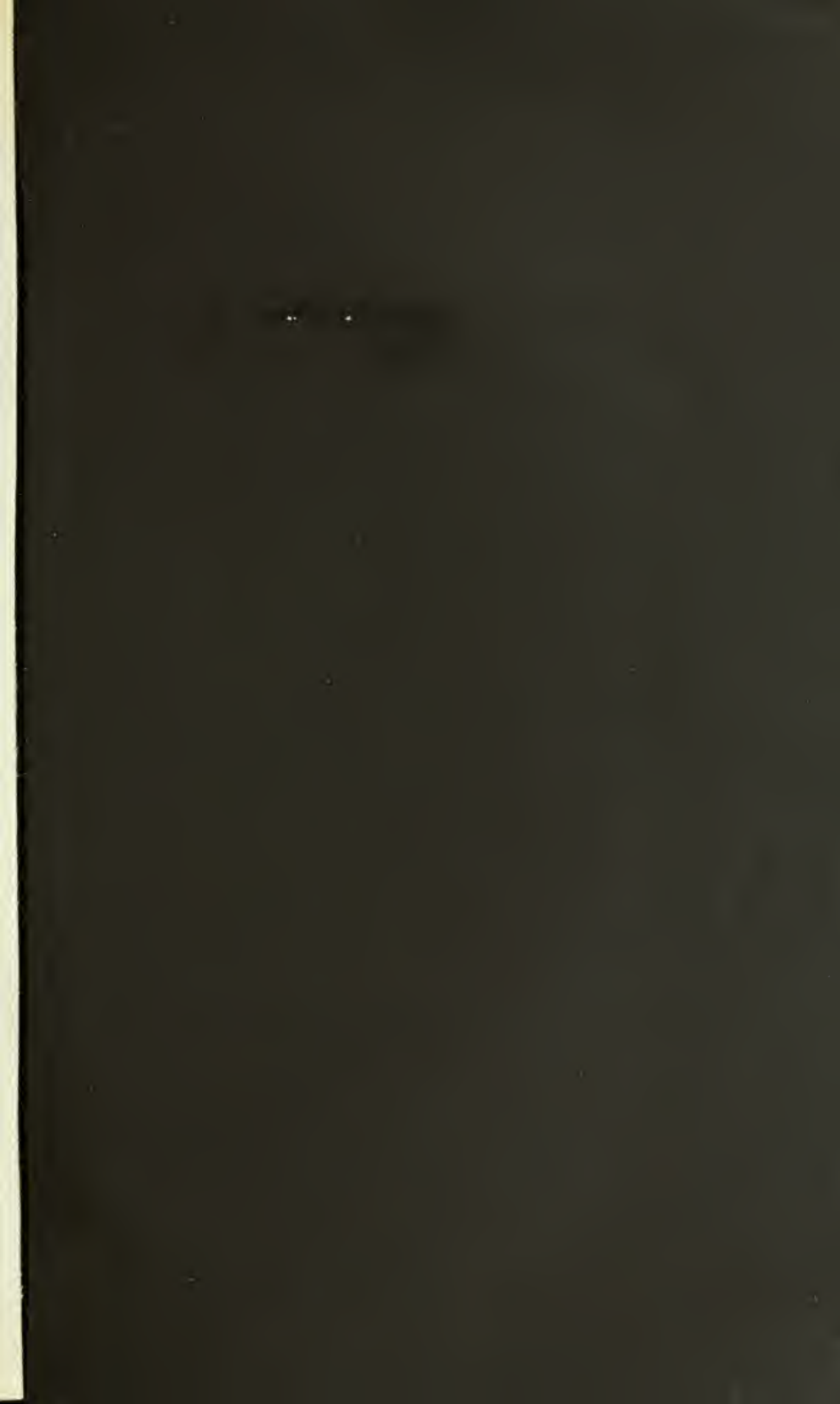




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THE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS



W. H. P. 1874

W. H. P. 1874



Gloaming: The Cottars Saturday Night

November chill blows loud wi' angry sigh.

The shortning winter-day is near a close.

The mairy beasts retreating frae the pleugh,

The blackning trains o' craws to their repose,

The toil worn Cottar frae his labor goes

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THE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS



VOLUME FIFTH

PROSE

Edinburgh

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1895

CONTENTS OF VOLUME FIFTH.

(*An asterisk is prefixed to those productions that, either wholly or in part, are here first embraced in a professedly full edition of the Author's works.*)

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To face page p. 141.

It is with no ordinary feeling of regret that the publisher, in issuing the present volume, has occasion to refer to the loss which the admirers of true artistic genius have recently sustained in the death of Mr SAM BOUGH, R.S.A. The interest which that eminent painter took in this Edition of the Works of Robert Burns, is made manifest in the characteristic landscape illustrations adorning the several volumes. These he executed with a power and feeling peculiar to himself, and they display a thorough appreciation of their respective subjects.

It may not be uninteresting here to record that a special link united the late artist, by remote incidental association, with the Bard whose writings were so precious to him. He was fond of telling his friends that his mother, while yet a child, had, in course of her own mother's occasional visits at the poet's house in Dumfries, been noticed by him, and dandled on his knee.

Had the life of Mr BOUGH been spared in its wonted vigour for even a brief period longer, the closing volume of this work would have been graced with a view of Dumfries by him, embracing in the background an extensive prospect of the Nith valley, reaching upwards for many miles. The publisher accompanied Mr BOUGH last summer, when he executed a masterly sketch from the point of view selected, and which now, alas! exists only in that stage of progress.

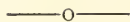
Mr BOUGH was born at Carlisle in January 1821, and died at Edinburgh on 19th November 1878. His remains are interred in the Dean Cemetery there.

“None that knew him need be told,
A warmer heart Death ne'er made cold.”



Clarinda —

PROSE WORKS.



THE CLARINDA CORRESPONDENCE.

“Can no honest man have a prepossession for a fine woman, but he must run his head against an intrigue?”

THE silhouette portrait which accompanies this portion of the present work, will give the reader some idea of the physical charms of the lady whose attractions engaged the almost undivided attention of Burns from the first week in December 1787, till near the end of March 1788. Robert Chambers, who saw and conversed with her in her later years, describes her as “of a somewhat voluptuous style of beauty, of lively and easy manners, of a poetical fabric of mind, with some wit, and not too high a degree of refinement or delicacy.”

These letters were obviously never intended to be seen by any one but the person to whom they were addressed; yet, by their fervid eloquence, as well as by their peculiar and in some respects questionable character, they have attained a wide celebrity. We shall not venture to say, as some critics have done, that it would have been better had most of them remained unknown; but the early unauthorised publication of a considerable portion of them furnished an erroneous estimate of their value, which a perusal of the entire correspondence is calculated to rectify. A few years after the poet's death, the lady was persuaded to trust a literary adventurer with a perusal of twenty-five of Burns's letters, with permission to make a few extracts from these to enrich a memoir of the bard he professed to be writing. By a gross breach of confidence, that person made entire copies of the lot, and had them published by Thomas Stewart of Glasgow, in 1802. An interdiction was soon obtained, at the instance of the London pub-

lishers of Dr Currie's edition of the author's writings, against those who thus pirated these letters; yet, in spite of legal proceedings, the stolen letters continued to be appended to the poet's correspondence from year to year, till after the death of Clarinda in 1841. Her grandson, the late W. C. M'Lehose, was shortly thereafter induced to publish the complete collection, in so far as the letters had been retained by the family. The following impudent preface headed the surreptitious publication referred to:—

“The lady to whom these letters are addressed seems to have encouraged a friendly correspondence with the poet, whose fascinating powers of mind must necessarily have produced, on her part, esteem and admiration. Yet although he was forbidden to indulge in the more tender affections of the heart, it was natural to expect, from the strong sensibility and delicate feelings of the bard, that in his correspondence with a young and amiable woman *love* must be the principal theme.

“We are happy that from the condescension of the proprietrix, we are enabled to favour the public with an additional portion of the writings of our favourite poet; nor is this condescension the effect of vanity, as from the letters themselves this lady can never be discovered; although, like Swift's Vanessa, she is, under a fictitious name, ushered into immortality by an author equally celebrated.

“To remove the doubts of those who might suspect that these are not the genuine productions of the bard to whom they are ascribed, the originals are permitted to remain with the publisher for one month after their first publication.”

About the close of 1796, Mr John Syme, who exerted himself to supply Dr Currie with materials for the deceased poet's Biography and the edition of his works to be published for the benefit of his widow and children, applied to Clarinda on the subject of the bard's letters addressed to her; and in reply she thus stipulated: “On condition that you send me my letters, I will select such passages from our dear bard's letters as will do honour to his memory, and cannot hurt my own fame, even with the most rigid.” The result was that the letters she had addressed to Burns were returned to her; but Dr Currie did not see fit to avail himself of the selected passages offered to Mr Syme.

We have already explained (page 311, Vol. IV.) how Clarinda and Burns were introduced to each other. She was younger than the poet by only three months: her maiden name was Agnes Craig, her father being Mr Andrew Craig a surgeon in Glasgow: a brother of her father was the Rev. William Craig, one of the parish ministers of that city, whose son was William Craig, a Lord of Session (born 1746—died 1813). In July 1776, she was, at the age of seventeen, married to Mr James M'Lehose, a law agent in Glasgow, of respectable connexions. "Only a short time had elapsed," she afterwards wrote, "ere I perceived, with inexpressible regret, that our dispositions, tempers, and sentiments, were so totally different as to banish all hopes of happiness." The result was a separation within five years after the marriage, and she returned to her father's house, while he, in 1784, went to the West Indies to push his fortune. After the death of her father in 1782, she removed her place of residence to Edinburgh, her only certain source of income being a small annuity, arising from a judicious investment which her father had made in her behalf. At the time she became acquainted with Burns, she had two sons who lived with her: the elder boy, Andrew, survived to practise as a Writer to the Signet, and died in 1839, about two years and a half before his mother: the younger child, William, always delicate, died in 1790. Her husband died at Kingston, Jamaica, in 1812.

(1) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[Dec. 6, 1787.]

MADAM,—I had set no small store by my tea-drinking to-night, and have not often been so disappointed. On Saturday evening I shall embrace the opportunity with the greatest pleasure. I leave this town on this day se'nnight, and probably for a couple of twelvemonths; but must ever regret that I so lately got an acquaintance whom I shall ever highly esteem, and in whose welfare I shall ever be warmly interested.

Our worthy common friend, in her usual pleasant way, rallied me a good deal on my new acquaintance, and in the humor of her ideas I wrote some lines, which I inclose you, as I think they have a good deal of poetic merit;* and Miss Nimmo tells me you are not only a critic but a poetess. Fiction, you know, is the native region of poetry; and I hope you will pardon my vanity in sending you the bagatelle as a tolerable off-hand *jeu-d'esprit*. I have several poetic trifles which I shall gladly leave with Miss Nimmo, or you, if they were worth house-room; as there are scarcely two people on earth by whom it would mortify me more to be forgotten, though at the distance of ninescore miles.—I am, Madam, with the highest respect, your very humble servant,

ROB^t. BURNS.

Thursday Evening.

(^c) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[DEC. 8, 1787.]

I CAN say, with truth, Madam, that I never met with a person in my life whom I more anxiously wished to meet again than yourself. To-night I was to have had that very great pleasure—I was intoxicated with the idea; but an unlucky fall from a coach has so bruised one of my knees, that I can't stir my leg off the cushion: so if I don't see you again, I shall not rest in my grave for chagrin. I was vexed to the soul I had not seen you sooner; I am determined to cultivate your friendship with the enthusiasm of Religion; but thus has Fortune ever served me. I cannot bear the idea of leaving Edinburgh without seeing you. I know not how to account for it—I am strangely

* These lines by Burns, which he commends in a style so unwonted when speaking of his own work, seem not to have been preserved.

taken with some people; nor am I often mistaken. You are a stranger to me; but I am an odd being; some yet unnamed feelings—things, not principles, but better than whims—carry me farther than boasted reason ever did a Philosopher. Farewell! every happiness be yours!

ROBT. BURNS.

Saturday Evening, }
St James' Square, No. 2. }

(¹) MRS M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CLAR. CORR., 1843.)

Saturday Ev. [Dec. 8, 1787.]

ENURED as I have been to disappointments, I never felt more, nay, nor half so severely, for one of the same nature! The cruel cause, too, augments my uneasiness. I trust you'll soon recover it; meantime, if my sympathy, my friendship, can alleviate your pain, be assured you possess them. I am much flattered at being a favourite of yours. Miss Nimmo can tell you how earnestly I had long pressed her to make us acquainted. I had a presentiment that we should derive pleasure from the society of each other. To-night I had thought of fifty things to say to you; how unfortunate this prevention! Do not accuse Fortune; had I not known she was *blind* before, her ill-usage of *you* had marked it sufficiently. However, she is a fickle, old, envious beldame, and I'd much rather be indebted to *Nature*. You shall *not* leave town without seeing me, if I should come along with good Miss Nimmo and call for you. I am determined to see you; and am ready to exclaim with Yoricke, "Tut! are we not all relations?" We are, indeed, *strangers* in one sense; but of near kin in many respects: these "nameless feelings" I perfectly comprehend, tho' the pen of a Locke could not define them. Perhaps *instinct* comes nearer their description than either "Principles or Whims." Think ye they have any connection with that "heavenly light which leads astray?" One thing I know, that they have a powerful effect upon me; and are delightful when under the check of *reason* and *religion*.

Miss Ninmo was a favourite of mine from the first hour I met her. There is a softness, a nameless something about her that, was I a man, old as she is, I would have chosen her before most women that I know. I fear, however, this liking is not *mutual*. I'll tell you why I think so, at meeting. She was in mere jest when she told you I was a *Poetess*. I have often composed rhyme, (if not *reason*), but never one line of *poetry*. The distinction is obvious to every one of the least discernment. Your lines were truly poetical; give me all you can spare. Not one living has a higher relish for poetry than I have; and my reading everything of the kind makes me a tolerable judge. Ten years ago, such lines from such a hand would have half-turned my head. Perhaps you thought it might have done so even *yet*, and wisely premised that "Fiction was the native region of poetry." Read the enclosed, which I scrawled just after reading yours.* Be sincere, and own that, whatever merit it has, it has not a line resembling poetry. Pardon any little freedoms I take with you; if they entertain a heavy hour, they have all the merit I intended. Will you let me know, now and then, how your leg is? If I was your *sister*, I would call and see you; but 'tis a censorious world this (and in this sense);^a "you and I are not of this world." Adieu. Keep up your heart, you will soon get well, and we shall *meet*. Farewell. God bless you!

A. M.†

(³) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[Dec. 12, 1787.]

I STRETCH a point indeed, my dearest Madam, when I answer your card on the rack of my present agony. Your friendship, Madam! By heavens, I was never proud before. Your lines, I maintain it, are poetry, and good poetry: mine

* Neither do Clarinda's lines in reply to those of Burns seem to have been preserved.

† We have had an opportunity of collating and correcting the text of this letter from the original, now in possession of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq.

were indeed partly fiction, and partly a friendship which, had I been so blest as to have met with you *in time*, might have led me—God of love only knows where. Time is too short for ceremonies.

I swear solemnly—in all the tenor of my former oath—to remember you in all the pride and warmth of friendship until—I cease to be !

To-morrow, and every day, till I see you, you shall hear from me.

Farewell ! May you enjoy a better night's repose than I am likely to have.

R. B.

(²) MRS M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[*Sunday Noon, Dec. 16, 1787.*]

MISS NIMMO and I had a long conversation last night. Little did I suspect that she was of the party. Gentle, sweet soul ! She is accusing herself as the cause of your misfortune. It was in vain I rallied her upon such an excess of sensibility—as I termed it. She is lineally descended from “My Uncle Toby ;” has hopes of the devil, and would not hurt a fly. How could you tell me that you were in “agony ?” I hope you will swallow laudanum, and procure some ease from sleep. I am glad to hear Mr Wood attends you. He is a good soul, and a safe surgeon. I know him a little. Do as he bids, and I trust your leg will soon be quite well. When I meet you, I must chide you for writing in your romantic style. Do you remember that she whom you address is a married woman ? or—Jacob-like—would you wait seven years, and even then perhaps be disappointed, as he was ? No ; I know you better : you have too much of that impetuosity which generally accompanies noble minds. To be serious, most people would think, by your style, that you were writing to some vain, silly woman to make a fool of her—or worse. I have too much vanity to ascribe it to the former motive, and too much

charity to harbour an idea of the latter ; and viewing it as the effusion of a benevolent heart upon meeting one similar to itself, I have promised you my friendship : it will be your own fault if I ever withdraw it. Would to God I had it in my power to give you some solid proofs of it ! Were I the Duchess of Gordon, you should be possessed of that independence which every generous mind pants after ; but I fear she is “no Duchess at the heart.” Obscure as I am (comparatively) I enjoy all the necessaries of life as fully as I desire, and wish for wealth only to procure the “luxury of doing good.”

My chief design in writing you to-day was to beg you would not write me often, lest the exertion should hurt you. Meantime, if my scrawls can amuse you in your confinement, you shall have them occasionally. I shall hear of you every day from my beloved Miss Nimmo. Do you know, the very first time I was in her house, most of our conversation was about a certain (lame) poet ? I read her soul in her expressive countenance, and have been attached to her ever since. Adieu ! Be patient. Take care of yourself, My best wishes attend you. A. M.

(⁴) TO MRS M^CLEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[*Thurs. Dec. 20, 1787.*]

YOUR last, my dear Madam, had the effect on me, that Job's situation had on his friends, when “they sat down seven days and seven nights astonished, and spake not a word.”—“Pay my addresses to a married woman !” I started as if I had seen the ghost of him I had injured. I recollected my expressions ; some of them indeed were, in the law phrase, “habit and repute,” which is being half guilty. I cannot possibly say, Madam, whether my heart might not have gone astray a little ; but I can declare, upon the honor of a poet, that the vagrant has wandered unknown to me. I have a pretty handsome troop of follies

of my own ; and, like some other people's, they are but undisciplined blackguards : but the luckless rascals have something like honor in them ; they would not do a dishonest thing.

To meet with an unfortunate woman, amiable and young, deserted and widowed by those who were bound by every tie of duty, nature, and gratitude, to protect, comfort, and cherish her ; add to all, when she is perhaps one of the first of lovely forms and noble minds—the mind, too, that hits one's taste as the joys of Heaven do a saint—should a faint idea, the natural child of imagination, thoughtfully peep over the fence—were you, my friend, to sit in judgment, and the poor, airy straggler brought before you, trembling, self-condemned, with artless eyes, brimful of contrition, looking wistfully on its judge—you could not, my dear Madam, condemn the hapless wretch to death “without benefit of clergy?”

I won't tell you what reply my heart made to your raillery of “seven years,” but I will give you what a brother of my trade says on the same allusion :—

“The patriarch to gain a wife,
Chaste, beautiful and young,
Serv'd fourteen years a painful life,
And never thought it long.
O were you to reward such cares,
And life so long would stay ;
Not fourteen but four hundred years
Would seem but as one day !” *

I have written you this scrawl because I have nothing else to do, and you may sit down and find fault with it, if you have no better way of consuming your time ; but finding fault with the vagaries of a poet's fancy is much such another business as Xerxes chastising the waves of Hellespont.

* This is in Tom D'Urfey's 2nd Vol. of Songs, p. 37, London, 1719.

My limb now allows me to sit in some peace ; to walk
I have yet no prospect of, as I can't mark it to the ground.

I have just now looked over what I have written, and
it is such a chaos of nonsense that I dare say you will
throw it into the fire, and call me an idle, stupid fellow ;
but whatever you may think of my brains, believe me to
be, with the most sacred respect and heartfelt esteem,
My dear Madam, your humble servant,

ROB^t. BURNS.

(³) TO MR ROBERT BURNS.

(BRIGHT'S "Glenriddell MSS.")

ON BURNS SAYING HE "HAD NOTHING ELSE TO DO."

When first you saw *Clarinda's* charms,
What rapture in your bosom grew !
Her heart was shut to Love's alarms,
But then—you'd nothing else to do.

Apollo oft had lent his harp,
But now 'twas strung from Cupid's bow ;
You sung—it reach'd *Clarinda's* heart—
She wish'd you'd nothing else to do.

Fair Venus smil'd, Minerva frown'd,
Cupid observ'd—the arrow flew :
Indifference, ere a week went round,
Show'd you had nothing else to do.

(Three other verses were added, of inferior merit.)

Christmas Eve, 1787.

CLARINDA.

(⁵) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART 1802.)

[Dec. 28, 1787.]

I BEG your pardon, my dear "*Clarinda*," for the fragment
scrawl I sent you yesterday. I really don't know what I

wrote. A gentleman, for whose character, abilities, and critical knowledge, I have the highest veneration, called in just as I had begun the second sentence, and I would not make the porter wait.* I read to my much-respected friend several of my own bagatelles, and, among others, your lines, which I had copied out. He began some criticism on them as on the other pieces, when I informed him they were the work of a young lady in this town; which, I assure you, made him stare. My learned friend seriously protested, that he did not believe any young woman in Edinburgh was capable of such lines; and, if you know anything of Professor Gregory, you will neither doubt of his abilities nor his sincerity. I do love you, if possible, still better for having so fine a taste and turn for poesy. I have again gone wrong in my usual unguarded way, but you may erase the word; and put esteem, respect, or any other tame Dutch expression you please, in its place. I believe there is no holding converse, or carrying on correspondence, with an amiable woman, much less a *gloriously amiable fine woman*, without some mixture of that delicious passion, whose most devoted slave I have more than once had the honor of being—But why be hurt or offended on that account? Can no honest man have a prepossession for a fine woman, but he must run his head against an intrigue? Take a little of the tender witchcraft of love, and add it to the generous, the honorable sentiments of manly friendship; and I know but *one* more delightful morsel, which few, few in any rank ever taste. Such a composition is like adding cream to

* This refers to a short letter (now lost) accompanying the impromptu verses, given at page 123, Vol. II., in reply to Clarinda's lines. That versified "Reply," which is signed "Sylvander," contains an expression which Clarinda takes up at the close of her next letter.

"Love, from Clarinda's heavenly eyes,
Transix'd his bosom thro' and thro'."

strawberries: it not only gives the fruit a more elegant richness, but has a peculiar deliciousness of its own.

I enclose you a few lines I composed on a late melancholy occasion. I will not give above five or six copies of it at all; and I would be hurt if any friend should give any copies without my consent.*

You cannot imagine, Clarinda (I like the idea of Arcadian names in a commerce of this kind), how much store I have set by the hopes of your future friendship. I don't know if you have a just idea of my character, but I wish you to see me *as I am*. I am, as most people of my trade are, a strange Will-o'-wisp being; the victim, too frequently, of much imprudence and many follies. My great constituent elements are *pride* and *passion*: the first I have endeavoured to humanize into integrity and honor; the last makes me a devotee, to the warmest degree of enthusiasm, in love, religion, or friendship—either of them, or all together, as I happen to be inspired. 'Tis true I never saw you but once; but how much acquaintance did I form with you in that once! Do not think I flatter you, or have a design upon you, Clarinda: I have too much pride for the one, and too little cold contrivance for the other; but of all God's creatures I ever could approach in the beaten way of acquaintance,† you struck me with the deepest, the strongest, the most permanent impression. I say the most permanent, because I know myself well, and how far I can promise either on my prepossessions or powers. Why are you unhappy? And why are so many of our fellow-creatures, unworthy to belong to the same species with you, blest with all they can wish? You have a hand all benevolent to

* The lines here referred to were those "On the death of Lord President Dundas." Page 119, Vol. II.

† "The beaten way of friendship"—this was a favourite phrase of Burns, which we have formerly pointed out.

give; why were you denied the pleasure? You have a heart formed, gloriously formed for all the most refined luxuries of love; why was that heart ever wrung? 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 fields of Enjoyment? If we do not, man was made in vain! I deserved most of the unhappy hours that have lingered over my head; they were the wages of my labour; but what unprovoked demon, malignant as hell, stole upon the confidence of unmistrusting busy fate, and dashed your cup of life with undeserved sorrow?

Let me know how long your stay will be out of town: I shall count the hours till you inform me of your return. Cursed *etiquette* forbids your seeing me just now; and so soon as I can walk, I must bid Edinburgh adieu. Lord! why was I born to see misery, which I cannot relieve; and to meet with friends, whom I can't enjoy? I look back with the pang of unavailing avarice on my loss in not knowing you sooner: all last winter, these three months past, what luxury of intercourse have I not lost! Perhaps though, 'twas better for my peace. You see I am either above, or incapable of, dissimulation. I believe it is want of that particular genius. I despise design, because I want either coolness or wisdom to be capable of it. I am interrupted. Adieu, my dear Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

Friday Evening.

(4) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Friday Evening, [Dec. 28, 1787.]

I go to the country early to-morrow morning, but will be home by Tuesday—sooner than I expected. I have not time to answer

yours as it deserves; nor, had I the age of Methusalem, could I answer it in kind. I shall grow *vain*. Your praises were enough—but those of a Dr Gregory superadded! Take care, many a “glorious woman” has been undone by having her head turned. “*Know you!*” I know you far better than you do me. Like yourself, I am a bit of an enthusiast. In religion and friendship quite a bigot—perhaps I could be so in love too; but everything dear to me in heaven and earth forbids! This is my fixed principle; and the person who would dare to endeavour to remove it I would hold as my chief enemy. Like you, I am incapable of dissimulation; nor am I, as you suppose, unhappy. Possessed of fine children, competence, fame, friends kind and attentive—what a monster of ingratitude should I be in the eye-of Heaven were I to style myself unhappy! True, I have met with scenes horrible to recollection, even at six years’ distance; but adversity, my friend, is allowed to be the school of Virtue. It oft confers that chastened softness which is unknown among the favourites of Fortune! Even a mind possessed of natural sensibility, without this, never feels that exquisite pleasure which nature has annexed to our sympathetic sorrows. Religion, the only refuge of the unfortunate, has been my balm in every woe. O! could I make her appear to you as she has done to me! Instead of ridiculing her tenets, you would fall down and worship her very semblance wherever you found it!

I will write again at more leisure, and notice other parts of yours. I send you a *simile* upon a character I don’t know if you are acquainted with. I am confounded at your admiring my lines. I shall begin to question your taste—but Dr G.! When I am low-spirited (which I am at times) I shall think of this as a *restorative*.*

Now for the simile:—

The morning sun shines glorious and bright,
And fills the heart with wonder and delight!
He dazzles, in meridian splendour seen,
Without a blackening cloud to intervene.
So, at a distance view’d, your genius bright,
Your wit, your flowing numbers can delight,

* See Burns’s letter of 31st Dec. 1787, addressed to Mr Richard Brown. Page 316, Vol. IV.

But ah ! when error's dark'ning clouds arise,
 When passion thunders, folly's lightning flies,
 More safe we gaze, but admiration dies :
 And as the tempting brightness snares the moth,
 Sure ruin marks too near approach to both.

Good night ; for Clarinda's "heavenly eyes" need the earthly
 aid of sleep. Adieu. CLARINDA.

P.S.—I entreat you not to mention our correspondence to one
 on earth. Though I've conscious innocence, my situation is a
 delicate one.

(5) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

January 1, 1788.

MANY happy returns of this day to you, my dear, pleasant friend !
 May each revolving year find you *wiser and happier* ! I embrace
 the first spare hour to fulfil my promise ; and begin with thanking
 you for the enclosed lines—they are very pretty : * I like the idea
 of personifying the vices rising in the absence of *Justice*. It is a
 constant source of refined pleasure, giving "to airy nothings a
 local habitation and a name," which people of a luxuriant imagina-
 tion only can enjoy. Yet, to a mind of a benevolent turn, it is
 delightful to observe how equal the distribution of happiness is
 among all ranks ! If stupid people are rendered incapable of
 tasting the refined pleasures of the intelligent and feeling mind,
 they are likewise exempted from the thousand distractions and
 disquietudes peculiar to sensibility.

I have been staying with a dear female friend who has long
 been an admirer of yours, and was once on the point of meeting
 with you in the house of a Mrs Bruce. She would have been a
 much better "Clarinda." She is comely without being beautiful,
 and has a large share of sense, taste, and sensibility ; added to all,
 a violent penchant for poetry. If ever I have an opportunity, I

* On the death of Lord President Dundas.

shall make you and her acquainted.* No wonder Dr Gregory criticised my lines. I saw several defects in them myself; but had neither time nor patience (nor ability perhaps) to correct them. The three last verses were longer than the former; and in the conclusion, I saw a vile tautology which I could not get rid of.† But you will wonder when I tell you that I am not only ignorant of every language except my own, but never so much as knew a syllable of the English grammar. If I can write grammatically, 'tis through mere habit. I rejoice to hear of Dr Gregory being your particular friend. Though unacquainted, I am no stranger to his character: where worth unites with abilities, it commands our love as well as admiration. Alas! they are too seldom found in one character! Those possessed of great talents would do well to remember that all depends upon the use made of them. Shining abilities improperly applied, only serve to accelerate our destruction in both worlds. I loved you for your fine taste in poetry long before I saw you; so shall not trouble myself erasing the same word applied in the same way to me.

You say, "there is no corresponding with an agreeable woman without a mixture of the tender passion." I believe there is no friendship between people of sentiment of different sexes, without a little *softness*; but when kept within proper bounds, it only serves to give a higher relish to such intercourse. Love and Friendship are names in every one's mouth; but few, extremely few, understand their meaning. Love (or affection) cannot be genuine if it hesitate a moment to sacrifice every selfish gratification to the happiness of its object. On the contrary, when I would purchase *that* at the expense of *this*, it deserves to be styled—not love, but a name too gross to mention. Therefore, I contend that an honest man may have a friendly prepossession for a woman, whose soul would abhor the idea of an intrigue with her. These are my sentiments on the subject: I hope they correspond with yours.

* Clarinda's "dear female friend" was "Miss Mary Peacock," whom the reader will soon hear more of in these letters. She afterwards became the second wife of Mr James Gray, of the High School, Edinburgh: the "Ettrick Shepherd" married a sister of Mr Gray's first wife.

† This passage proves that the verses enclosed to Richard Brown by Burns on 31st Dec., could not be the little composition—"Talk not of Love, it gives me pain," which consisted in all of three stanzas.

'Tis honest in you to wish me to see you "*just as you are.*" I believe I have a tolerably just idea of your character. No wonder; for had I been a man, I should have been you. I am not vain enough to think myself equal in abilities; but I am formed with a liveliness of fancy, and a strength of passion little inferior. Situation and circumstances have, however, had the effects on each of us which might be expected. Misfortune has wonderfully contributed to subdue the keenness of my passions, while success and adulation have served to nourish and inflame yours. Both of us are incapable of deceit, because we want coolness and command of our feelings. Art is what I never could attain to, even in situations where a little would have been prudent. Now and then I am favoured with a salutary blast of "the north wind of prudence." The southern zephyrs of kindness too often send up their sultry fogs, and cloud the atmosphere of my understanding. I have thought that Nature threw me off in the same mould, just after you. We were born, I believe, in one year. Madame Nature has some merit by her work that year. Don't you think so? I suppose the Carline has had a flying visit of Venus and the Graces; and Minerva has been jealous of her attention, and sent Apollo with his harp to charm them away.

But why do you accuse Fate for my misfortunes? There is a noble independence of mind which I admire; but, when not checked by Religion, it is apt to degenerate into a criminal arraignment of Providence. No "malignant demon," as you suppose, was "permitted to dash my cup of sorrow;" it was the kindness of a wise and tender Father who foresaw that I needed chastisement ere I could be brought to Himself. Ah, my friend, Religion converts our heaviest misfortunes into blessings! I feel it to be so. These passions, naturally too violent for my peace, have been broken and moderated by adversity; and if even that has been unable to conquer my vivacity, what length might I not have gone, had I been permitted to glide along in the sunshine of prosperity? I should have forgot my future destination, and fixed my happiness on the fleeting shadows below! My hand was denied the bliss of giving, but Heaven accepts of the wish. My heart was formed for love, and I desire to devote it to Him who is the source of love! Yes, we shall surely meet in an "un-

known state of being" where there will be full scope for every kind, heartfelt affection—love without alloy, and without end. Your paragraph upon this made the tears flow down my face! I will not tell you the reflections which it raised in my mind; but I wished that a heart susceptible of such a sentiment took more pains about its accomplishment. I fancy you will not wish me to write again; you'll think me too serious and grave. I know not how I have been led to be so; but I make no excuse, because I must be allowed to write to you as I feel, or not at all. You say you have "humanized pride into honor and integrity." 'Tis a good endeavour; and could you command your too impetuous passions, it would be a more glorious achievement than his who conquered the world, and wept because he had no more worlds to subdue. Forgive my freedom with you: I never trouble myself with the faults of those I don't esteem, and only notice those of friends, to themselves. I am pleased with friends when they tell me mine, and look upon it as a test of real friendship.

I have your Poems in loan just now, I've read them many times, and with new pleasure. Sometime I shall give you my opinion of them severally. Let me have a sight of some of your "Bagatelles," as you style them. If ever I write any more, you shall have them; and I'll thank you to correct their errors. I wrote lines on Bishop Geddes, by way of blank verse; but they were what Pope describes, "Where ten low words do creep in one dull line." I believe you (being a genius) have inspired me; for I never wrote so well before. Pray, is Dr Gregory pious? I have heard so. I wish I knew him. Adieu! You have quantity enough, whatever be the quality! Good night, Believe me your sincere friend.

CLARINDA.

[*Tuesday.*]

(6) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Thursday, 3d Jan. 1788.

I GOT your lines : * they are “in *kind* !” I can’t but laugh at my presumption in pretending to send my poor ones to *you* ! but it was to amuse myself. At this season, when others are joyous, I am the reverse. I have no *near* relations ; and while others are with theirs, I sit alone, musing upon several of mine with whom I used to be—now gone to the land of forgetfulness.

You have put me in a rhyming humour. The moment I read yours, I wrote the following lines :—

Talk not of Love ! it gives me pain,
 For Love has been my foe :
 He bound me in an iron chain,
 And plung’d me deep in woe !
 But Friendship’s pure and lasting joys
 My heart was formed to prove ;
 The worthy object be of those,
 But never talk of Love.
 The “Hand of Friendship” I accept,
 May Honor be our guard !
 Virtue our intercourse direct,
 Her smiles our dear reward.

But I wish to know (in sober prose) how your leg is ? I would have inquired sooner had I known it would have been acceptable. Miss N. informs me now and then ; but I have not seen her dear face for some time. Do you think you could venture this length in a coach without hurting yourself ? I go out of town the beginning of the week for a few days. I wish you could come to-morrow or Saturday. I long for a conversation with you, and lameness of body won’t hinder that. ’Tis really curious—so much *fun* passing between two persons who saw one another only *once* ! Say if you think you dare venture ; only let the coachman be “adorned with sobriety.”

Adieu ! Believe me (on my simple word) your real friend and well-wisher,

A. M.

* Here, again, the lines of Burns have been lost, through some unaccountable remissness on the part of his correspondent. But, indeed, when scraps of the bard’s handwriting grew invaluable, Clarinda became the prey of covetous collectors.

(6) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[Thursday, Jan^y 3d, 1788.]

MY DEAR CLARINDA,—Your last verses have so delighted me, that I have copied them in among some of my own most valued pieces, which I keep sacred for my own use. Do let me have a few now and then.

Did you, Madam, know what I feel when you talk of your sorrows !

Good God ! that one, who has so much worth in the sight of heaven, and is so amiable to her fellow-creatures, should be so unhappy ! I can't venture out for cold. My limb is vastly better ; but I have not any use of it without my crutches. Monday, for the first time, I dine in a neighbour's, next door. As soon as I can go so far, *even in a coach*, my first visit shall be to you. Write me when you leave town, and immediately when you return ; and I earnestly pray your stay may be short. You can't imagine how miserable you made me when you hinted to me not to write. Farewell.

SYLVANDER.

(7) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[Thursday, Jan. 3, 1788.]

YOU are right, my dear Clarinda ; a friendly correspondence goes for nothing, except one write their undisguised sentiments. Yours please me for their intrinsic merit, as well as because they are *yours*, which, I assure you, is to me a high recommendation. Your religious sentiments, Madam, I revere. If you have, on some suspicious evidence from some lying oracle, learnt that I despise or ridicule so sacredly important a matter as real religion, you have, my

Clarinda, much misconstrued your friend.—“I am not mad, most noble Festus!” Have you ever met a perfect character? Do we not sometimes rather exchange faults than get rid of them? For instance, I am perhaps tired with, and shocked at, a life too much the prey of giddy inconsistencies and thoughtless follies; by degrees I grow sober, prudent, and statedly pious—I say statedly, because the most unaffected devotion is not at all inconsistent with my first character—I join the world in congratulating myself on the happy change. But let me pry more narrowly into this affair. Have I, at bottom, any thing of a secret pride in these endowments and emendations? Have I nothing of a presbyterian sourness, an hypocritical severity, when I survey my less regular neighbours? In a word, have I missed all those nameless and numberless modifications of indistinct selfishness, which are so near our own eyes, that we can scarce bring them within the sphere of our vision, and which the known spotless cambric of our character hides from the ordinary observer?

My definition of worth is short; truth and humanity respecting our fellow-creatures; reverence and humility in the presence of that Being, my Creator and Preserver, and who, I have every reason to believe, will one day be my Judge. The first part of my definition is the creature of unbiassed instinct; the last is the child of after reflection. Where I found these two essentials I would gently note and slightly mention any attendant flaws—flaws, the marks, the consequences of human nature.

I can easily enter into the sublime pleasures that your strong imagination and keen sensibility must derive from religion, particularly if a little in the shade of misfortune; but I own I cannot, without a marked grudge, see heaven totally engross so amiable, so charming a woman, as my friend Clarinda; and should be very well pleased at a cir-

cumstance that would put it in the power of somebody (happy somebody!) to divide her attention, with all the delicacy and tenderness of an earthly attachment.

You will not easily persuade me that you have not a grammatical knowledge of the English language—so far from being inaccurate, you are elegant beyond any woman of my acquaintance, except one, whom I wish you knew.*

Your last verses to me have so delighted me, that I have got an excellent old Scots air that suits the measure, and you shall see them in print in the “Scots Musieal Museum,” a work publishing by a friend of mine in this town. I want four stanzas; you gave me but three, and one of them alluded to an expression in my last letter;† so I have taken your two first verses, with a slight alteration in the second, and have added a third; but you must help me to a fourth. Here they are: the latter half of the first stanza would have been worthy of Sappho; I am in raptures with it.

