'The Lounger.'

"At this time Burns's prospects in life were so extremely gloomy, that he had seriously formed a plan of going out to Jamaica in a very humble situation, not however without lamenting that his want of patronage should force him to think of a project so repugnant to his feelings, when his ambition aimed at no higher an object than the station of an exciseman or guager in his own country.

"His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius, and worth; but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference, on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing perhaps was more remarkable among his various attainments, than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

"He came to Edinburgh early in the winter following, and remained there for several months. By whose advice he took this step I am unable to say. Perhaps it was suggested only by his own curiosity to see a little more of the world; but I confess I dreaded the consequences from the first, and always wished that his pursuits and habits should continue the same as in the former

part of life ; with the addition of what I considered as thus completely within his reach, a good farm on moderate terms, in a part of the country agreeable to his taste.

“The attentions he received during his stay in town from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manner and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country ; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station, plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right, he always wore boots ; and, when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin breeches.

“The variety of his engagements, while in Edinburgh, prevented me from seeing him so often as I could have wished. In the course of the spring, he called on me once or twice, at my request early in the morning, and walked with me to the Braid Hills, in the neighbourhood of the town, when he charmed me still more by his private conversation, than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of Nature ; and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained.

“In his political principles he was then a Jacobite ; which was perhaps owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of the Lord Mareschall. Indeed, he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in some convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the winter of 1786-87 ; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversations turned chiefly on his literary projects, or his private affairs.

“I do not recollect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me that you had ever seen Burns. If you have, it is superfluous for me to add, that the idea which his conversation



conveyed of the powers of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents, and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous ; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.

“Among the subjects on which he was accustomed to dwell, the characters of the individuals with whom he happened to meet was plainly a favourite one. The remarks he made on them were always shrewd and pointed, though frequently inclining too much to sarcasm. His praise of those he loved was sometimes indiscriminate and extravagant ; but this, I suspect, proceeded rather from the caprice and humour of the moment, than from the effects of attachment in blinding his judgment. His wit was ready, and always impressed with marks of a vigorous understanding ; but to my taste, not often pleasing and happy. His attempts at epigrams in his printed works are the only performances perhaps, that he has produced, totally unworthy of his genius.

“In Summer, 1787, I passed some weeks in Ayrshire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think that he made a pretty long excursion that season to the Highlands, and that he also visited what Beattie calls the Arcadian ground of Scotland, on the banks of the Teviot and the Tweed.

“I should have mentioned before, that notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter, of Burns's predilection for convivial, and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety, from all of him that ever fell under my own observation. He told me indeed himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him of any merit in his temperance. I was somewhat alarmed about the effect of his now comparatively sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house after a winter's campaign in town, that he had been much disturbed



in bed by a palpitation at his heart, which he said was a complaint to which he had of late become subject.

"In the course of the same season I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a Mason Lodge in Mauchline, when Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and everything he said was happily conceived, and freely, as well as fluently expressed. If I am not mistaken he told me that in that village, before going to Edinburgh he had belonged to a small club of such of the inhabitants as had a taste for books, when they used to converse and debate on any interesting questions that occurred to them in the course of their reading. His manner of speaking in public had evidently the mark of some practice in extempore elocution.

"I must not omit to mention, what I have always considered as characteristical in a high degree of true genius, the extreme facility and good nature of his taste, in judging of the composition of others, where there was any real ground of praise. I repeated to him many passages of English poetry, with which he was unacquainted, and have more than once witnessed the tears of admiration and rapture with which he heard them. The collection of songs by Dr Aiken, which I first put into his hands, he read with unmixed delight, notwithstanding his former efforts in that difficult sphere of writing; and I have little doubt that it had some effect in polishing his subsequent compositions.

"In judging of prose, I do not think his taste was equally sound. I once read to him a passage or two in Franklin's Works, which I thought very happily executed, upon the model of Addison; but he did not appear to relish or perceive the beauty which they derived from their exquisite simplicity; and spoke of them with indifference, when compared with the point and antithesis, and quaintness of 'Junius.' The influence of that taste is very perceptible in his own prose compositions, although their great and various excellences render some of them scarcely less objects of wonder than his poetical performances. The late Dr Robertson used to say that, considering his education, the former seemed to him the more extraordinary of the two.