“Talk not of Love, it gives me pain,
For Love has been my foe:
He bound me with an iron chain,
And sunk me deep in woe.

But Friendship’s pure and lasting joys
My heart was form’d to prove:
There, welcome, win and wear the prize,
But never talk of Love.

Your friendship much can make me blest,
O why that bliss destroy!
Why urge the only‡ one request
You know I must § deny.

* This lady must have been Miss Chalmers, whose letters to him he afterwards shewed to Clarinda.

† This “last letter” of Burns seems to be lost, for that of Friday, 28th December, does not contain the expression, “Hand of Friendship,” quoted in Clarinda’s third stanza. Perhaps, however, Clarinda’s lines are a response to the following words of Burns in that letter:—“I do *love* you. . . . You may erase the word, and put esteem, respect, or any other tame Dutch expression in its place,” &c.

‡ Or “*odious* one request.”

§ Or, “*will* deny.”—*R. B.*

The alteration in the second four lines is no improvement, but there was a slight inaccuracy in your rhyme. The third I only offer to your choice, and have left two words for your determination. The air is *The Banks of Spey*, and is most beautiful.

To-morrow evening I intend taking a chair, and paying a visit at Park Place to a much-valued old friend.* If I could be sure of finding you at home (and I will send one of the chairmen to call), I would spend from five to six o'clock with you, as I go past. I cannot do more at this time, as I have something on my hand that hurries me much. I propose giving you the first call, my old friend the second, and Miss Nimmo as I return home. Do not break any engagement for me, as I will spend another evening with you, at any rate, before I leave town.

Do not tell me that you are pleased when your friends inform you of your faults. I am ignorant what they are; but I am sure they must be such evanescent trifles, compared with your personal and mental accomplishments, that I would despise the ungenerous, narrow soul, who would notice any shadow of imperfections you may seem to have, any other way than in the most delicate agreable raillery. Coarse minds are not aware how much they injure the keenly feeling tie of bosom-friendship, when, in their foolish officiousness, they mention what nobody cares for recollecting. People of nice sensibility and generous minds have a certain intrinsic dignity that fires at being trifled with, or lowered, or even too nearly approached.

You need make no apology for long letters: I am even with you. Many happy New Years to you, charming Clarinda! I can't dissemble, were it to shun perdition. He who sees you as I have done, and does not love you, de-

* This was probably Mr Nicol, whose house, in Buccleuch Place, was only a short distance from Clarinda's residence.

serves to be damn'd for his stupidity ! He who loves you, and would injure you, deserves to be doubly damn'd for his villany ! Adieu. SYLVANDER.

P.S.—What would you think of this for a fourth stanza ?

Your thought, if love must harbour there,
Conceal it in that thought,
Nor cause me from my bosom tear
The very friend I sought.

(*) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[5th Jan. 1788.]

SOME days, some nights, nay, some *hours*, like the “ten righteous persons in Sodom,” save the rest of the vapid, tiresome, miserable months, and years of life. One of these hours, my dear Clarinda, blest me with yesternight.

“—One well-spent hour,
In such a tender circumstance for friends,
Is better than an age of common time.”—*Thomson*.

My favourite feature in Milton's Satan is his manly fortitude in supporting what cannot be remedied ; in short, the wild broken fragments of a noble, exalted mind in ruins. I meant no more by saying he was a favourite hero of mine.

I mentioned to you my letter to Dr Moore, giving an account of my life : it is truth, every word of it, and will give you the just idea of a man whom you have honored with your friendship. I am afraid you will hardly be able to make sense of so torn a piece. Your verses I shall muse on deliciously, as I gaze on your image in my mind's eye, in my heart's core : they will be in time enough for a week to come. I am truly happy your headache is better. Oh, how can Pain or Evil be so daringly, unfeelingly,

cruelly savage as to wound so noble a mind, so lovely a form !

My little fellow is all my namesake.* Write me soon.
My every, strongest good wish attend you, Clarinda,

SYLVANDER.

Saturday, Noon.

I know not what I have written. I am pestered with people around me.

(7) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Monday Night, [Jan^y 7th, 1788.]

I CANNOT delay thanking you for the packet of Saturday ; twice have I read it with close attention. Some parts of it did beguile me of my tears. With Desdemona, I felt "'twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful." When I reached the paragraph where Lord Glencairn is mentioned, I burst out into tears. 'Twas that delightful swell of the heart which arises from a combination of the most pleasurable feelings. Nothing is so binding to a generous mind as placing confidence in it. I have ever felt it so. You seem to have known this feature in my character intuitively ; and therefore intrusted me with all your faults and follies. The description of your first love-scene delighted me. It recalled the idea of some tender circumstances which happened to myself, at the same period of life—only mine did not go so far. Perhaps in return, I'll tell you the particulars when we meet. Ah, my friend ! our early love emotions are surely the most exquisite. In riper years we may acquire more knowledge, sentiment, &c. ; but none of these can yield such rapture as the dear delusions of heart-throbbing youth ! Like yours, mine was a rural scene too, which adds much to the tender meeting. But no more of these recollections.

One thing alone hurts me, though I regretted many ; your avowal of being an enemy to Calvinism. I guessed it was so by

* This refers to Robert Burns, junior, born 3d September 1783.

some of your pieces ; but the confirmation of it gave me a shock I could only have felt for one I was interested in. You will not wonder at this, when I inform you that I am a strict Calvinist, *one* or *two* dark tenets excepted, which I never meddle with. Like many others, you are so, either from never having examined it with candour and impartiality, or from having unfortunately met with weak professors who did not understand it ; and hypocritical ones who made it a cloak of knavery. Both of these, I am aware, abound in country life : nor am I surprised at their having had this effect upon your enlightened understanding. I fear your friend, the captain of the ship, was of no advantage to you in this and many respects.

My dear Sylvander, I flatter myself you have some opinion of Clarinda's understanding. Her belief in Calvinism is not (as you will be apt to suppose) the prejudice of education. I was bred by my father in the Arminian principles. My mother, who was an angel, died when I was in my tenth year. She was a Calvinist—was adored in her life, and died triumphing in the prospect of immortality. I was too young at that period to know the difference ; but her pious precepts and example often recurred to my mind amidst the giddiness and adulation of "Miss in her teens." 'Twas since I came to this town, five years ago, that I imbibed my present principles. They were those of a dear, valued friend, in whose judgment and integrity I had entire confidence. I listened often to him with delight, upon the subject. My mind was docile and open to conviction. I resolved to investigate with deep attention that scheme of doctrine which had such happy effects upon him. Conviction of understanding, and peace of mind were the happy consequences. Thus have I given you a true account of my faith. I trust my practice will ever correspond. Were I to narrate my past life as honestly as you have done, you would soon be convinced that neither of us could hope to be justified by our good works.

If you have time and inclination I should wish to hear your chief objections to Calvinism. They have been often confuted by men of great minds and exemplary lives ; but perhaps you never enquired into these. Ah Sylvander ! Heaven has not endowed you with such uncommon powers of mind to employ them in

the manner you have done. This long, serious subject will, I know, have one of *three* effects: either to make you laugh in derision—yawn in supine indifference—or set about examining the hitherto-despised subject. Judge of the interest Clarinda takes in you when she affirms that there are but few events could take place that would afford her the heartfelt pleasure of the latter.

Read this letter attentively, and answer me at leisure. Do not be frightened at its gravity; believe me, I can be as lively as you please. Though I wish Madame Minerva for my guide, I shall not be hindered from rambling sometimes into the fields of Faucy. I must tell you that I admire your narrative, in point of composition, beyond all your other productions. One thing I am afraid of; there is not a trace of friendship towards a female; now, in the case of Clarinda, this is the only “consummation devoutly to be wished.”

You told me you never had met with a woman who could love as ardently as yourself. I believe it; and would advise you never to tie yourself till you meet with such a one. Alas! you'll find many who *canna*, and some who *manna*; but to be joined to one of the former description would make you miserable. I think you had almost best resolve against wedlock; for unless a woman were qualified for the companion, the friend, and the mistress, she would not do for you. The last may gain Sylvander, but the others alone can keep him. Sleep, and want of room, prevent my explaining myself upon “infidelity in a husband,” which made you stare at me.* This and other things shall be matter for another letter, if you are not wishing this to be the last. If agreeable to you, I'll keep the narrative till we meet. Adieu! “Charming Clarinda” must e'en resign herself to the arms of Morpheus.—Your true friend, CLARINDA.

P.S.—Don't detain the porter. Write when convenient.

I am probably to be in your Square this afternoon, near two o'clock. If your room be to the street, I shall have the pleasure of giving you a nod. I have paid the porter, and you may do so when you write. I am sure they sometimes have made us pay double. Adieu!

Tuesday Morning.

* One of the subjects of conversation during their short interview on the evening of Friday, 4th January.

(9) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Jan^y. 8, 1788.

I AM delighted, charming Clarinda, with your honest enthusiasm for religion. Those of either sex, but particularly the female, who are lukewarm in that most important of all things—"O my soul, come not thou into their secrets!"

I feel myself deeply interested in your good opinion, and will lay before you the outline of my belief:—He who is our Author and Preserver, and will one day be our Judge, must be—not for His sake, in the way of duty, but from the natural impulse of our hearts—the object of our reverential awe and grateful adoration. He is almighty, and all-bounteous; we are weak and dependent: hence prayer and every other sort of devotion. "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life:" consequently, it must be in every one's power to embrace His offer of "everlasting life;" otherwise he could not, in justice, condemn those who did not. A mind pervaded, actuated, and governed by purity, truth, and charity, though it does not *merit* heaven, yet is an absolutely necessary prerequisite, without which heaven can neither be obtained nor enjoyed; and, by divine promise, such a mind shall never fail of attaining "everlasting life:" hence, the impure, the deceiving, and the uncharitable, exclude themselves from eternal bliss, by their unfitness for enjoying it. The Supreme Being has put the immediate administration of all this, for wise and good ends known to Himself, into the hands of Jesus Christ, a great personage, whose relation to Him we cannot comprehend, but whose relation to us is that of a Guide and Saviour; and who, except for our own obstinacy and misconduct, will bring us all, through various ways, and by various means, to bliss at last.

These are my tenets, my lovely friend ; and which, I think, cannot be well disputed. My creed is pretty nearly expressed in the last clause of Jamie Dean's grace, an honest weaver in Ayrshire ; " Lord, grant that we may lead a gude life ! for a gude life maks a gude end, at least it helps weel ! "

I am flattered by the entertainment you tell me you have found in my packet. You see me as I have been, you know me as I am, and may guess at what I am likely to be. I too may say, " Talk not of love, &c.," for indeed he has " plunged me in deep woe ! " Not that I ever saw a woman who pleased unexceptionably, as my Clarinda elegantly says, " in the companion, the friend, and the mistress." *One* indeed I could except—*One*, before passion threw its mists over my discernment, I knew—the first of women ! Her name is indelibly written in my heart's core—but I dare not look in on it—a degree of agony would be the consequence. Oh ! thou perfidious, cruel, mischief-making demon, who presidest o'er that frantic passion—thou mayest, thou dost poison my peace, but shalt not taint my honor ! I would not, for a single moment, give an asylum to the most distant imagination that would shadow the faintest outline of a selfish gratification, at the expense of *her* whose happiness is twisted with the threads of my existence. May she be happy as she deserves ! And if my tenderest, faithful friendship can add to her bliss, I shall at least have one solid mine of enjoyment in my bosom ! *Don't guess at these ravings !*

I watched at our front window to-day, but was disappointed. It has been a day of disappointments. I am just risen from a two hours' bout after supper, with silly or sordid souls, who could relish nothing in common with me—but the Port. *One !*——'tis now " witching time of night ; " and whatever is out of joint in the foregoing scrawl, impute

it to enchantments and spells ; for I can't look over it, but will seal it up directly, as I don't care for to-morrow's criticisms on it.

You are by this time fast asleep, Clarinda ; may good angels attend and guard you as constantly and faithfully as my good wishes do !

“Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar graces.”

John Milton, I wish thy soul better rest than I expect on my pillow to-night ! O for a little of the cart-horse part of human nature ! Good night, my dearest Clarinda !

SYLVANDER.

Tuesday Night.

(⁶) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES. 1843.)

Wednesday 10 P.M. [Jan. 9th, 1788.]

THIS moment your letter was delivered to me. My boys are asleep. The youngest has been for sometime in a crazy state of health, but has been worse these two days past. Partly this, and the badness of the day, prevented my exchanging a heartfelt “How d’ye,” yesterday. Friday, if nothing prevents, I shall have that pleasure, about two o’clock, or a little before it.

I wonder how you could write so distinctly after two or three hours over a bottle ; but they were not congenial whom you sat with, and therefore your spirits remained unexhausted ; and when quit of them, you fled to a friend who can relish most things in common with you (except port). ’Tis dreadful what a variety of these “silly, sordid souls” one meets with in life ! but in scenes of mere sociality these pass. In reading the account you gave of your inveterate turn for social pleasure, I smiled at its resemblance to my own. It is so great that I often think I had been a man but for some mistake of Nature. If you saw me in a merry party, you would suppose me only an enthusiast

in *fun* ; but I now avoid parties. My spirits are sunk for days after ; and, what is worse, there are sometimes dull or malicious souls who censure me loudly for what their sluggish natures cannot comprehend. Were I possessed of an independent fortune, I would scorn their pitiful remarks ; but everything in my situation renders prudence necessary.

I have slept little these two nights. My child was uneasy, and that kept me awake watching him. Sylvander, if I have merit in anything, 'tis in an unremitting attention to my two children ; but it cannot be denominated merit, since 'tis as much inclination as duty. A prudent woman (as the world goes) told me she was surprised I loved them "considering what a father they had." I replied with acrimony, I could not but love my children in any case ; but my having given them the misfortune of such a father endears them doubly to my heart ; they are innocent ; they depend upon me ; and I feel this the most tender of all claims. While I live, my fondest attention shall be theirs.

All my life I loved the unfortunate, and ever will. Did you ever read Fielding's *Amelia* ? If you have not, I beg you would. There are scenes in it, tender, domestic scenes, which I have read over and over, with feelings too delightful to describe ! I meant a "Booth," as such a one is infinitely to be preferred to a brutal, though perhaps constant husband. I can conceive a man, fond of his wife, yet (Sylvander-like) hurried into a momentary deviation, while his heart remained faithful. If he concealed it, it could not hurt me ; but if, unable to bear the anguish of self-reproach, he unbound it to me, I would not only forgive him, but comfort and speak kindly, and in secret only weep. Reconciliation in such a case would be exquisite beyond almost anything I can conceive ! Do you now understand me on this subject ? I was uneasy till it was explained ; for all I have said, I know not if I had been an "*Amelia*," even with a "Booth." My resentments are keen, like all my other feelings : I am exquisitely alive to kindness and to unkindness. The first binds me for ever ! But I have none of the spaniel in my nature. The last would soon cure me, though I loved to distraction. But all this is not perhaps interesting to Sylvander. I have seen nobody to-day ; and like a true egotist, talk away to please myself. I am not in a humour to answer your creed to-night.

I have been puzzling my brain about the fair one you bid me "not guess at." I first thought it your Jean ; but I don't know if she now possesses your "tenderest, faithfulest friendship." I can't understand that bonie lassie : her refusal, after such proofs of love, proves her to be either an angel or a dolt. I beg pardon, I know not all the circumstances, and am no judge therefore. I love you for your continued fondness, even after enjoyment : few of your sex have souls in such cases. But I take this to be the test of true love—mere desire is all that the bulk of people are susceptible of ; and that is soon satisfied. "*Your good wishes.*" You had mine, Sylvander, long before I saw you. You will have them while I live. With you, I wish I had a little of the "cart-horse" in me. You and I have some horse properties ; but more of the eagle, and too much of the turtle-dove ! Good night !
—Your friend,

CLARINDA.

Thursday Morning, [Jan^y. 10, 1788.]

This day is so good that I'll make out my call to your Square. I am laughing to myself at announcing this for the third time. Were she "who poisons your peace" to intend you a Pisgah view, she could do no more than I have done on this trivial occasion. Keep a good heart, Sylvander ; the eternity of your love-sufferings will be ended before six weeks. Such perjuries "the laughing gods allow." But remember there is no such toleration in friendship, and—I am yours,

CLARINDA.

(¹⁰) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[Jan^y. 10, 1788.]

I AM certain I saw you, Clarinda ; but you don't look to the proper story for a poet's lodging,

"Where speculation roosted near the sky."

I could almost have thrown myself over for very vexation. Why didn't you look higher ? It has spoilt my peace for

this day. To be near my charming Clarinda; to miss her look while she was searching for me. I am sure the soul is capable of disease; for mine has convulsed itself into an inflammatory fever. I am sorry for your little boy: do let me know to-morrow how he is.

You have converted me, Clarinda—I shall love that name while I live; there is heavenly music in it. Booth and Amelia I know well. Your sentiments on that subject, as they are on every subject, are just and noble. “To be feelingly alive to kindness, and to unkindness,” is a charming female character.

What I said in my last letter, the powers of fuddling sociality only know for me. By yours, I understand my good star has been partly in my horizon, when I got wild in my reveries. Had that evil planet, which has almost all my life shed its baleful rays on my devoted head, been, as usual, in my zenith, I had certainly blabb’d something that would have pointed out to you the dear object of my tenderest friendship, and, in spite of me, something more. Had that fatal information escaped me (and it was merely chance, or kind stars, that it did not), I had been undone! You never would have written me, except perhaps *once* more! O, I could curse circumstances, and the coarse tie of human laws, which keeps fast what common sense would loose, and which bars that happiness itself cannot give—happiness which, otherwise, Love and Honor would warrant! But hold, I shall make no more “hair-breadth ’scapes.”

My friendship, Clarinda, is a life-rent business. My likings are both strong and eternal. I told you I had but one male friend: I have but two female. I should have a third, but she is surrounded by the blandishments of flattery and courtship. The name I register in my heart’s core is *Peggy Chalmers*: Miss Nimmo can tell you how divine she

is. She is worthy of a place in the same bosom with my Clarinda? That is the highest compliment I can pay her. Farewell, Clarinda! Remember SYLVANDER.

Thursday Noon.

(9) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1813.)

Thursday Eve., [Jan. 10, 1788.]

I COULD not see you, Sylvander, though I had twice traversed the Square. I'm persuaded you saw not me neither. I met the young lady I meant to call for first; and returned to seek another acquaintance, but found her moved. All the time my eye soared to poetic heights, *alias* garrets, but not a glimpse of you could I obtain! You surely was within the glass, at least. I returned, finding my intrinsic dignity a good deal hurt, as I missed my friend. Perhaps I will see you again next week: say how high you are. Thanks for the enquiry about my child; his complaints are of a tedious kind, and require patience and resignation. Religion has taught me both. By nature I inherit as little of them as a harum-scarum friend of mine. In what respects has Clarinda "converted you?" Tell me. It were an arduous task indeed!

Your "ravings" last night, and your ambiguous remarks upon them, I cannot, perhaps ought not to comprehend. I am your friend, Sylvander: take care lest Virtue demand even Friendship as a sacrifice. You need not curse the tie of human laws; since what is the happiness Clarinda would derive from being loosed? At present, she enjoys the hope of having her children provided for. In the other case, she is left indeed at liberty, but half dependent on the bounty of a friend—kind in substantial, but having no feeling of romance: and who are the generous, the disinterested, who would risk the world's "dread laugh" to protect her and her little ones? Perhaps a Sylvander-like son of "whim and fancy" might, in a sudden fit of romance: but would not ruin be the consequence? Perhaps one of the former . . . yet if he

was even dearer to her than all the world—such are still her romantic ideas—she could not be his.

You see, Sylvander, you have no cause to regret my bondage. The above is a true picture. Have I not reason to rejoice that I have it not in my power to dispose of myself? (I commit myself into Thy hands, Thou Supreme Disposer of all events! do Thou with me as seemeth to Thee good!) Who is this male friend? I know your third female. Ah, Sylvander, many “that are first shall be last,” and *vice versa*! I am proud of being compared to Miss Chalmers: I have heard how amiable she is. She cannot be more so than Miss Nimmo: why do you not register her also? She is warmly your friend; surely you are incapable of ingratitude. She has almost wept to me at mentioning your intimacy with a certain famous, or rather infamous, man in town.* Do you think Clarinda could anger you just now? I composed lines addressed to you sometime ago, containing a hint upon the occasion. I had not courage to send them then: if you say you’ll not be angry, I will yet.

I know not how ’tis, but I felt an irresistible impulse to write to you the moment I read yours. I have a design in it. Part of your interest in me is due to mere novelty. You’ll be tired of my correspondence ere you leave town, and will never fash to write me from the country. I forgive you in a “state of celibacy.” Sylvander, I wish I saw you happily married: you are so formed, you cannot be happy without a tender attachment, Heaven direct you!

When you see Bishop Geddes,† ask him if he remembers a lady at Mrs Kemp’s, on a Sunday night, who listened, with the gaze of attention, to every word he uttered. I saw he observed me, and returned that glance of cordial warmth which assured me he was pleased with my delicate flattery. I wished that night he had been my father that I might shelter me in his bosom.

You shall have this, as you desired, to-morrow; and if possible, none for four or five days. I say, if possible, for I really can’t but write as if I had “nothing else to do.” I admire your Epitaph; but while I read it, my heart swells at the sad idea of

* The reference here can be to no person but William Nicol.

† See page 302, Vol. IV.—Letter to Mrs Dunlop, with foot-note.

its realization. Did you ever read *Sancho's Letters*? they would hit your taste. My next will be on my favourite theme—religion.

Farewell, Sylvander! Be wise, be prudent, and be happy.

CLARINDA.

Let your next be sent in the morning.

If you were well, I would ask you to meet me to-morrow, at twelve o'clock. I go down in the Leith Fly, with poor Willie: what a pleasant chat we might have! But I fancy 'tis impossible. Adieu!

Friday. One o'clock.

(¹¹) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Saturday Morning [Jan. 12th, 1788.]

YOUR thoughts on religion, Clarinda, shall be welcome. You may perhaps distrust me when I say 'tis also *my* favourite topic; but mine is the religion of the bosom. I hate the very idea of controversial divinity; as I firmly believe that every honest, upright man, of whatever sect, will be accepted of the Deity. If your verses, as you seem to hint, contain censure, except you want an occasion to break with me, don't send them. I have a little infirmity in my disposition, that where I fondly love or highly esteem, I cannot bear reproach.

"Reverence thyself" is a sacred maxim; and I wish to cherish it. I think I told you Lord Bolingbroke's saying to Swift—"Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely: make an effort to love me with all mine." A glorious sentiment, and without which there can be no friendship! I do highly, very highly, esteem you, Clarinda: you merit it all! Perhaps, too (I scorn dissimulation), I could fondly love you; judge then, what a maddening sting your reproach would be. "Oh, I have sins to heaven, but

none to you." With what pleasure would I meet you to-day, but I cannot walk to meet the Fly. I hope to be able to see you, *on foot*, about the middle of next week. I am interrupted—perhaps you are not sorry for it. You will tell me ; but I won't anticipate blame. O Clarinda ! did you know how dear to me is your look of kindness, your smile of approbation, you would not, either in prose or verse, risk a censorious remark.

"Curst be the verse, how well so e'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe."

SYLVANDER.

(¹²) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[*Saturday, Jan. 12.*]

You talk of weeping, Clarinda ! Some involuntary drops wet your lines as I read them. *Offend me*, my dearest angel ! You cannot offend me—you never offended me. If you had ever given me the least shadow of offence, so pardon me, my God, as I forgive Clarinda. I have read yours again ; it has blotted my paper. Though I find your letter has agitated me into a violent headache, I shall take a chair, and be with you about eight. A friend is to be with us to tea, on my account, which hinders me from coming sooner. Forgive, my dearest Clarinda, my unguarded expressions ! For Heaven's sake, forgive me, or I shall never be able to bear my own mind.—Your unhappy,

SYLVANDER.

[Accordingly, on Saturday night (12th January) Burns had his *second tête-à-tête* meeting with Clarinda, in her own house. The first

of these interviews (on Friday 4th January) was of short duration, yet sufficiently long to afford time to Sylvander to give Clarinda a sketch of his bygone attachment to Jean Armour, with its results; and also for Clarinda to make Sylvander "stare at her remarks on infidelity in a husband." The letter of Clarinda which follows, and especially its supplement of *Tuesday*, gives the reader a peep "behind the scenes." At parting the poet wished her, in his own mother's phrase, "A sound sleep and a blythe waukening."]

(¹⁰) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES. 1843.)

Sunday Evening, [Jan. 13.]

I WILL not deny it, Sylvander, last night was one of the most exquisite I ever experienced. Few such fall to the lot of mortals! Few, extremely few, are formed to relish such refined enjoyment. That it should be so, vindicates the wisdom of Heaven. But though our enjoyment did not lead beyond the limits of virtue, yet to-day's reflections have not been altogether unmixed with regret. The idea of the pain it would have given, were it known to a friend to whom I am bound by the sacred ties of gratitude (no more);* the opinion Sylvander may have formed from my unreservedness; and, above all, some secret misgivings that Heaven may not approve, situated as I am—these procured me a sleepless night; and though at church, I am not at all well.

Sylvander, you saw Clarinda last night, behind the scenes! Now, you'll be convinced she has faults. If she knows herself, her intention is always good; but she is too often the victim of sensibility, and hence is seldom pleased with herself. A rencontre to-day I will relate to you, because it will show you I have my own share of pride. I met with a sister of Lord Napier at the house of a friend with whom I sat between sermons: I knew who she was; but paid her no other marks of respect than I do to any gentlewoman. She eyed me with minute, supercilious

* Her cousin, Lord Craig, it is presumed.

attention, never looking at me when I spoke, but even half interrupted me, before I had done addressing the lady of the house. I felt my face glow with resentment and consoled myself with the idea of being her superior in every respect but the accidental, the trifling one of birth ! I was disgusted at the fawning deference the lady showed her ; and when she told me at the door that it was my Lord Napier's sister, I replied, " Is it indeed ?—by her breeding I should have taken her for the daughter of some upstart tradesman ! "

Sylvander, my sentiments as to birth and fortune are truly unfashionable : I despise the persons who pique themselves on either—the former especially. Something may be allowed to bright talents, or even external beauty—these belong to us essentially ; but birth in no respect can confer merit, because it is not our own. A person of vulgar, uncultivated mind I would not take to my bosom in any station ; but one possessed of natural genius improved by education and diligence, such an one I'd take for my friend, be her extraction ever so mean. These alone constitute any real distinction between man and man. Are we not all the offspring of Adam ? Have we not one God—one Saviour—one Immortality ? I have found but one among all my acquaintance who agreed with me—my Mary whom I mentioned to you. I am to spend to-morrow with her, if I am better. I like her the more that she likes you.

I intended to resume a little upon your favourite topic, the " Religion of the bosom." Did you ever imagine that I meant any other ? Poor were that religion and unprofitable whose seat is merely in the brain. In most points we seem to agree : only I found all my hopes of pardon and acceptance with Heaven upon the merit of Christ's atonement—whereas you do upon a good life. You think " it helps weel at least." If anything we could do had been able to atone for the violation of God's Law, where was the need (I speak it with reverence) of such an astonishing Sacrifice ? Job was an " upright man." In the dark season of adversity, when other sins were brought to his remembrance, he boasted of his integrity ; but no sooner did God reveal Himself to him, than he exclaimed, " Behold I am vile, and abhor myself in dust and ashes." Ah ! my friend, 'tis pride that hinders us from embracing Jesus ! we would be our own Saviour, and scorn to

be indebted even to the "Son of the Most High." But this is the only sure foundation of our hopes. It is said by God Himself, it is "to some a stumbling-block, to others foolishness;" but they who believe feel it to be "the wisdom of God."

If my head did not ache, I would continue the subject. I too hate controversial religion; but this is the "Religion of the Bosom." My God! Sylvander, why am I so anxious to make you embrace the Gospel? I dare not probe too deep for an answer: let your heart answer; in a word Benevolence. When I return, I'll finish this. Meantime, adieu! Sylvander, I intended doing you good; if it prove the reverse, I shall never forgive myself. Good night.

Tuesday noon [Jan. 15th.] Just returned from the Dean, where I dined and supped with fourteen of both sexes—all stupid. My Mary and I alone understood each other. However, we were joyous, and I sung in spite of my cold; but no wit. 'Twould have been pearls before swine literalized. I recollect promising to write you. Sylvander, you'll never find me worse than my word. If you have written me (which I hope), send it to me when convenient, either at nine in the morning or evening. I fear your limb may be worse from staying so late. I have other fears too: guess them! Oh! my friend, I wish ardently to maintain your esteem; rather than forfeit one iota of it, I'd be content never to be wiser than now. Our last interview has raised you very high in mine. I have met with few indeed of your sex who understood delicacy in such circumstances; yet 'tis that only which gives relish to such delightful intercourse. Do you wish to preserve my esteem, Sylvander? Do not be proud to Clarinda! She deserves it not. I subscribe to Lord B.'s sentiment to Swift; yet some faults I shall yet sigh over, though you style it "reproach" even to hint them. Adieu! You have it much in your power to add to the happiness of CLARINDA.

(13) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Monday Evening, 11 o'clock, [Jan. 14.]

WHY have I not heard from you, Clarinda? To-day I well expected it; and before supper when a letter to me was announced, my heart danced with rapture; but behold, 'twas some fool who had taken it into his head to turn poet, and made me an offer of the first fruits of his nonsense "It is not poetry, but prose run mad."

Did I ever repeat to you an epigram I made on a Mr Elphinston, who has given a translation of *Martial*, a famous Latin poet? The poetry of Elphinston can only equal his prose notes.* I was sitting in a merchant's shop of my acquaintance, waiting somebody; he put *Elphinston* into my hand, and asked my opinion of it: I begged leave to write it on a blank leaf, which I did, as you shall see or a new page:

TO MR ELPHINSTON.

O thou, whom poesy abhors!
 Whom prose has turnèd out of doors!
 Heard'st thou yon groan? proceed no further!
 'Twas laurel'd Martial calling murder!

* Mr James Elphinston, born in Edinburgh in 1721, set up a boarding-school at Kensington, London, where Samuel Johnson sometimes visited him. He died at Hammersmith in 1809. He pleased Johnson mightily by suggesting and causing the publication in Edinburgh of an edition of *The Rambler* in 8 vols. duodecimo, with translation of the mottoes. It is the handsomest edition of that work ever printed.

His own writings are now forgotten, or remembered for their absurdity. Dr Beattie says "His translation of *Martial* is truly an unique: the specimens issued by him for subscribers did very well to laugh at; but a whole quarto of nonsense and gibberish is too much. It is strange that a man, not wholly illiterate, should have lived so long in England, without learning the language."—*Biog. Dict.*

I am determined to see you, if at all possible, on Saturday evening. Next week I must sing—

“The night is my departing night,
The morn’s the day I maun awa :
There’s neither friend nor foe o’ mine
But wishes that I were awa !
What I hae done for lack o’ wit,
I never, never can reca’ ;
I hope ye’re a’ my friends as yet,
Gude night, and joy be wi’ you a’ !”*

If I could see you sooner, I would be so much the happier ; but I would not purchase the *dearest gratification* on earth, if it must be at your expense in worldly censure ; far less, inward peace !

I shall certainly be ashamed of thus scrawling whole sheets of incoherence. The only *unity* (a sad word with poets and critics !) in my ideas, is Clarinda. There my heart “reigns and revels.”

“What art thou, Love? whence are those charms,
That thus thou bear’st an universal rule?
For thee the soldier quits his arms,
The king turns slave, the wise man fool.
In vain we chase thee from the field,
And with cool thoughts resist the yoke :
Next tide of blood, alas ! we yield ;
And all those high resolves are broke !”

I like to have quotations ready for every occasion. They give one’s ideas so pat, and save one the trouble of finding expressions adequate to one’s feelings. I think it is one of the greatest pleasures attending a poetic genius, that we can give our woes, cares, joys, loves, &c., an embodied form in verse, which, to me, is ever immediate ease. Goldsmith says finely of his muse—

“Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe :
Who found me poor at first, and keep’st me so.”

* The original letter has now got divided into two halves at this place, and these are in the hands of two separate owners.

My limb has been so well to-day, that I have gone up and down stairs often without my staff. To-morrow I hope to walk once again on my own legs to dinner. It is only next street. Adieu !

SYLVANDER.

(⁴) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Tuesday Evening [Jan. 15].

THAT you have faults, my Clarinda, I never doubted ; but I knew not where they existed, and Saturday night made me more in the dark than ever. O Clarinda ! why would you wound my soul by hinting that “last night must have lessened my opinion of you !” True, I was “behind the scenes with you ;” but what did I see ? A bosom glowing with honor and benevolence ; a mind ennobled by genius, informed and refined by education and reflection, and exalted by native religion, genuine as in the climes of heaven ; a heart formed for all the glorious meltings of friendship, love, and pity. These I saw. I saw the noblest immortal soul creation ever showed me.

I looked long, my dear Clarinda, for your letter ; and am vexed that you are complaining. I have not caught you so far wrong as in your idea, that the commerce you have with one friend hurts you, if you cannot tell every tittle of it to another.* Why have so injurious a suspicion of a good God, Clarinda, as to think, that Friendship and Love, on the sacred inviolate principles of Truth, Honor, and Religion, can be any thing else than an object of his divine approbation ?

* “But still keep something to yourself,
You scarcely tell to any.”

Epistle to a Young Friend.

I have mentioned, in some of my former scrawls, Saturday evening next. Do allow me to wait on you that evening. Oh, my angel! how soon must we part!—and when can we meet again? I look forward on the horrid interval with tearful eyes! What have I not lost by not knowing you sooner? I fear, I fear my acquaintance with you is too short, to make that lasting impression on your heart I could wish.

SYLVANDER.

(¹¹) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Wed. Morn. [16 Jan. 1788.]

YOUR mother's wish was fully realized. I slept sounder to-night than for weeks past, and I had "a blythe waukening"; for your letter was the first object my eyes opened on. Sylvander, I fancy you and "Vulcan" are intimates: he had lent you a key which opens Clarinda's heart at pleasure—shews you what is there, and enables you to adapt yourself to its every feeling! I believe I shall give over writing you. Your letters are too much! my way is, alas! "hedged in;" but had I, like Sylvander, "the world before me," I should bid him, "if he had a friend that loved me," tell him to WRITE as he does, and "that would woo me." Seriously, you are the first letter-writer I ever knew, and I only wonder how you can be *fashed* with my scrawls. I impute it to partiality.

Either *to-morrow*, or *Friday*, I shall be happy to see you. On *Saturday*, I am not *sure* of being alone, or at home. Say which you'll come? Come to tea if you please; but eight will be an hour less liable to intrusions. I hope you'll *come afoot*, even tho' you take a chair home. A chair is so uncommon a thing in our neighbourhood, it is apt to raise speculation; but they are all asleep by ten. I'm happy to hear of your being able to "*walk*"—even to the next street. You are a consummate flatterer; really my cheeks glow when I read your flights of fancy. I fancy you see I like it, when you peep into the *Repository*. I know none insensible to that "delightful essence." If I grow *affected*

or *conceited*, you are alone to blame. Ah! my friend, these are disgusting qualities! but I'm not afraid. I know any merit I have perfectly; but I know *many* sad *counterbalances*.

Your lines of Elphinston are *CLEVER*, beyond anything I ever saw of the kind; I know the character—the figure is enough to make one cry *Murder!* He is a complete pedant in language; but are not you and I pedants in something else? Yes, but in far superior things—Love, Friendship, Poesy, Religion! Ah, Sylvander! you have murdered Humility, and I can say thou didst it.

You carry your warmth too far as to Miss Napier (not Nairn); yet I am pleased at it. She is sensible, lively, and well-liked, they say. She was not to know Clarinda was “divine,” and therefore kept her distance. She is comely, but a thick bad figure, waddles in her pace, and has rosy cheeks.

Wha is that clumsy damsel there?
 “Whisht! it's the daughter of a Peer,
 Right Honorably Great!”

The daughter of a Peer, I cried,
 It doth not *yet* appear
 What we *shall* be (in t'other world),
 God keep us frae this here!
 That she has *Blude*, I se no dispute,
 I see it in her face;
 Her honor's in her *name*, I fear,
 And in nae other place.

I hate myself for being satirical—hate me for it too. I'll certainly go to Miers to please you, either with Mary or Miss N. Sylvander, some most interesting parts of yours I cannot enter upon at present. I dare not think upon parting—upon *the interval*; but I'm sure both are wisely order'd for our good. A line in return to tell me which night you'll be with me—“*lasting impression!*” Your key might have shewn you me better. Say

——— “my lover, poet, and my friend,
 What day next month th' Eternity will end?”

When you use your key, don't rummage too much, lest you find I am half as great a fool in the *tender* as yourself. Farewell. Sylvander! I may sign, for I am already sealed, your friend.

CLARINDA.

[The original of the above lively female epistle is in the possession of J. T. Gibson Craig, Esq., by whose kindness we have been enabled, not only to collate it with printed copies, but to introduce here for the first time, Clarinda's little attempt at Epigram. In reference to the lady's expressed anxiety that the poet's visits to her house be kept as secret as possible, Chambers makes the following grave observation, which, for the sake of its moral philosophy, we here repeat:—"The lady doubtless meant well, but it is impossible to applaud either her prudence or her delicacy in encouraging visits which she felt would tell upon her reputation if they were discovered. It need not be insisted on that the pure are under an obligation to society to maintain all the appearances as well as the reality of purity." What would that editor say to the hypocrisy of the girl who sings—

"Steal me a blink o' your bonie black e'e,
Yet look as ye werena lookin to me"?

Still more to her audacious contempt of parental authority in these words—

"Tho' father and mother and a' should gae mad,
O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad!"

(15) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Saturday Morn. [19th Jan.]

THERE is no time, my Clarinda, when the conscious thrilling chords of Love and Friendship give such delight as in the pensive hours of what our favourite Thomson calls, "philosophic melancholy." The sportive insects, who bask in the sunshine of Prosperity, or the worms that luxuriantly crawl amid their ample wealth of earth; they need no Clarinda—they would despise Sylvander, if they dared. The family of Misfortune, a numerous group of brothers and sisters!—they need a resting-place to their souls. Unnoticed, often condemned by the world—in some degree, perhaps, con-

demned by themselves—they feel the full enjoyment of ardent love, delicate tender endearments, mutual esteem and mutual reliance.

In this light I have often admired religion. In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a compassionate Deity, an Almighty Protector, are doubly dear.

“’Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright ;
 ’Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.”

I have been this morning taking a peep through, as Young finely says, “the dark postern of time long elapsed ;” and you will easily guess ’twas a rueful prospect : what a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly ! My life reminded me of a ruined temple : what strength, what proportion in some parts !—what unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others ! I kneeled down before the Father of mercies, and said, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son !” I rose eased and strengthened. I despise the superstition of a fanatic ; but I love the religion of a man. “The future,” said I to myself, “is still before me : there let me

‘on reason build resolve—
 That column of true majesty in man !’

I have difficulties many to encounter,” said I ; “but they are not absolutely insuperable :—and where is firmness of mind shown, but in exertion ? Mere declamation is bombast rant. Besides, wherever I am, or in whatever situation I may be,

“ ——”Tis nought to me,
 Since God is ever present, ever felt,
 In the void waste as in the city full ;
 And where he vital breathes, there must be joy !”

Saturday Night—half after Ten.

What luxury of bliss I was enjoying this time yesternight !
My ever-dearest Clarinda, you have stolen away my soul :
but you have refined, you have exalted it : you have given
it a stronger sense of virtue, and a stronger relish for
piety.—Clarinda, first of your sex ! if ever I am the veriest
wretch on earth to forget you ; if ever your lovely image is
effaced from my soul,

“ May I be lost, no eye to weep my end ;
And find no earth that’s base enough to bury me ! ”

What trifling silliness is the childish fondness of the every-
day children of the world ! ’Tis the unmeaning toying of
the younglings of the fields and forests : but where Senti-
ment and fancy unite their sweets ; where Taste and
Delicacy refine ; where Wit adds the flavour, and Good-
sense gives strength and spirit to all ; what a delicious
draught is the hour of tender endearment !—Beauty and
Grace, in the arms of Truth and Honor, in all the luxury
of mutual love !

Clarinda, have you ever seen the picture realized ? Not
in all its very richest colouring, but

“ Hope, thou nurse of young Desire,
Fair promiser of Joy.”

Last night, Clarinda, but for one slight shade, was the
glorious picture—

—————“ Innocence
Look’d gaily smiling on ; while rosy Pleasure
Hid young Desire amid her flowery wreath,
And pour’d her cup luxuriant, mantling high
The sparkling heav’nly vintage—Love and Bliss ! ”

Clarinda, when a poet and poetess of Nature’s making—
two of Nature’s noblest productions—when they drink
together of the same cup of Love and Bliss, attempt not, ye
coarser stuff of human nature, profanely to measure enjoy-
ment ye never can know ! Good night, my dear Clarinda !

SYLVANDER.

(12) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Saturday Even. [19th Jan.]

I AM wishing, Sylvander, for the power of looking into your heart. It would be but fair, for you have the key of mine. You are possessed of acute discernment. I am not deficient either in that respect. Last night must have shown you Clarinda not "divine," but as she really is. I can't recollect some things I said, without a degree of pain. Nature has been kind to me in several respects; but one essential she has denied me entirely: it is that instantaneous perception of fit and unfit, which is so useful in the conduct of life. No one can discriminate more accurately *afterwards* than Clarinda. But when her heart is so expanded by the influence of kindness, she loses all command of it, and often suffers severely in the recollection of her unguardedness. You must have perceived this; but at any rate, I wish you "to know me as I really am." I would have given much for society to-day; for I can't bear my own: but no human being has come near me. Well as I like you, Sylvander, I would rather lose your love than your esteem: the first I ought not to wish; the other I shall ever endeavour to maintain. But no more of this: you prohibit it, and I obey.

For many years have I sought for a male friend, endowed with sentiments like yours; one who could love me with tenderness, yet unmixed with selfishness; who could be my friend, companion, protector, and who would die sooner than injure me. I sought—but I sought in vain! Heaven has, I hope, sent me this blessing in my Sylvander! Whatever weaknesses may cleave to Clarinda, her heart is not to blame: whatever it may have been by nature, it is unsullied by art. If she dare dispose of it—last night can leave you at no loss to guess the man:

Then, dear Sylvander, use it weel,
 And row it in your bosom's biel;
 Ye'll find it ay baith kind and leal,
 And fu' o' glee;
 It wad na wrang the vera deil;
 Ah, far less thee!

How do you like this parody on a passage of my favorite

V.

D

poet? It is extempore—from the heart; and let it be *to the heart*. I am to enclose the first fruits of my muse:—

TO A BLACKBIRD SINGING ON A TREE.

MORNINGSIDE, 1784.

Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy cheerful notes will hush despair;
Thy tuneful warblings, void of art,
Thrill sweetly thro' my aching heart.
Now choose thy mate and fondly love,
And all the charming transport prove—
Those sweet emotions all enjoy,
Let Love and Song thy hours employ;
Whilst I, a love-lorn exile, live,
And rapture nor receive nor give.
Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy cheerful notes will hush despair.

It has no poetic merit, but it bespeaks a sweet feminine mind—such a one as I wish mine to be; but my vivacity deprives me of that softness which is, in my opinion, the first female ornament. It was written to soothe an aching heart. I then labored under a cruel anguish of soul, which I cannot tell you of. If I ever take a walk to the temple of Hymen, I'll disclose it; but you and I (were it ever possible) would “fall out by the way.”

The lines on the soldier* were occasioned by reading a book entitled the “Sorrows of the Heart.” Miss Nimmo was pleased with them, and sent them to the gentleman. They are not poetry, but they speak what I felt at a survey of so much filial tenderness.

I agree with you in liking quotations. If they are apt, they often give one's ideas more pleasantly than our own language can at all times. I am stupid to-night. I have a soreness at my heart. I conclude, therefore, with a verse of Goldsmith, which of late has become an immense favourite of mine;

“In Nature's simplest habit clad,
No wealth nor power had he;
Genius and worth were all he had,
But these were *all* to me.”

Good night, “my dear Sylvander,” say this (like Werter) to yourself,—Your

CLARINDA.

* This piece has not been preserved.

Sunday Evening.

I would have given much, Sylvander, that you had heard Mr Kemp this afternoon. You would have heard my principles, and the foundation of all my immortal hopes, elegantly delivered. "Let me live the life of the righteous, and my latter end be like his," was the text. Who are the righteous? "Those," says Sylvander, "whose minds are actuated and governed by purity, truth, and charity." But where does such a mind exist? "It must be where the soul is made perfect," for I know none such on earth. "The righteous," then, must believe in Christ, and rely on His perfect righteousness for salvation. "Everlasting" life, as you observe, is in the power of all to embrace, and this is eternal life, to "believe in Him whom God hath sent." Purity, truth, and charity will flow from this belief, as naturally as the stream from the fountain. These are indeed the only evidences we can have of the reality of our faith; and they must be produced in a degree ere we can be fit for the enjoyment of Heaven. But where is the man who dare plead these before "Infinite Holiness?" Will inflexible Justice pardon our thousand violations of His laws? Will our imperfect repentance and amendments atone for past guilt? or, will we presume to present our best services (spotted as they are) as worthy of acceptance before unerring Rectitude? I am astonished how any intelligent mind, blessed with a divine revelation, can pause a moment on the subject. "Enter not into judgment with me, O Lord! in Thy sight no flesh can be justified!" This must be the result of every candid mind upon surveying its own deserts. If God had not been pleased to reveal His own Son, as our all-sufficient Saviour, what could we have done but cried for mercy, without any sure hope of obtaining it? But when we have Him clearly announced as our surety, our guide, our blessed advocate with the Father—who, in their senses, ought to hesitate in putting their souls into the hands of this glorious "Prince of Peace?" Without this, we may admire the Creator in His works, but we can never approach Him with the confidential tenderness of children—"I will arise, and go to my Father." This is the blessed language of every one who believes and trusts in Jesus. Oh, Sylvander, who would go on fighting with themselves, resolving and re-resolving, while they can thus

fly to their Father's house? But alas! it is not till we tire of these husks of our own, that we recollect that *there*, there is bread enough, and to spare. Whenever the wish is sincerely formed in our hearts, our Heavenly Father will have compassion upon us "though a great way off." This is the "religion of the bosom." I BELIEVE that there will be many of every sect, nation and people who will "stand before the throne;" but I believe that it will be the effect of Christ's atonement, conveyed to them by ways too complicated for our finite minds to comprehend. But why should we who know "the way, the truth, and the life" deprive ourselves of the comfort it is fitted to yield? Let my earnest wish for your eternal as well as temporal happiness, excuse the warmth with which I have unfolded what has been my own fixed point of rest. I want no controversy—I hate it; let our only strivings be, who shall be the most constant and attached friend, which of us shall render our conduct most approved to the other. I am well aware how vain it were (vain in every sense of the expression) to hope to sway a mind so intelligent as yours, by any arguments I could devise. May that God, who spoke worlds into existence, open your eyes to see "the truth, as it is in Jesus!" Forgive me, Sylvander, if I've been tedious upon my favorite theme. You know who it was, who could not stop "when his divinity came across him."* Even there you see we are congenial.

I'll tell you a pretty apt quotation I made to-day, warm from my heart. I met the Judges in the morning, as I went into the Parliament Square, among whom was Lord Dreghorn,† in his new robes of purple. He is my mother's cousin-german, the greatest real honor he could ever claim; but used me in a manner unfeeling, harsh beyond description, at one of the darkest periods of my chequered life. I looked steadfastly in his sour face; his eye met mine. I was a female, and therefore he stared; but,

* "But when Divinity comes cross me,
My readers ay are sure to lose me."

Dedication to G. H.

† Clarinda's mother was a daughter of the Rev. John M'Laurin of Luss, who was brother to Colin M'Laurin the celebrated mathematician. Lord Dreghorn was a son of Colin M'Laurin. He died in 1795.

when he knew who it was, he averted his eyes suddenly. Instantaneously these lines darted into my mind :

“ Would you the purple should your limbs adorn,
Go, wash the conscious blemish with a tear.”

The man, who enjoys more pleasure in the mercenary embrace of a courtesan, than in relieving the unfortunate, is a detestable character, whatever his bright talents be.

I pity him ! Sylvander, all his fortune could not purchase half the luxury of Friday night ! Let us be grateful to Heaven, though it has denied us wealth and power, for being endowed with feelings, fitted to yield the most exquisite enjoyments here and hereafter ! May I hope you'll read what I have urged on religion, with attention, Sylvander, when Reason resumes her reign ? I've none of those future delusive hopes which you too vainly express as having towards Clarinda. Do not indulge them ; my wishes extend to your immortal welfare. Let your first care be to please God : for that which He delights in must be happiness. I must conclude, or I'll relapse. I have not a grain of humor to-night in my composition ; so, lest “ charming Clarinda ” should make you yawn, she'll decently say “ good night ! ”

I laugh to myself at the recollection of your earnest asseverations as to your being anti-Platonic ! Want of passions is not merit : strong ones under the control of reason and religion—let these be our glory.—Once more good night, CLARINDA.

(16) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Sunday Night [Jan. 20th].

THE impertinence of fools has joined with a return of an old indisposition, to make me good for nothing to-day. The paper has lain before me all this evening to write to my dear Clarinda, but—

“ Fools rush'd on fools, as waves succeed to waves.”

I cursed them in my soul ; they sacrilegiously disturbed

my meditations on her who holds my heart. What a creature is man ! A little alarm last night and to-day, that I am mortal, has made such a revolution on my spirits ! There is no philosophy, no divinity, comes half so home to the mind. I have no idea of courage that braves Heaven. 'Tis the wild ravings of an imaginary hero in bedlam. I can no more, Clarinda ; I can scarcely hold up my head ; but I am happy you don't know it, you would be so uneasy.

SYLVANDER.

Monday Morning.

I am, my lovely friend, much better this morning on the whole ; but I have a horrid languor on my spirits.

“ Sick of the world and all its joy,
My soul in pining sadness mourns ;
Dark scenes of woe my mind employ,
The past and present in their turns.”

Have you ever met with a saying of the great and likewise good Mr Locke, author of the famous Essay on the Human Understanding ? He wrote a letter to a friend, directing it “ Not to be delivered till after my decease.” It ended thus, — “ I know you loved me when living, and will preserve my memory now I am dead. All the use to be made of it is, that this life affords no solid satisfaction, but in the consciousness of having done well, and the hopes of another life. Adieu ! I leave my best wishes with you.—J. LOCKE.”

Clarinda, may I reckon on your friendship for life ? I think I may. Thou Almighty Preserver of men ! Thy friendship, which hitherto I have too much neglected—to secure it shall, all the future days and nights of my life, be my steady care. The idea of my Clarinda follows :

“ Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mix'd with God's, her loved idea lies.”

But I fear inconstancy, the consequent imperfection of human

weakness. Shall I meet with a friendship that defies years of absence and the chances and changes of fortune ! Perhaps “such things are.” *One* honest man I have great hopes from that way ; but who, except a romance writer, would think on a *love* that could promise for life, in spite of distance, absence, chance, and change, and that, too, with slender hopes of fruition ?

For my own part, I can say to myself in both requisitions —“Thou art the man.” I dare, in cool resolve, I dare declare myself that friend and that lover. If womankind is capable of such things, Clarinda is. I trust that she is ; and feel I shall be miserable if she is not. There is not one virtue which gives worth, or one sentiment which does honor to the sex, that she does not possess superior to any woman I ever saw : her exalted mind, aided a little, perhaps, by her situation, is, I think, capable of that nobly romantic love-enthusiasm. May I see you on Wednesday evening, my dear angel ? The next Wednesday again, will, I conjecture, be a hated day to us both. I tremble for censorious remarks, for your sake ; but in extraordinary cases, may not usual and useful precaution be a little dispensed with ! Three evenings, three swift-winged evenings, with pinions of down, are all the past ; I dare not calculate the future. I shall call at Miss Nimmo’s to-morrow evening : ’twill be a farewell call.

I have wrote out my last sheet of paper, so I am reduced to my last half-sheet. What a strange, mysterious faculty, is that thing called imagination ! We have no ideas almost at all of another world ; but I have often amused myself with visionary schemes of what happiness might be enjoyed by small alterations—alterations that we can fully enter to, in this present state of existence. For instance, suppose you and I just as we are at present ; the same reasoning powers, sentiments, and even desires ; the same fond curi-

osity for knowledge, and remarking observation in our minds; and imagine our bodies free from pain, and the necessary supplies for the wants of nature, at all times, and easily within our reach: imagine farther, that we were set free from the laws of gravitation which bind us to this globe, and could at pleasure fly, without inconvenience, through all the yet un conjectured bounds of creation, what a life of bliss would we lead, in our mutual pursuit of virtue and knowledge, and our mutual enjoyment of friendship and love!

I see you laughing at my fairy fancies, and calling me a voluptuous Mahometan; but I am certain I would be a happy creature, beyond any thing we call bliss here below; nay, it would be a paradise congenial to you too. Don't you see us, hand in hand, or rather, my arm about your lovely waist, making our remarks on Sirius, the nearest of the fixed stars, or surveying a comet, flaming innoxious by us, as we just now would mark the passing pomp of a travelling monarch; or in a shady bower of Mercury or Venus, dedicating the hour to love, in mutual converse, relying honor, and reveling endearment, whilst the most exalted strains of poesy and harmony would be the ready, spontaneous language of our souls! Devotion is the favorite employment of your heart; so it is of mine: what incentives then to, and powers for reverence, gratitude, faith and hope, in all the fervors of adoration and praise to that Being, whose unsearchable wisdom, power, and goodness, so pervaded, so inspired every sense and feeling! By this time, I dare say, you will be blessing the neglect of the maid that leaves me destitute of paper!

SYLVANDER.

(17) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[Monday 21st Jan^y.]

. . . I AM a discontented ghost, a perturbed spirit. Clarinda, if ever you forget Sylvander, may you be happy, but he will be miserable.

O what a fool I am in love ! what an extraordinary prodigal of affection ! Why are your sex called the tender sex, when I never have met with one who can repay me in passion ? They are either not so rich in love as I am, or they are niggards where I am lavish.

O Thou, whose I am, and whose are all my ways ! Thou seest me here, the hapless wreck of tides and tempests in my own bosom : do Thou direct to Thyself that ardent love for which I have so often sought a return, in vain, from my fellow-creatures ! If Thy goodness has yet such a gift in store for me, as an equal return of affection from her who, Thou knowest, is dearer to me than life, do Thou bless and hallow our bond of love and friendship ; watch over us, in all our outgoings and incomings, for good ; and may the tie that unites our hearts be strong and indissoluble as the thread of man's immortal life !

I am just going to take your Blackbird, the sweetest, I am sure, that ever sung, and prune its wings a little.

SYLVANDER.

[Burns had formed a resolution to leave Edinburgh permanently on Wednesday 30th January. He had written a frosty, keen letter to Creech with a view to bring him to a final pecuniary settlement ; and on Monday 21st January he announced to Mrs Dunlop his intention of leaving the city about the middle of the week following. In the foregoing letter to Clarinda he requests a *fourth* private meeting with her on the evening of the 23rd, and along with it he probably sent his *Parting Song* to that lady,

which is mentioned in his next letter as being in the hands of Mr Schetki to set to music.

“Clarinda, mistress of my soul,
The measured time is run !
The wretch beneath the dreary pole,
So marks his latest sun.”—See Vol. II. page 127.

Referring to the meeting betwixt the lovers on Wednesday 23rd January, Chambers thus observes :—“On this occasion, it would appear, the communications of the pair had been of a more fervent and unreserved kind than heretofore, insomuch as to leave self-accusing reflections in the bosom of Clarinda. Each wrote a letter to the other the next day.”]

(¹⁸) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Thursday Morning [Jan. 24th.]

“Unlavish Wisdom never works in vain.”

I HAVE been tasking my reason, Clarinda, why a woman, who, for native genius, poignant wit, strength of mind, generous sincerity of soul, and the sweetest female tenderness, is without a peer ; and whose personal charms have few, very few parallels among her sex ; why, or how, she should fall to the blessed lot of a poor harum-scarum poet, whom Fortune had kept for her particular use to wreak her temper on, whenever she was in ill-humour.

One time I conjectured that, as Fortune is the most capricious jade ever known, she may have taken, not a fit of remorse, but a paroxysm of whim, to raise the poor devil out of the mire where he had so often and so conveniently served her as a stepping-stone, and given him the most glorious boon she ever had in her gift, merely for the maggot's sake, to see how his fool head and his fool heart will bear it.

At other times, I was vain enough to think that Nature, who has a great deal to say with Fortune, had given the coquettish goddess some such hint as—"Here is a paragon of female excellence, whose equal, in all my former compositions, I never was lucky enough to hit on, and despair of ever doing so again: you have cast her rather in the shades of life. There is a certain poet of my making: among your frolics, it would not be amiss to attach him to this masterpiece of my hand, to give her that immortality among mankind, which no woman of any age ever more deserved, and which few rhymsters of this age are better able to confer."

Evening, Nine o'clock.

I am here—absolutely unfit to finish my letter—pretty hearty, after a bowl which has been constantly plied since dinner till this moment. I have been with Mr Schetki the musician, and he has set the song finely. I have no distinct ideas of anything, but that I have drunk your health twice to-night, and that you are all my soul holds dear in this world.

SYLVANDER.

(¹³) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Thursday Forenoon [Jan^y. 24th.]

SYLVANDER, the moment I waked this morning, I received a summons from Conscience to appear at the Bar of Reason. While I trembled before this sacred throne, I beheld a succession of figures pass before me in awful brightness! Religion, clad in a robe of light, stalked majestically along, her hair dishevelled, and in her hand the Scriptures of Truth, held open at these words—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." Reputation followed: her eyes darted indignation, while she waved a beauti-

ful wreath of laurel, intermixed with flowers gathered by Modesty in the Bower of Peace. Consideration held her bright mirror close to my eyes, and made me start at my own image! Love alone appeared as counsel in my behalf. She was adorned with a veil, borrowed from Friendship, which hid her defects, and set off her beauties to advantage. She had no plea to offer, but that of being the sister of Friendship, and the offspring of Charity. But Reason refused to listen to her defence, because she brought no certificate from the Temple of Hymen. While I trembled before her, Reason addressed me in the following manner:—"Return to my paths, which alone are peace; shut your heart against the fascinating intrusion of the passions; take Consideration for your guide, and you will soon arrive at the Bower of Tranquillity."

Sylvander, to drop my metaphor, I am neither well nor happy to-day: my heart reproaches me for last night. If you wish Clarinda to regain her peace, determine against everything but what the strictest delicacy warrants.

I do not blame you, but myself. I must not see you on Saturday, unless I find I can depend on myself acting otherwise. Delicacy, you know, it was which won me to you at once: take care you do not loosen the dearest, most sacred tie that unites us! Remember Clarinda's present and eternal happiness depends upon her adherence to virtue. Happy Sylvander! that can be attached to Heaven and Clarinda together. Alas! I feel I cannot serve two masters. God pity me! !

Thursday night.

Why have I not heard from you, Sylvander? Everything in nature seems tinged with gloom to-day. Ah Sylvander,

"The heart's ay the part ay
That makes us right or wrang !"

How forcibly have these lines recurred to my thoughts! Did I not tell you what a wretch love rendered me? Affection to the strongest height I am capable of, to a man of Sylvander's merit; if it did not lead me into weaknesses and follies my heart utterly condemns. I am convinced that without the approbation of Heaven and my own mind, existence would be to me a heavy

course. Sylvander, why do not your Clarinda's repeated levities cure the too passionate fondness you express for her? Perhaps it has a little removed esteem. But I dare not touch this string; it would fill up the cup of my present misery. O Sylvander, may the friendship of that God you and I have too much neglected to secure, be henceforth our chief study and delight. I cannot live deprived of the consciousness of this favor. I feel something of this awful state all this day. Nay, while I approached God with my lips, my heart was not fully there.

Mr Locke's posthumous letter ought to be written in letters of gold. What heartfelt joy does the consciousness of having done well in any one instance confer; and what agony the reverse! Do not be displeased when I tell you I wish our parting was over. At a distance we shall retain the same heartfelt affection and interestedness in each other's concerns; but absence will mellow and restrain those violent heart-agitations which, if continued much longer, would unhinge my very soul, and render me unfit for the duties of life.

You and I are capable of that ardency of love for which the wide creation cannot afford an adequate object. Let us seek to repose it in the bosom of our God. Let us next give a place to those dearest on earth—the tender charities of parent, sister, child! I bid you good-night with this short prayer of Thomson's—

“Father of Light and Life, thou Good Supreme!
O teach us what is good—teach us Thyself!
Save us from folly, vanity, and vice,” &c.

Your letter—I should have liked had it contained a little of the last one's seriousness. Bless me! you must not flatter so; but it's in a “merry mood,” and I make allowances. Part of some of your encomiums I know I deserve; but you are far out when you enumerate “strength of mind” among them. I have not even an ordinary share of it; every passion does what it will with me; and all my life, I have been guided by the impulse of the moment—unsteady and weak! I thank you for the letter, though it sticket my prayer. Why did you tell me you drank away Reason, that “heaven-lighted lamp in man?” When Sylvander utters a calm, sober sentiment, he is never half

so charming. I have read several of these in your last letter with vast pleasure. Good night!

Friday Morning [25 Jan.]

My servant (who is a good soul) will deliver you this. She is going down to Leith, and will return about two or three o'clock. I have ordered her to call then, in case you have ought to say to Clarinda to-day. I am better of that sickness at heart I had yesterday; but there's a sting remains, which will not be removed till I am at peace with Heaven and myself. Another interview, spent as we ought, will help to procure this. A day when the sun shines gloriously always makes me devout! I hope 'tis an earnest (to-day) of being soon restored to the "light of His countenance" who is the source of love and standard of perfection. Adieu!

CLARINDA.

(¹⁹) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[Friday, January 25th.]

CLARINDA, my life, you have wounded my soul. Can I think of your being unhappy, even though it be not described in your pathetic elegance of language, without being miserable? Clarinda, can I bear to be told from you that "you will not see me to-morrow night—that you wish the hour of parting were come!" Do not let us impose on ourselves by sounds. If, in the moment of fond endearment and tender dalliance, I perhaps trespassed against the *letter* of decorum's law, I appeal even to you, whether I ever sinned, in the very least degree, against the *spirit* of her strictest statute? But why, my love, talk to me in such strong terms; every word of which cuts me to the very soul? You know a hint, the slightest signification of your wish, is to me a sacred command.

Be reconciled, my angel, to your God, yourself, and me ; and I pledge you Sylvander's honor—an oath, I daresay, you will trust without reserve, that you shall never more have reason to complain of his conduct. Now, my love, do not wound our next meeting with any averted looks or restrained caresses. I have marked the line of conduct—a line I know, exactly to your taste—and which I will inviolably keep ; but do not you show the least inclination to make boundaries. Seeming distrust, where you know you may confide, is a cruel sin against sensibility.

“Delicacy, you know, it was which won me to you at once ; take care you do not loosen the dearest, most sacred tie that unites us.” Clarinda, I would not have stung *your* soul, I would not have bruised *your* spirit, as that harsh, crucifying “Take care” did *mine* ; no, not to have gained heaven ! Let me again appeal to your dear self, if Sylvander, even when he seemingly half-transgressed the laws of decorum, if he did not shew more chastened trembling, faltering delicacy, than the many of the world do in keeping these laws ?

O Love and Sensibility, ye have conspired against my Peace ! I love to madness, and I feel to torture ! Clarinda, how can I forgive myself that I have ever touched a single chord in your bosom with pain ! would I do it willingly ? Would any consideration, any gratification, make me do so ? Oh, did you love like me, you would not, you could not, deny or put off a meeting with the man who adores you—who would die a thousand deaths before he would injure you ; and who must soon bid you a long farewell !

I had proposed bringing my bosom friend, Mr Ainslie, to-morrow evening, at his strong request, to see you ; as he has only time to stay with us about ten minutes, for an engagement. But I shall hear from you—this afternoon, for Mercy's sake ! for, till I hear from you, I am wretched.

O Clarinda, the tie that binds me to thee is intwisted—
incorporated with my dearest threads of life !

SYLVANDER.

[Clarinda could not resist the foregoing passionate appeal, although she had just written to him—"Do not be displeased when I tell you I wish our parting was over . . . I must not see you on Saturday, unless I can depend on myself acting otherwise. . . Remember Clarinda's present and eternal happiness depends upon her adherence to virtue. Happy Sylvander, that can be attached to heaven and Clarinda together ! Alas ! I feel I cannot serve two masters. God pity me ! !"] Another such meeting took place on Friday night (the poet's birth-day) and Sylvander's visit was repeated on the night of Saturday—both of which facts the following short letter discloses.]

(²⁰) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[*Saturday 26th Jan.*]

I WAS on the way, *my love*, to meet you (I never do things by halves) when I got your card. Mr Ainslie goes out of town to-morrow morning, to see a brother of his who is newly arrived from France. I am determin'd that he and I shall call on you together ; so, look you, lest I should never see to-morrow, we will call on you to-night. Mary and you may put off tea till about seven ; at which time, in the Galloway phrase, "an the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale," expect the humblest of your humble servants, and his dearest friend. We propose staying only half an hour, "for ought we ken." I could suffer the lash of misery eleven months in the year, were the twelfth to be composed of hours like yesternight. You are the soul of my enjoyment ; all else is of the stuff of stocks and stones.

SYLVANDER.

(21) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Sunday Noon [Jan. 27th.]

I HAVE almost given up the Excise idea. I have been just now to wait on a great person, Miss ——'s friend, ——, why will great people not only deafen us with the din of their equipage, and dazzle us with their fastidious pomp, but they must also be so very dictatorially wise? 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?"

Sunday Night.

I have been with Miss Nimmo. She is indeed "a good soul," as my Clarinda finely says. She has reconciled me, in a good measure, to the world, with her friendly prattle.

Schetki has sent me the song, set to a fine air of his composing. I have called the song "Clarinda." I have carried it about in my pocket and hummed it over all day.

Monday Morning.

If my prayers have any weight in heaven, this morning looks in on you and finds you in the arms of Peace, except where it is charmingly interrupted by the ardors of Devotion. I find so much serenity of mind, so much positive pleasure, so much fearless daring toward the world, when I warm in devotion, or feel the glorious sensation—a consciousness of Almighty friendship, that I am sure I shall soon be an honest enthusiast.

"How are thy servants blest, O Lord!

How sure is their defence!

Eternal Wisdom is their guide,

Their help, Omnipotence!"

I am, my dear Madam, yours

SYLVANDER.

V.

E

(14) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Sunday, 8 Ev. [27th Jan.]

SYLVANDER, when I think of you as my *dearest* and most attached *friend*, I am highly pleased ; but when you come across my mind as my *lover*, something within gives a *sting* resembling that of guilt ! Tell me why is this ? It must be from the idea that I am another's. What ? another's wife ! O cruel Fate ! I am indeed bound in an "iron chain !" Forgive me, if this should give you pain. You know I must (I told you I *must*) tell you my genuine feelings, or be silent. Last night we were happy ! beyond what the bulk of mankind can conceive ! Perhaps the "line" you had mark'd was a *little* infringed—it was really ; but, tho' I *disapprove*, I have not been *unhappy* about it. I am convinced no less of your *discernment* than of your *wish* to make your Clarinda happy. I know you *sincere*, when you profess horror at the idea of what would render her miserable forever. But we must *guard* against going to the *verge* of danger. Ah ! my friend, much need had we to "watch and pray !" May these benevolent spirits whose office it is to "save the fall of Virtue, struggling on the brink of vice" be ever present to protect and guide us in right paths !

I had an hour's conversation to-day with my worthy friend Mr K——p.* You'll attribute, perhaps to *this*, the above sentiments. 'Tis true, there's not one on earth has so much influence on me, except Sylvander ; *partly* it has forced me to "feel along the mental intelligence." However, I've broke the ice. I confessed I had conceived a tender impression of late—that it was mutual, and that I had wish'd to unbosom myself to him (as I did), particularly to ask if he thought I should, or not, mention it to my *friend* ?† I saw he felt for me (for I was in tears) ; but he

* The Rev. John Kemp, minister of Tolbooth parish church.

† Her cousin, Lord Craig, who occasionally gave her donations of money, besides using his influence in her favour, to obtain aid from other sources.

bewail'd that I had given my *heart*, while in my present state of bondage—wish'd I had made it friendship *only*—in short, talk'd to me in the style of a tender Parent, *anxious* for my happiness. He disapproves altogether of my saying a syllable of the matter to my friend; says it could only make him uneasy; and that I'm in no way bound to do it by any one tie. This has eased me of a *load* which has lain upon my mind ever since our intimacy. Sylvander, I wish you and Mr K——p were acquainted—such worth and sensibility! If you had his piety and sobriety of manners, united to the shining abilities you possess! you'd be “a faultless monster which the world ne'er saw.” He too has great talents. His imagination is rich, his feelings delicate, his discernment acute; yet there are *shades* in his, as in all characters: but these it would ill become Clarinda to point out. Alas! I know too many blots in my own!

Sylvander, I believe nothing were a more impracticable task }
 than to make you feel a little of genuine Gospel *humility*! }
 Believe me, I wish not to see you deprived of that noble fire of an exalted mind which you eminently possess. Yet a sense of your faults—a *feeling* sense of them!—were devoutly to be wish'd. Tell me, did you ever, or how oft have you smote on your breast, and cried “God be merciful to me a sinner”? I fancy, once or twice, when suffering from the effects of your errors. Pardon me if I be hurting your “intrinsic dignity;” it need not—even “divine Clarinda” has been in this *mortal* predicament.

Pray, what does Mr Ainslie think of her! was he not astonished to find her merely human? Three weeks ago, I suppose you would have walked into her presence *unshod*; but one must *bury* even divinities when they discover symptoms of mortality! (Let *these* be interred in Sylvander's bosom!)

My dearest friend, there are two wishes uppermost in my heart; to see you think alike with Clarinda on religion; and to see you settled in some creditable line of business. The warm interest I take in both these is perhaps the best proof of the sincerity of my friendship, as well as the earnest of its duration. As to the first, I devolve it over into the hands of the Omniscient! May He raise up friends who will effectuate the other! While I breathe these fervent wishes, think not that anything but pure *disinterested* regard prompts them. They're fond, but chimerical

ideas. They are never indulged but in the hour of tender endearment, when

—————“Innocence
Looks gaily smiling on ; while rosy Pleasure
Hides young Desire amid her flowery wreath,
And pours her cup luxuriant, mantling high
The sparkling heavenly vintage—Love and Bliss !”

’Tis past ten; and I please myself with thinking Sylvander will be about to retire, and write to Clarinda. I fancy you’ll find this *stupid* enough; but I can’t be always bright; the *sun* will be *sometimes* under a cloud. Sylvander, I wish our kind feelings were more moderate; why set one’s heart upon *impossibilities*? Try me merely as your friend (alas! all I ought to be): believe me, you’ll find me most rational. If you’d caress the “mental intelligence” as you do the corporeal frame, indeed, Sylvander, you’d make me a philosopher. I see you fidgetting at this *violently* blasting rationality. I have a headache which brings home those things to the mind. To-morrow I’ll hear from you, I hope! This is Sunday, and not a word on our favorite subject. O fy! “divine Clarinda.” I intend giving you *my* idea of Heaven in opposition to your heathenish description (which, by the by, was elegantly drawn). Mine shall be founded on Reason and supported by Scripture; but it’s too late; my head aches, but my heart is affectionately yours.

Monday Morning.

I am not sorry almost at the Excise affair misgiving. You will be better out of Edin.: it is full of temptation to one of your social turn. Providence (if you be wise in future) will order something better for you. I’m half-glad you were school’d about the Inscription; ’twill be a lesson, I hope, in future. Clarinda would have lectured you on it before, “if she durst.” Miss N. is a woman after my own heart. You are reconciled to the world by her “friendly prattle”! How can you talk so diminutively of the conversation of a woman of solid sense? what will you say of Clarinda’s chit chat? I suppose you will give it a still more insignificant term if you durst; but it is mixed with *something* that makes it more bearable, were it even weaker than it is. Miss

N. is right in both her conjectures. Ah, Sylvander! my peace *must* suffer; yours cannot. *You* think, in loving Clarinda, you are doing right; all Sylvander's eloquence cannot convince me that it is so! If I were but at liberty—Oh how I would indulge in all the luxury of *innocent* love! It is, I fear, I fear, too late to talk in this strain after indulging you and myself so much; but would Sylvander shelter his Love in Friendship's *allowed* garb, Clarinda would be much happier!

"To-morrow," did'st thou say? The time is short *now*; is it not *too* frequent? Do not sweetest dainties cloy soonest? Take your chance—come half-past eight. If anything *partieular* occur to render it improper *to-morrow*, I'll send you word, and name another evening. Mr Kemp is to call to-night, I believe. *He* too "trembles for my peace." Two such worthies to be interested about my foolish ladyship! The Apostle Paul, with all his rhetoric, would not reconcile me to the *great* (little souls) when I think of them and Sylvander together; but I *pity* them.

"If e'er ambition did my fancy cheat,
With any wish so *mean*, as to be great,
Continue, Heav'n, far from me to remove
The humble blessings of that life I'd love."

Till we meet, my dear Sylvander, adieu!

CLARINDA.*

[The meetings at Clarinda's house became more frequent as the anticipated hour of parting drew nearer. From the preceding letter we gather that Burns proposed an interview on Tuesday 29th January. Miss Mary Peacock, already spoken of, seems to have been staying for a day or two about this period with her friend Mrs M'Lehose. From Sylvander's letter of Friday morning 1st February, we learn that Mary was present at an interview between the lovers on the Wednesday evening.]

* This letter has been collated with the original MS., in the possession of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq.

(22) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[29th Jan.]

I CANNOT go out to-day, my dearest Clarinda, without sending you half a line, by way of a sin offering; but believe me, 'twas the sin of ignorance. Could you think that I *intended* to hurt you by any thing I said yesterday? Nature has been too kind to you for your happiness, your delicacy, your sensibility.—O why should such glorious qualifications be the fruitful source of woe! You have “murdered sleep” to me last night. I went to bed, impressed with an idea that you were unhappy; and every start I closed my eyes, busy Fancy painted you in such scenes of romantic misery, that I would almost be persuaded you are not well this morning.

“If I unwitting have offended,
 Impute it not
 But while we live
 But one short hour, perhaps, between us two,
 Let there be peace.”

If Mary is not gone by the time this reaches you, give her my compliments. She is a charming girl, and highly worthy of the noblest love.

I send you a poem to read till I call on you this night, which will be about nine. I wish I could procure some potent spell, some fairy charm, that would protect from injury, or restore to rest that bosom chord, “trembling alive all o’er,” on which hangs your peace of mind. I thought, vainly I fear I thought, that the devotion of love—love strong as even you can feel—love guarded, invulnerably guarded by all the purity of virtue, and all the pride of honor,—I thought, such a love might make you happy. Shall I be mistaken? I can no more for hurry. SYLVANDER.

Tuesday Morning.

(15) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Thursday, Noon [31 Jan.]

I HAVE been giving Mary a convoy; the day is a genial one. Mary is a happy woman to-day. Mrs Cockburn has seen her "Henry," and admired it vastly. She talked of you, told her she saw you, and that her lines even met your applause. Sylvander, I share in the joy of every one; and am ready to "weep with those who weep," as well as "rejoice with those who rejoice." I wish all the human race well; my heart throbs with the large ambitious wish to see them blest; yet I seem sometimes as if born to inflict misery. What a cordial evening we had last night! I only tremble at the ardent manner Mary talks of Sylvander! She knows where his affections lie, and is quite unconscious of the eagerness of her expression. All night I could get no sleep for her admiration. I like her for it, and am proud of it; but I know how much violent admiration is akin to love.

I go out to dinner, and mean to leave this, in case of one from you to-day. Miss Chalmers's letters are charming. Why did not such a woman secure your heart? O the caprice of human nature! to fix impossibilities.

I am, however, happy you have such valuable friends. What a pity that those who will be most apt to feel your merit, will be probably among the number who have not the power of serving you! Sylvander, I never was ambitious; but of late I have wished for wealth with ardour unfelt before, to be able to say, "Be independent, thou dear friend of my heart!" What exquisite joy! Then "your head would be lifted up above your enemies." O then what little shuffling, sneaking attentions! shame on the world! Wealth and power command its adulation, while real genius and worth, without these, are neglected and contemned.