"His memory was uncommonly retentive, at least for poetry, of which he recited to me frequently long compositions with the most

minute accuracy. They were chiefly ballads, and other pieces in our Scottish dialect; great part of them (he told me) he had learned in his childhood from his mother, who delighted in such recitations, and whose poetical taste, rude as it probably was, gave, it is presumable, the first direction to her son's genius.

"Of the more polished verses which accidentally fell into his hands in his early years, he mentioned particularly the commendatory poems by different authors, prefixed to "*Hervey's Meditations*," a book which has always had a very wide circulation among such of the country people of Scotland, as affect to unite some degree of taste with their religious studies. And these poems (although they are certainly below mediocrity), he continued to read with a degree of rapture beyond expression. He took notice of this fact himself, as a proof how much the taste is liable to be influenced by accidental circumstances.

"His father appeared to me, from the account he gave of him, to have been a respectable and worthy character, possessed of a mind superior to what might have been expected from his station in life. He ascribed much of his own principles and feelings to the early impressions he had retained from his instructions and example. I recollect that he once applied to *him* (and he added that the passage was literal statement of fact) the two last lines of the following passage in "*The Minstrel*;" the whole of which he repeated with great enthusiasm:—

'Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,  
 When Fate, relenting, lets the flower revive?  
 Shall Nature's voice, to man alone unjust,  
 Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?  
 Is it for this fair Virtue oft must strive  
 With disappointment, penury, and pain?  
 No: Heaven's Immortal Spring shall yet arrive,  
 And man's majestic beauty bloom again,  
 Bright through th' eternal years of Love's triumphant reign.

THIS TRUTH SUBLIME, HIS SIMPLE SIRE HAD TAUGHT,  
 IN SOOTH, 'T WAS ALMOST ALL THE SHEPHERD KNEW.

"With respect to Burns's early education I cannot say anything with certainty. He always spoke with respect and gratitude of the schoolmaster who had taught him to read English, and who, finding in his scholar a more than ordinary ardour for knowledge, had been at pains to instruct him in the grammatical principles of

the language. He began the study of Latin, but dropped it before he had finished the verbs. I have sometimes heard him quote a few Latin words, such as *omnia vincit amor*, &c., but they seemed to be such as he had caught from conversation, and which he repeated by rote. I think he had a project, after he came to Edinburgh, of prosecuting the study under his intimate friend, the late Mr Nicol, one of the masters of the grammar-school here; but I do not know that he even proceeded so far as to make the attempt.

“He certainly possessed a smattering of French; and, if he had an affectation in anything, it was in introducing occasionally a word or phrase from that language. It is possible that his knowledge in this respect might be more extensive than I suppose it to be; but this you can learn from his more intimate acquaintance. It would be worth while to enquire, whether he was able to read the French authors with such facility, as to receive from them any improvement to his taste. For my own part, I doubt it much—nor would I believe it, but on very strong and pointed evidence.

“If my memory does not fail me, he was well instructed in Arithmetic, and knew something of practical Geometry, particularly surveying. All his other attainments were entirely his own.

“The last time I saw him was during the winter 1788-89;\* when he passed an evening with me at Drumsheugh, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where I was then living. My friend Mr Alison, was the only other person in company. I never saw him more agreeable or interesting. A present which Mr Alison sent him afterwards of his *Essays on Taste*, drew from Burns a letter of acknowledgement, which I remember to have read with some degree of surprise, at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed of the general principles of the doctrine of *Association*.”

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ARTICLE K.—Page 213.

DESCRIPTION OF BURNS IN 1787, FROM PROFESSOR JOSIAH  
WALKER'S MEMOIR OF THE POET, 1811.

“In good society Burns never struggled to put on for a moment a better manner than was natural to him. Though he took his full

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\* Burns visited Edinburgh in February 1789, which would likely be the date of the interview referred to. The poet's letter to Mr Alison will be found in the correspondence.

share in conversation, not only from a perception that it was expected, but from a consciousness that it would gratify expectation, yet he did so in a manner that was dignified and manly, and altogether remote from petulant vanity, or offensive exultation in an importance so new to him. His deportment was plain without vulgarity, and though it had little softness, and showed him ready to repel any insult, with decision at least, if not with roughness, yet he soon made it evident that those who behaved to him with propriety were in no danger of any unprovoked or boorish rudeness. In the company of women, he was correct and guarded; but after they retired, he could sometimes indulge that licentious wit in which he was too well qualified to excel.