"In nature's simplest habit clad,
No wealth nor power had he;
Genius and worth were all he had,
And these were all to me."

Forgive my quoting my most favourite lines. You spoke of being here to-morrow evening. I believe you would be the first to tire of our society ; but I tremble for censorious remarks ; however, we must be sober in our hours. I am flat to-day, so adieu ! I was not so cheerful last night as I wished. Forgive me. I am yours,

CLARINDA.

(²³) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Friday Morn., 7 o'clock [1st Feb.]

YOUR fears for Mary are truly laughable. I suppose, my love, you and I showed her a scene, which perhaps made her wish that she had a swain, and one who could love like me ; and 'tis a thousand pities that so good a heart as hers should want an aim—an object. I am miserably stupid this morning. Yesterday I dined with a Baronet, and sat pretty late over the bottle. And “who hath woe ; who hath sorrow ? they that tarry long at the wine ; they that go to seek mixed wine.” Forgive me, likewise, a quotation from my favourite author. Solomon’s knowledge of the world is very great. He may be looked on as the “Spectator” or “Adventurer” of his day : and it is, indeed, surprising what a sameness has ever been in human nature. The broken, but strongly characterizing hints, that the royal author gives us of the manners of the court of Jerusalem and country of Israel are, in their great outlines, the same pictures that London and England, Versailles and France exhibit some three thousand years later. The loves in the “Song of Songs,” are all in the spirit of Lady M. W. Montague, or Madame Ninon de l’Enclos ; though, for my part, I dislike both the ancient and modern voluptuaries ; and will dare to affirm, that such an attachment as mine to

Clarinda, and such evenings as she and I have spent, are what these greatly respectable and deeply experienced Judges of Life and Love never dreamed of.

I shall be with you this evening between eight and nine, and shall keep as sober hours as you could wish. I am ever, my dear Madam, yours,

SYLVANDER.

(2^d) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Sunday morning [Feb. 3rd.]

I HAVE just been before the throne of my God, Clarinda. According to my association of ideas, my sentiments of love and friendship, I next devote myself to you. Yesternight I was happy—happiness “that the world cannot give.” I kindle at the recollection; but it is a flame where “Innocence looks smiling on,” and Honor stands by, a sacred guard. Your heart, your fondest wishes, your dearest thoughts, these are yours to bestow: your person is unapproachable, by the laws of your country; and he loves not as I do who would make you miserable.

You are an angel, Clarinda: you are surely no mortal that “the earth owns.”—To kiss your hand, to live on your smile, is to me far more exquisite bliss than any the dearest favours that the fairest of the sex, yourself excepted, can bestow.

Sunday Evening.

You are the constant companion of my thoughts. How wretched is the condition of one who is haunted with conscious guilt, and trembling under the idea of dreaded vengeance! And what a placid calm, what a charming secret

enjoyment is given to one's bosom by the kind feelings of friendship, and the fond throes of love ! Out upon the tempest of Anger, the acrimonious gall of fretful Impatience, the sullen frost of lowering Resentment, or the corroding poison of withered Envy ! They eat up the immortal part of man ! If they spent their fury only on the unfortunate objects of them, it would be something in their favor ; but these miserable passions, like traitor Iscariot, betray their lord and master.

Thou Almighty Author of peace, and goodness and love ! do Thou give me the social heart that kindly tastes of every man's cup ! Is it a draught of joy ? warm and open my heart to share it with cordial, unenvying rejoicing ! Is it the bitter potion of sorrow ? melt my heart with sincerely sympathetic woe ! Above all, do Thou give me the manly mind, that resolutely exemplifies in life and manners those sentiments which I would wish to be thought to possess ! The friend of my soul—there may I never deviate from the firmest fidelity, and most active kindness ! Clarinda, the dear object of my fondest love ; there, may the most sacred, inviolate honor, the most faithful, kindling constancy, ever watch and animate my every thought and imagination !

Did you ever meet with the following lines spoken of Religion, your darling topic ?

“Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright ;
Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night !
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few,
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue ;
Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms Affliction, or repels its dart ;
Within the breast bids purest rapture rise,
Bids smiling Conscience spread her cloudless skies.”

I met with these verses very early in life, and was so

delighted with them that I have them by me, copied at school.*

Good night, and sound rest, my dearest Clarinda !

SYLVANDER.

(¹⁶) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Wed. Even., Nine [Feb. 6.]

THERE is not a sentiment in your last dear letter but must meet the approbation of every worthy discerning mind—except one, “that my heart, my fondest wishes are mine to bestow.” True they are not, they cannot be placed upon him who ought to have had them, but whose conduct (I dare not say more against him) has justly forfeited them. But is it not too near an infringement of the sacred obligations of marriage to bestow one’s heart, wishes and thoughts upon another? Something in my soul whispers that it approaches criminality. I obey the voice. Let me cast every kind feeling into the allowed bond of Friendship. If ’tis accompanied with a shadow of a softer feeling, it shall be poured into the bosom of a merciful God! If a confession of my warmest, tenderest friendship does not satisfy you, duty forbids Clarinda should do more! Sylvander, I never expect to be happy here below! Why was I formed so susceptible of emotions I dare not indulge? Never were there two hearts formed so exactly alike as ours! No wonder our friendship is heightened by the “sympathetic glow.” In reading your *Life*, I

* The lines are taken from one of several sets of recommendatory addresses in rhyme, prefixed to old editions of *Hervey’s Meditations*, a book that had an immense circulation in Scotland during last century, but which does not fit even the *religious taste* of the present day. Burns quoted the lines several times during the course of his correspondence with Mrs. Dunlop and others. Dugald Stewart also refers to them as having been quoted by the poet in conversation.

find the very first poems that hit your fancy, were those that first engaged mine. While almost a child, the hymn you mentioned, and another of Addison's, "When all thy mercies," &c., were my chief favourites. They are much so to this hour : and I make my boys repeat them every Sabbath day. When about fifteen, I took a great fondness for Pope's "Messiah," which I still reckon one of the sublimest pieces I ever met with.

Sylvander, I believe our friendship will be lasting ; its basis has been virtue, similarity of tastes, feelings, and sentiments. Alas ! I shudder at the idea of one hundred miles distance. You'll hardly write me once a month, and other objects will weaken your affection for Clarinda ! Yet I cannot believe so. Oh, let the scenes of Nature remind you of Clarinda ! In Winter, remember the dark shades of her fate ; in Summer, the warmth, the cordial warmth of her friendship ; in Autumn, her glowing wishes to bestow plenty on all ; and let Spring animate you with hopes, that your friend may live to surmount the wintry blasts of life, and revive to taste a springtime of happiness ! At all events, Sylvander, the storms of life "will quickly pass, and one unbounded Spring encircle all."* There, Sylvander, I trust we'll meet. Love *there* is not a crime. I charge you to meet me there. O God !—I must lay down my pen.

I repent, almost, flattering your writing talents so much : I can see you know all the merit you possess. The allusion of "the key" is true ; † therefore I won't recant it ; but I rather was too humble about my own letters, I have met with several who wrote worse than myself, and few, of my own sex, better ; so I don't give you great credit for being fashed with them.

Sylvander, I have things with different friends I can't tell to another, yet am not hurt ; but I told you of that particular friend : he was, for near four years, the one I confided in. He is very worthy, and answers your description in the "Epistle to J. S." exactly. When I had hardly a friend to care for me in Edinburgh, he befriended me. I saw, too soon, 'twas with him a warmer feeling : perhaps a little infection was the natural

* "The storms of Wintry time will quickly pass,

And one unbounded Spring encircle all."—*Thomson's Winter.*

† See Clarinda's letters of 16th January and of 19th January, *supra*.

effect. I told you the circumstance which helped to eradicate the tender impression in me ; but I perceive (though he never tells me so)—I see it in every instance, *his* prepossession still remains. I esteem him as a faithful friend ; but I can never feel more for him. I fear he's not convinced of that. He sees no man with me half so often as himself ; and thinks I surely am at least partial to no other. I cannot bear to deceive one in so tender a point, and am hurt at his harbouring an attachment I can never return. I have thoughts of owning my intimacy with Sylvander, but a thousand things forbid it. I should be tortured with Jealousy, that "green-eyed monster" ; and besides I fear 'twould wound his peace. 'Tis a delicate affair. I wish your judgment on it. O Sylvander, I cannot bear to give pain to any creature, far less to one who pays me the attention of a brother !

I never met with a man congenial, perfectly congenial to myself but *one*—ask no questions. Is Friday to be the last night ? I wish, Sylvander, you'd steal away—I cannot bear farewell ! I can hardly relish the idea of meeting—for the idea ! but we will meet again, at least in Heaven, I hope. Sylvander, when I survey myself, my returning weaknesses, I am consoled that my hopes, my immortal hopes, are founded in the complete righteousness of a compassionate Saviour. "In all our afflictions He is afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence guards us."

I am charmed with the lines on Religion, and with you for relishing them. I only wish the world saw you as you appear in your letters to me. Why did you send forth to them the "Holy Fair," &c. ? Had Clarinda known you, she would have held you in her arms till she had your promise to suppress them. Do not publish the "Moor-hen" : do not for your sake, and for mine. I wish you vastly to hear my valued friend, Mr Kemp. Come to hear him on Sunday afternoon. 'Tis the first favour I have asked you : I expect you will not refuse me. You'll easily get a seat. Your favourite, Mr Gould, I admired much. His composition is elegant indeed ; but 'tis like beholding a beautiful superstructure built on a sandy foundation : 'tis fine to look upon ; but one dares not abide in it with safety. Mr Kemp's language is very good—perhaps not such studied periods as Mr G.'s ; but he is far more animated. He is pathetic in a

degree that touches one's soul ! and then, 'tis all built upon a rock.

I could chide you for the Parting Song.* You "may reca'," by being wise in future, "your friend as yet." I will be your friend for ever ! Good night ! God bless you ! prays

CLARINDA.

Thursday Noon.

I shall go to-morrow forenoon to Miers alone : 'tis quite a usual thing I hear. Mary is not in town, and I don't care to ask Miss Nimmo, or any body else. What size do you want it about ? O Sylvander, if you wish my peace, let *Friendship* be the word between us : I tremble at more. "Talk not of Love," &c. To-morrow I'll expect you. Adieu !

CLARINDA.

(²⁵) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Thursday Night [Feb. 7th.]

I CANNOT be easy, my Clarinda, while any sentiment respecting me in your bosom gives you pain. If there is no man on earth to whom your heart and affections are justly due, it may savour of imprudence, but never of criminality, to bestow that heart and those affections where you please. The God of love meant and made those delicious attachments to be bestowed on somebody ; and even all the imprudence lies in bestowing them on an unworthy object. If this reasoning is conclusive, as it certainly is, I must be allowed to "talk of Love."

It is, perhaps, rather wrong to speak highly to a friend of his letter ; it is apt to lay one under a little restraint

* "Clarinda, mistress of my soul," &c. See page 65 *supra*.

in their future letters, and restraint is the death of a friendly epistle; but there is one passage in your last charming letter, Thomson nor Shenstone never exceeded it, nor often came up to it. I shall certainly steal it, and set it in some future poetic production, and get immortal fame by it. 'Tis when you bid the scenes of nature remind me of Clarinda. Can I forget you, Clarinda? I would detest myself as a tasteless, unfeeling, insipid, infamous blockhead! I have loved women of ordinary merit, whom I could have loved for ever. You are the first, the only unexceptionable individual of the beauteous sex that I ever met with; and never woman more entirely possessed my soul. I know myself, and how far I can depend on passions, well. It has been my peculiar study.

I thank you for going to Miers. Urge him, for necessity calls, to have it done by the middle of next week: Wednesday the latest day. I want it for a breast-pin, to wear next my heart. I propose to keep sacred set times, to wander in the woods and wilds for meditation on you. Then, and only then, your lovely image shall be produced to the day, with a reverence akin to devotion.

* * * * *

To-morrow night shall not be the last. Good night! I am perfectly stupid, as I supped late yesternight.

SYLVANDER.

[Four or five letters addressed by Clarinda to Sylvander about this time have been lost. The "particular friend" referred to by Clarinda in her letter of Feb. 6th; and perhaps one or two others, including Mr Kemp, the lady's spiritual adviser, had interfered; and from that source must have emanated the "puritanic scrawl" and the "haughty dictatorial letter" commented on by Sylvander in the next two items of the correspondence.]

(26) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[Wed. Feb. 13.]

MY EVER DEAREST CLARINDA,—I make a numerous dinner-party wait me while I read yours and write this. Do not require that I should cease to love you, to adore you in my soul; 'tis to me impossible: your peace and happiness are to me dearer than my soul. Name the terms on which you wish to see me, to correspond with me, and you have them. I must love, pine, mourn, and adore in secret: this you must not deny me. You will ever be to me

“Dear as the light that visits those sad eyes,
Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart.”*

I have not patience to read the Puritanic scrawl. Damned sophistry. Ye heavens, thou God of nature, thou Redeemer of mankind! ye look down with approving eyes on a passion inspired by the purest flame, and guarded by truth, delicacy, and honor; but the half inch soul of an unfeeling, cold-blooded, pitiful Presbyterian bigot cannot forgive anything above his dungeon-bosom and foggy head.

Farewell! I'll be with you to-morrow evening; and be at rest in your mind. I will be yours in the way you think most to your happiness. I dare not proceed. I love, and will love you; and will, with joyous confidence, approach the throne of the Almighty Judge of men with your dear idea; and will despise the scum of sentiment, and the mist of sophistry.

SYLVANDER.

* Quoted imperfectly from Shakspeare's "Julius Cæsar."

(27) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Wednesday, Midnight [Feb. 13th.]

MADAM,—After a wretched day, I am preparing for a sleepless night. I am going to address myself to the Almighty Witness of my actions—some time, perhaps very soon, my Almighty Judge. I am not going to be the advocate of Passion: be Thou my inspirer and testimony, O God, as I plead the cause of truth!

I have read over your friend's haughty dictatorial letter: you are only answerable to your God in such a matter. Who gave any fellow-creature of yours (a fellow-creature incapable of being your judge, because not your peer) a right to catechise, scold, undervalue, abuse, and insult, wantonly and unhumanly to insult you thus? I don't wish, not even *wish* to deceive you, Madam. The Searcher of hearts is my witness how dear you are to me; but though it were possible you could be still dearer to me, I would not even kiss your hand, at the expense of your conscience. Away with declamation! let us appeal to the bar of common sense. It is not mouthing everything sacred; it is not vague ranting assertions; it is not assuming, haughtily and insultingly assuming, the dictatorial language of a Roman Pontiff, that must dissolve a union like ours. Tell me, Madam, are you under the least shadow of an obligation to bestow your love, tenderness, caresses, affections, heart and soul, on Mr M'Lehose—the man who has repeatedly, habitually, and barbarously broken through every tie of duty, nature or gratitude to you? The laws of your country indeed, for the most useful reasons of policy and sound government, have made your person inviolate; but are your heart and affections bound to one

who gives not the least return of either to you? You cannot do it; it is not in the nature of things that you are bound to do it; the common feelings of humanity forbid it. Have you then, a heart and affections which are no man's right? You have. It would be highly, ridiculously absurd to suppose the contrary. Tell me then, in the name of common sense, can it be wrong, is such a supposition compatible with the plainest ideas of right and wrong, that it is improper to bestow the heart and these affections on another—while that bestowing is not in the smallest degree hurtful to your duty to God, to your children, to yourself, or to society at large?

This is the great test; the consequences: let us see them. In a widowed, forlorn, lonely situation, with a bosom glowing with love and tenderness, yet so delicately situated that you cannot indulge these nobler feelings except you meet with a man who has a soul capable of

* * * * *

SYLVANDER.

(28) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.*

(STEWART, 1802.)

[Thursday, 14th Feb.]

"I AM distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan!" I have suffered, Clarinda, from your letter. My soul was in arms at the sad perusal: I dreaded that I had acted wrong. If I have robbed you of a friend, God forgive me! But, Clarinda, be comforted: let us raise the tone of our feelings a little higher and bolder. A fellow-creature who leaves us, who spurns us without just cause, though once our bosom

* The original of this letter is now in the Poet's monument at Edinburgh.

friend—up with a little honest pride—let them go! How shall I comfort you, who am the cause of the injury? Can I wish that I had never seen you? that we had never met? No, I never will! But have I thrown you friendless?—there is almost distraction in the thought. Father of mercies! against Thee often have I sinned: through Thy grace I will endeavour to do so no more. She who, Thou knowest, is dearer to me than myself—pour Thou the balm of peace into her past wounds, and hedge her about with Thy peculiar care, all her future days and nights. Strengthen her tender, noble mind firmly to suffer, and magnanimously to bear! Make me worthy of that friendship—that love she honors me with. May my attachment to her be pure as devotion, and lasting as immortal life. O Almighty Goodness, hear me! Be to her, at all times, particularly in the hour of distress or trial, a Friend and Comforter, a Guide and Guard.

“How are Thy servants blest, O Lord,
How sure is their defence!
Eternal Wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence.”

Forgive me, Clarinda, the injury I have done you. To-night I shall be with you, as indeed I shall be ill at ease till I see you.

SYLVANDER.

(²⁰) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

Two o'clock [Thursday, 14th Feb.]

I JUST now received your first letter of yesterday, by the careless negligence of the penny post. Clarinda, matters are grown very serious with us: then seriously hear me, and hear me Heaven!

I met you, my dear Clarinda, by far the first of woman-kind, at least to me. I esteemed, I loved you at first sight, both of which attachments you have done me the honor to return. The longer I am acquainted with you, the more innate amiableness and worth I discover in you. You have suffered a loss, I confess, for my sake; but if the firmest, steadiest, warmest friendship; if every endeavour to be worthy of your friendship; if a love, strong as the ties of nature, and holy as the duties of religion; if all these can make anything like a compensation for the evil I have occasioned you; if they be worth your acceptance, or can in the least add to your enjoyments—so help Sylvander, ye Powers above, in his hour of need, as he freely gives these all to Clarinda!

I esteem you, I love you as a friend; I admire you, I love you as a woman, beyond any one in all the circle of creation. I know I shall continue to esteem you, to love you, to pray for you, nay, to pray for myself for your sake.

Expect me at eight; and believe me to be ever, my dearest Madam, yours most entirely, SYLVANDER.

(³⁰) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[*Friday, 15th Feb.*]

WHEN matters, my love, are desperate, we must put on a desperate face;

“——— On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.”

or, as the same author finely says in another place, —

——— ‘Let thy soul spring up,
And lay strong hold for help on Him that made thee.’

I am yours, Clarinda, for life. Never be discouraged at all this. Look forward; in a few weeks I shall be somewhere or other out of the possibility of seeing you: till then I shall write you often, but visit you seldom. Your fame, your welfare, your happiness are dearer to me than any gratification whatever. Be comforted, my love! the present moment is the worst; the lenient hand of Time is daily and hourly either lightening the burden, or making us insensible to the weight.* None of these friends, I mean Mr —— and the other gentlemen, can hurt your worldly support: and for their friendship, in a little time you will learn to be easy, and, by and by, to be happy without it. A decent means of livelihood in the world, an approving God, a peaceful conscience, and one firm trusty friend—can anybody that has these be said to be unhappy? These are yours.

To-morrow evening I shall be with you about eight, probably for the last time, till I return to Edinburgh. In the meantime, should any of these two unlucky friends question you respecting me, whether I am *the Man*, I do not think they are entitled to any information. As to their jealousy and spying, I despise them. Adieu! my dearest Madam.

SYLVANDER.

[At the favourite hour of assignation, and on the favourite night of meeting (Saturday), the closing interview, at this period, between the distressed lovers took place. For the sake of her imprudent attachment to Sylvander, poor Clarinda had been “catechised, scolded, undervalued, abused, and wantonly insulted.” That Clarinda would experience some temporary consolation and

* “Time comes wi’ kind oblivious shade,
And daily darker sets it;
And if nae mair mistakes are made,
The world soon forgets it.”—Page 303, Vol. I.

comfort from the eloquent pleadings and sophistry of Sylvander at this meeting may be assumed. There, as in his letters, when he stood forth as the advocate of Passion, and called the Searcher of hearts to witness that, were it possible she could be still dearer to him than she is, he would not “even *kiss her hand* at the expense of her conscience,” Clarinda’s own heart of love must have beaten in unison with every argument and sentiment he uttered.

It had been fixed that on Monday, 18th February, Burns should leave Edinburgh on a journey involving about three weeks absence. A letter from every stage was promised; and, in order to gratify her religious enthusiasm, he vowed “to meet her at the Throne of Grace” exactly at 8 p.m. of every Sunday during their separation. This, it is to be feared, was an *unworthy concession* on the part of “rantin, rovin Robin,” in favour of the “cold-blooded, pitiful Presbyterian bigots” with the “half-inch souls, dungeon-bosoms, and foggy heads” whose interference had startled Clarinda.

While Sylvander sets out on his journey, the reader will please to halt here for a little, as we have something to tell him about the devout churchman who directed the spiritual aspirations and hopes of poor Clarinda at this period, and for some years thereafter. The Rev. John Kemp was born in Perthshire—the son of the Rev. David Kemp, minister of Gask—in 1745; therefore he would be about forty-three years old when Burns curst his “half-inch soul and foggy head.” In 1779 he was appointed colleague of the famous Dr Webster in the Tolbooth Church at Edinburgh; and after the period of Burns’s residence in that city he had the degree of D.D. conferred on him. He was three times married, the second and third of which alliances were with daughters of the nobility. His second wife, Lady Mary Anne Carnegie, daughter of the sixth Earl of Northesk, died in 1798, and shortly thereafter he espoused Lady Elizabeth Hope, daughter of John, second Earl of Hopetoun. His son, David Kemp, entered into trade as a manufacturer near Dumbarton, and on 28th Sept. 1803, married the eldest daughter of Sir James Colquhoun of Luss, a connexion which eventually gave rise to proceedings that told heavily on the character of Clarinda’s

minister. Sir James, either through uxorious jealousy, or circumstances which were to him “confirmation strong as proofs from holy writ,” became convinced that his own lady and Dr Kemp, were in improper intercourse together; and after in vain trying to accomplish a disunion betwixt them, he raised an action of divorce against his wife and her alleged correspondent. The legal proceedings were watched with great public interest, and gave occasion for as much scandal on one side, as of sympathising concern on the other. Dr. Kemp’s own party represented him as the most injured man living; while the profane multitude characterised him as a second Dr Cantwell. Among other satirical effusions of the day, the “Town Eclogue,” in reference to the son’s marriage, and Dr Kemp’s intimacy with Lady Colquhoun, has this couplet among other grosser stuff:—

“To a Weaver’s arms consign the high-born Miss,
Then greet the Mother with a holy kiss.”

While the interesting *crim. con.* cause was pending in court Death opportunely stepped in, and put an end to litigation by quietly removing to the other world the two principal actors in the drama, almost simultaneously. In the same week’s Journal the two deaths are thus recorded.

“April 18. (1805). At Weirbank House, near Melrose, of a stroke of palsy, aged sixty, the Rev. John Kemp, D.D., one of the ministers of the Tolbooth Church, Edinburgh, and Secretary to the Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge.”

“April 23rd. At Edinburgh, Sir James Colquhoun of Luss, Bart., Sheriff-depute of Dumbartonshire.”]

(³¹) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

GLASGOW, *Monday Evening, 9 o’clock, [Feb. 18.]*

THE attraction of Love, I find, is in an inverse proportion to the attraction of the Newtonian philosophy. In the

system of Sir Isaac, the nearer objects are to one another, the stronger is the attractive force : in my system, every milestone that marked my progress from Clarinda, awakened a keener pang of attachment to her. How do you feel, my love? is your heart ill at ease? I fear it. God forbid that these persecutors should harass that peace which is more precious to me than my own! Be assured I shall ever think of you, muse on you, and, in my moments of devotion, pray for you. The hour that you are not in all my thoughts—"be that hour darkness! let the shadows of death cover it! let it not be numbered in the hours of the day!"

———"When I forget the darling theme,
Be my tongue mute! my fancy paint no more!
And, dead to joy, forget my heart to beat!"

I have just met with my old friend, the ship captain *—guess my pleasure! to meet you could alone have given me more. My brother William, too, the young saddler, has come to Glasgow to meet me; and here are we three spending the evening.

I arrived here too late to write by post; but I'll wrap half a dozen sheets of blank paper together, and send it by the Fly, under the name of a parcel. You shall hear from me next post town. I would write you a longer letter, but for the present circumstances of my friend.

Adieu, my Clarinda! I am just going to propose your health by way of grace-drink.

SYLVANDER.

* Mr Richard Brown, the "young fellow" whom he mentions with approbation in his autobiography, at the Irvine period of his life.

(17) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

EDIN^B., *Tuesday Even.*, 9 o'clock, [19th Feb.]

MR — has just left me, after half an hour's most pathetic conversation. I told him of the usage I had met with on Sunday night, which he condemned much, as unmanly and ungenerous. I expressed my thanks for his call; but he told me it was "merely to hide the change in his friendship from the world." Think how I was mortified! I was indeed; and affected so, as hardly to restrain tears. He did not name you, but spoke in terms that showed plainly he knew. Would to God he knew my Sylvander as I do! then might I hope to retain his friendship still; but I have made my choice, and you alone can ever make me repent it. Yet, while I live, I must regret the loss of such a man's friendship. My dear generous friend of my soul does so too. I love him for it! Yesterday I thought of you, and went over to Miss Nimmo, to have the luxury of talking of you. She was most kind; and praised you more than ever, as a man of worth, honor, genius. O how I could have listened to her for ever! She says she is afraid our attachment will be lasting. I stayed tea, was asked kindly, and did not choose to refuse, as I stayed last time when you were of the party. I wish you were here to-night to comfort me. I feel hurt and depressed; but to-morrow I hope for a cordial from your dear hand! I must bid you good night. Remember your Clarinda. Every blessing be yours!

Your letter this moment. Why did you write before to-day? Thank you for it. I figure your heartfelt enjoyment last night. O to have been of the party! Where was it? I'd like to know the very spot. My head aches, so I can't write more; but I have kissed your dear lines over and over. Adieu! I'll finish this to-morrow.—Your

CLARINDA.

Wednesday, Eleven a.m.

Mary was at my bedside by eight this morning. We had much chat about you. She is an affectionate, faithful soul. She tells me her defence of you was so warm, in a large company where you were blamed for some trivial affair, that she left them

impressed with the idea of being in love. She laughs, and says, "'tis a pity to have the skaith, and nothing for her pains."

My spirits are greatly better to-day. I am a little anxious about Willie; his leg is to be lanced this day, and I shall be fluttered till the operation is fairly over. Mr Wood thinks he will soon get well, when the matter lodged in it is discussed. God grant it! Oh, how can I ever be ungrateful to that good Providence who has blest me with so many undeserved mercies, and saved me often from the ruin I courted! The heart that feels its continual dependence on the Almighty is bound to keep His laws, by a tie stronger and tenderer than any human obligation. The feeling of Honor is a noble and powerful one; but can we be honorable to a fellow creature, and basely unmindful of our Bountiful Benefactor to whom we are indebted for life and all its blessings; and even for those very distinguishing qualities, Honor, Genius and Benevolence?

I am sure you enter into these ideas; did you think with me in all points I should be too happy; but I'll be silent. I may wish and pray, but you shall never again accuse me of presumption. My dear, I write this to Mauchline, to be waiting you. I hope, nay I am sure, 'twill be welcome.

You are an extravagant prodigal in more essential things than affection. To-day's post would have brought me yours, and saved you sixpence. However it pleased me to know that, "though absent in body, you were present with me in spirit."

Do you know a Miss Nelly Hamilton in Ayr, daughter to Captain John Hamilton of the Excise cutter? I stayed with her at Kailzie, and love her. She is a dear, amiable, romantic girl. I wish much to write to her, and will enclose it for you to deliver personally if agreeable. She raved about your poems in summer, and wished to be acquainted. Let me know if you have any objections. She is an intimate of Miss Nimmo too. I think the streets look deserted-like since Monday; and there's a certain insipidity in good kind of folks I once enjoyed not a little. You who are a casuist, explain these deep enigmas. Miss Wardrope supped here on Monday. She once named you, which kept me from falling asleep. I drank your health in a glass of ale (as the lasses do at Hallowe'en) "in to mysel'.

Happy Sylvander! to meet with the dear charities of brother, sister, parent! whilst I have none of these, and belong to nobody. Yes I have my children, and my heart's friend, Sylvander—the only one I have found capable of that nameless, delicate attachment, which none but noble, romantic minds can comprehend. I envy you the Captain's society. Don't tell him of the "Iron Chain," lest he call us both fools. I saw the happy trio in my mind's eye. So absence increases your fondness, 'tis ever so in great souls. Let the poor worklings enjoy—*possess*, I mean, for they can't enjoy—their golden dish; we have each of us an estate, derived from the Father of the universe, into whose hands I trust we'll return it, cultivated so as to prove an inexhaustible treasure through the endless ages of eternity!

Afternoon.

Mr Wood has not come, so the affair is not over. I hesitate about sending this till I hear further; but I think you said you'd be at Mauchline on Thursday: at any rate you'll get this on your arrival.

Farewell! may you ever abide under the shadow of the Almighty.—Yours,

CLARINDA.

(32) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

KILMARNOCK, *Friday* [*February 22d.*]

I WROTE you, my dear Madam, the moment I alighted in Glasgow. Since then I have not had opportunity: for in Paisley, where I arrived next day, my worthy, wise friend, Mr Pattison,* did not allow me a moment's respite. I was there ten hours; during which time I was introduced to nine men worth six thousands; five men worth ten thousands; his brother, richly worth twenty thousands; and a young

* This is the correspondent to whom the poet addressed a letter, given at page 242, Vol. IV.

weaver, who will have thirty thousands good, when his father, who has no more children than the said weaver, and a Whig kirk, dies. Mr P. was bred a zealous Antiburgher; but, during his widowerhood, he has found their strictness incompatible with certain compromises he is often obliged to make with those Powers of darkness—the devil, the world, and the flesh: so he, good, merciful man! talked privately to me of the absurdity of eternal torments; the liberality of sentiment in indulging the honest instincts of nature; the mysteries of * * * &c. He has a son, however, that, at sixteen, has repeatedly minted at certain privileges, only proper for sober, staid men, who can use the good things of this life without abusing them; but the father's parental vigilance has hitherto hedged him in, amid a corrupt and evil world.

His only daughter, who, “if the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale,” will have seven thousand pounds when her old father steps into the dark Factory-office of Eternity with his well-thummed web of life, has put him again and again in a commendable fit of indignation, by requesting a harpsichord. “O! these boarding-schools!” exclaims my prudent friend. “She was a good spinner and sewer, till I was advised by her foes and mine to give her a year of Edinburgh!”

After two bottles more, my much-respected friend opened up to me a project, a legitimate child of Wisdom and Good Sense; 'twas no less than a long thought-on and deeply-matured design to marry a girl, fully as elegant in her form as the famous priestess whom Saul consulted in his last hours, and who had been second maid of honor to his deceased wife. This, you may be sure, I highly applauded, so I hope for a pair of gloves by and by. I spent the two bypast days at Dunlop House with that worthy family to whom I was deeply indebted early in my poetic career; and

in about two hours I shall present your “twa wee sarkies” to the little fellow. My dearest Clarinda, you are ever present with me; and these hours, that drawl by among the fools and rascals of this world, are only supportable in the idea, that they are the forerunners of that happy hour that ushers me to “the mistress of my soul.” Next week I shall visit Dumfries, and next again return to Edinburgh. My letters, in these hurrying dissipated hours, will be heavy trash; but you know the writer.—God bless you.

SYLVANDER.

(¹⁸) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

EDIN^a., *Friday Ev.*, [22nd Feb.]

I WISH you had given me a hint, my dear Sylvander, that you were to write to me only once in a week. Yesterday I looked for a letter; to-day never doubted it; but both days have terminated in disappointment. A thousand conjectures have conspired to make me most unhappy. Often have I suffered much disquiet from forming the idea of such an attention, on such and such an occasion, and experienced quite the reverse. But in you, and you alone, I have ever found my highest demands of kindness accomplished; nay, even my fondest wishes, not gratified only, but anticipated! To what then can I attribute your not writing me one line since Monday?

God forbid that your nervous ailment has incapacitated you for that office from which you derived pleasure singly; as well as that most delicate of all enjoyments, pleasure reflected. To-morrow I shall hope to hear from you. Hope, blessed Hope, thou balm of every woe, possess and fill my bosom with thy benign influence!

I have been solitary since the tender farewell till to-night. I was solicited to go to Dr Moyes's Lecture with Miss Craig and a gallant of hers, a student; one of the many stupid animals, knowing only in the Science of Puppyism, or “the nice conduct of a

clouded cane." With what sovereign contempt did I compare his trite, insipid frivolity with the intelligent, manly observation which ever marks the conversation of Sylvander. He is a glorious piece of Divine workmanship, Dr Moyes. The subject to-night was the origin of minerals, springs, lakes, and the ocean. Many parts were far beyond my weak comprehension, and indeed that of most women. What I understood delighted me, and altogether raised my thoughts to the infinite wisdom, and boundless goodness of the Deity. The man himself marks both. Presented with a universal blank of Nature's works, his mind appears to be illuminated with Celestial light. He concluded with some lines of the Essay on Man:—"All are but parts of one stupendous whole," &c., a passage I have often read with sublime pleasure.

Miss Burnet sat behind me. What an angelic girl! I stared at her, never having seen her so near. I remember you talking of her, &c. What felicity to witness her "softly speak and sweetly smile"! How could you celebrate any other Clarinda! O I would have adored you, as Pope of exquisite taste and refinement, had you loved, sighed, and written upon her for ever! breathing your passion only to the woods and streams. But Poets, I find, are not quite incorporeal, more than others. My dear Sylvander, to be serious, I really wonder you ever admired Clarinda after beholding Miss Burnet's superior charms. If I don't hear to-morrow, I shall form dreadful reasons. God forbid! Bishop Geddes was within a foot of me too. What field for contemplation—both! Good night. God bless you! prays CLARINDA.

(³³) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.*

(Here first included in the Correspondence.)

[MOSSGIEL, *Sat.* 23 Feb., 1788.]

I HAVE just now, my ever dear Madam, delivered your kind present to my sweet little Bobbie, whom I find a very

* We take this from the columns of the *Banffshire Journal*, in which it appeared some years ago, "as printed from the original," which was described as considerably mutilated, the upper portion being cut off.

fine fellow. Your letter was waiting me. Your interview with Mr Kemp opens a wound, ill-closed, in my breast ; not that I think his friendship of so much consequence to you, but because you set such a value on it.

Now for a little news that will please you. I, this morning, as I came home, called for a certain woman. I am disgusted with her—I cannot endure her ! I, while my heart smote me for the profanity, tried to compare her with my Clarinda : 'twas setting the expiring glimmer of a farthing taper beside the cloudless glory of the meridian sun. *Here* was tasteless insipidity, vulgarity of soul, and mercenary fawning ; *there* polished good sense, Heaven-born genius, and the most generous, the most delicate, the most tender passion. I have done with her, and she with me.*

I set off to-morrow for Dumfries-shire. 'Tis merely out of compliment to Mr Miller ; for I know the Indies must be my lot. I will write you from Dumfries, if these horrid postages don't frighten me.

“ Whatever place, whatever land I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee ;
Still to 'Clarinda' turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthen'd chain.”

I just stay to write you a few lines, before I go to call on my friend, Mr Gavin Hamilton. I hate myself as an

* The reader will not require to be told that the “certain woman” here so disrespectfully spoken of, was the Jean of his tender attachment three years before, and who, in three months hereafter, became Mrs Burns. This is the letter referred to at page 333, Vol. IV., which, taken in connexion with the letter to Ainslie of 3d March 1788, places Burns in a very disadvantageous light at this stage of his history. The unbinged condition of his moral fabric is strongly exemplified in the grim remark, “I know the Indies must be my lot.” Strange that in closing his exciting Edinburgh career, he should sink into the same rut from which he emerged in November 1786 ! See his letter to Aiken, 8th October 1786, in which he states the reasons that urge him to go abroad, rather than manfully gird himself to engage in the battle of life.

unworthy sinner, because these interviews of old dear friends make me, for half a moment, almost forget Clarinda.

Remember to-morrow evening, at eight o'clock, I shall be with the Father of Mercies, at that hour on your own account. Farewell ! If the post goes not to-night, I'll finish the other page to-morrow morning. SYLVANDER.

P.S.—Remember.

(²⁴) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

CUMNOCK, *2d March*, 1788.

I HOPE, and am certain, that my generous Clarinda will not think my silence, for now a long week, has been in any degree owing to my forgetfulness. I have been tossed about through the country ever since I wrote you ; and am here returning from Dumfries-shire, at an inn, the post-office of the place, with just so long time as my horse eats its corn, to write you. I have been hurried with business and dissipation, almost equal to the insidious import of the Persian Monarch's mandate, when he forbade asking petition of God or man for forty days. Had the venerable prophet been as thronged as I, he had not broken the decree ; at least not thrice a day.

I am thinking my farming scheme will yet hold. A worthy intelligent farmer, my father's friend and my own, has been with me on the spot : he thinks the bargain practicable. I am myself, on a more serious review of the lands, much better pleased with them. I won't mention this in writing to anybody but you and Mr Ainslie. Don't accuse me of being fickle ; I have the two plans of life

before me, and I wish to adopt the one most likely to procure me independence.

I shall be in Edinburgh next week. I long to see you ; your image is omnipresent to me ; nay, I am convinced I would soon idolatrize it most seriously ; so much do absence and memory improve the medium through which one sees the much-loved object. To-night, at the sacred hour of eight, I expect to meet you at the Throne of Grace. I hope as I go home to-night, to find a letter from you at the post-office in Mauchline ; I have just once seen that dear hand since I left Edinburgh ; a letter indeed which much affected me. Tell me, first of womankind, will my warmest attachment, my sincerest friendship, my correspondence—will they be any compensation for the sacrifices you make for my sake ? If they will, they are yours. If I settle on the farm I propose, I am just a day and a half's ride from Edinburgh. We shall meet : don't you say, " Perhaps, too often ! "

Farewell, my fair, my charming Poetess ! May all good things ever attend you.—I am ever, my dearest Madam, yours,

SYLVANDER.

(¹⁹) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

EDINBURGH, *March 5, 1788.*

I RECEIVED yours from Cumnock about an hour ago ; and to show you my good-nature sit down to write to you immediately. I fear, Sylvander, you overvalue my generosity ; for, believe me, it will be sometime ere I can cordially forgive you the pain your silence has caused me ! Did you ever feel that sickness of heart which arises from "hope deferred ?" That—the cruellest of pains—you have inflicted on me for eight days by-past. I hope

I can make every reasonable allowance for the hurry of business and dissipation. Yet had I been ever so engrossed, I should have found one hour out of the twenty-four to write to you. No more of it. I accept of your apologies; but am hurt that any should have been necessary betwixt us on such a tender occasion.

I am happy that the farming scheme promises so well. There's no fickleness, my dear Sir, in changing for the better. I never liked the Excise for you; and feel a sensible pleasure in the hope of your becoming a sober, industrious farmer. My prayers in this affair are heard I hope, so far: may they be answered completely! The distance is the only thing I regret; but whatever tends to your welfare over-weighs all other considerations. I hope ere then to grow wiser, and to lie easy under six weeks' silence. I had begun to think that you had fully experienced the truth of Sir Isaac's philosophy.

I have been under unspeakable obligations to your friend, Mr Ainslie. I had not a mortal to whom I could speak of your name but him. He has called often; and, by sympathy, not a little alleviated my anxiety. I tremble lest you should have devolved what you used to term your "folly," upon Clarinda: more's the pity. 'Tis never graceful but on the male side; but I shall learn more wisdom in future. Example has often good effects.

I got both your letters from Kilmarnock and Mauchline, and would, perhaps, have written to you unbidden, had I known anything of the geography of the country; but I knew not whether you would return by Mauchline or not, nor could Mr Ainslie inform me. I have met with several little rubs that hurt me the more that I had not a bosom to pour them into—

"On some fond breast the feeling soul relies."

Mary, I have not once set eyes on, since I wrote to you. O that I should be formed susceptible of kindness, never, never to be fully, or at least, habitually returned! "Trim (said my uncle Toby), I wish, Trim, I were dead."

Mr Ainslie called just now to tell me he had heard from you. You would see, by my last, how anxious I was, even then, to hear from you. 'Tis the first time I ever had reason to be so: I hope 'twill be the last. My thoughts were yours both Sunday nights at eight. Why should my letter have affected you? You know

I count all things (Heaven excepted) but loss that I may win and keep you. I supped at Mr Kemp's on Friday. Had you been an invisible spectator with what perfect ease I acquitted myself, you would have been pleased, highly pleased with me.

Interrupted by a visit from Miss R——. She was inquiring kindly for you. I delivered your compliments to her. She means (as you once said) all the kindness in the world, but she wants that “finer chord.” Ah! Sylvander, happy, in my mind, are they who are void of it. Alas! it too often “thrills with anguish.”

I hope you have not forgotten to kiss the little cherub for me. Give him fifty, and think Clarinda blessing him all the while. I pity his mother sincerely, and wish a certain affair happily over. My Willie is in good health, except his leg, which confines him close since it was opened; and Mr Wood says it will be a very tedious affair. He has prescribed sea-bathing as soon as the season admits. I never see Miss Nimmo. Her indifference wounds me; but all these things make me fly to the Father of Mercies, who is the inexhaustible Fountain of all kindness. How could you ever mention “postages?” I counted on a crown at least; and have only spent one poor shilling. If I had but a shilling in the world, you would have sixpence; nay, eightpence, if I could contrive to live on a groat. I am avaricious only in your letters; you are so, indeed. Farewell.—Yours,

CLARINDA.

(35) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

[MAUCHLINE, 6 March 1788.]

I own myself guilty, Clarinda: I should have written you last week. But when you recollect, my dearest Madam, that yours of this night's post is only the third I have from you, and that this is the fifth or sixth I have sent to you, you will not reproach me with a good grace for

unkindness. I have always some kind of idea, not to sit down to write a letter, except I have time and possession of my faculties so as to do some justice to my letter; which at present is rarely my situation. For instance, yesterday I dined at a friend's at some distance; the savage hospitality of this country spent me the most part of the night over the nauseous potion in the bowl. This day, sick—head-ache—low spirits—miserable—fasting, except for a draught of water or small beer. Now, eight o'clock at night—only able to crawl ten minutes' walk into Mauchline to wait the post, in the pleasurable hope of hearing from the mistress of my soul.

But, truce with all this! When I sit down to write to you, all is harmony and peace. A hundred times a day do I figure you, before your taper, your book or work laid aside, as I get within the room. How happy have I been! and how little of that scantling portion of time, called the life of man, is sacred to happiness, much less transport.

I could moralize to-night, like a death's head.

“O, what is life, that thoughtless wish of all!
A drop of honey in a draught of gall.”

Nothing astonishes me more, when a sickness clogs the wheels of life, than the thoughtless career we run, in the hour of health. “None saith, where is God, my Maker, that giveth songs in the night: who teacheth us more knowledge than the beasts of the field, and more understanding than the fowls of the air?”

Give me, my Maker, to remember Thee! Give me, to act up to the dignity of my nature! Give me, to feel “another's woe;” and continue with me that dear-loved friend that feels with mine!

The dignifying and dignified consciousness of an honest man, and the well grounded trust in approving Heaven, are two most substantial foundations of happiness. . . .

I could not have written a page to any mortal except yourself. I'll write you by Sunday's post. Adieu. Good night.

SYLVANDER.

(³⁶) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(STEWART, 1802.)

MOSSGIEL, 7th March 1788.

CLARINDA, I have been so stung with your reproach for unkindness, a sin so unlike me, a sin I detest more than a breach of the whole Decalogue, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth articles excepted, that I believe I shall not rest in my grave about it, if I die before I see you. You have often allowed me the head to judge, and the heart to feel, the influence of female excellence: was it not blasphemy then, against your own charms, and against my feelings, to suppose that a short fortnight could abate my passion! You, my Love, may have your cares and anxieties to disturb you; but they are the usual recurrences of life: your future views are fixed, and your mind in a settled routine. Could not you, my ever dearest Madam, make a little allowance for a man, after long absence, paying a short visit to a country full of friends, relations and early intimates? Cannot you guess, my Clarinda, what thoughts, what cares, what anxious forebodings, hopes and fears, must crowd the breast of the man of keen sensibility, when no less is on the tapis than his aim, his employment, his very existence, through future life?

To be overtopped in any thing else, I can bear; but in the lists of generous love, I defy all mankind! not even the tender, the fond, the loving Clarinda! she whose strength of attachment, whose melting soul, may vie with Eloise and

Sappho, not even she can overpay me the affection she owes me!

Now that, not my apology, but my defence is made, I feel my soul respire more easily. I know you will go along with me in my justification—would to heaven you could in my adoption too! I mean an adoption beneath the stars—an adoption where I might revel in the immediate beams of her

“the bright sun of all her sex.”

I would not have you, my dear Madam, so much hurt at Miss Nimmo's coldness. 'Tis placing yourself below her, an honor she by no means deserves. We ought, when we wish to be economists in happiness; we ought in the first place, to fix the standard of our own character; and when, on full examination, we know where we stand, and how much ground we occupy, let us contend for it as property; and those who seem to doubt, or deny us what is justly ours, let us either pity their prejudices, or despise their judgment. I know, my dear, you will say this is self-conceit; but I call it self-knowledge; the one is the overweening opinion of a fool, who fancies himself to be, what he wishes himself to be thought: the other is the honest justice that a man of sense, who has thoroughly examined the subject, owes to himself. Without this standard, this column in our own mind, we are perpetually at the mercy of the petulance, the mistakes, the prejudices, nay, the very weakness and wickedness of our fellow-creatures.

I urge this, my dear, both to confirm myself in the doctrine, which, I assure you, I sometimes need; and because I know that this causes you often much disquiet. To return to Miss Nimmo: she is certainly a most worthy soul, and equalled by very, very few, in goodness of heart. But, can she boast more goodness of heart than

Clarinda? not even prejudice will dare to say so; for penetration and discernment, Clarinda sees far beyond her. To wit, Miss Nimmo dare make no pretence: to Clarinda's wit scarce any of her sex dare make pretence. Personal charms—it would be ridiculous to run the parallel: and for conduct in life, Miss Nimmo was never called out, either much to do, or to suffer; Clarinda has been both, and has performed her part, where Miss Nimmo would have sunk at the bare idea.

Away then with these disquietudes! Let us pray with the honest weaver of Kilbarchan, “Lord send us a gude conceit o’ oursel’!” or, in the words of the auld sang,

“Who does me disdain, I can scorn him again,
And I’ll never mind any such foes.”

There is an error in the commerce of intimacy [on brief acquaintanceship]* which has led me far astray. [We are apt to be taken in by] those who, by way of exchange, have not an equivalent to give us; and what is still worse, have no idea of the value of our goods. Happy is our lot, indeed, when we meet with an honest merchant who is qualified to deal with us on our own terms; but this is a rarity. With almost everybody, we must pocket our pearls, less or more; and learn in the old Scots phrase, “to gie siclike as we get.” For this reason, we should try to erect a kind of bank or storehouse in our own minds; or, as the Psalmist recommends, “commune with our own hearts, and be still.” This is exactly the [course to adopt with those who interfere with our choice of friends; for] if the friend be so peculiarly favored of Heaven as to have a soul as noble and exalted as yours, sooner or later your bosom will ache with disappointment.

* The latter portion of the MS. of this letter is in a dilapidated condition, and the passages within square brackets are supplied by conjecture.

I wrote you yesternight, which will reach you long before this can. I may write Mr Ainslie before I see him, but I am not sure. Farewell! and remember

SYLVANDER.

(²⁰) CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

EDIN^B., 8th March 1788.

I WAS agreeably surprised by your answer to mine of Wednesday evening this morning. I thought it always took two days, a letter from this to Mauchline, and did not expect yours sooner than Monday. This is the fifth from you, and the fourth time I am now writing you. I hate calculating them: like some things, they don't do to be numbered. I wish you had written from Dumfries as you promised; but I do not impute it to any cause but hurry of business, &c. I hope I shall never live to reproach you with unkindness. You never ought to put off till you "have time to do justice to your letters." I have sufficient memorials of your abilities in that way; and last week, two lines to have said "How do ye, my Clarinda?" would have saved me days and nights of cruel disquietude—"A word to the wise" you know. I know human nature better than to expect always fine flights of fancy, or exertions of genius, and feel in myself the effects of this "crazy mortal coil" upon its glorious inhabitant. To-day I have a clogging headache; but however stupid, I know (at least I hope) a letter from your heart's friend will be acceptable. It will reach you to-morrow, I hope.

Shocking custom! one can't entertain with hospitality, without taxing their guests with the consequences you mention. Your reflections upon the effects which sickness has on our retrospect of ourselves, are noble. I see my Sylvander will be all I wish him, before he leaves this world. Do you remember that simple eulogium I pronounced on you, when Miss Nimmo asked what I thought of you?—"He's ane of God's ain; but his time's no come yet." It was like a speech from your worthy mother, whom I

revere. She would have joined me with a heartfelt sigh, which none but mothers know. It is rather a bad picture of us, that we are most prone to call upon God in trouble. Ought not the daily blessings of health, peace, competence, friends—ought not these to awaken our constant gratitude to the Giver of all? I imagine that the heart which does not occasionally glow with filial love in the hours of prosperity, can hardly hope to feel much comfort in flying to God in the time of distress. O my dear Sylvander! that we may be enabled to set Him before us, as our witness, benefactor, and judge at all times, and on all occasions!

In the name of wonder, how could you spend ten hours with such a heathen as Mr Pattison? What a despicable character! Religion!—he knows only the name; none of her real votaries ever wished to make any such shameful compromises. But 'tis Scripture verified; the demon of avarice, his original devil, finding him empty, called in other seven more impure spirits, and so completely infernalized him. Destitute of discernment to perceive your merit, or taste to relish it, my astonishment at his fondness of you is only surpassed by your more than Puritanic patience in listening to his shocking nonsense! I hope you received his certificate. I was told it was in a tattered condition some months ago, and that then he proposed putting it on parchment by way of preserving it. Don't call me severe: I hate all who would "turn the grace of God into licentiousness"; 'tis commonly the weaker part of mankind who attempt it.

"Religion, thou the soul of happiness."

Yesterday morning in bed I happened to think of you. I said to myself—"My bonie Lizzie Baillie," &c., and laughed; but I felt a delicious swell of heart, and my eyes swam in tears. I know not if your sex ever feel this burst of affection; 'tis an emotion indescribable. You see I'm grown a fool since you left me. You know I was rational when you first knew me; but I always grow more foolish the farther I am from those I love: by and by I suppose I shall be insane altogether.

I am happy your little lamb is doing so well. Did you execute my commission? You had a great stock in hand;* and if any

*A stock of kisses, see her former letter, p. 99. "Kiss the little cherub for me: give him fifty, and think Clarinda blessing him all the while."

agreeable customers came in the way, you would dispose of some of them I fancy, hoping soon to be supplied with a fresh assortment. For my part, I can truly say I have had no demand. I really believe you have taught me dignity, which, partly through good nature, and partly by misfortune, had been too much laid aside; but which now I will never part with. Why should I not keep it up? Admired, esteemed, beloved, by one of the first of mankind! Not all the wealth of Peru could have purchased these. O Sylvander, I am great in my own eyes when I think how high I am in your esteem! You have shown me the merit I possess; I knew it not before. Even Joseph * trembled t'other day in my presence. "Husbands looked mild, and savages grew tame!" Love and cherish your friend Mr Ainslie, he is your friend indeed. I long for next week; happy days, I hope, yet await us. When you meet young Beauties, think of Clarinda's affection, of her situation, of how much her happiness depends on you. Farewell till we meet. God be with you!

CLARINDA.

P.S.—Will you take the trouble to send for a small parcel left at Dunlop and Wilson's, Booksellers, Trongate, Glasgow, for me, and bring it with you in the Fly?

[Sylvander would receive the foregoing letter just before leaving Mauchline for Edinburgh, which he appears to have done on Monday 10th March, proceeding by way of Glasgow. On Thursday, the 13th, he executed his lease of the farm of Ellisland. On Monday following (the date of the next letter of this series) his entry with the Excise was finally resolved on; and he obtained his formal order for instructions as an exciseman. How often he met with Clarinda, during the first week of this fortnight spent in the city, does not appear; but in the four letters which follow, and which close this extraordinary correspondence, the reader will not fail to observe the absence of all concern regarding the censorious remarks of Clarinda's friends and neighbours. Clarinda seems to have schooled herself, or been schooled into the most easy *sang froid*

* It has never been explained who "Joseph" was. She had no son of that name.

on the subject. "I thank you," writes Sylvander on the 18th, "for all the happiness you bestowed on me yesterday : the walk—delightful ; the evening—rapture ! Do not be uneasy to-day ; Clarinda, forgive me !" "Tell me," he writes on the 21st, "were you studious to please me last night ? I am sure you did it to transport."

The last letter of the series is particularly striking in contrast with the ulterior results—the sudden collapse of this laboured intrigue ; for by what other phrase, on Sylvander's side, can his three months' siege of the too susceptible, but single-hearted enthusiast in love, be distinguished ? Was he in earnest when he said—"Will it please you, my love, to get every week, or at least every fortnight, a packet, two or three sheets full of remarks, nonsense, news, rhymes, and old songs ? Will you open, with satisfaction and delight, a letter from a man who loves you, who has loved you, and who will love you to death, through death, and forever ?"]

(37) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[EDIN^g., 17th March 1788.]

I WILL meet you to-morrow, Clarinda, as you appoint. My Excise affair is just concluded, and I have got my order for instructions : so far good. Wednesday night I am engaged to sup among some of the principals of the Excise ; so can only make a call for you that evening ; but next day, I stay to dine with one of the Commissioners, so cannot go till Friday morning.

Your hopes, your fears, your cares, my love, are mine ; so don't mind them. I will take you in my hand through the dreary wilds of this world, and scare away the ravening bird or beast that would annoy you. I saw Mary in town to-day, and asked her if she had seen you. I shall certainly bespeak Mr Ainslie as you desire.

Excuse me, my dearest angel, this hurried scrawl and miserable paper ; circumstances make both. Farewell till to-morrow !

SYLVANDER.

Monday, Noon.

(³⁸) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[EDIN^a, 18th March.]

I AM just hurrying away to wait on the Great Man, Clarinda ; but I have more respect to my own peace and happiness than to set out without waiting on you ; for my imagination, like a child's favourite bird, will fondly flutter along with this scrawl, till it perch on your bosom. I thank you for all the happiness bestowed on me yesterday. The walk—delightful ; the evening—rapture. Do not be uneasy to-day, Clarinda ; forgive me. I am in rather better spirits to-day, though I had but an indifferent night. Care, anxiety, sat on my spirits ; and all the cheerfulness of this morning is the fruit of some serious, important ideas that lie, in their realities, beyond “the dark and the narrow house,” as Ossian, prince of poets, says. The Father of Mercies be with you, Clariuda ! and every good thing attend you !

SYLVANDER.

Tuesday Morning.

(³⁹) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Wednesday Morning [19th March.]

CLARINDA, will that envious night-cap hinder you from appearing at the window as I pass ? “Who is she that

looketh forth as the morning ; fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners ? ”

Do not accuse me of fond folly for this line ; you know I am a cool lover. I mean by these presents greeting, to let you to wit, that arch-ras—, Cr—ch, has not done my business yesternight, which has put off my leaving town till Monday morning. To-morrow, at eleven, I meet with him for the last time ; just the hour I should have met far more agreeable company.

You will tell me this evening, whether you cannot make our hour of meeting to-morrow one o’clock. I have just now written Creech such a letter, that the very goose-feather in my hand shrunk back from the line, and seemed to say, “ I exceedingly fear and quake ! ” I am forming ideal schemes of vengeance. O for a little of my will on him ! I just wished he loved as I do—as glorious an object as Clarinda—and that he were doomed.—Adieu, and think on

SYLVANDER.

(⁴⁰) SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

Friday, Nine o’clock, Night [21st March.]

I AM just now come in, and have read your letter. The first thing I did was to thank the Divine Disposer of events, that he has had such happiness in store for me as the connexion I have with you. Life, my Clarinda, is a weary, barren path ; and woe be to him or her that ventures on it alone ! For me, I have my dearest partner of my soul : Clarinda and I will make out our pilgrimage together. Wherever I am, I shall constantly let her know how I go on, what I observe in the world around me, and what adventures I meet with. Will it please you, my love, to get,

every week, or at least, every fortnight, a packet, two or three sheets, full of remarks, nonsense, news, rhymes, and old songs ?

Will you open, with satisfaction and delight, a letter from a man who loves you, who has loved you, and who will love you to death, through death, and for ever ? Oh Clarinda ! what do I owe to Heaven for blessing me with such a piece of exalted excellence as you ! I call over your idea, as a miser counts over his treasure ! Tell me, were you studious to please me last night ? I am sure you did it to transport. How rich am I who have such a treasure as you ! You know me ; you know how to make me happy, and you do it most effectually. God bless you with

“ Long life, long youth, long pleasure, and a friend ! ”

To-morrow night, according to your own direction, I shall watch the window : 'tis the star that guides me to Paradise. The great relish to all is—that Honor—that Innocence—that Religion, are the witnesses and guarantees of our happiness. “ The Lord God knoweth,” and perhaps “ Israel, he shall know ” my love and your merit. Adieu, Clarinda ! I am going to remember you in my prayers.

SYLVANDER.

The reader sees from the above letter that on Saturday night (22d March) the enraptured lovers were again to hold tryste in the house of Clarinda—probably for the last time until the celebrated “ mirk night o' December ”—the *sixth* of that month, 1791. We must take the poet's word for it, that “ Honor, Innocence, and Religion were the witnesses and guarantees of their happiness.” On Monday the 24th, Sylvander permanently left Edinburgh, and two days thereafter he thus wrote from Glasgow to a friend. “ These eight days I have been positively crazed.” We shall not question the fact ; but, from that date, no more “ love letters ” passed between “ Sylvander and Clarinda.” It was probably at

this time that the poet procured an elegant copy of "Young's Night Thoughts," and forwarded the same for the lady's consolation, bearing this holograph inscription.

"To Mrs M'Lehose, this Poem, the sentiments of the heirs of Immortality, told in the numbers of Paradise, is respectfully presented by
ROB^T. BURNS." *

Thus ends this remarkable interlude in the drama of our Bard's life. When back to Ayrshire, and restored to calm reflection, he had to face a dilemma which, in his own words, "damned him with only a choice of different species of error and misconduct." His own correct judgment at length determined him to cast in his lot "for better for worse" with Jean Armour, as his only chance of retaining permanent self-respect. As might have been expected, this turn of events proved an immediate death-blow to the romantic attachment betwixt "Clarinda and Sylvander." The farther history of their less-impassioned intercourse will appear in proper order as we proceed, his subsequent letters to her (eight in number) being addressed, not to "Clarinda," but to *Mrs M'Lehose*.

The annexed cut represents this heroine of Burns at an advanced stage of life when her charms were mellowed into the characteristics of one of Byron's beauties—"fat, fair, and forty."

* Mrs M'Lehose in her declining years presented the volume to Mr Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, at the sale of whose books in 1852 it passed into the possession of the Duke of Buccleuch, K.G.



(5) TO MR RICHARD BROWN, GREENOCK.

(WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

GLASGOW, 26 *March* 1788.

I AM monstously to blame, my dear Sir, in not writing to you and sending you the Directory. I have been getting my Tack extended, as I have taken a farm, and I have been racking shop accounts with Mr Creech ; both of which, together with watching, fatigue, and a load of care almost too heavy for my shoulders, have in some degree actually fevered me. I really forgot the Directory yesterday, which vexed me ; but I was convulsed with rage a great part of the day. I have to thank you for the ingenious, friendly, and elegant epistle from your friend, Mr Crawford.* I shall certainly write to him, but not now. This is merely a card to you, as I am posting to Dumfriesshire, where many perplexing arrangements await me. I am vexed about the Directory ; but my dear Sir, forgive me ; these eight days I have been positively crazed. My Compliments to Mrs B. I shall write to you at Grenada. I am ever, my dearest friend, yours,

ROB^t. BURNS.(2) TO MR ROBT. CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS,
EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MAUCHLINE, 31 *March* 1788.

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

* Thomas Crawford, Esq., of Cartsburn, a friend of Brown, had written a kind letter to the poet inviting him to spend a day or two with him.

hymns, and spiritual songs ; and your favourite air, *Capt. O'Kean*, coming at length in my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated :—

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

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

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

My very best compliments and best wishes to Mrs Cleghorn.

R. B.

The honest, social farmer of Saughton Mills, replied to the above, expressing satisfaction with these lines as “fitting the tune to a hair,” and recommending the poet to add another stanza (which was ultimately done) ; suggesting at same time that a Jacobite turn be given to the song, which might be placed in the lips of the unfortunate Prince Charles, after the fatal issue of Culloden. He concludes his letter thus sensibly :—

“Any skill I have in country business you may truly command. Situation, soil, customs of countries, may vary from each other, but Farmer-Attention is a good farmer in every place.

I beg to hear from you soon. Mrs Cleghorn joins me in best compliments.

I am, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, your very sincere friend,

ROBERT CLEGHORN."

Mr James Findlay, Excise Officer in Tarbolton, received formal instructions dated from the Excise Office, Edinburgh, 31 March 1788, to "instruct the bearer Mr Robert Burns in the art of gauging, and fit him for surveying victuallers, rectifiers, chandlers, tanners, tawers, malsters, &c." The period for instruction in these arts, and in the mode of keeping Excise books, was to extend over six weeks, after which Findlay and his Supervisor were to report on Mr Burns's qualifications, &c. Mr Findlay, through this connexion, was introduced to the "divine Miss Markland," one of the "six proper young belles of Mauchline," and in the following September they were made man and wife. The latter survived till August 1851, when she was 86 years old.

Burns's object was to have these Excise arrangements accomplished before Whitsunday 1788, when he was to enter into his Dumfriesshire farm. His brother Gilbert had been struggling with the ungrateful soil of Mossgiel, and in renewing his lease of Mossgiel, Mr Gavin Hamilton seems to have proposed that Burns should put his name to the deed as security for his brother's rent, which involvement, however, the not incautious poet thought proper to decline. He nevertheless, in addition to former advances, put into Gilbert's hands a farther supply of money to help him on the present occasion—the sum in all thus advanced extending to £180.

(⁵) TO MR GAVIN HAMILTON.

(CHAMBERS, 1851.)

MOSSGIEL, *Friday Morning*.

THE language of refusal is to me the most difficult language on earth, and you are the man in the world, excepting one of Right Honble. designation, to whom it gives me the greatest pain to hold such language. My brother has already got money, and shall want nothing in my power to enable him

to fulfil his engagement with you : but to be security on so large a scale, even for a brother, is what I dare not do, except I were in such circumstances of life as that the worst that might happen could not greatly injure me.

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

ROBERT BURNS.

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

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

MAUCHLINE, 7th April 1788.

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

I have been roving over the country, as the farm I have taken is forty miles from this place, hiring servants and preparing matters ; but most of all, I am earnestly busy to bring about a revolution in my own mind. As, till within these eighteen months, I never was the wealthy master of ten guineas, my knowledge of business is to learn ; add to this, my late scenes of idleness and dissipation have enervated my mind to an alarming degree. Skill in the sober science of life is my most serious and hourly study. I have dropt all conversation and all reading (prose reading) but what tends in some way or other to my serious aim. Except one worthy young fellow, I have not a single

correspondent in Edinburgh. You have indeed kindly made me an offer of that kind. The world of wits, and *gens comme il faut* which I lately left, and with whom I never again will intimately mix—from that port, Sir, I expect your Gazette : what *les beaux esprits* are saying, what they are doing, and what they are singing. Any sober intelligence from my sequestered walks of life ; any droll original ; any passing remark, important forsooth, because it is mine ; any little poetic effort, however embryoth ; these, my dear Sir, are all you have to expect from me. When I talk of poetic efforts, I must have it always understood, that I appeal from your wit and taste to your friendship and good nature. The first would be my favorite tribunal, where I defied censure ; but the last, where I declined justice.

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

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

R. B.

(¹⁰) TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MAUCHLINE, 7th April 1788.

I AM indebted to you and Miss Nimmo for letting me know Miss Kennedy. Strange! how apt we are to indulge prejudice in our judgments of one another! Even I, who pique myself on my skill in marking characters; because I am too proud of my character as a man, to be dazzled in my judgment *for* glaring wealth; and too proud of my situation as a poor man to be biassed *against* squalid poverty; I was unacquainted with Miss K.'s very uncommon worth.

I am going on a good deal progressive in *mon grand but*, the sober science of life. I have lately made some sacrifices, for which, were I *viva voce* with you to paint the situation and recount the circumstances, you would applaud me.

R. B.

The "Sacrifices" alluded to in the last sentence, appear to refer to a resolution which, about this period, must have been working in the poet's mind, as to the future disposal of himself among the various claimants of his affections. He had, as we have seen, made offer to, and been declined by, Miss Chalmers, on the plea of her pre-engagement to Mr Lewis Hay. The letters addressed by that lady to Burns, have been withheld from the world; but the reader has seen in the Clarinda correspondence that the poet had allowed the latter lady a perusal of them. She had formerly told him, "I am proud to be registered in the same bosom with Peggy Chalmers," and afterwards she remarked—"Miss Chalmers's letters are charming. Why did not such a woman secure your heart?" Professor Walker in his observations regarding the poet's matrimonial views, seems to take it for granted that when Burns discovered "the interest which he had the power of creating" in accomplished women of the higher ranks of Society,

he must have aspired to find a wife among them. Lockhart observes that it is "extremely doubtful that Burns, if he ever had this view, could have found any high-born maiden willing to partake such fortunes as his were likely to be, and yet possessed of such qualifications for making him a happy man, as he *had*, ready for his acceptance, in his Jean. The proud heart of the poet could never have stooped to woo for gold; and birth and high-breeding could only have been introduced into a farm-house to embitter, in the upshot, the whole existence of its inmates. It is very easy to say, that had Burns married an accomplished woman, he *might* have found domestic evenings sufficient to satisfy all the cravings of his mind—abandoned tavern haunts and jollities for ever—and settled down into a pattern character; but it is at least as possible, that consequences of an exactly opposite nature might have ensued."

One of the poet's main difficulties in making up his mind to rescue Jean Armour from further obloquy, by openly acknowledging her as his wife, instead of keeping her as his private mistress, was the mad engagement he had made with Clarinda to wait for her until her husband might happen to die (an event which did not occur till sixteen years after his own death!). "I could show," thus he wrote to that lady after his marriage, "how my precipitate, headlong, unthinking conduct, leagued with a conjuncture of unlucky events to thrust me out of a possibility of keeping the path of rectitude—to curse me by an irreconcilable war between my duty and my nearest wishes—and to damn me with a choice only of different species of error and misconduct." This was really the case with the hapless bard at the time he was roused from the Clarinda spell, and forced to examine the cold realities of his position. Under the potency of that spell he had made the unfeeling remarks regarding poor Jean which are contained in his letter of 23 Feb. (page 94 *supra*), and had acted towards her as explained in his letter to Ainslie of 3rd March (page 331, Vol. IV.). Lockhart, with considerate candour, observes that "so far from Burns having all along regarded Miss Armour as his wife, it is extremely doubtful whether *she* had ever for one moment considered him as actually her husband, until he declared the marriage of 1788. Burns did no more than was

demanding by justice as well as honour; but the act was one which no human tribunal could have compelled him to perform." It is too probable, that even when he made up his mind to this marriage, the poet's respect for Jean had considerably abated: "her mercenary fawning," he had recently remarked, and, nearly a year before, he had spoken to James Smith of his "disgust at the mean, servile compliance of the Armours." His letter to Johnson in May, 1788, indicates that, as the Marquis of Montrose in relation to *his* mistress had done, Burns now "called a synod in his heart," and put Jean to the test of a trial thus:—"Pride and seeming Justice were murderous King's Advocates on the one side; yet Humanity, Generosity, and Forgiveness were such powerful—such irresistible counsel on the other side, that a Jury of all new Endearments and Attachments brought in a unanimous verdict of 'Not Guilty!'" A recollection of the poet's sister is that when he returned from Edinburgh at the end of March, he wore a breast-pin which enclosed a miniature of Clarinda's face; and after he declared his marriage with Jean, he sent his brother William, with "bonie Jean" behind him on a horse, to Glasgow, where an artist executed a similar likeness of her, which was substituted for the other. The pin thus altered had the following apt motto engraved on it:—"To err is human; to forgive divine." As a corollary to this anecdote we must add that in December 1791 Burns thus wrote to Mrs M'Lehose, "I sent some of your hair—a part of the parcel you gave me—to Mr Bruce the jeweller in Princes Street, with a measure, to get a ring done for me." Thus Clarinda was dethroned from her place in his breast, and worn as an ornament round his little finger!

(⁵) TO MR JAMES SMITH,

AVON PRINTFIELD, LINLITHGOW.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MAUCHLINE, *April 28th 1788.*

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

There is no understanding a man properly, without knowing sometimes of his previous ideas (that is to say, if the man has any ideas; for I know many who, in the animal-muster, pass for men, that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, $1\cdot25-1\cdot5-1\cdot75$, or some such fractional matter); so to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

“Bode a robe and wear it,
Bode a pock and bear it,”

says the wise old Scots adage! I hate to presage ill-luck; and as my girl has been *doubly* kinder to me than even the best of women usually are to their partners of our sex, in similar circumstances, I reckon on twelve times a brace of children against I celebrate my twelfth wedding day:

* * * * *

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

Now for business. I intend to present Mrs Burns with a printed shawl, an article of which I daresay you have variety: ’tis my first present to her since I have irrevocably called her mine; and I have a kind of whimsical wish to get the first said present from an old and valued friend of hers and mine—a trusty Trojan, whose friendship I count myself possessed of as a liferent lease.

Look on this letter as a “beginning of sorrows;” I will write you till your eyes ache reading nonsense.

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

(¹⁰) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MAUCHLINE, 28th April 1788.

MADAM,—Your powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farming at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy ; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the excise business without solicitation, and as it costs me only six weeks' attendance for instructions, to entitle me for a commission—which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed—I thought five-and-thirty pounds a-year was no bad *dernier ressort* for a poor poet, if Fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

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

You see, Madam, the truth of the French maxim, *Le*

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

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

(¹) TO PROF. DUGALD STEWART.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

SIR,—I inclose you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that Great Unknown Being, who frames the chain of causes and events; prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, Sir, to claim it as my privilege, to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life.—I have the honor to be, most truly, Sir, your much indebted humble serv.,

ROB^T. BURNS.

MAUCHLINE, May 3, 1788.

(11) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MAUCHLINE, 4th May 1788.

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

R. B.

(¹) TO MR SAMUEL BROWN, KIRKOSWALD.*

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MOSSGIEL, 4th May 1788.

DEAR UNCLE,—This, I hope, will find you and your conjugal yoke-fellow in your good old way. I am impatient to know if the Ailsa fowling be commenced for this season yet, as I want three or four stones of feathers, and I hope you will bespeak them for me. It would be a vain attempt for me to enumerate the various transactions I have been engaged in since I saw you last; but this know—I engaged in a *smuggling trade*, and God knows if ever any poor man experienced better returns—two for one: but as freight and delivery have turned out so dear, I am thinking of taking out a licence, and beginning in fair trade.

I have taken a farm on the borders of the Nith, and in imitation of the old patriarchs, get men-servants and maid-servants, and flocks and herds, and beget sons and daughters. Your obedient nephew

ROBT. BURNS.

* Samuel Brown was a half-brother of the poet's mother, and resided at Ballochneil, about a mile west of Kirkoswald. It was with him Burns lodged during the summer of 1775, while attending Rodger's school to learn trigonometry, &c. The following fragment of song, having for its subject the same which forms the burden of the above letter, is attributed to Burns.

AUNTIE JEANIE'S BED.

My auntie Jean held to the shore
As Ailsa boats came back,
And she has coft a feather bed,
For twenty and a plack:
The feathers gained her fifty merk
Before a towmond sped:
O sic a noble bargain
Was Auntie Jeanie's bed!

(²) MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

(CHAMBERS, 1851.)*

MAUCHLINE, 25th May 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am really uneasy about that money which Mr Creech owes me per note in your hand, and I want it much at present as I am engaging in business pretty deeply both for myself and my brother. A hundred guineas can be but a trifling affair to him, and 'tis a matter of most serious importance to me.† To-morrow I begin my operations as a farmer, and God speed the plough!

I am so enamoured of a certain girl's prolific, twin-bearing merit, that I have given her a legal title to the best blood in my body, and so farewell rakery! To be serious, I found I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my hands; and though Pride and seeming Justice were murderous King's Advocates on the one side, yet Humanity, Generosity, and Forgiveness, were such powerful, such irresistible council on the other side, that a jury of all Endearments and new attachments brought in a unanimous verdict *Not Guilty!* And the Panel, be it known unto all whom it concerns, is installed and instated into all the rights, privileges, immunities, franchises, services, and paraphernalia that at present do, or at any time coming may, belong to the name, title and designation. [MS. *torn away here.*]

Present my best Compliments to . . .

* The holograph of this letter is now in the British Museum. The reader, on comparing this version with the copy in Chambers, will find that several passages and warm expressions had been omitted by that decorous editor.

† Creech's promissory note, quoted at page 219, Vol. IV., had been placed by the poet in Mr Johnson's hands to be presented for payment six months after its date, 23d Oct. 1787. Creech paid the amount on May 30th, 1788.

(6) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MAUCHLINE, *May 26th* 1788.

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

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

ROB^T. BURNS.

(13) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MAUCHLINE, *27th May* 1788.

MADAM,—I have been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which unlike . . . , has followed me, in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret, in the fleeting hours of my late will-o'-wisp appearance, that

“here I had no continuing city;” and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendor put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life—insignificance and poverty. . . .

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honor to spend an hour or two at a good woman’s fire-side, where the planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. ’Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who though in appearance partakers, and equally noble partakers, of the same nature with Madame, are from time to time—their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts—sold for months and years, . . . not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but, the caprices of the important few.* We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honor to commend them. But light be the turf upon his breast who taught “Reverence thyself!” We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in the air in the wantonness of his pride.

R. B.

* Servants in Scotland are hired from term to term—Whitsunday to Martinmas, or Martinmas to Whitsunday.

THE ELLISLAND PERIOD.

JUNE 1788 TO NOVEMBER 1791.

(13) TO MRS DUNLOP,

AT MR DUNLOP'S, HADDINGTON.

ELLISLAND, 14th June 1788.*

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

Goldsmith.

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

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

Your surmise, Madam, is just ; I am indeed a husband. . . . I found a once much-loved, and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements ; but as I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter—and

* In the MS. "13th June" has been set down in mistake for 14th.

there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery . . . The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition ; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me ; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than common handsome figure—these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the “Scriptures of the Old and New Testament,” nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny pay wedding.*

R. B.

EXTRACT FROM THE AUTHOR'S JOURNAL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, *Sunday, 15 June 1788.*

THIS is now the third day that I have been in this country. “Lord ! what is man ?” What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas, and fancies ! And what a capricious kind of existence he has here ! . . . There is, indeed, an elsewhere, where, as Thomson says, “virtue sole survives.”

“Tell us, ye dead ;

Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be ?

A little time

Will make us wise as you are, and as close.”

I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's *Adam*, “gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace.”

* The above letter, which we take verbatim from Currie, has been sadly garbled in all editions of the poet's correspondence, from that of Cunningham downwards. Cromek had, in the *Reliques*, page 60, printed in a footnote an interesting passage regarding Mrs Burns, which Dr Currie had omitted in his version of a letter from the poet to Mrs Dunlop, dated July 10, 1788, and Cunningham blunderingly incorporated the omitted passage with the present letter, of which it never formed a part.

But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream, till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humor, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, "the water is naught, and the ground barren," and nothing short of a supernaturally gifted Elisha can ever heal the evils.

Wedlock—the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be anything with me but names—was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on; in my present situation, it was absolutely necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest pride of character, justice to my own happiness for after-life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on her part to repent it. I can fancy how, but have never seen where, I could have made a better choice. Come then, let me act up to my favourite motto—that glorious passage in Young,

"On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man!"