Early in the year 1787, a friend from Edinburgh informed me of the sensation then created in that city by a bard of my native county, and promised to bring me his volume on a subsequent visit. By his praise of its contents, my expectations were very moderately excited, as in my own mind, I instantly classed the poetical ploughman with the poetical milkmaids, and thrashers of England, of whose productions I was no violent admirer. But had the case been otherwise, all I could have anticipated would have been far surpassed. I was born within a few miles of the cottage of Alloway, and in that vicinity I chiefly spent those years of youth when impressions are most lively and permanent, and continue to be recalled through life with frequency and fondness, by bringing along with them that portion of the past on which it is most pleasing to dwell. The same horizon which presented its daily outline to his eye was also mine. In the same dialect, even to accents and phrases of the most limited locality, we both first learned to express our thoughts, and to both, the *patois* of Kyle appeared, for many years, to be the only language of nature.

Thus prepared, the poems were put into my hands; and before finishing a page I experienced emotions of surprise and delight of which I had never been so conscious before. The language that I had begun to despise, as fit for nothing but colloquial vulgarity, seemed to be transfigured by the sorcery of genius into the genuine language of poetry. It expressed every idea with a brevity and force, and bent itself to every subject with a pliancy, in which the most perfect languages too often fail. Every line

awakened a train of associations; every phrase struck a note which led the mind to perform the accompaniment. On every page the stamp of genius was impressed. All was touched by a hand of that astonishing dexterity, as to seem only performing its easiest and most habitual functions, when accomplishing what every other would attempt in vain. I never quitted the volume till I had finished its perusal; and I can recollect no equal period to have passed more rapidly than the hours in which I was thus engaged.

"A desire to see the man who had the power of producing such effects naturally succeeded, and this was speedily gratified. I had occasion, soon after, to be in Edinburgh, and was invited by Dr Blacklock to breakfast in company with Burns. I was not much struck with his first appearance, as I had previously heard it described. His person, though strong and well-knit, and much superior to what might be expected in a ploughman, was still rather coarse in its outline. His stature, from want of setting up, appeared to be only of the middle size, but was rather above it. His motions were firm and decided, and though without any pretensions to grace, were at the same time so free from clownish constraint, as to show that he had not always been confined to the society of his profession. His countenance was not of that elegant cast which is most frequent among the upper ranks, but it was manly and intelligent and marked by a thoughtful gravity which shaded at times into sternness. In his large dark eye the most striking index of his genius resided. It was full of mind, and would have been singularly expressive, under the management of one who could employ it with more art, for the purpose of expression.

"He was plainly but properly dressed, in a style midway between the holiday costume of a farmer and that of the company with which he now associated. His black hair, without powder, at a time when it was very generally worn, was tied behind, and spread upon his forehead. Upon the whole, from his person, physiognomy, and dress, had I met him near a seaport, and been required to guess his condition, I should have probably conjectured him to be the master of a merchant-vessel of the most respectable class.

"In no part of his manner was there the slightest degree of affectation; nor could a stranger have suspected, from anything in



his behaviour or conversation, that he had been for some months the favourite of all the fashionable circles of a metropolis.

"In conversation he was powerful. His conceptions and expressions were of corresponding vigour, and on all subjects were as remote as possible from commonplaces. Though somewhat authoritative, it was in a way which gave little offence, and was readily imputed to his inexperience in those modes of smoothing dissent and softening assertion which are important characteristics of polished manners. After breakfast, I requested him to communicate some of his unpublished pieces, and he recited his farewell song to the Banks of Ayr, introducing it with a description of the circumstances in which it was composed, more striking than the poem itself. He had left Dr Laurie's family, after a visit which he expected to be the last, and, on his way home, had to cross a wide stretch of solitary moor. His mind was strongly affected by parting for ever with a scene where he had tasted so much elegant and social pleasure, and depressed by the contrasted gloom of his prospects. The aspect of nature harmonized with his feelings. It was a lowering and heavy evening in the end of Autumn. The wind was up, and whistled through the rushes and long spear-grass which bent before it. The clouds were driving across the sky; and cold pelting showers at intervals added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind; and in those circumstances did he compose the song which he considered was to be the last effort of his muse in Caledonia.