(?) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, *June 15th 1788.*

THIS is now the third day, my dearest Sir, that I have so-journed in these regions; and during these three days you

have occupied more of my thoughts than in three weeks preceding : in Ayrshire I have several variations of friendship's compass, here it points invariably to the pole. My farm gives me a good many uncouth cares and anxieties, but I hate the language of complaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says well—"Why should a living man complain?"

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

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

What books are you reading, or what is the subject of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession ? You said something about Religion in your last. I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire ; but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow, if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being *well*-married : you have so much sense, and knowledge of human nature, that though

you may not realise perhaps the ideas of romance, yet you will never be "ill-married."*

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

R. B.

Burns arrived at Ellisland on 13th June, but his heart was away in "the west," and ere ten days had elapsed he was back to Ayrshire. While his farm-house was being erected, he had to "shelter in a wretched hovel pervious to every blast that blew, and every shower that fell ; and was only preserved from being chilled to death, by being suffocated with smoke." Social communication of any kind he seldom could enjoy ; for "nothing flourished there in any degree of perfection except stupidity and canting, and the people about him had as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet." No wonder therefore, that "about half of his time was spent in Ayrshire with his darling Jean." In his graphic epistle to Hugh Parker, printed at p. 151, Vol. II., he appoints his correspondent to meet him at Tarbolton on 24th June, and accordingly we find him at Mauchline on the 23rd inditing a note to Ainslie thus :—

(^s) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

MAUCHLINE, 23rd June 1788.

THIS letter, my dear Sir, is only a business scrap. Mr Miers, profile painter in your town, has executed a profile

* MARRIAGE.—"Edinburgh, 22 Decem. 1798. Robert Ainslie, Esq., W.S., St. Andrew's Church parish, and Miss Jean Cunningham, parish of Colinton, daughter of the late Lieut.-Col. James Cunningham, of the Scots Brigade."—*Parish Ch. Record.*

of Dr Blacklock for me : do me the favour to call for it, and sit to him yourself for me, which put in the same size as the doctor's. The account of both profiles will be fifteen shillings which I have given to James Connel, our Mauchline Carrier, to pay you when you give him the parcel. You must not, my friend, refuse to sit. The time is short. When I sat to Mr Miers, I am sure he did not exceed two minutes. I propose hanging Lord Glencairn, the doctor, and you, in trio, over my new chimney-piece that is to be. Adieu !

R. B.

His stay in Ayrshire on that occasion was very short ; for we find him again at Ellisland before the 28th of June which is the date appended to one of his manuscript copies of the verses composed in Friar's Carse Hermitage. His next neighbour up the Nith, on the west side of the river, was Robert Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, a gentleman of literary and antiquarian tastes, and of a kindly social nature. His beautiful little estate with pleasant mansion, finely situated on a rocky promontory at a bend of the river, was named Friar's Carse. Amid some shrubbery near the end of his grounds adjacent to the poet's farm, Mr Riddell had erected a romantic little grotto or hermitage, comfortably seated and furnished with a writing table ; and he was so polite as to give Burns a key which admitted him to the grounds, and occasionally this hermitage became his favourite place of retirement.*

* We have found some confusion in our attempts to trace Mr Riddell's pedigree, and none of the poet's annotators has pointed out where the estate of "Glenriddell" is situated and who possessed it. In the obituaries of old Magazines we find the name of (1) Robert Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, who died in 1770. His widow, Mrs Jean Ferguson, only daughter of Alex. Ferguson, of Craigdarroch, M.P., by his lady, Anne Laurie, daughter of Sir Robt. Laurie of Maxwelton, survived him 22 years, dying in Dec. 1792, aged 81. She married Mr Riddell in 1731. Then (2) we have "Died at Dumfries, 12th April 1788. Walter Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, in his 70th year."

The *Robert Riddell*, Esq. of Glenriddell and Friar's Carse, with whom Burns contracted such an intimacy, was, in all likelihood, a son of the latter ; his

(P) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, *June 30th* 1788.

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

I am vexed at that affair of the . . . but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death.* I am concerned for the old fellow's exit only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect—for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life, that the welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind benevolent animal, but he is dropt into such a needy situation here in this vexatious world, and has such a whoreson, hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food; that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others that he may look properly to himself. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr Miers for the profile of a Mr H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did I ever give Mr Miers any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will *not* have any such profile in my possession.

wife's surname was Elizabeth. Mr Riddell died 21st April 1794, and the title "laird of Glenriddell" devolved on his brother Mr Walter Riddell, husband of Burns's correspondent, Maria Riddell of Woodley Park. Finally we notice the death of her son, thus recorded:—"June 4, 1804. Died at Hampton Court, of a deep decline, Alex. Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell."

* Mr Samuel Mitchelson, W.S., with whom Ainslie had served his apprenticeship, died 21st June 1788.

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

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

mind, or sink beneath a galling load of regret and remorse—these are alternatives of the last moment.

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

R. B.

(⁴) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800, AND CROMEK, 1808.)

MAUCHLINE, 10th *July* 1788.

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

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

Mrs Burns, madam, is the identical woman,

* * * * *

When she first found herself “as women wish to be who

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

To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger. My preservative against the first, is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honor, and her attachment to me : my antidote against the last, is my long and deep-rooted affection for her. I can easily *fancy* a more agreeable companion for my journey of life ; but, upon my honor, I have never *seen* the individual instance. In household matters, of aptness to learn, and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress ; and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business. The Muses must not be offended when I tell them, the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas* ; but I assure them their ladyships will ever come next in place. You are right, that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends ; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number.

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner for life who could have entered into my favorite studies, relished my favorite authors, &c., without probably entailing on me, at the same time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the blessed, boarding school acquirements, which (*pardonnez moi, Madame*) are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be-gentry.

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

R. B.

The reader has already seen two notes of Burns addressed to Mr Peter Hill, who was the principal assistant of Mr Creech the Bookseller. Mr Hill had, in February 1788, opened a shop on his own account, in Parliament Square; and our poet having conceived a liking for him, a high degree of intimacy was soon formed between them. Chambers remarks that "having no similar affection for Creech, Burns resolved to send to Hill for any books he might henceforth have occasion for, including, above all, that prime essential of a Scotsman's house-furniture—a Family Bible."

(³) MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, IN PART, AND HERE COMPLETED.*)

MAUCHLINE, 18th July 1788.

YOU injured me, my dear Sir, in your construction of the cause of my silence. From Ellisland in Nithsdale to Mauchline in Kyle is forty and five miles. *There*, a house a-building, and farm enclosures and improvements to tend; *here*, a new—not so much indeed a *new* as a *young* wife: good God, Sir, could my dearest brother expect a regular correspondence from me! I who am busied with the sacred pen of Nature, in the mystic volume of Creation—can I dishonor my hand with a dirty goose-feather, on a parcel of mashed old rags? I who am “called as was Aaron,” to offer in the *sanctum sanctorum*, not indeed the mysterious, bloody types of future MURDER, but the thrice hallowed quintessences of future EXISTENCE—can I—but I have apologised enough. I am certain that you, my liberal-minded and much respected friend, would have acquitted me, though I had obeyed to the very letter that famous statute among the irrevocable decrees of the Medes and Persians, “not to ask petition for forty days of either God or man, save thee, O Queen, only!”

I am highly obliged to you, my dearest Sir, for your kind, your elegant compliments on my becoming one of that most respectable, that most truly venerable corps, they who are, without a metaphor, the fathers of posterity, the benefactors of all coming generations; the editors of Spiritual Nature, and the authors of Immortal Being. Now that I am “one

* For the privilege of collating and completing this and other letters addressed to Mr Peter Hill, from the original manuscripts, we are indebted to George Wilson, Esq. of Dalmarnock, a grandson of the poet's correspondent.

of you," I shall humbly but fervently endeavour to be a conspicuous member. Now it is "called to-day" with my powers and me, and the time fast approacheth when, beholding the debilitated victim of all-subduing Time, they shall exclaim, "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

Your book came safe, and I am going to trouble you with further commissions. I call it troubling you—because I want only BOOKS; the cheapest way, the best; so you may have to hunt for them in the evening auctions. I want Smollett's works, for the sake of his incomparable humour. I have already Roderick Random, and Humphrey Clinker.—Peregrine Pickle, Launcelot Greaves, and Ferdinand Count Fathom, I still want; but as I said, the veriest ordinary copies will serve me. I am nice only in the appearance of my poets. I forget the price of Cowper's Poems, but I believe I must have them. I saw the other day, proposals for a publication, entitled, "Banks's new and complete Christian's Family Bible," printed for C. Cooke, Paternoster-row, London.—He promises at least to give in the work, I think it is three hundred and odd engravings, to which he has put the names of the first artists in London. You will know the character of the performance, as some numbers of it are published; and if it is really what it pretends to be, set me down as a subscriber, and send me the published numbers.

Let me hear from you your first leisure minute, and trust me, you shall in future have no reason to complain of my silence. The dazzling perplexity of novelty will dissipate, and leave me to pursue my course in the quiet path of methodical routine.

I might go on to fill up the page, but I dare say you are already sufficiently tired of, my dear Sir, yours sincerely

ROBT. BURNS.

My D. Sir,

I am just going for Kithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my rhyming things for you. — The Miss Baillies I have seen in Edin. — "Fair & lovely are Thy Works, Lord God Almighty! who would not praise Thee for these Thy gifts in Thy goodness to the sons of men!!!" — It needed not your fine taste to admire them. — I declare, one day I had the honor of dining at M^r Baillie's, I was almost in the predicament of the children of Israel, when they could not look on Moses' face for the glory that shone in it when he descended from mount Horeb. —

I did once write a poetic Address from the falls of Bruar to his grace of Athole, when I was in the Highlands. When you return to Scotland let me know, & I will send such of my pieces as please myself best — I return to Mauchline in about ten days. — My Compl^{ts} to M^r Eusden. —

I am in truth, but at present, in haste
yours sincerely
Robt Burns

Mauchline
July 18th 1788

M^r George Lockhart 3
March.
at Miss Gray's
Glasgow

My D^r Sir,

I am just going for Lithodale, else
I would certainly have transcribed some of my hymn
things for you. — The Miss Daiches I have seen in
Edin. — Fair & lovely are Thy works, Lord God
"Almighty! who would not praise Thee for these Thy
"gifts in Thy goodness to the sons of men!!" —

(¹) TO MR GEORGE LOCKHART, MERCHANT,
AT MISS GRAY'S, GLASGOW.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MY D^R. SIR,—I am just going for Nithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my rhyming things for you. The Miss Bailies I have seen in Edin^r. “Fair and lovely are Thy works, Lord God Almighty! who would not praise Thee for these Thy gifts in Thy goodness to the sons of men !!!” It needed not your fine taste to admire them. I declare, one day I had the honor of dining at Mr Bailies, I was almost in the predicament of the Children of Israel, when they could not look on Moses’ face for the glory that shone in it when he descended from Mount Horeb.

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

I return to Mauchline in about ten days. My compl^{ts}. to Mr Purden.—I am in truth, but at present in haste,
yours sincerely,

ROB^T. BURNS.

MAUCHLINE, *July 18th, 1788.*

(¹) TO MR ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, WRITER,
ST JAMES’ SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)

ELLISLAND, NITHSDALE, *July 27th 1788.*

MY GODLIKE FRIEND,—

Nay, do not stare,
You think the phrase is odd-like;
But “God is Love,” the saints declare,—
Then, surely thou art god-like.

&c. &c., see page 159, Vol. II.

My spur-galled, spavened Pegasus makes so hobbling a progress over the course of Extempore, that I must here

alight and try the foot-path of plain prose. I have not met with anything this long while, my dear Sir, that has given my inward man such a fillip as your kind epistle.

For my own Biographical story, I can only say with the venerable Hebrew Patriarch—"Here am I with the children God has given me!" I have been a farmer since Whitsunday, and am just now building a house—not a Palace to attract the train-attended steps of pride-swollen Greatness, but a plain, simple domicile for Humility and Contentment. I am too a married man. This was a step of which I had no idea when you and I were together. On my return to Ayrshire, I found a much-loved female's positive happiness, or absolute misery among my hands, and I could not trifle with such a sacred deposit. I am, since, doubly pleased with my conduct. I have the consciousness of acting up to that generosity of principle which I would be thought to possess, and I am really more and more pleased with my choice. When I tell you that Mrs Burns was once "my Jean," you will know the rest. Of four children she bore me in seventeen months, my eldest boy is only living. By the bye, I intend breeding him up for the Church; and from an innate dexterity in secret mischief which he possesses, and a certain hypocritical gravity as he looks on the consequences, I have no small hopes of him in the sacerdotal line.

Mrs Burns does not come from Ayrshire till my said new house be ready, so I am eight or ten days at Mauchline and this place alternately. Hitherto my direction was only "at Mauchline," but "at Ellisland near Dumfries," will now likewise find me; though I prefer the former. I need not tell you that I shall expect to hear from you soon, Adieu!

ROBT. BURNS.

Lowe's poem I shall transcribe in my first leisure hour.

R. B.

(15) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MAUCHLINE, 2d August 1788.

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

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

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

'Heav'n oft tears the bosom-chords

'That nature finest strung.'

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

Thou whom chance may hither lead,

Be thou clad in russet weed,

Be thou decked in silken stole,

Grave these maxims on thy soul, &c.

See page 157, Vol. II.

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

Pity the tuneful Muses’ helpless train,
 Weak, timid landsmen on Life’s stormy main !
 The world were blest, did bliss on them depend ;
 Ah, that “the friendly e’er should want a friend !”
 The little Fate bestows they share as soon ;
 Unlike sage proverb’d Wisdom’s hard-wrung boon.
 Let Prudence number o’er each sturdy son
 Who life and wisdom at one race began ;
 Who feel by reason, and who give by rule ;
 (Instinct’s a brute, and Sentiment a fool !)
 Who make poor “will do” wait upon “I should” ;
 We own they’re prudent ; but who feels they’re good !
 Ye wise ones, hence ! ye hurt the social eye ;
 God’s image rudely etch’d on base alloy !
 But come, ye

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

R. B.

The reader may have noted that about 7th April 1788—just a fortnight after parting with Clarinda—Burns began to show relenting symptoms of returning affection towards *his own Jean*. It required strong reasoning efforts on his part to bend his proud spirit into so condescending a mood ; and when at length he saw the necessity of adopting her as his wife, he nevertheless conceived he was making sacrifices for which the world would applaud him.

Very gradually did he break the intelligence of this resolution to his friends. On 28th April he whispered the fact to James Smith, the old confidential negotiator betwixt Jean and him : he ordered a wedding shawl for her, and closed his letter in these words :— “Mrs Burns (’tis only her private designation), begs her best compliments to you.” On 4th May, so many stones of down-feathers are bespoke to provide the nuptial couch ; and finally, on 25th May, he intimated to an Edinburgh correspondent that he had lately given his Jean “a *legal title* to the best blood in his body.” This last announcement gives countenance to a tradition which (curiously enough, while we are penning the present sentence), we find publicly advertised in this morning’s *Scotsman* :—

“To be sold by public roup in Dowell’s Rooms, George Street, on Wednesday 8th May 1878, at 2 p.m. Lot 1. Mauchline Castle, with dwelling house and grounds, extending to one acre, one rood, and seven poles, in occupation of Mrs Hamilton. Property is held of the Crown, nominal feu-duty. The house was formerly the residence of Gavin Hamilton, the friend and patron of Robert Burns, who was married there. Upset price £1,000.”

Gavin Hamilton was a Justice of the Peace, and a marriage certificate from him was law-binding enough ; but it did not altogether suit the requirements of Jean and her relatives. The annual Communion season at Mauchline took place in those days on the second Sunday of August, and the Session-books evince that about the end of July and early days of the following month, a great “clearing of characters” formed the daily work of Mr Auld and his staff of elders. Burns and his bride, among other tainted parties, humbled themselves before this conclave which he had so bitterly satirized in former days, and was, in the near future, about to do again. The following entry we copied from the veritable record in the Session-clerk’s hands : be it observed, however, that Jean’s signature is in the Bridegroom’s hand-writing ; from which circumstance we infer that the Bride was either too nervous to hold a pen, or, at that period, she had not acquired so much of the art of penmanship as to enable her to sign her own name. She ultimately was taught to do so.

1788.

Aug. 5. Sess. con :—Compeared Robert Burns, with Jean Armour, his alleged Spouse. They both acknowledged their irregular marriage, and their sorrow for that irregularity, and desiring that the Session will take such steps as may seem to them proper, in order to the Solemn Confirmation of the said marriage.

The Session, taking this affair under their consideration, agree that they both be rebuked for this acknowledged irregularity, and that they be taken solemnly engaged to adhere faithfully to one another as husband and wife all the days of their life.

In regard the Session have a title in Law to some fine for behoof of the Poor, they agree to refer to Mr Burns his own generosity.

The above Sentence was accordingly executed, and the Session absolved the said parties from any scandal on this acct.

ROBT. BURNS.

WILLIAM AULD, *Modr.*

JEAN ARMOUR.

(Mr Burns gave a guinea-note for behoof of the poor.)

On the very day of the above solemnity, which happened to be Mauchline Fair-Day, the bridegroom resolved that Jean should not want her fairing, so he dispatched the following letter to a Glasgow silk-mercet, containing an order for the materials to make a black silk dress for his bride.

(¹) TO MR ROBERT M'INDOE,
MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

(DR HATELY WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)*

MAUCHLINE, 5th Aug. 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am vexed for nothing more, that I have not been at Glasgow, than not meeting with you. I have seldom found my friend Andrew M'Culloch wrong in his ideas of mankind; but respecting your worship he was as true as Holy Writ. This is the night of our Fair, and I, as you see, cannot keep well *in a line*: but if you will send me by the bearer, John Ronald, carrier between Glasgow and Mauchline, fifteen yards of black silk, the same kind as that of which I bought a gown and petticoat from you formerly—lutestring, I think is its name—I shall send you the money and a more coherent letter, when he goes again to your good town. To be brief, send me fifteen yds. black lutestring silk, such as they used to make gowns and petticoats of, and I shall choose, some sober morning before breakfast, and write you a sober answer, with the sober sum which will then be due from, dear Sir, fu' or fasting, yours sincerely,

ROB^T. BURNS.

TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 16th August 1788.

I AM in a fine disposition, my honored friend, to send you an elegiac epistle; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian:—

* The original MS. is now possessed by John Reid, Esq., Kingston Place, Glasgow, a memorandum inscribed on the letter intimates that the price was 5s. 6d, or 5s. 9d, per yard

“Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?
Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?”

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

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

I was yesterday at Mr Miller’s to dinner for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind; from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage, as a professional man, was expected: I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye my adored household gods, independence of spirit, and integrity of soul! In the course of conversation, “Johnson’s Musical Museum,” a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning,

“Raving winds around her blowing.”

The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words. “Mine, Madam—they are indeed my very best verses;” she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well, “king’s caff is better than ither folks’ corn.” I was going to make a New Testament quotation about “casting pearls,” but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste.

After all that has been said on the other side of the

question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favored by partial heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honors, and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days are sold to the minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad, called, "The Life and Age of Man ;" beginning thus :

"'Twas in the sixteen hunder year
Of God and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie."

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived awhile in her girlish years : the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died ; during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of "the Life and Age of Man."

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

"What truth on earth so precious as the lie?"

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

search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty and distress.

I am sure, dear Madam, you are now *more* than pleased with the *length* of my letters. I return to Ayrshire, middle of next week ; and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest. R. B.

TO MR ROB^t. AINSLIE, WRITER,
CARE OF MR AINSLIE, BOOKSELLER, NEW TOWN, EDINBURGH.

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

MAUCHLINE, 23rd Aug. 1788.

I REC^d. your last, my dear friend, but I write you just now on a vexatious business.

I don't know if ever I told you some very bad reports that Mrs M'———se once told me of Mr Nicol. I had mentioned the affair to Mr Cruickshank in the course of conversation about our common friend, that a lady had said so and so, which I suspected had originated from some malevolence of Dr Adam's. He had mentioned this story to Mr Nicol cursorily, and there it rested ; till now, a prosecution has commenced between Dr A. and Mr N——, and Mr N. has press'd me over and over to give up the lady's name. I have refused this ; and last post Mr N. acquaints me, but in very good natur'd terms, that if I persist in my refusal, I am to be served with a summons to compear and declare the fact.

Heaven knows how I should proceed ! I have this moment wrote Mrs M'———se, telling her that I have informed

* The original MS. of this letter was communicated to us by Mr Robert Forrester, Bookseller, Glasgow, previous to its becoming the property of Mr Archibald Munro, M. A., Clare Hall Academy, Newington, Edinburgh.

you of the affair; and I shall write Mr Nicol by Tuesday's post that I will not give up my female friend till farther consideration; but that I have acquainted you with the business and the name; and that I have desired you to wait on him, which I intreat, my dear Sir, you will do; and give up the name or not, as your and Mrs M^c—se's prudence shall suggest.

I am vexed to the heart that Mr Ainslie has disappointed my brother. I grasp at your kind offer, and wish you to enquire for a place among the Saddler's shops. If I get him into a first rate shop, I will bind him a year or two, I almost do not care on what terms. He is about eighteen; really very clever; and in what work he has seen, not a despicable tradesman; but I will have him a first rate hand if possible.

Why trouble yourself about Hamilton? let me pay the expense, for I don't know where he is now to be found.* Dr Blacklock—where he lodged, which caused me to meet with him—and Signior Dasti, junr., one of his greatest cronies, are the only intelligencers to whom I can refer you. Adieu! I am ever most cordially yours

ROBT. BURNS.

(²) TO MR JOHN BEUGO, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, *Sep.* 9th 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,†—There is not in Edinburgh above the number of the Graces whose letters would have given me so

* See, on this subject, Letter to Ainslie, page 134, *supra*.

† Most readers will be aware that the gentleman here addressed was the engraver of a little head of Burns, which formed the frontispiece to his Edinburgh edition of 1787, after Nasmyth's painting. He was born in the same year with the poet, and was so intimate with him as to take private

much pleasure as yours of the 3d instant, which only reached me yesternight.

I am here on my farm, busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose, they only know in graces, prayers, &c. and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiding webs—by the ell! As for the Muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as a poet. For my old capricious but good-natured hussy of a Muse—

“By banks of Nith I sat and wept
When Coila I thought on,
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow trees upon.”

I am generally about half my time in Ayrshire with my “darling Jean,” and then, I, at *lucid intervals*, throw my horny fist across my be-cob-webbed lyre, much in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning wheel.

I will send you “The Fortunate Shepherdess” as soon as I return to Ayrshire, for there I keep it by a careful hand, as I would not for any thing it should be mislaid or lost. I do not wish to serve you from any benevolence, or other grave Christian virtue; ’tis purely a selfish gratification of my own feeling whenever I think of you.

You do not tell me if you are going to be married. Depend upon it, if you do not make some foolish choice, it will be a very great improvement upon the dish of life. I can speak from experience, though, God knows, my choice was as random as blind man’s buff. . . .

If your better functions would give you leisure to write to

lessons in French along with him from Mr Louis Cauvin. He died 13th December 1841, aged 82.

me, I should be extremely happy ; that is to say, if you neither keep nor look for a regular correspondence. I hate the idea of being obliged to write a letter. I sometimes write a friend twice a week ; at other times once a quarter.

I am exceedingly pleased with your fancy in making the author you mention place a map of Iceland instead of his portrait before his works : 'twas a glorious idea.*

Could you conveniently do me one thing ?—whenever you finish any head I should like to have a proof copy of it. I might tell you a long story about your fine genius ; but as what everybody knows cannot have escaped you, I shall not say one syllable about it.

If you see Mr Nasmyth, remember me to him most respectfully, as he both loves and deserves respect ; though if he would pay less respect to the mere carcase of greatness, I should think him much nearer perfection.

R. B.

(²) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY,
ENCLOSING A POETICAL EPISTLE. (*See* p. 164, Vol. II.)
(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

ELLISLAND, 10th Sep. 1788.

SIR,—The scrapes and premunires into which our indiscretions and follies, in the ordinary constitution of things, often bring us, are bad enough ; but it is peculiarly hard that a man's virtues should involve him in disquiet, and the very goodness of his heart cause the persecution of his peace. You, Sir, have patronized and befriended me—not by barren compliments, which merely fed my vanity, or

* The idea which Burns refers to with so much relish, of having prefixed by way of frontispiece to a certain author's book, a map of Iceland, is a hit at Creech, and his frozen temperament. He was then about to publish his "Fugitive Pieces."

little marks of notice, which perhaps only encumbered me more in the awkwardness of my native rusticity ; but by being my persevering friend in real life : and now, as if your continued benevolence had given me a prescriptive right, I am going again to trouble you with my importunities.

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

There is one way by which I might be enabled to extricate myself from this embarrassment—a scheme which I hope and am certain is in your power to effectuate. I live here, Sir, in the very centre of a country Excise division ; the present officer lately lived on a farm which he rented, in my nearest neighbourhood ; and as the gentleman, owing to some legacies, is quite opulent, a removal could do him no manner of injury ; and on a month's warning to give me a little time to look again over my instructions, I would not be afraid to enter on business. I do not know the name of

his division, as I have not yet got acquainted with any of the Dumfries Excise people ; but his own name is Leonard Smith. It would suit me to enter on it beginning of next summer ; but I shall be in Edinburgh to wait upon you about the affair, sometime in the ensuing winter.

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

If I were in the service, it would likewise favour my poetical schemes. I am thinking of something in the rural way of the drama kind. Originality of character is, I think, the most striking beauty in that species of composition, and my wanderings in the way of my business would be vastly favourable to my picking up original traits of human nature.

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

——“ If I in aught have done amiss,
Impute it not ! ”——

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

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

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

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

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) TO MRS ROBERT BURNS, MAUCHLINE.

(DR HATELY WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)*

ELLISLAND, *Friday, 12th Sep. 1788.*

MY DEAR LOVE,—I received your kind letter with a pleasure which no letter but one from you could have given me. I dreamed of you the whole night last; but alas! I fear it will be three weeks yet, ere I can hope for the happiness of seeing you. My harvest is going on. I have some to cut down still, but I put in two stacks to-day, so I'm as tired as a dog.

You might get one of Gilbert's sweet milk cheeses, and send it to On second thoughts, I believe you had best get the half of Gilbert's web of table linen, and make it up; tho' I think it damnable dear, but it is no outlaid money to us, you know. I have just now consulted my old landlady about table linen, and she thinks I may have the best for two shillings per yard; so after all, let it alone until I return; and some day next week I will be in Dumfries, and will ask the price there. I expect your new gowns will be very forward, or ready to make, against I be home to get the baiveridge. I have written my long-thought-on letter to Mr Graham, the Commissioner of Excise; and have sent sheetful of Poetry besides. Now I talk of poetry, I had [a fine] strathspey among my hands to make verses to, for Johnson's Collection, which I [intend as my honey-moon song.]

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* The MS. of this very interesting letter is possessed by Mr Andrew Nicolson, shoemaker, Dumfries; unfortunately it is considerably damaged throughout, and the latter portion is wanting. The reader will perceive the connexion between this letter and the one at page 147 *supra*, ordering the silk for Jean's dress. It is proper to explain here, that a young woman in rural districts, on *her first appearance* in a new dress in those days was subject to a "baiveridge" tax, if claimed by the young men who chanced to meet her. That is to say, she had to "pay off" on the occasion.

(11) MISS MARGARET CHALMERS, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, *Sept.* 16, 1788.

WHERE are you? and how are you? and is Lady Mackenzie recovering her health? for I have had but one solitary letter from you. I will not think you have forgot me, Madam; and for my part—

“When thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand!”

“My heart is not of that rock, nor my soul careless as that sea.” I do not make my progress among mankind as a bowl does among its fellows—rolling through the crowd without bearing away any mark or impression, except where they hit in hostile collision.

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honor of interesting yourselves much *à l'égard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness.—I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two, whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say, more, but, so much as Lady Mackenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest of human kind—unfortunate, even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost anybody I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child!—If ever you honored me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert. I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a lato

important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable licence, or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLAINY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire, I married "my Jean." This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance, perhaps; but I had a long and much loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county. Mrs Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse.—I must except also from this last, a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly; and all the ballads in the country, as she has (O the partial lover! you will cry) the finest "wood note wild" I ever heard.—I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honor of a share in your best wishes.* She is still at Mauchline, as

* This interesting letter is the last that has been preserved of the admired series of communications which the bard addressed to her. He afterwards refers to her as "Mrs Lewis Hay." The following notices from the Scots Magazine are interesting in this connexion:—

MARRIAGE.—"Dec. 9, 1788. At Edinburgh, Lewis Hay, Esq., Banker in Edinburgh, to Miss Margaret Chalmers, youngest daughter of the late James Chalmers, Esq. of Fingland."

DEATH.—"Feb. 28, 1800. At Edinburgh, Mr Lewis Hay, Banker." Mrs Hay latterly resided many years at Pau, in Berne, where she died in the Spring of 1813.

I am building my house ; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls ; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death, by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect, but I believe, in time, it may be a saving bargain. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a losing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my Excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set *all* before your view, whatever disrespect you, in common with the world, have for this business, I know you would approve of my idea. I will make no apology, dear Madam, for this egotistic detail : I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness ! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at every thing dishonest, and the same scorn at every thing unworthy—if they are not in the dependance of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not EQUALS ? And if the bias, the instinctive bias, of their souls run the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS ?

When I may have an opportunity of sending you this, Heaven only knows. Slienstone says, “when one is confined idle within doors by bad weather, the best antidote against *ennui* is to read the letters of, or write to, one’s friends ;” in that case then, if the weather continues thus, I may scrawl you half a quire.

I very lately—to wit, since harvest began—wrote a poem, not in imitation, but in the manner, of Pope’s Moral

Epistles. It is only a short essay, just to try the strength of my Muse's pinion in that way. I will send you a copy of it, when once I have heard from you. I have likewise been laying the foundation of some pretty large poetic works : how the superstructure will come on, I leave to that great maker and marrer of projects—TIME. Johnson's collection of Scots songs is going on in the third volume ; and, of consequence, finds me a consumpt for a great deal of idle metre. One of the most tolerable things I have done in that way is two stanzas that I made to an air, a musical gentleman* of my acquaintance composed for the anniversary of his wedding day, which happens on the seventh of November. Take it as follows :—

The day returns—my bosom burns,
The blissful day we twa did meet, &c.

See p. 168, Vol. II.

I give over this letter for shame. If I should be seized with a scribbling fit, before this goes away, I shall make it another letter ; and then you may allow your patience a week's respite between the two. I have not room for more than the old, kind, hearty, FAREWELL.

To make some amends, *mes chères Mesdames*, for dragging you on to this second sheet ; and to relieve a little the tiresomeness of my unstudied and uncorrectable prose, I shall transcribe you some of my late poetic bagatelles ; though I have, these eight or ten months, done very little that way. One day, in a Hermitage on the Banks of the Nith, belonging to a gentleman in my neighbourhood, who is so good as give me a key at pleasure, I wrote as follows ; supposing

* Robert Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, who was no great musician, yet ventured to publish something in that line.

myself the sequestered venerable inhabitant of the lonely mansion.

Thou whom chance may hither lead, &c.—page 157, Vol. II.

R. B.*

(¹) TO MR MORISON, WRIGHT, MAUCHLINE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, *Sep.* 22, 1788

MY DEAR SIR,—Necessity obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plastered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think will, at farthest, be my time beyond which I cannot

* As we may not have another opportunity of referring to this amiable lady, we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity to quote from Professor Walker, who was personally acquainted with her, some interesting remarks: “At Harvieston, the poet’s attention seems to have been chiefly engaged by Miss Chalmers, now Mrs Hay, with whom he afterwards maintained a correspondence by which no reader can fail to be charmed. He might indeed have wandered far before he met with an acquaintance so well adapted to call forth all that was laudable in his character, and to check all that was reprehensible; and by this means to draw him into the fairest light, both to others and himself. Burns required friends who at once could fascinate and restrain: and this he found in one who united the resolution of the stronger sex, without its rigour, to the tenderness of the weaker, without its errors; and the graceful playfulness which became her age, to a discretion which is generally the gift of long experience. By a penetrating reader her character might indeed be conjectured from the letters which the poet addressed to her; for in no others of the collection do we find the easy confidential strain, to which he was encouraged by the kindness of his correspondent, so happily tempered with a propriety imposed by the gentle control of her recollected virtues.”

A relative of Mrs Hay thus described her person to Robert Chambers:—“In early life, when her hazel eyes were large and bright, and her teeth white and regular, her face possessed a charm not always the result or the accompaniment of fine features. She was short, but her figure was faultless. Her conversation was cheerful and intelligent. She talked rarely of books, yet greatly liked reading. She spoke readily and well, but preferred listening to others.”

V.

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

(³) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

ELLISLAND, 23rd Sept. 1788.

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

I am cursed with a melancholy prescience, which makes

* Cromeek made reference to this passage as a fine specimen of “the bathos.” The reader has already, at page 313, Vol. IV., seen a sample of the same style in the letter to Mr Francis Howden. A farther instance of it will appear in a letter to Mr Creech, dated 30th May 1795.

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

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

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

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹⁷) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP,
MOREHAM MAINS, HADDINGTON.*

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MAUCHLINE, 27th Sep. 1788.

I HAVE received twins, dear Madam, more than once ; but scarcely ever with more pleasure than when I received yours of the 12th instant. To make myself understood ; I had wrote to Mr Graham, inclosing my Poem addressed to him, and the same post which favored me with yours, brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he had received mine ; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was more polite or kind.

Your criticisms, my honored Benefactress, are truly the work of a *Friend*. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed, caterpillar critic ; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude, the *pro* and *con* of an author's merits ; they are the judicious observations of animated friendship, selecting the beauties of the piece. I have just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning (for between my wife and my farm is just 46 miles) by three o'clock. As I jogged on in the dark, I was taken with a poetic fit as follows :

Mrs F—— of C——'s lamentation for the death of her son ; an uncommonly promising youth of 18 or 19 years of age.†

Fate gave the word—the arrow sped,
And pierc'd my darling's heart.—See p. 169, Vol. II.

You will not send me your poetic rambles, but you see I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your impromptus give me

* The original MS. of this letter is in the Poet's Monument at Edinburgh.

† James Fergusson, Esq., younger of Craigdarroch, died in November 1787.

double pleasure ; what falls from your pen can be neither uninteresting in itself, nor indifferent to me.

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

What a life of solicitude is the life of a parent ! You interested me much in your young couple. I suppose it is not any of the ladies I have seen.

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

I will pay the sapientipotent George most cheerfully, to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire.

I have the honor to be, D^r. Madam, your much obliged, and most respectful, humble serv^t. ROBT. BURNS.

(4) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MAUCHLINE, 1st October 1788.

I HAVE been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the "Address to Lochlomond" you were so obliging as to send to me.* Were I impanelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be "Guilty ! A poet of nature's making !" It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favorite classic author in his own walks of study and composition before him as a model. Though

* By the Rev. Dr Cririe, afterwards minister of Dalton in Dumfriesshire. He died in 1835.

your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother-poet forgive me, if I venture to hint that his imitation of that immortal bard is in two or three places rather more servile than such a genius as his required, *e.g.* :—

“To soothe the maddening passions all to peace.”

ADDRESS.

“To soothe the throbbing passions into peace.”

THOMSON.

I think the “Address” is in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the “Seasons.” Like Thomson, too, he has looked into nature for himself; you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading; in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but, like a true poet of nature’s making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only, I do not altogether like—

“Truth,
The soul of every song that’s nobly great.”

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is nobly great. Perhaps I am wrong; this may be but a prose criticism. Is not the phrase, in line 7, page 6, “Great lake,” too much vulgarized by every-day language for so sublime a poem?

“Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,”

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration of a comparison with other lakes is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader’s ideas must sweep the

“Winding margin of an hundred mile

The perspective that follows, mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digressions on the yew tree—“Ben-Lomond’s lofty, cloud-envelop’d head,” &c., are beautiful. A thunderstorm is a

subject which has been often tried, yet our poet in his grand picture has interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original :—

—————"the gloom
Deep-seam'd with frequent streaks of moving fire."

In his preface to the storm, "the glens how dark between," is noble Highland landscape! The "rain ploughing the red mould," too, is beautifully fancied. "Ben-Lomond's lofty, pathless top," is a good expression; and the surrounding view from it is truly great: the

—————"silver mist,
Beneath the beaming sun,"

is well described; and here he has contrived to enliven his poem with a little of that passion which bids fair, I think, to usurp the modern Muses altogether. I know not how far this episode is a beauty upon the whole, but the swain's wish to carry "some faint idea of the vision bright," to entertain her "partial, listening ear," is a pretty thought. But in my opinion the most beautiful passages in the whole poem are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Lochlomond's "hospitable flood;" their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, diving, &c.; and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to any thing in the "Seasons." The idea of "the floating tribes far distant seen, all glistening to the moon," provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. "The howling winds," "the hideous roar" of the "white cascades," are all in the same style.

I forget that while I am thus holding forth with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must, however, mention that the last verse of the sixteenth page is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must likewise notice that

beautiful paragraph beginning, "The gleaming lake," &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the last two paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began—I should like to know who the author is ; but, whoever he be, please present him with my grateful thanks for the entertainment he has afforded me.

A friend of mine desired me to commission for him two books, "Letters on the Religion essential to Man," a book you sent me before ; and "The World Unmasked, or the Philosopher the Greatest Cheat." Send me them by the first opportunity. The Bible you sent me is truly elegant ; I only wish it had been in two volumes. R. B.

On October 14th 1788, on Dalswinton Loch, within the grounds of the poet's landlord, Mr Miller, took place the first trial of the first Steam Boat in the world. The inventor and patentee was Mr William Symington. There is no word of Burns having been present on the occasion. The model vessel was 25 feet long, by 7 feet broad, and successfully steamed across the loch at the rate of five miles an hour.

Some sensation about this time being excited by the approach of the centenary day of the landing of King William III. at Torbay, the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk was pleased to appoint Wednesday the 5th of November to be observed as "a Day of solemn Thanksgiving for that most glorious event, the Revolution." Burns, who did not much sympathise in this matter, was not particularly pleased with the sermon preached by Mr Kirkpatrick, minister of his parish—Dunscore, and forwarded to a London liberal paper, the long letter on the subject which next falls in course. His patron, the Earl of Glencairn, took a prominent part in a secular movement which was set agoing in Edinburgh in regard to that centenary, as the following notice from the Scots Magazine will show :—

"At Edinburgh, 4th November, a meeting was held of the 'Independent Friends,' to celebrate the secular anniversary of the

glorious Revolution in 1688, the Earl of Glencairn in the chair. A committee was appointed to raise subscriptions for the erection of a Public Monument at Edinburgh, or neighbourhood, with suitable inscription, relating to the event. Committee—the Earls of Buchan, Glencairn, Dumfries and Selkirk. Hon. Harry Erskine, Lord Elibank, Lord Ankerville, Sir H. Wellwood Moncreiff, Bart., Sir W. A. Cunningham, Bart., G. Douglas, Esq. of Cavers, Robert Graham, Esq. of Gartmore, Major-General Fletcher Campbell, Wm. Ferguson, Esq. of Raith, Archibald Spiers, Esq., of Ellerslie.”

(²) TO THE EDITOR OF “THE STAR.”

(CURRIE, 1800.)

November 8th 1788.

SIR,—Notwithstanding the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectarians have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us ; still, the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, and insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shows that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind who is undone—the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes—who but sympathizes with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother ? We forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgment to the AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, for the consequent blessings of the glorious Revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious ; to it we are likewise indebted for the present Royal Family, the ruling features of whose administration have ever been mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the House of Stuart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils; and we may bless GOD for all his goodness to us as a nation, without at the same time cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most of us would have done, had we been in their situation.

The “bloody and tyrannical House of Stuart,” may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present royal family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stuarts more attentive to their subjects’ rights? Might not the epithets of “bloody and tyrannical” be, with at least equal justice, applied to the House of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, Sir, seems to be this;—At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the

struggling liberties of his people ; with us, luckily, the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine ; but, likewise happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stuarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless God: but cannot join in the ridicule against them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone of exigency ; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us ?

Man, Mr Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: who would believe, Sir, that in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people under our national protection should complain, not against our monarch and a few favorite advisers, but against our WHOLE LEGISLATIVE BODY, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the House of Stuart ! I will not, I cannot, enter into the merits of the cause ; but I dare say the American Congress, of 1776, will be allowed to have been as able and enlightened as the English Convention was in 1688 ; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as

duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed House of Stuart.

To conclude, Sir ; let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family, illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent ; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.

R. B.

(¹⁸) MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP,

CARE OF WM. KERR, ESQ., POST OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)*

MAUCHLINE, 13th Nov. 1788.

MADAM,—I had the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak ; if it is so, Poets must be weaker still ; for Misses Rachel and Keith, and Miss Georgina M'Kay, with their flattering attentions and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own they did not lard me over as a Poet does his Patron, or still more his Patroness, nor did they sugar me up as a Cameronian Preacher does J—s—s C——st ; but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate innuendoes of Compliment that if it had not been for a lucky recollection how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked on myself as a person

* We are indebted to the polite liberality of R. F. Sketchley, Esq., Assistant Keeper of South Kensington Museum, London, for supplying us with a verbatim copy of this important letter, so greatly curtailed in Currie's edition. It forms one of three letters of Burns which were bequeathed to that Museum by the late Mr John Forster.

of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the Major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over against the finest Quey * in Ayrshire, which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm-stock. As it was on Hallow-day, I am determined, annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an Ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

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

What you mention of the Thanksgiving day is inspiration from above. Is it not remarkable, odiously remarkable, that tho' manners are more civilized, and the rights of mankind better understood, by an Augustan Century's improvement, yet in this very reign of heavenly Hanoverianism, and almost in this very year, an empire beyond the Atlantic has its REVOLUTION too, and for the very same maladministration

* Heifer.

and legislative misdemeanours in the illustrious and sapientipotent Family of H—— as was complained of in the “tyrannical and bloody house of Stuart.”

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I shall take the first conveniency to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and Friendship, under the guarantee of the Major’s hospitality. There will soon be threescore and ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a festive day of “The feast of reason and the flow of soul.” I have the honor to be, Madam, your grateful humble ser^t,

ROBT. BURNS.

(³) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MAUCHLINE, 15th Nov. 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have sent you two more songs. If you have got any tunes, or anything to correct, please send them by return of the carrier.

I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will very probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country; and I am certain, posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly; and your name shall be immortal.

I am preparing a flaming preface for your third volume. I see every day new musical publications advertised; but what are they? Gaudy, hunted butterflies of a day, and then vanish for ever: but your work will outlive the

momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of mine.

Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devotion? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as, whether she be rather black or fair, plump or thin, short or tall, &c., and choose your air, and I shall task my muse to celebrate her.*

(¹) TO DR BLACKLOCK, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MAUCHLINE, *November 15th 1788.*

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—As I hear nothing of your motions, but that you are, or were, out of town, I do not know where this may find you, or whether it will find you at all. I wrote you a long letter, dated from the land of Matrimony, in June; but either it had not found you, or, what I dread more, it found you or Mrs Blacklock in too precarious a state of health and spirits to take notice of an idle packet.

I have done many little things for Johnson since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and I have finished one piece in the way of Pope's "Moral Epistles;" but, from your silence, I have every thing to fear, so I have only sent you two melancholy things, and I tremble lest they should too well suit the tone of your present feelings.†

In a fortnight I move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale; till then, my direction is at this place; after that period, it

* It is believed that the beautiful song—"Turn again, thou fair Eliza." p. 23, Vol. II. was the outcome of this promise. Vol. III. of Johnson's work appeared on 2nd Feb. 1790.

† The two poetical pieces here enclosed were these:—

"Fate gave the word—the arrow sped,"—page 169; and "The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill."—page 171, Vol II.

will be at Ellisland, near Dumfries. It would extremely oblige me were it but half a line, to let me know how you are, and where you are. Can I be indifferent to the fate of a man to whom I owe so much? A man whom I not only esteem, but venerate.

My warmest good wishes and most respectful compliments to Mrs Blacklock, and Miss Johnson, if she is with you.

I cannot conclude without telling you that I am more and more pleased with the step I took respecting "my Jean." Two things, from my happy experience, I set down as apophthegms in life—A wife's head is immaterial, compared with her heart; and—"Virtue's (for wisdom, what poet pretends to it?) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Adieu!

R. B.

The *Edinburgh Advertiser* of 28th November 1788, contained the following paragraph regarding our poet:—"Burns, the 'Ayrshire Bard,' is now enjoying the sweets of retirement at his farm. Burns, in thus retiring has acted wisely. Stephen Duck, the 'Poetical Thresher,' by his ill-advised patrons, was made a Parson. The poor man, hurried out of his proper element, found himself quite unhappy; became insane, and with his own hands, it is said, ended his life. Burns, with propriety, has resumed the *flail*; but we hope he has not thrown away the *quill*."

(^d) TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ., DRUMLANRIG.

ENCLOSING A SONG.

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

SANQUHAR, 26th Nov. 1788.

SIR,—I write you this and the enclosed, literally *en passant*, for I am just baiting on my way to Ayrshire. I have philosophy or pride enough to support me with unwounded indifference against the neglect of my more

dull superiors, the merely rank and file of noblesse and gentry—nay, even to keep my vanity quite sober under the larding of their compliments; but from those who are equally distinguished by their rank and character—those who bear the true elegant impressions of the Great Creator on the richest materials—their little notices and attentions are to me amongst the first of earthly enjoyments. The honor thou didst my fugitive pieces in requesting copies of them is so highly flattering to my feelings and poetic ambition, that I could not resist even this half opportunity of scrawling off for you the enclosed, as a small but honest testimony how truly and gratefully I have the honor to be, Sir,—Your deeply obliged humble servant, ROBT BURNS.

The original MS. of the above letter is in the possession of Mr James Graham, Mount Vernon Cottage, Carlisle, and is valuable as showing how early Burns attracted the attention of the gentry and land-owners in his neighbourhood, and obtained a footing of intimacy with them. The song enclosed was, in all probability, the fine compliment to his wife, beginning—

“O were I on Parnassus hill.”

See page 170, Vol. II.

perhaps composed on this very journey.

At Sanquhar, the hill of Corsincon which he preferred to Parnassus, was right in front of him, and the infant Nith—henceforth to be his Heliconian font, sparkled through the intervening prospect. He was on his way to Mauchline to bring home his Jean, and “move bag and baggage into Nithsdale;” and only ten days before, he had written these words to Blacklock:—“I am more and more pleased with the step I took regarding ‘my Jean.’ Two things from my happy experience, I set down as apophthegms in life—A wife’s head is immaterial compared with her heart; and ‘Virtue’s ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.’”

The house which he had been erecting at Ellisland was not yet completed, and the “smoky hovel,” which for some time had been used as a shelter, was now abandoned for more comfortable

quarters in a romantic spot called "the Isle," down the Nith from Ellisland about one mile. To this temporary domicile, from which his letters were dated for nearly six months thereafter, he brought Mrs Burns in the first week of December, where already two servant lads and a servant girl, with some cart-loads of furniture and other plenishing, had already arrived from Ayrshire.

(¹⁹) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 17th Dec., 1788.

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

again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, Madam, for I will make my threatening good. I am to be at the New-year-day fair of Ayr; and, by all that is sacred in the world, friend, I *will* come and see you. . . .

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old schoolfellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world!—They spoil these “social offspring of the heart.” Two veterans of the “men of the world” would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase, “Auld lang syne,” exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr Kerr* will save you this postage.

AULD LANGSYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And days o’ langsyne?

See page 174, Vol. II.

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

MY BONIE MARY.

Go fetch to me a pint o’ wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie;
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonie lassie.

See page 176, Vol. II.

* Mr Kerr was postmaster in Edinburgh. This worthy man was ever ready to frank a letter for a friend: it has been said that such weighty articles as a pair of buckskin breeches have passed for a brother sportsman, in those primitive days, free through the post.

TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK, EDINBURGH.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

ELLISLAND, [December,] 1788.

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

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

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

R. B.

* The verses here enclosed were the second version of the author's "Lines written in Friar's Carse Hermitage." The unseemly quarrel between Mr Nicol and Rector Adam is again referred to in this letter. The coarse epithets here bestowed on the latter must be read with great modification by those who are familiar with our poet's manner of "backing his friends."

(¹) TO MR JOHN TENNANT, AUCHENBEY.*

CARE OF MR JOHN ROBB, INNKEEPER, AYR.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

December 22nd 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,—I yesterday tried my cask of whisky for the first time, and I assure you it does you great credit. It will bear five waters, strong, or six, ordinary toddy. The whisky of this country is a most rascally liquor; and, by consequence, only drunk by the most rascally part of the inhabitants. I am persuaded, if you once get a footing here, you might do a great deal of business, in the way of consumpt: and should you commence Distiller again, this is the native barley country. I am ignorant if, in your present way of dealing, you would think it worth while to extend your business so far as this country side. I write you this on the account of an accident, which I must take the merit of partly designed too. A neighbour of mine, a John Currie, miller in Carse-mill—a man who is, in a word a good man, a “very” good man, even for a £500 bargain,—he and his wife were in my house the time I broke open the cask. They keep a country public-house and sell a great deal of foreign spirits, but all along thought that whisky would have degraded their house. They were perfectly astonished at my whisky, both for its taste and strength; and, by their desire, I write you to know if you

* The MS. of this letter is in the poet's Monument at Edinburgh. The person addressed was a son of “gude auld Glen,” otherwise, John Tennant in Glenconner, an old friend of the poet's father. James Tennant, to whom the poetic epistle at page 205, Vol. II., is addressed, was a half brother of “Auchenbey.” The latter was a full brother of “Wabster Charlie,” “Preacher Willie,” “Singing Samnock,” and of David Tennant, the “manly Tar.” George Reid of Barquharrie was the kind friend who lent the pony for the poet's first journey to Edinburgh. Auchenbey is in the north border of Ochiltree parish, adjoining Mauchline parish.

could supply them with liquor of an equal quality, and at what price. Please write me by first post, and direct to me at Ellisland, near Dumfries. If you could take a jaunt this way yourself, I have a spare spoon, knife, and fork very much at your service. My comp^{ts}. to Mrs Tennant, and all the good folks in Glenconner and Barquharrie.—I am, most truly, my dear Sir, yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

1789.

Burns, on his farm by Nithside, in a choice situation, comfortably housed at the *Isle*, his Jean by his side, with men-servants, and maid servants around him to execute his orders, ought to have been a contented man. The previous six months were not devoid of enjoyment to him, but they were accompanied with perpetual motion and commotion—"eight days at Mauchline, and eight days at this place alternately." Now, at all events, his life was more uniformly calm and settled, and very pleasant is Dr Currie's picture of the domestic felicity he experienced at this period. "He resumed at times the occupation of a labourer, and found neither his strength nor his skill impaired. Pleased with surveying the grounds he had to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building that should give shelter to his wife and children, and, as he fondly hoped, to his own grey hairs; sentiments of independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic content and peace rose on his imagination; and a few days passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest, which he had ever experienced."

Alas! that those halcyon days should have been so very few! Already had he begun to suspect that his farm by no means promised to be such a pennyworth as he had been led to expect. "I am cursed," he said, "with a melancholy prescience which makes me the veriest coward in life. There is not any exertion which I would not attempt, rather than be in that horrid situation—to be ready to call on the mountains to fall, and the hills to cover

me from the presence of a haughty landlord, or his still more haughty underling, to whom I owed—what I could not pay.” “To save me from that horrid situation, I have taken my Excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket, ready for any emergency of fortune.” That Excise scheme was a pet one of his own early formation, and seemed to have been “hived in his bosom like the bag o’ the bee.” As Touchstone said of his Audrey, so could Burns of his gaugership—“It is a plain thing, but *mine own*.” Very nobly he remarked: “There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an Excise officer; but I do not pretend to borrow honor from my profession; I would much rather have it said that my profession borrowed credit from me.”

It is not surprising, that after his own and his father’s bitter experience of farming, he should from the first have conceived misgivings about Ellisland. It might have been better perhaps had he adhered to the promptings of his own instinct, thus communicated to his Excise patrons:—“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; when Death, the poor man’s last and often best friend, relieved him. . . . 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, I shall lodge this sum in a banking house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age.”

On New Year’s morning, while Gilbert Burns at Mossgiel was inditing a hearty salutation to his brother at Ellisland, the latter was engaged in penning to his friend Mrs Dunlop, one of the finest letters ever written by man, and which we now proceed to give. We collate the text with a copy kindly furnished to us by the possessor of the author’s holograph—Mr Robert Clarke, Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.; and the reader will perceive that Dr Currie had suppressed some sentences which are here restored.

(20) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, *Newyear-day Morning*, 1789.

THIS, dear Madam, is a morning of wishes; and would to God that I came under the Apostle James's description!—"The effectual, fervent prayer of a *righteous man* availeth much." In that case, Madam, you should "welcome in" a Year full of blessings: every thing that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every Pleasure that frail Humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of Devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought, which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of Instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere Machinery.

This day; the first Sunday of May; a breezy, blue-skied noon, some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of Autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holidays. Not like the Sacramental, Executioner-face of a Kilmarnock Communion; but to laugh or cry, be cheerful or pensive, moral or devout, according to the mood and tense of the Season and Myself. I believe I owe this to that glorious Paper in the Spectator, "The Vision of Mirza;" a Piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: "On the fifth day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*; after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer," &c.

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or

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

Apropos to an Ass, how do you like the following Apostrophe to Dulness, which I intend to interweave in “The Poet’s Progress.”

O Dulness, portion of the truly blest ! &c.

(Extending to 20 lines.—See page 183, Vol. II.)

I have sketched two or three verses to you, but as a private opportunity offers immediately, I must defer

transcribing them. A servant of mine goes to Ayrshire with this, but I shall write you by post. If I am to be so happy as to have it in my power to see you when I go to Ayr Fair, which I very much doubt, I will try to dine at Dunlop in the Wednesday of that week.

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

ROBT. BURNS.

GILBERT BURNS TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

MOSSGIEL, 1st Jan. 1789.

DEAR BROTHER,—I have just finished my New Year's day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, "through the dark postern of time long elapsed," I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the GOD OF SEASONS is to us; and that, however some clouds may seem to lour over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well.

Your mother and sisters, with Robert the second,* join me in the compliments of the season to you and Mrs Burns, and beg you will remember us in the same manner to William, the first time you see him.—I am dear brother, yours

GILBERT BURNS.

* This proves that the child did not accompany Mrs Burns to Dumfriesshire; so that those biographers are inaccurate who refer to the poet's happiness during this first winter at Ellisland, as arising specially from his having "his wife and children for the first time under a roof of his own." Lockhart, in particular, was very incorrect, and gave some offence to Mrs Burns in the following passage:—"He brought his wife home to Ellisland about the end of November; and few housekeepers start with a larger provision of young mouths to feed than did the young couple. Mrs Burns

(5) TO DR MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES,
4th Jan. 1789.

SIR,—As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary-sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian Colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have, at last, got some business with you, and business-letters are written by the style-book. I say my business is with you, Sir, for you never had any with me, except the business that benevolence has in the mansion of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late *éclat* was owing to the singularity of my situation, and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface of my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from nature to the poetic character. I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude to learn the muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by him "who forms the secret bias of the soul;" but I as firmly believe, that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains. At least I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant

had lain in this autumn, for the second time, of twins, and I suppose "sonsy, smirking, dear-bought Bess" accompanied her younger brothers and sisters from Mossiel." Not until August 1789, when Francis Wallace was born, had Mrs Burns more than the one child to bring to Ellisland. Dr Currie gave rise to Mr Lockhart's misstatement by remarking in a footnote, that "Mrs Burns was about to be confined in child-bed when the house at Ellisland was rebuilding."

day, a day that may never arrive—but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession, the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses, in a good measure, the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend—not only of abilities to judge, but with good nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, Sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I enclose you an essay of mine, in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the epistle addressed to R. G. Esq., or Robert Graham, of Fintry, Esq., a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story, and to give you the one, I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of Mr Creech's ingenuous, fair dealing to me. He kept me hanging about Edinburgh, from 7th August 1787, until the 13th April, 1788, before he would condescend to give me a statement of affairs; nor had I got it even then, but for an angry letter I wrote him, which irritated his pride. I could—not “a tale”—but a detail “unfold;” but what am I that I should speak against the Lord's anointed Bailie of Edinburgh?

I believe I shall, in whole (£100 copy-right included) clear about £400, some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honor

to interest yourself much in my welfare—I give you this information ; but I give it to yourself only ; for I am still much in the gentleman’s mercy. Perhaps I injure the man in the idea I am sometimes tempted to have of him ; God forbid I should ! A little time will try, for in a month I shall go to town to wind up the business, if possible.

To give the rest of my story in brief : I have married “my Jean,” and taken a farm. With the first step, I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied ; with the last it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother who supports my aged mother ; another still younger brother, and three sisters in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about £180 to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much ; I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part : I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour might help to smooth matters at the “grand reckoning.” There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy ; I have an Excise officer’s commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr Graham, who is one of the Commissioners of Excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a Treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c. . . .

Thus secure of a livelihood “to thee, sweet poetry, delightful maid,” I would consecrate my future days.

R. B.

(11) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, *Jan. 6th*, 1789.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Robin shure in hairst, I shure wi' him ;
 Fient a heuk had I, yet I stack by him.
 I gaed up to Dunse to warp a wab o' plaiden ;
 At his daddy's yett, wha met me but Robin ?
Chorus.—Robin shure in hairst, &c.

See page 188, Vol. II.*

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ., DRUMLANRIG.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

ELLISLAND, 9th Jan^r. 1789.

SIR,—A poet and a beggar are in so many points of view alike, that one might take them for the same individual under different designations ; were it not that, though with a trifling poetic licence, poets may be styled beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold, that every beggar is a poet. In one particular, however, they remarkably agree : if you help either the one or the other to a mug of ale or the picking of a bone, they will willingly repay you with a song. This occurs to me at present, as I have just despatched a rib of J. Kilpatrick's Highlander,† a bargain for which I am indebted to you (in the style of our ballad-printers), “ Five Excellent New Songs.”

* All the poet's editors, from Cunningham downwards, in giving the foregoing letter, omit the verses, and adhibit a note stating that the title of the song here alluded to, has not been ascertained. Mr Ainslie, who survived to 11th April 1838, had sent both letter and song to the Scots Magazine for publication, withholding only the name of the poet's correspondent. These accordingly appeared in the October number, 1801, of that periodical.

It appears that so early as August 1787, Ainslie was father of an illegitimate son, which circumstance would furnish the subject of the above song. In June 1788, Burns in his complacency regarding his own recent marriage, wrote to Ainslie thus : “ You will make a noble fellow if once you were married,” but his correspondent was in no hurry about that event ; for not until December 1798 did he commit himself to matrimony.—See page 132 *supra*.

† This is explained to mean a Highland wedder, which Mr M'Murdo had bought from Kilpatrick, and presented to Burns, as a supply to his table.

The enclosed is nearly my newest song, and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of its excellence. Two or three others which I have by me shall do themselves the honor to wait on your after leisure ; petitioners for admittance into favor must not harass the condescension of their benefactor.

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

With—not the compliments, but—the best wishes, the sincerest prayer of the season for you, that you may see many happy years with Mrs M'Murdo and your family—two blessings, by the by, to which your rank does not entitle you, a loving wife and fine family being almost the only good things of this life to which the farm-house and cottage have an exclusive right. I have the honor to be, Sir, your much indebted and very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

The poet in his letter to Mrs Dunlop, of 17th Dec. 1788, intimated his intention to be at the New Year's Fair at Ayr, which would be about 12th of January, 1789. He afterwards in a letter to Dr Moore refers to that journey thus :—"In January last on my road to Ayrshire, I had to put up at Bailie Whigham's in Sanquhar, the only tolerable inn in the place." On that occasion, after being, as he supposed, comfortably housed for the night, the unexpected arrival of the funeral pageantry of the late Mrs Oswald of Auchencruive, on its way to the place of interment in Ayrshire, put Burns out of temper, because on that account he had to take horse, and resume his journey for other twelve miles to the next inn, at New Cumnock. This incident produced his powerful Ode to the memory of that lady, which is given at page 190, Vol. II. Within ten days he was back to Ellisland, inditing letters to correspondents ; and after the middle of February, he proceeded to Edinburgh to have a final reckoning

with Creech, on which occasion he did not see "Clarinda," because on being informed by Ainslie that the poet was expected in town for a few days, that lady said she would avoid her windows to prevent her, by any chance, catching a glimpse of him.

(²) TO PROF^R. DUGALD STEWART.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 20th Jan. 1789.

SIR,—The enclosed sealed packet I sent to Edinburgh a few days after I had the happiness of meeting you in Ayrshire, but you were gone for the Continent. I have added a few more of my productions, those for which I am indebted to the Nithsdale Muses. The piece inscribed to R. G., Esq., is a copy of verses I sent Mr Graham, of Fintry, accompanying a request for his assistance in a matter, to me, of very great moment. To that gentleman I am already doubly indebted, for deeds of kindness of serious import to my dearest interests, done in a manner grateful to the delicate feelings of sensibility. This poem is a species of composition new to me; but I do not intend it shall be my last essay of the kind, as you will see by the 'Poet's Progress.'* These fragments, if my design succeeds, are but a small part of the intended whole. I propose it shall be the work of my utmost exertions ripened by years: of course I do not wish it much known. The fragment, beginning "A little, upright, pert, tart," &c., I have not shewn to man living, till now I send it you. It is the postulata, the axioms, the definition of a character, which, if it appear at all, shall be placed in a variety of lights. This particular part I send you merely

* See page 180, Vol. II. The particular part in which Mr Creech was satirised, beginning "A little upright, pert," &c., is given at page 182. The poem inscribed to Mr Graham, here referred to, is that printed at page 164, Vol. II.

as a sample of my hand at portrait-sketching ; but lest idle conjecture should pretend to point out the original, please, let it be for your single, sole inspection.

Need I make any apology for this trouble to a gentleman who has treated me with such marked benevolence and peculiar kindness ; who has entered into my interests with so much zeal, and on whose critical decisions I can so fully depend ? A poet as I am by trade, these decisions are to me of the last consequence. My late transient acquaintance among some of the mere rank and file of greatness I resign with ease : but to the distinguished champions of genius and learning, I shall be ever ambitious of being known. The native genius and accurate discernment in Mr Stewart's critical strictures, the justice (the iron justice, for he has no bowels of compassion for a poor poetic sinner) of Dr Gregory's remarks, and the delicacy of Professor Dalzell's taste, I shall ever revere.

I shall be in Edinburgh some time next month. I have the honor to be, Sir, your highly obliged and very humble servant,

R. B.

The next of Burns's letters in order of date is unfortunately without the address, but Chambers with every probability supposes it was written to

(²) THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE ?

(CHAMBERS, 1851.)

ELLISLAND, 22nd January 1789.

SIR,—There are two things which, I believe, the blow that terminates my existence alone can destroy—my attachment and propensity to poesy, and my sense of what I owe to your goodness. There is nothing in the different situations of a Great and a Little man that vexes me more than the ease

with which the one practises some virtues that to the other are extremely difficult, or perhaps wholly impracticable. A man of consequence and fashion shall richly repay a deed of kindness with a nod and a smile, or a hearty shake of the hand ; while a poor fellow labours under a sense of gratitude, which, like copper coin, though it loads the bearer, is yet of small account in the currency and commerce of the world. As I have the honor, Sir, to stand in the poor fellow's predicament with respect to you, will you accept of a device I have thought on to acknowledge these obligations I can never cancel ? Mankind, in general, agree in testifying their devotion, their gratitude, their friendship, or their love, by presenting whatever they hold dearest. Everybody who is in the least acquainted with the character of a poet, knows that there is nothing in the world on which he sets so much value as his verses. I desire, from time to time, as she may bestow her favors, to present you with the productions of my humble Muse. The enclosed are the principal of her works on the banks of the Nith. The poem inscribed to R. G., Esq., is some verses, accompanying a request, which I sent to Mr Graham, of Fintry—a gentleman who has given double value to some important favours he has bestowed on me by his manner of doing them, and on whose future patronage, likewise, I must depend for matters to me of the last consequence.

I have no great faith in the boastful pretensions to intuitive propriety and unlabored elegance. The rough material of Fine Writing is certainly the gift of Genius ; but I as firmly believe that the workmanship is the united effort of Pains, Attention, and repeated Trial. The piece addressed to Mr Graham is my first essay in that didactic, epistolary way ; which circumstance, I hope, will bespeak your indulgence. To your friend Captain Erskine's strictures*

* The Hon. Andrew Erskine, a poet and musical amateur residing in Edinburgh, brother to the Earl of Kelly.

I lay claim as a relation ; not, indeed, that I have the honor to be akin to the peerage, but because he is a son of Parnassus.

I intend being in Edinburgh in four or five weeks, when I shall certainly do myself the honor of waiting on you, to testify with what respect and gratitude, &c. R. B.

(⁴) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER,
BELL'S WYND, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)*

CALEDONIA, A BALLAD.

There was once a time, but old Time was then young,
That brave Caledonia, the chief of her line,
From some of your northern deities sprung,—
Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?

(*See page 5.—Vol. III.*)

I shall be in Edinburgh, my dear Sir, in about a month, when we shall overhaul the whole collection and report progress.

The foregoing I hope will suit the excellent air it is designed for. Adieu till next week, ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 23rd Jan. 1789.

(¹) TO MR DAVID BLAIR,
GUN MAKER, ST PAUL'S SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)†

ELLISLAND, 23rd Jan^y. 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,—My honor has lain bleeding these two months almost, as 'tis near that time since I received your

* From the poet's holograph in the possession of W. F. Watson, Esq., Edinburgh.

† From the original MS. in possession of Miss Mary S. Gladstone of Fasque. Certain markings on it shew that it had passed through Dr Currie's hands.

kind though short epistle of the 29th Oct. The defensive tools do more than half mankind do, they do honor to their maker; but I trust that with me they shall have the fate of a miser's gold—to be often admired, but never used.

Long before your letter came to hand, I sent you, by way of Mr Nicol, a copy of the book, and a proof-copy of the print, loose among the leaves of the book. These, I hope, are safe in your possession some time ago. If I could think of any other channel of communication with you than the villanous expensive one of the Post, I could send you a parcel of my Rhymes; partly as a small return for your kind, handsome compliment, and much more as a mark of my sincere esteem and respect for Mr Blair. A piece I did lately I shall try to cram into this letter, as I think the turn of thought may perhaps please you.

WRITTEN IN FRIAR'S CARSE HERMITAGE, ON THE BANKS OF THE NITH,
DECEMBER 1788. (*See* page 178, Vol. II.)

I remember with pleasure, my dear Sir, a visit you talked of paying to Dumfries, in Spring or Summer. I shall only say I have never parted with a man, after so little acquaintance, whom I more ardently wished to see again. At your first convenience, a line to inform me of an affair in which I am much interested—just an answer to the question, How you do? will highly oblige, my dear Sir, yours very sincerely
ROBT. BURNS.

The pistols which form the subject of the above letter were presented by Burns before he died, to Dr William Maxwell, his principal medical attendant. They came, through the hands of Dr Maxwell's daughter, into the possession of the Roman Catholic Bishop Gillis, of Edinburgh, by whom they were presented to the Society of Scottish Antiquaries on 24th January 1859.* Dr

* Bishop Gillis died, 24th February 1864.

Maxwell removed his residence from Dumfries to Edinburgh in 1834, and at a sale of his effects in May of that year, several pistols and swords were disposed of, but he had too much veneration for the memory of Burns, to part with his dying gift in that manner. Allan Cunningham acquired a pair of pistols and an old Highland broadsword, which had been bought at that sale, in the belief that they had formerly been the property of Burns, and hugged himself on possessing such precious relics. In the first edition of his *Biography of Burns*, he refers to that brace of pistols as having been *bought* by the poet “from Johnson the gunsmith, and having tried them, he wrote ‘I have proved the pistols, and can say of them what I would not do for the bulk of mankind—they are an honour to their maker.’” It thus appears that Allan had heard some floating rumour about the letter in the text; but his mis-quotation, as well as blunder in the maker’s name, proves he had never seen it.

Dr Maxwell died at Edinburgh in October 1834, and Miss Maxwell, who constituted Bishop Gillis her heir, died in September 1858. The Bishop, in an elaborate paper which he read to the Society of Antiquaries on the subject of Burns’s pistols, observed that Dr Maxwell “incurred heavy responsibilities with Blair of Birmingham, for the manufacture of firearms,” in his enthusiastic efforts to help on the Revolution of France. It is known as a fact that Maxwell in one capacity or another, was present on the scaffold when King Louis XVI. was beheaded on 21st January 1793; and it is said that he preserved a handkerchief which, on that occasion, he had dipped in the royal blood.

(²) TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.,
WRITER, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)

ELLISLAND, 24th Jan^y. 1789.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM—When I saw in my last newspaper that a Surgeon in Edinburgh was married to a certain amiable and accomplished young lady, whose name begins with

Ann; a lady with whom I fancy I have the honor of being a little acquainted,* I sincerely felt for a much esteemed friend of mine. As you are the single, only instance that ever came within the sphere of my observation of human nature, of a young fellow, dissipated but not debauched, a circumstance that has ever given me the highest idea of the native qualities of your heart, I am certain that a disappointment in the tender passion must, to you, be a very serious matter. To the hopeful youth, keen on the badger foot of Mammon, or listed under the gaudy banners of ambition, a love-disappointment, as such, is an easy business; nay, perhaps he hugs himself on his escape; but to your scanty tribe of mankind, whose souls bear, on the richest materials, the most elegant impress of the Great Creator, LOVE enters deeply into their existence, and is entwined with their very thread of life. I can myself affirm, both from bachelor and wedlock experience, that Love is the Alpha and Omega of human enjoyment. All the pleasures, all the happiness of my humble compeers flow immediately and directly from this delicious source. It is the spark of celestial fire which lights up the wintry hut of poverty, and makes the cheerless mansion warm, comfortable, and gay. It is the emanation of Divinity that preserves the sons and daughters of rustic labour from degenerating into the brutes with which they daily hold converse. Without it, life to the poor inmates of the cottage, would be a damning gift.†

I intended to go on with some kind of consolatory epistle, when, unawares, I flew off in this rhapsodical tangent. Instead of attempting to resume a subject for which I am so

* Jan. 13, 1789. Married at Edinburgh, Mr Forrest Dewar, Surgeon, to Miss Anne Stewart, daughter of John Stewart, Esq. of East Craigs. See letter to Alex. Cunningham, 27th July 1788. Page 141 *supra*.

† Here ends, in the Glenriddell MS., all that Burns chose to transcribe of this letter, where also it is undated. Our text is printed from the original holograph, now in possession of the son of Burns's correspondent.

ill-qualified, I shall ask your opinion of some verses I have lately begun on a theme of which you are the best judge I ever saw. It is Love too; though not just warranted by the law of nations. A married lady of my acquaintance, whose *crim. con.* amour with a certain Captain made some noise in the world, is supposed to write to him, now in the West Indies, as follows:—

By all I loved, neglected and forgot,
 No friendly face ere lights my squalid cot :
 Shunned, hated, wrong'd, unpitied, unredrest,
 The mock'd quotation of the scorners jest.*

* * * * *

(¹) TO ROBERT RIDDELL, ESQ. OF FRIAR'S CARSE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 1789.

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

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

R. B.

* In the original letter this is the bottom of page second : the other half of the sheet which would contain the remainder of the verses, is wanting. The second half-sheet was long ago dishonestly appropriated by some one who obtained temporary access to it, and appears to have found its way into the manuscript market. See Vol. II., page 193.

(4) TO THE RIGHT REV. DR JOHN GEDDES.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 3d Feb. 1789.

VENERABLE FATHER,—As I am conscious that wherever I am, you do me the honor to interest yourself in my welfare, it gives me pleasure to inform you that I am here at last, stationary in the serious business of life, and have now not only the retired leisure, but the hearty inclination to attend to those great and important questions—what I am? where I am? and for what I am destined?

In that first concern, the conduct of the man, there was ever but one side on which I was habitually blameable, and there I have secured myself in the way pointed out by Nature and Nature's God. I was sensible that, to so helpless a creature as a poor poet, a wife and a family were incumbrances, which a species of prudence would bid him shun; but when the alternative was, being at eternal warfare with myself on account of habitual follies—to give them no worse name—which no general example, no licentious wit, no sophistical infidelity, would to me ever justify. I must have been a fool to have hesitated, and a madman to have made another choice. Besides I had, in "my Jean," a long and much loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

In the affair of a livelihood, I think myself tolerably secure: I have good hopes of my farm, but should they fail, I have an Excise Commission, which, on my simple petition, will, at any time, procure me bread. There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an excise officer, but I do not intend to borrow honor from my profession; and though the salary be comparatively small, it is luxury to any

thing that the first twenty-five years of my life taught me to expect.

* * * *

Thus, with a rational aim and method in life, you may easily guess, my reverend and much-honored friend, that my characteristical trade is not forgotten ; I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the Muses. I am determined to study Man and Nature, and in that view, incessantly to try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something worth preserving.

You will see in your book, which I beg your pardon for detaining so long, that I have been tuning my lyre on the banks of Nith. Some larger poetic plans that are floating in my imagination, or partly put in execution, I shall impart to you when I have the pleasure of meeting with you ; which, if you are then in Edinburgh, I shall have about the beginning of March.

That acquaintance, worthy Sir, with which you were pleased to honor me, you must still allow me to challenge ; for with whatever unconcern I give up my transient connection with the merely Great, (those self-important beings whose intrinsic worthlessness is often concealed under the accidental advantages of their birth), I cannot lose the patronising notice of the Learned and the Good, without the bitterest regret.

R. B.

Bishop Gillis, of the Romish Church in Edinburgh, thus remarked in 1859, in reference to the foregoing epistle : " If any man, after perusing this letter, will still say that the mind of Burns was beyond the reach of religious influence, or, in other words, that he was a scoffer at Revelation, that man need not be reasoned with, as his own mind must be hopeless beyond the reach of argument."

The amiable gentleman thus addressed, Burns fell acquainted

with at the house of Lord Monboddo in the winter of 1786-87. He was a man of great learning and worth, and was one of the first clergymen of the Romish Church in this country on whom, since the Reformation era, was conferred the honorary degree of LL.D. He had a cousin Alexander Geddes, a priest of the same persuasion, with whom Cunningham, Waddell, and others of the poet's biographers have confounded him. Bishop Gillis described the latter as "that unfortunate victim of human vanity, the unbelieving Priest, Alexander Geddes, who died in London in 1802." But Alexander Geddes was nevertheless a remarkable man, and in 1777 was honoured by his Alma Mater, the University of Aberdeen, with the degree of LL.D. He removed to London, and devoted himself to a new translation of the Scriptures, under the patronage of Lord Petre. In the course of his researches, he saw cause to change his views with respect to Scriptural authority and doctrine, which sufficiently accounts for the irreverence with which Bishop Gillis spoke of him.

John Geddes, the poet's correspondent, was styled by an old citizen of Edinburgh who remembered him, "the most fashionable man in this city." We have already seen with what veneration "Clarinda" regarded him, and he must have been no bigot, for that lady met him in the house of her minister, Mr Kemp, whose history the reader has been made familiar with. She records that she "listened with the gaze of attention to every word uttered by Dr Geddes: I saw he observed me, and returned that glance of cordial warmth which assured me he was pleased with my delicate flattery. I wished that night he had been my father, that I might shelter me in his bosom." Burns, from the terms used regarding him, in his letter to Mrs Dunlop, of 4th Nov. 1787, seems to have formed an equally high opinion of Dr Geddes. It is believed that he was the means of procuring for the list of subscribers to the Poet's Edition of April 1787, the names of no fewer than five foreign Romish Seminaries, beginning with the Scots College of Valladolid, of which he had for many years been Rector.