"I paid particular attention to his recitation, which was plain, slow, articulate, and forcible, but without any elegance or art. He did not always lay the emphasis with propriety, nor did he humour the sentiment by the variations of his voice. He was standing, during the time, with his face towards the window, to which, and not to his auditors, he directed his eye; thus depriving himself of any additional effect which the language of his countenance. In this he resembled the generality of singers in ordinary company, who, to shun any charge of affectation, withdraw all meaning from their features, and lose the advantage by which vocal performers on the stage augment the impression and give energy to the sentiment of the song.

"The day after my first introduction to Burns, I supped in



company with him at Dr Blair's. The other guests were very few, and as each had been invited chiefly to have an opportunity of meeting with the poet, the doctor endeavoured to draw him out, and to make him the central figure of the group. Though he therefore furnished the greatest proportion of the conversation, he did no more than what he saw evidently was expected. Men of genius have often been taxed with a proneness to commit blunders in company, from that ignorance or negligence of the laws of conversation which must be imputed to the absorption of their thoughts in a favourite subject, or to the want of that daily practice in attending to the petty modes of behaviour which are incompatible with a studious life. From singularities of this sort, Burns was unusually free; yet on the present occasion he made a more awkward slip than any that are reported of the poets or mathematicians most noted for absence. Being asked from which of the public places he had received the greatest gratification, he named the High Church, but gave the preference as a preacher to the colleague of our worthy entertainer, whose celebrity rested on his pulpit eloquence, in a tone so pointed and decisive, as to throw the whole company into the most foolish embarrassment. The doctor, indeed, with becoming self-command, endeavoured to release the rest by cordially seconding the encomium so injudiciously introduced; but this did not prevent the conversation from labouring under that compulsory effort which was unavoidable, while the thoughts of all were full of the only subject on which it was improper to speak. Of this blunder Burns must instantly have been aware, but he showed the return of good sense by making no attempt to repair it. His secret mortification was indeed so great, that he never mentioned the circumstance until many years after, when he told me that his silence had proceeded from the pain which he felt in recalling it to his memory."\*

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\* The greatest breach of decorum of this kind which has been imputed to Burns is one recorded by Cromek:—"At a private breakfast party, in a literary circle of Edinburgh, the conversation turned on the poetical merit and pathos of Gray's *Elegy*; a poem of which he was enthusiastically fond. A Clergyman present, remarkable for his love of paradox, and for his eccentric notions on every subject, distinguished himself by an injudicious and ill-timed attack on this exquisite poem, which Burns with generous warmth manfully defended. As the gentleman's remarks were rather general than specific, Burns urged him to bring forward the passages which

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## SIR WALTER SCOTT'S REMINISCENCES OF BURNS.

*(From LOCKHART'S LIFE OF BURNS, 1828.)*

To these reminiscences I shall now add those of one who is not likely to be heard unwillingly on any subject, and—young as he was in 1786-87—on few subjects, I think, with greater interest than the personal appearance and conversation of Robert Burns. The following is an extract from a letter of Sir Walter Scott:—

“As for Burns, I may truly say, ‘*Virgilium vidi tantum!*’ I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-87, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father’s. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Fergusson’s, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sate silent, looked, and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns’s manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury’s representing a Soldier lying dead in the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side—on the other, his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:—

‘Cold on Canadian hills, on Minden’s plain,  
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain—  
Bent o’er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,  
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,  
Gave the sad presage of his future years,  
The child of misery baptiz’d in tears.’

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he thought exceptionable. He made several attempts to quote the poem, but always in a blundering, inaccurate manner. Burns bore all this for a good while with forbearance, till at length, goaded by the fastidious criticisms and wretched quibblings of his opponent, he roused himself, and with an eye flashing contempt and indignation, thus addressed the cold critic:—“Sir, I perceive a man may be an excellent judge of poetry by square and rule, and after all be a d—d blockhead!”

"Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears.\* He asked whose those lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure.

"His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect, perhaps, from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr

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\* The ideas which were suggested to the mind of Burns on this occasion found embodiment after many days in the tender ballad called "The Sodger's Return," particularly in the four opening lines, which George Thomson did his best to render common-place :

"When wild War's deadly blast was blawn,  
And gentle Peace returning,  
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,  
And mony a widow mourning."

This recollection of Sir Walter Scott is beautifully told. Fifty years ago, Carlyle wrote thus concerning it :—"A time will come when this reminiscence, slight though it is, will be as precious as those of Walker and Stewart." It is a pity that some well-meaning busy-bodies cannot "leave well alone," but will mar the effect of a fine picture by overloading it with disturbing details. A local historian, with the object of rendering Sir Walter's narrative more inviting, has told us—most incorrectly we believe—that the identical house where this interview with Burns took place, was at a mansion in the Sheens to which Professor Fergusson certainly did afterwards remove his residence; and what is worse, that the veritable framed print which so affected Burns to tears, was presented by the son of the Professor to Mr Wm. Chambers, who has hung it up in the "Chambers' Institute" of Peebles. Now, we shall never believe that the identical framed print referred to by Scott is the one thus conserved in Peebles, because the name "Langhorne" is engraved at the end of the quoted lines in quite distinct letters; consequently the print which Burns read from must have been framed close up to the edge of the last line in the inscription, otherwise the embryo Sir Walter could not have had the opportunity to display his sharpness before those literati who were unable to inform Burns who composed the lines that affected him. The address of Professor Fergusson is thus distinctly given in Peter Williamson's Edinburgh Directory for 1786-88 : "Professor Adam Fergusson, Argyle Square."

Nasmyth's picture, but to me it conveys the idea, that they are diminished as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits.\* I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scottish School, *i.e.*, none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh, but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

"I remember on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English Poetry was rather limited, and also, that having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Fergusson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models; there was, doubtless, national predilection in his estimate.

"This is all I can tell about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the *Laird*. I do not speak in *malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information, more perfectly free from

\* This observation of Sir Walter has been productive of much mischief among sculptors and painters who have since tried to pourtray the Bard's lineaments. With the dogmas of phrenology to prompt them farther, many hideous "improvements" on Nasmyth's representation have been the result — witness among others Skirving's portrait of Burns.

either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark this. I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since."

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DESCRIPTION OF BURNS, COMPILED BY DR CURRIE, FROM  
ACCOUNTS BY JOHN SYME, ALEX. CUNNINGHAM,  
AND OTHER ASSOCIATES OF THE POET.

Burns was nearly five feet ten inches in height, and of a form that indicated agility as well as strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well formed; and his countenance uncommonly interesting and expressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly, and a certain fulness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original profession, disguised in some degree the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. The external appearance of Burns was most strikingly indicative of the character of his mind. On a first view, his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled however with an expression of deep penetration, and of calm thoughtfulness, approaching to melancholy. There appeared, in his first manner and address, perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious elevation, not indeed incompatible with openness and affability, which however bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents. Strangers that supposed themselves approaching an Ayrshire peasant who could make rhymes, and to whom their notice was an honour, found themselves speedily overawed by the presence of a man who bore himself with dignity, and who possessed a singular power of correcting forwardness and of repelling intrusion. But though jealous of the respect due to himself, Burns never enforced it where he saw it was willingly paid; and though inaccessible to the approaches of pride, he was open to every advance of kindness and benevolence. His dark and haughty countenance easily relaxed into a



look of good-will, of pity, or of tenderness; and as the various emotions succeeded each other in his mind, assumed with equal ease the expression of the broadest humour, of the most extravagant mirth, of the deepest melancholy, or of the most sublime emotion. The tones of his voice happily corresponded with the expression of his features, and with the feelings of his mind. When to these endowments are added a rapid and distinct apprehension, a most powerful understanding, and a happy command of language—of strength as well as brilliancy of expression—we shall be able to account for the extraordinary attractions of his conversation—for the sorcery which, in social parties, he seemed to exert on all around him. In the company of women, this sorcery was more especially apparent. Their presence charmed the fiend of melancholy in his bosom, and awoke his happiest feelings; it excited the powers of his fancy, as well as the tenderness of his heart; and by restraining the vehemence and the exuberance of his language, at times gave to his manners the impression of taste, and even of elegance, which in the company of men they seldom possessed. This influence was doubtless reciprocal. A Scottish lady accustomed to the best society, declared with characteristic *naïveté*, that no man's conversation ever "carried her so completely off her feet," as that of Burns; and an English lady, familiarly acquainted with several of the most distinguished characters of the present times, assured the editor, that in the happiest of his social hours, there was a charm about Burns which she had never seen equalled.\* This charm arose not more from the power than the versatility of his genius. No languor could be felt in the society of a man who passed at pleasure from grave to gay, from the ludicrous to the pathetic, from the simple to the sublime: who wielded all his faculties with equal strength and ease, and never failed to impress the offspring of his fancy with the stamp of his understanding.

This indeed is to represent Burns in his happiest phasis. In large and mixed parties, he was often silent and dark, sometimes fierce and overbearing; he was jealous of the proud man's scorn,

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\* The "Scottish lady" here spoken of is understood to have been Jane, Duchess of Gordon, and the "English lady" undoubtedly was Mari Riddell.



jealous to an extreme of the insolence of wealth, and prone to avenge, even on its innocent possessor, the partiality of fortune. By nature, kind, brave, sincere, and in a singular degree compassionate, he was, on the other hand, proud, irascible and vindictive. His virtues and his failings had their origin in the extraordinary sensibility of his mind, and equally partook of the chills and glows of sentiment. His friendships were liable to interruption from jealousy or disgust, and his enmities died away under the influence of pity or self-accusation. His understanding was equal to the other powers of his mind, and his deliberate opinions were singularly candid and just; but, like other men of great and irregular genius, the opinions which he delivered in conversation were often the offspring of temporary feelings, and widely different from the calm decisions of his judgment. This was not merely true respecting the characters of others, but in regard to some of the most important points of human speculation.

On no subject did he give a more striking proof of the strength of his understanding, than in the correct estimate he formed of himself. He knew his own failings; he predicted their consequence; the melancholy foreboding was never long absent from his mind; yet his passion carried him down the stream of error, and swept him over the precipice he saw directly in his course. The fatal defect in his character lay in the comparative weakness of his volition,\* that superior faculty of the mind which, governing the conduct according to the dictates of the understanding, alone entitles it to be denominated rational; which is the parent of

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\* This dictum of Dr Currie is disputed by Professor Walker, who thus argues:—"In ordinary language, we call that person 'wilful' who knows what is right, yet does what is wrong; intimating that his Will has too much power, and predominates over his reason. The decisions of Burns's understanding were misguided by his 'treacherous inclinations.' He had such an abhorrence of selfishness, servility, and cunning, as to make him undervalue the virtues, from an excess of which they may proceed; while, on the other hand, his admiration of tenderness, benevolence, and generosity, blinded him to the turpitude of the social vices. Had he been urged by powerful motives to any act of meanness, hypocrisy, or cruelty, he had sufficient strength of Will to abstain from it; and when he yielded to the seductions of licentious intemperance, it was, in some measure, owing to the incorrect and partial views which his understanding had adopted. When a man limits his praise to certain favourite virtues, he thereby opens a way for the introduction of certain favourite vices."

fortitude, patience, and self-denial ; which, by regulating and combining human exertions, may be said to have effected all that is great in the works of man, in literature, in science, or on the face of nature. The occupations of a poet are not calculated to strengthen the governing powers of the mind, or to weaken that sensibility which requires perpetual control, since it gives birth to the vehemence of passion as well as to the higher powers of imagination. Unfortunately the favourite occupations of genius are calculated to increase all its peculiarities ; to nourish that lofty pride which disdains the littleness of prudence, and the restrictions of order ; and, by indulgence to increase that sensibility which, in the present form of our existence, is scarcely compatible with peace or happiness, even when accompanied with the choicest gifts of fortune.





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