In the second-last paragraph of the letter in the text, Burns speaks of a Book belonging to Dr Geddes, which he apologises for having retained so long. That was an interleaved copy of the

author's Edinburgh edition, in which he had undertaken to insert some notes and several unpublished poems. The interesting relic found its way to America, many years after the decease of Dr Geddes, whose death is thus announced in the Scots Magazine,—“11th Feb. 1799, Died at Aberdeen, the Right Rev. Dr Geddes.” It was purchased in 1863, by Mr James Black, Detroit, a native of Nairn, who was long in the Town Clerk's office there. At the Burns's Anniversary Dinner at Detroit in 1867, Mr Black produced the highly prized volume and detailed its succession of possessors till it fell into his hands. The order in which the MS. additions are written, and the titles prefixed to them by the poet, are as follows :—

1. On reading in a newspaper the death of John M'Leod, Esq., brother to Miss Isabella M'Leod, a particular friend of the Author's.
2. On the death of Sir J. Hunter Blair.
3. Written on the blank leaf of my first edition, which I presented to an old sweetheart then married : I was then on the tiptoe for Jamaica.
4. An Epitaph on a Friend.
5. The Humble Petition of Bruar Water to the noble Duke of Athole.
6. On the death of Robert Dundas, of Arniston, Esq., late Lord President of the Court of Session.
7. On seeing some Water-fowl in Loch Turrit, a wild scene among the hills of Oughtertyre.
8. Written at the Hermitage at Taymouth.
9. Written at the Fall of Foyers.
10. Written in Friar's Carse Hermitage, on the banks of Nith, June 1788.
11. The same, altered from the foregoing, Dec. 1788.
12. To Robert Graham, of Fintry, Esq., accompanying a request.

Appended to the last-named poems are these words—“The foregoing three pieces are the favour of the Nithsdale Muses.” After No. 6, the poet writes—“The foregoing poem has some tolerable lines in it, but the incurable wound of my pride will not suffer me to correct or even peruse it. I sent a copy of it, with

my best prose letter, to the son of the great man, the theme of the piece, by the hand, too, of one of the noblest men in God's world, Alexander Wood, Surgeon, when behold, his Solicitorship took no more notice of my poem or me than I had been a strolling fiddler who had made free with his lady's name over the head of a silly new reel ! Did the gentleman think I looked for any dirty gratuity ? ”

The names left blank in the printed poems, Burns wrote out in full for Dr Geddes. Also at the end of "Tam Samson's Elegy," he has written the following verse, with an asterisk to note its proper place in the poem :—

“Here low he lies in lasting rest ;
Perhaps upon his mouldering breast
Some spitefu’ moor fowl bigs her nest,
 To hatch an’ breed.
Alas ! nae mair he’ll them molest !
 Tam Samson’s dead !”

This last stanza was introduced in the poet's edition, in 2 Vols., 1793.

ADDRESS OF THE SCOTTISH DISTILLERS
TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT.

(CROMER, 1808.)

[Feb. 1789.]

SIR,—While pury burgesses crowd your gate, sweating under the weight of heavy addresses, permit us, the quondam distillers in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, to approach you, not with venal approbation, but with fraternal condolence; not as what you are just now, or for some time have been; but as what, in all probability, you will shortly be. We shall have the merit of not deserting our *friends* in the day of their calamity, and you will have the satisfaction of perusing at least one honest address. You are well acquainted with the dissection of human

nature ; nor do you need the assistance of a fellow-creature's bosom to inform you that man is always a selfish, often a perfidious being. This assertion, however the hasty conclusions of superficial observation may doubt it, or the raw inexperience of youth may deny it, those who make the fatal experiment we have done will feel it. You are a statesman, and consequently are not ignorant of the traffic of these corporation compliments. The little great man who drives the borough to market, and the very great man who buys the borough in that market, they two do the whole business ; and you well know they, likewise, have their price. With that sullen disdain which you can so well assume, rise, illustrious Sir, and spurn these hireling efforts of venal stupidity. They are the compliments of a man's friends on the morning of his execution ; they take a decent farewell, resign you to your fate, and hurry away from your approaching hour.

If fame say true, and omens be not very much mistaken, you are about to make your exit from that world where the sun of gladness gilds the path of prosperous men : permit us, great Sir, with the sympathy of fellow-feeling to hail your passage to the realms of ruin. Whether the sentiment proceed from the selfishness or cowardice of mankind is immaterial ; but to a child of misfortune, pointing out those who are still more unhappy, is giving him some degree of positive enjoyment. In this light, Sir, our downfall may be *again* useful to you ; though not exactly *in the same way*, it is not perhaps the first time it has gratified your feelings. It is true, the triumph of your evil star is exceedingly despiteful. At an age when others are the votaries of pleasure, or underlings in business, you had attained the highest wish of a British statesman ; and with the ordinary date of human life, what a prospect was before you ! Deeply rooted in *Royal Favour*, you overshadowed the

land. The birds of passage, which follow ministerial sunshine through every clime of political faith and manners, flocked to your branches; and the beasts of the field (the lordly possessors of hills and valleys) crowded under your shade. "But behold a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven, and cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches!" A blow from an unthought-of quarter, one of those terrible accidents which peculiarly mark the hand of Omnipotence, upset your career, and laid all your fancied honours in the dust. But turn your eyes, Sir, to the tragic scenes of our fate:—an ancient nation, that for many ages had gallantly maintained the unequal struggle for independence with her much more powerful neighbour, at last agrees to a union which should ever after make them one people. In consideration of certain circumstances, it was covenanted that the former should enjoy a stipulated alleviation in her share of the public burdens, particularly in that branch of the revenue called the Excise. This just privilege has of late given great umbrage to some interested, powerful individuals of the more potent half of the empire, and they have spared no wicked pains, under insidious pretexts, to subvert the spirit of their ancient enemies, which they yet dreaded too much openly to attack.

In this conspiracy we fell; nor did we alone suffer, our country was deeply wounded. A number of (we will say) respectable individuals, largely engaged in trade, where we were not only useful, but absolutely necessary to our country in her dearest interests; we, with all that was near and dear to us, were sacrificed, without remorse, to the infernal deity of political Expediency, not that sound policy, the good of the whole. We fell to gratify the wishes of

dark Envy, and the views of unprincipled Ambition ! Your foes, Sir, were avowed ; you fell in the face of day ; your enemies were too brave to take an ungenerous advantage. On the contrary, our enemies, to complete our overthrow, contrived to make their guilt appear the villainy of a nation. Your downfall only drags with you your private friends and partizans : in our misery are more or less involved the most numerous and most valuable part of the community—all those who immediately depend on the cultivation of the soil, from the landlord of a province down to his lowest hind.

Allow us, Sir, yet further, just to hint at another rich vein of comfort in the dreary regions of adversity ;—the gratulations of an approving conscience. In a certain great assembly, of which you are a distinguished member, panegyrics on your private virtues have so often wounded your delicacy, that we shall not distress you with anything on the subject. There is, however, one part of your public conduct which our feelings will not permit us to pass in silence : our gratitude must trespass on your modesty ; we mean, worthy Sir, your whole behaviour to the Scots Distillers.—In evil hours, when obtrusive recollection presses bitterly on the sense, let that, Sir, come like a healing angel, and speak the peace to your soul which the world can neither give nor take away.—We have the honor to be, Sir, your sympathizing fellow-sufferers, and grateful humble Servants,

JOHN BARLEYCORN—Præses.

The date of the foregoing political letter in the manner of Junius, is pointed out by the writer himself in his transcript of it in the Glenriddell volume of letters, where it is headed by the following introduction :—

“At the juncture of the King’s illness, while the Regency Bill was pending, and when every body expected the Premier’s downfall, addresses crowded in to him from all quarters, and

among the rest the following appeared in a newspaper. The addressers, the late Distillers of Scotland, had just been ruined by a positive breach of the public faith in a most partial tax laid on by the House of Commons to favor a few opulent English Distillers who, it seems, were of vast electioneering consequence."

(⁹) TO MR JAMES BURNES, MONTROSE.

(GILBERT BURNS'S ED., 1820.)*

ELLISLAND, 9th Feb. 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,—Why I did not write to you long ago is what, even on the rack, I could not answer. If you can in your mind form an idea of indolence, dissipation, hurry, cares, change of country, entering on untried scenes of life, all combined, you will save me the trouble of a blushing apology. It could not be want of regard for a man for whom I had a high esteem before I knew him—an esteem which has much increased since I did know him; and this caveat entered, I shall plead guilty to any other indictment with which you shall please to charge me.

After I parted from you, for many months my life was one continued scene of dissipation. Here at last I am become stationary, and have taken a farm and—a wife. The farm beautifully situated on the Nith, a large river that runs by Dumfries, and falls into the Solway frith. I have gotten a lease of my farm as long as I pleased; but how it may turn out is just a guess, and it is yet to improve and enclose, &c.; however, I have good hopes of my bargain on the whole.

* The original MS. is now preserved in the Poet's Monument at Edinburgh. Chambers, who seems to have never consulted Gilbert Burns's edition, notes this and several other letters to James Burnes to have appeared in "Lockhart's Life of Burns," where the reader will in vain look for them.

My wife is my Jean, with whose story you are partly acquainted. I found I had a much-loved fellow creature's happiness or misery among my hands, and I durst not trifle with so sacred a deposit.* Indeed I have not any reason to repent the step I have taken, as I have attached myself to a very good wife, and have shaken myself loose of a very bad failing.

I have found my book a very profitable business, and with the profits of it I have begun life pretty decently. Should fortune not favour me in farming, as I have no great faith in her fickle ladyship, I have provided myself in another resource, which, however some folks may affect to despise it, is still a comfortable shift in the day of misfortune. In the hey-day of my fame, a gentleman, whose name at least I dare say you know, as his estate lies somewhere near Dundee, Mr Graham, of Fintry, one of the Commissioners of Excise, offered me the commission of an Excise officer. I thought it prudent to accept the offer; and accordingly I took my instructions, and have my commission by me. Whether I may ever do duty, or be a penny the better for it, is what I do not know; but I have the comfortable assurance, that come whatever ill fate will, I can, on my simple petition to the Excise-board, get into employ.

We have lost poor uncle Robert this winter. He had long been very weak, and with very little alteration in him; he expired Janry. 3rd.† His son William has been with me this winter, and goes in May to bind himself to be a mason with my father-in-law, who is a pretty considerable

* This expression the poet has repeated no fewer than half-a-dozen times in his correspondence between the end of May 1788 and the present date.

† This does not mean that Uncle Robert died at Ellisland as many annotators have supposed. He died in his own house at Stewarton, and the poet kindly looked after the orphans, by securing them employment. Fanny ultimately was married to a brother of Mrs Burns.

architect in Ayrshire. His other son, the eldest, John, comes to me I expect in summer. They are both remarkably stout young fellows, and promise to do well. His only daughter, Fanny, has been with me ever since her father's death, and I purpose keeping her in my family till she be quite woman-grown, and be fit for better service. She is one of the cleverest girls, and has one of the most amiable dispositions, that I have ever seen.

All friends in this country and Ayrshire are well. Remember me to all friends in the north. My wife joins me in compliments to your bedfellow and family. I would write your brother-in-law, but have lost his address. For goodness sake don't take example by me, but write me soon. I am ever, My dear Cousin, yours most sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

The reader will understand that Burns paid a short visit to Edinburgh sometime in the latter half of February 1789 and returned to his home at "The Isle" on the closing day of that month. Occasional mention has been made in course of the poet's correspondence, of his younger brother William, who had served an apprenticeship to the trade of a saddler. In writing to Gilbert immediately on returning from his great Highland tour, the poet says "I have been trying for a berth for William, but am not likely to be successful. A Mr Ainslie, Bookseller in Edinburgh, afterwards, undertook to get employment for William, and in August 1788 we have Burns expressing extreme disappointment that the offer had proved a disappointing one, and then Robert Ainslie, Writer, engaged in the same undertaking, apparently with no success; for, about the close of that year, William remained for some weeks at Ellisland unemployed. The young man crossed the border into England and obtained some work at Longtown as the following letter shows. The chief object of the poet's visit to Edinburgh was to have a final reckoning with Creech, in which he succeeded; indeed, he owned that Mr Creech had at length dealt fairly with him.

⁽¹⁾ WILLIAM BURNS TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

LONGTOWN, *Feb.* 15, 1789.

DEAR SIR,—As I am now in a manner only entering into the world, I begin this our correspondence, with a view of being a gainer by your advice, more than ever you can be by any thing I can write you of what I see, or what I hear, in the course of my wanderings. I know not how it happened, but you were more shy of your counsel than I could have wished the time I staid with you: whether it was because you thought it would disgust me to have my faults freely told me while I was dependent on you; or whether it was because you saw that by my indolent disposition, your instructions would have no effect, I cannot determine; but if it proceeded from any of the above causes, the reason of withholding your admonition is now done away with, for I now stand on my own bottom, and that indolence which I am very conscious of, is something rubbed off by being called to act in life whether I will or not; and my experience, which I daily feel, makes me wish for that advice which you are so able to give, and which I can only expect from you or Gilbert, since the loss of the kindest and ablest of fathers.

The morning after I went from the Isle, I left Dumfries about five o'clock and came to Annan to breakfast, and staid about an hour; and I reached this place about two o'clock. I have got work here, and I intend to stay a month or six weeks and then go forward, as I wish to be at York about the latter end of summer, where I propose to spend next winter, and go on for London in the spring.

I have the promise of seven shillings a week from Mr Proctor while I stay here, and sixpence more if he succeeds himself, for he has only new begun trade here. I am to pay four shillings per week of board wages, so that my neat income here will be much the same as in Dumfries.

The inclosed you will send to Gilbert with the first opportunity. Please send me the first Wednesday after you receive this, by the Carlisle waggon, two of my coarse shirts, one of my best linen ones, my velveteen vest, and a neckcloth; write to me along with

them, and direct to me, Saddler, in Longtown, and they will not miscarry, for I am boarded in the waggoner's house. You may either let them be given in to the waggon, or send them to Coulthard and Gellebourn's shop and they will forward them. Pray write me often while I stay here.—I wish you would send me a letter, though never so small, every week, for they will be no expense to me and but little trouble to you. Please to give my best wishes to my sister-in-law, and believe me to be your affectionate and obliged brother,

WILLIAM BURNS.

P.S.—The great-coat you gave me at parting did me singular service the day I came here, and merits my hearty thanks. From what has been said, the conclusion is this—that my hearty thanks and my best wishes are all that you and my sister must expect from

W. B.

(¹) TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, LONGTOWN.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

ISLE, 2nd March 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,—I arrived from Edinburgh only the night before last, so could not answer your epistle sooner. I congratulate you on the prospect of employ; and I am indebted to you for one of the best letters that has been written by any mechanic lad in Nithsdale, or Annandale, or any dale on either side of the Border, this twelvemonth. Not that I would have you always affect the stately stilts of studied composition, but surely writing a handsome letter is an accomplishment worth courting; and, with attention and practice, I can promise you that it will soon be an accomplishment of yours. If my advice can serve you (that is to say, if you can resolve to accustom yourself not only in reviewing your own deportment, manners, &c., but also in carrying your consequent resolutions of amending the

faulty parts into practice), my small knowledge and experience of the world is heartily at your service. I intended to have given you a sheetful of counsels, but some business has prevented me. In a word learn *Taciturnity*; let that be your motto. Tho' you had the wisdom of Newton, or the wit of Swift, garrulousness would lower you in the eyes of your fellow-creatures. I'll probably write you next week.

I am, your brother,

ROBERT BURNS.

(²¹) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 4th March 1789.

HERE am I, my honored friend, returned safe from the capital. To a man who has a home, however humble or remote (if that home is like mine, the scene of domestic comfort), the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust:

“Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!”

When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—“What merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with sceptre of rule, and the key of riches in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride?” I have read somewhere of a monarch (in Spain, I think it was), who was so out of humor with the Ptol-emæan system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council, he could have saved him a great deal of labor and absurdity. I will not defend the blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Princes Street, it has suggested itself

to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that if a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his own consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a prospect-glass. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his Majesty's liege subjects, in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage, in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow, or making way to a great man, and that too within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence, or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, Madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem, which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one great fault—it is by far too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice, under the title of Scottish Poets, that the very term Scottish Poetry borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr Carfrae, I shall advise him rather to try one of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances; and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the press. What it is that occupies me so much, and perhaps a little oppresses my present spirits, shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the mean time allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine * * * * * I give you them, that, as you have seen the original you may

guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them, be any real improvement.

“Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink mildly fearful even from applause,
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming Rachel, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall be the image of your mind ;
Your manners shall so true your soul express,
That all shall long to know the worth they guess ;
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
And even sick'ning envy must approve.”

R. B.

The reader will understand that the lines which close the preceding letter, form part of a little poem that Mrs Dunlop had addressed to her daughter Miss Rachel on her birth-day. She had sent them to Burns for his inspection, and here he transcribes them with a few suggested improvements.

The Rev. Peter Carfrae, a friend of Mrs Dunlop, had on 2nd January 1789, written to Burns enclosing a poem by a young Lothian farmer, named Mylne, recently deceased, composed in the Scots dialect, in form of an Address to Burns on the publication of his poem.

Mr Carfrae consulted our poet on the propriety of publishing that and others of Mr Mylne's effusions for the advantage of his family. The following is our bard's reply :

(^d) TO THE REV. PETER CARFRAE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[ELLISLAND, *March* 1789.]

REV. SIR,—I do not recollect that I have ever felt a severer pang of shame, than on looking at the date of your obliging letter which accompanied Mr Mylne's poem. . . .

I am much to blame ; the honor Mr Mylne has done me, greatly enhanced in its value by the endearing, though melancholy circumstance, of its being the last production of his muse, deserved a better return.

I have, as you hint, thought of sending a copy of the poem to some periodical publication ; but, on second thoughts, I am afraid, that in the present case, it would be an improper step. My success, perhaps as much accidental as merited, has brought an inundation of nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry. Subscription bills for Scottish poems have so dunned, and daily do dun the public, that the very name is in danger of contempt. For these reasons, if publishing any of Mr Mylne's poems in a magazine, &c., be at all prudent, in my opinion it certainly should not be a Scottish poem. The profits of the labours of a man of genius are, I hope, as honorable as any profits whatever ; and Mr Mylne's relations are most justly entitled to that honest harvest which fate has denied himself to reap. But let the friends of Mr Mylne's fame (among whom I crave the honor of ranking myself) always keep in eye his respectability as a man and as a poet, and take no measure that, before the world knows anything about him, would risk his name and character being classed with the fools of the times.

I have, Sir, some experience of publishing ; and the way in which I would proceed with Mr Mylne's poems is this :—I will publish, in two or three English and Scottish public papers, any one of his English poems which should, by private judges, be thought the most excellent, and mention it at the same time as one of the productions of a Lothian farmer of respectable character, lately deceased, whose poems his friends had it in idea to publish soon by subscription, for the sake of his numerous family :—not in pity to that family, but in justice to what his friends think

the poetic merits of the deceased; and to secure in the most effectual manner, to those tender connexions, whose right it is, the pecuniary reward of those merits.*

R. B.

(⁴¹) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

ELLISLAND, *March 9, 1789.*

MADAM,—The letter you wrote me to Heron's carried its own answer in its bosom; you forbade me to write you, unless I was willing to plead guilty to a certain indictment that you were pleased to bring against me. As I am convinced of my own innocence, and, though conscious of high imprudence and egregious folly, can lay my hand upon my breast, and attest the rectitude of my heart, you will pardon me, Madam, if I do not carry my complaisance so far as humbly to acquiesce in the name of "Villain," merely out of compliment to your opinion, much as I esteem your judgment, and warmly as I regard your worth.

I have already told you, and I again aver it, that, at the period of time alluded to, I was not under the smallest moral tie to Mrs Burns; nor did I, nor could I then know, all the powerful circumstances that omnipotent necessity was busy laying in wait for me. When you call over the scenes that have passed between us, you will survey the conduct of an honest man struggling successfully with temptations, the most powerful that ever beset humanity, and preserving untainted honor in situations where the austere virtue would have forgiven a fall; situations that, I will dare to say, not a single individual of all his kind,

* A volume of these poems, including two tragedies, was published by Creech in 1790.

even with half his sensibility and passion, could have encountered without ruin ; and I leave you to guess, Madam, how such a man is likely to digest an accusation of "perfidious treachery."

Was I to blame, Madam, in being the distracted victim of charms which, I affirm, no man ever approached with impunity ? Had I seen the least glimmering of hope that these charms could ever have been mine ; or even had not iron Necessity—— But these are unavailing words. I would have called on you when I was in town, indeed I could not have resisted it, but that Mr Ainslie told me you were determined to avoid your windows while I was in town, lest even a glance of me should occur in the street.

When I shall have regained your good opinion, perhaps I may venture to solicit your friendship ; but, be that as it may, the first of her sex I ever knew shall always be the object of my warmest good wishes. ROBT. BURNS.

The letter referred to, which "Clarinda" addressed to "Sylvander" at "Heron's," has not been given to the public ; indeed the likelihood is that Burns would tear it up at the instant, in his rage. The lady appears to have addressed him again, in terms less offensive, upbraiding him for not calling upon her during his recent visit to Edinburgh. Chambers thinks that the poet's answer is "at once justificatory of himself, and respectful towards the lady." Indeed the hand of the *artist* is very apparent in the above defence ; its independent tone being made palatable to his accuser through being honied over with the most daring flattery. The third paragraph is just a prose draught of his famous lines afterwards hymned into the ear of the same lady :

"Never blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy :
But to see her was to love her—
Love but her, and love for ever !
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him ?
Me, nae cheerful twinkle lights me ;
Dark despair around benights me."

(2) TO MR W^M. BURNS, LONGTOWN.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

ISLE, *Tuesday even.*
[*March 10, 1789.*]

DEAR WILLIAM,—In my last, I recommended that invaluable apophthegm—learn taciturnity.*

It is absolutely certain that nobody can know our thoughts; and yet, from a slight observation of mankind, one would not think so. What mischiefs daily arise from silly garrulity, or foolish confidence! There is an excellent Scots saying, that “A man’s mind is his kingdom.” It is certainly so; but how few can govern that kingdom with propriety?

The serious mischiefs in business which this flux of language occasions, do not come immediately to your situation; but in another point of view, the dignity of the man, now is the time that will either make or mar you. Yours is the time of life for laying in habits; you cannot avoid it, though you should choose; and these habits will stick to your last sand. At after periods, even at so little advance as my years, ’tis true, one may still be very sharp-sighted to one’s habitual failings and weaknesses; but to eradicate, or even amend them, is quite a different matter. Acquired at first by accident, they by and by begin to be as it were *convenient*, and in time are in a manner a *necessary* part of our existence. I have not time for more. Whatever you read, whatever you hear, concerning the ways and works of that strange creature, Man, look into the living world about you—look into yourself for the evidence of the fact, or the application of the doctrine. I am, ever yours,
ROBERT BURNS.

* On this subject of prudent taciturnity, see also Letter to Ainslie, page 135 *supra*.

(5) TO DR JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 23rd March 1780.

SIR,—The gentleman who will deliver this is a Mr Nielson,* a worthy clergyman in my neighbourhood, and a very particular acquaintance of mine. As I have troubled him with this packet, I must turn him over to your goodness, to recompense him for it in a way in which he much needs your assistance, and where you can effectually serve him:—Mr Nielson is on his way for France, to wait on his Grace of Queensberry, on some little business of a good deal of importance to him, and he wishes for your instructions respecting the most eligible mode of travelling, &c., for him, when he has crossed the channel. I should not have dared to take this liberty with you, but that I am told, by those who have the honor of your personal acquaintance, that to be a poor honest Scotchman is a letter of recommendation to you, and that to have it in your power to serve such a character, gives you much pleasure.

The inclosed ode is a compliment to the memory of the Mrs Oswald, of Auchencruive. You, probably, knew her personally, an honor of which I cannot boast; but I spent my early years in her neighbourhood, and among her servants and tenants. I know that she was detested with the most heartfelt cordiality. However, in the particular part of her conduct which roused my poetic wrath, she was much less blameable. In January last, on my road to Ayrshire, I had put up at Bailie Whigham's, in Sanquhar, the only tolerable inn in the place. The frost was keen, and the grim evening and howling wind were ushering in a night of snow and

* The Rev. Edward Nielson, minister of Kirkbean, in the Stewarty of Kirkeudbright.

drift. My horse and I were both much fatigued with the labors of the day, and just as my friend the Bailie and I were bidding defiance to the storm, over a smoking bowl, in wheels the funeral pageantry of the late great Mrs Oswald; and poor I am forced to brave all the horrors of a tempestuous night, and jade my horse, my young favourite horse, whom I had just christened Pegasus, twelve miles farther on, through the wildest moors and hills of Ayrshire, to New Cumnock, the next inn. The powers of poesy and prose sink under me, when I would describe what I felt. Suffice it to say, that when a good fire at New Cumnock had so far recovered my frozen sinews, I sat down and wrote the inclosed ode.

I was at Edinburgh lately, and settled finally with Mr Creech; and I must own, that, at last, he has been amicable and fair with me.

R. B.

(³) TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, LONGTOWN.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.*)

ISLE, 25th March 1789.

I HAVE stolen from my corn-sowing this minute to write a line to accompany your shirt and hat, for I can no more. Your sister Nannie arrived yesternight, and begs to be remembered to you. Write me every opportunity—never mind postage. My head too is as addle as an egg this morning with dining abroad yesterday. I received yours by the mason. Forgive this foolish-looking scrawl of an epistle. I am ever, my dear William, yours,

R. B.

* The MS. of this letter, framed and glazed, long hung in the "Traveler's Room" of the Red Lion Tavern, Shakespeare Square, Edinburgh. Our recollections of that matter date about 1839-40. The landlord's name was Fraser, and he had published a volume of short pieces in prose and verse. The whole locality, including the old Theatre Royal, is now occupied by the General Post Office.

P. S.—If you are not then gone from Longtown, I'll write you a long letter by this day se'ennight. If you shall not succeed in your tramps, don't be dejected, or take any rash step: return to us in that case, and we'll court Fortune's better humour. Remember this, I charge you. R. B.

(⁵) MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE in fragment, and here completed.)*

ELLISLAND, 2d April 1789.

I WILL make no excuses, my dear Bibliopolus, (God forgive me for murdering language !) that I have sat down to write you on this vile paper, stained with the sanguinary scores of "thae curs'd horse-leeches o' the Excise." It is economy, Sir; it is that cardinal virtue, prudence: so I beg you will sit down, and either compose or borrow a panegyric: (if you are going to borrow, apply to our friend Ramsay† for the assistance of the author of those pretty little buttering paragraphs of eulogiums on your thrice-honored, and never-enough-to-be-praised, Magistracy—how they hunt down a housebreaker with the sanguinary perseverance of a bloodhound—how they out-do a terrier in a badger-hole, in unearthing a resetter of stolen goods—how they steal on a thoughtless troop of night-nymphs as a spaniel winds the unsuspecting covey—or how they riot over a ravaged bawdy-house as a cat does o'er a plundered mouse-nest—how they new-vamp old churches, aiming at appearances of piety; plan squares and colleges, to pass for men of taste and learning,

* By favour of George Wilson, Esq., a descendant of Mr Peter Hill, we have been enabled to collate and correct the text from the original letter in his possession, and to insert here some interesting passages, hitherto suppressed.

† Mr David Ramsay, of the "*Edinburgh Evening Courant*."

&c., &c., &c. ; while old Edinburgh, like the doating mother of a parcel of rakehellly prodigals, may sing "Hooly and Fairly," or cry, "Waes me that e'er I saw ye !" but still must put her hand in her pocket, and pay whatever scores the young dogs think proper to contract.) I was going to say—but this d—mn'd parenthesis has put me out of breath—that you should get that manufacturer of the tinselled crockery of magistratial reputations, who makes so distinguished and distinguishing a figure in the *Ev. Courant*, to compose, or rather to compound, something very clever on my remarkable frugality ; that I write to one of my esteemed friends on this wretched paper, which was originally intended for the venal fist of some drunken exciseman, to take dirty notes in a miserable vault of an ale-cellar.

O Frugality ! thou mother of ten thousand blessings—thou cook of fat beef and dainty greens ! thou manufacturer of warm Shetland hose, and comfortable surtouts ! thou old housewife, darning thy decayed stockings with thy ancient spectacles on thy aged nose ! lead me, hand me in thy clutching palsied fist, up those heights, and through those thickets, hitherto inaccessible and impervious to my anxious, weary feet—not those damn'd Parnassian crags, bleak and barren, where the hungry worshippers of fame are breathless, clambering, hanging between heaven and hell ; but those glittering cliffs of Potosi, where the all-sufficient, all-powerful deity, Wealth, holds his immediate court of joys and pleasures ! where the sunny exposure of Plenty, and the hot walls of Profusion, produce those blissful fruits of Luxury, exotics in this world, and natives of Paradise !—Thou withered sybil, my sage conductress, usher me into the refulgent, adored Presence !—The Power, splendid and potent as he now is, was once the puling nursling of thy faithful care, and tender arms ! Call me thy son, thy cousin, thy kinsman,

or favorite, and adjure the god by the scenes of his infant years, no longer to repulse me as a stranger or an alien, but to favor me with his peculiar countenance and protection! He daily bestows his greatest kindnesses on the undeserving and the worthless—assure him, that I bring ample documents of meritorious demerits! Pledge yourself for me that for the glorious cause of LUCRE, I will do any thing, be any thing—but the horse-leech of private oppression, or the vulture of public robbery!!!!

But, to descend from heroics—what, in the name of all the devils at once, have you done with my trunk? Please let me have it by the first carrier, except his name be Niven; he is a rascal who imposed, or would have imposed on me the other day most infamously.

I want a Shakespeare: let me know what plays your used copy of Bell's Shakespeare wants. I want likewise an English dictionary—Johnson's, I suppose, is best. In these and all my *prose* commissions, the cheapest is always the best for me. There is a small debt of honor that I owe Mr Robert Cleghorn, in Saughton Mills, my worthy friend, and your well-wisher: please give him, and urge him to take it, the first time you see him, ten shillings' worth of anything you have to sell, and place it to my account.

The library scheme that I mentioned to you is already begun under the direction of Captⁿ. Riddell and ME! There is another in emulation of it going on at Closeburn, under the auspices of Mr Menteith of Closeburn, which will be on a greater scale than ours. I have likewise secured it for you. Captⁿ. R. gave his infant Society a great many of his old books, else I had written you on that subject; but, one of these days, I shall trouble you with a commission for "The Monkland Friendly Society." A copy of the *Spectator*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*; *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*,

Guthrie's Geographical Grammar, with some religious pieces, will likely be our first order.

Write me first post, and send me the address of Stuart, publisher of the *Star* newspaper: this I beg particularly, but do not speak of it.* I'll expect along with the trunk, my Ainslie's map of Scotland; and if you could send your boy to Mr Beugo, Engraver; he has a picture of mine a-framing, which will be ready by this time. You see the freedom I take with you. Please direct any parcels to me to the care of Walter Auld, Saddler, Dumfries. When I grow richer, I will write to you on gilt-post, to make amends for this sheet. At present, every guinea has a five-guinea errand with, my dear Sir, your faithful, poor, but honest friend,

ROBT. BURNS.

(By Stuart, I mean the famous Stuart who differed with the rest of the proprietors and set up by himself.)

(¹) TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER,
CARE OF MR WRIGHT, CARRIER, LONGTOWN.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1849.)

ISLE, 15th April 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,—I am extremely sorry at the misfortune of your legs; I beg you will never let any worldly concern interfere with the more serious matter, the safety of your life and limbs. I have not time in these hurried days to write you anything other than a mere how d'ye letter. I will only repeat my favourite quotation:—

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

My house shall be your welcome home; and as I know your

* The poet's reason for wanting this address will presently appear in his next letter to Mrs Dunlop.

prudence (would to God you had *resolution* equal to your *prudence*!) if, anywhere at a distance from friends, you should need money, you know my direction by post.

The enclosed is from Gilbert, brought by your sister Nanny. It was unluckily forgot. Yours to Gilbert goes by post.—I heard from them yesterday, they are all well. Adieu,

R. B.

(⁵) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, BELL'S WYND,
EDINBURGH.

(*Here first Published*).*

ELLISLAND, 24th April 1789.

DEAR SIR,—My trunk was unaccountably delayed in Edin^r., and did not reach me till about ten days ago ; so I had not much time of your music. I have sent you a list that I approve of, but I beg and insist that you will never allow my opinion to overrule yours. I will write you more at large next post, as I, at present, have scarce time to subscribe myself, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

ROB^t. BURNS.

(¹) TO MRS M'MURDO, DRUMLANRIG.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834).†

ELLISLAND, 2nd May, 1789.

MADAM,—I have finished the piece which had the happy fortune to be honored with your approbation ; and never did little Miss, with more sparkling pleasure, show her

* From the original MS. in the British Museum.

† The original MS. of this letter is now in the Collection of John Adams, Esq., Town Chamberlain, Greenock.

applauded sampler to partial Mamma, than I now send my Poem to you and Mr M'Murdo, if he is returned to Drumlanrig. You cannot easily imagine what thin-skinned animals—what sensitive plants poor Poets are. How do we shrink into the embittered corner of self-abasement, when neglected or contemned by those to whom we look up! and how do we, in erect importance, add another cubit to our stature on being noticed and applauded by those whom we honor and respect! My late visit to Drumlanrig has, I can tell you, Madam, given me a balloon waft up Parnassus, where on my fancied elevation I regard my poetic self with no small degree of complacency.*

Surely with all their sins, the rhyming tribe are not ungrateful creatures. I recollect your goodness to your humble guest—I see Mr M'Murdo adding, to the politeness of the Gentleman, the kindness of a Friend, and my heart swells as it would burst, with warm emotions and ardent wishes! It may be it is not gratitude, at least it may be a mixed sensation. That strange, shifting, doubling animal MAN is so generally, at best but a negative, often a worthless creature, that one cannot see real Goodness and native Worth, without feeling the bosom glow with sympathetic approbation.—With every sentiment of grateful respect, I have the honor to be, Madam, your obliged and grateful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

* Mrs M'Murdo was originally Jane Blair, a daughter of Provost Blair, of Dumfries. She died in 1836, at the age of 87. Her sister was the wife of Colonel De Peyster, who commanded the Dumfries Volunteers, while Burns was a member of that corps.

(22) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800, and Dr WADDELL, 1870.)

ELLISLAND, 4th May* 1789.

You see, Madam, that I am returned to my folio epistles again. I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or fancy, but I wish to send it to you; and if knowing and reading them gives half the pleasure to you, that communicating them to you gives to me, I am satisfied.

As I am not devoutly attached to a certain monarch, I cannot say that my heart ran any risk of bursting, on Thursday was se'ennight, with the struggling emotions of gratitude. God forgive me for speaking evil of dignities! but I must say that I look on the whole business as a solemn farce of fragrant mummery. The following are a few stanzas of new Psalmody for that "joyful solemnity," which I sent to a London newspaper with the date and preface following:—

(KILMARNOCK, 25 April.

MR PRINTER,—In a certain chapel not fifty leagues from the market cross of this good town, the following Stanzas of Psalmody, it is said, were composed for, and devoutly sung on—the late joyful solemnity of the 23rd.

O sing a new song to the L— ,
 Make, all and every one,
 A joyful noise, even for the King
 His restoration, &c.—See page 209, Vol. II.)

So much for Psalmody—You must know that the publisher of one of the most blasphemous party London newspapers is an acquaintance of mine, and as I am a little tinctured with Buff and Blue myself, I now and then help him to a stanza.

* We have at page 210, Vol. II., given our reason for holding that the month "April" in the MS. is a mistake for *May*.

I have another poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the Rt. Honble. Ch. J. Fox ; but how long that fancy may hold, I can't say. A few of the first lines I have just rough-sketched as follows:—

SKETCH.

How Wisdom and Folly meet, mix, and unite ;
How Virtue and Vice blend their black and their white, &c.

See page 211, Vol. II.

I beg your pardon for troubling you with the enclosed to the Major's tenant before the gate ; it is to request him to look me out two milk cows ; one for myself, and another for Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, a very obliging neighbour of mine. John very obligingly offered to do so for me ; and I will either serve myself that way, or at Mauchline fair. It happens on the 20th curt., and the Sunday preceding it I hope to have the honor of assuring you in person how sincerely I am, Madam, your highly obliged and most obedient, humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.

(³) TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 4th May 1789.

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

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

Inhuman man ! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye ! &c.
See page 214, Vol. II.

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

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

“Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my breast.”*

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of “Three gude fellows ayont the glen.” R. B.

(⁵) TO MR WILLIAM BURNS,

SADDLER, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

ELLISLAND, 5th May 1789.

MY DEAR WILLM.,—I am happy to hear by yours from Newcastle, that you are getting some employ. Remember,

“On Reason build Resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.”

* “As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.”—*Julius Cæsar*.

I had a visit of your old landlord. In the midst of a drunken frolic in Dumfries, he took it into his head to come and see me; and I took all the pains in my power to please and entertain the old veteran. He is high in your praises, and I would advise you to cultivate his friendship, as he is, in his way, a worthy, and to you may be, a useful man.

Anderson I hope will have your shoes ready to send by the waggon to-morrow. I forgot to mention the circumstance of making them pumps; but I suppose good calf shoes will be no great mistake. Wattie has paid me for the thongs.

What would you think of making a little inquiry how husbandry matters go, as you travel, and if one thing fail, you might try another?

Your falling in love is indeed a phenomenon. To a fellow of your turn it cannot be hurtful. I am, you know, a veteran in these campaigns, so let me advise you always to pay your particular assiduities and try for intimacy as soon as you feel the first symptoms of passion; this is not only best, as making the most of the little entertainment which the sportabilities of distant addresses always give, but is the best preservative for one's place. I need not caution you against guilty amours—they are bad everywhere, but in England they are the devil. I shall be in Ayrshire about a fortnight. Your sisters send their compliments. God bless you!

ROBERT BURNS.

(⁴) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

ELLISLAND, 13th May 1789.

SIR,—Though I intend making a little manuscript-book of my unpublished poems for Mrs Graham, yet I cannot

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

would make me, should you, too, illuminate my humble domicile. You will certainly do me the honor to partake of a farmer's dinner with me. I shall promise you a piece of good old beef, a chicken, or perhaps a Nith salmon, fresh from the wear, and a glass of good punch, on the shortest notice; and allow me to say that Cincinnatus or Fabricius, who presided in the august Roman senate, and led their invincible armies, would have jumped at such a dinner. I expect your honors with a kind of enthusiasm. I shall mark the year, and mark the day, and hand it down to my children's children, as one of the most distinguished honors of their ancestor.

I have the honor to be, with sincerest gratitude, your
obliged and very humble servant, ROB^t. BURNS.

(⁶) TO MR RICHARD BROWN, PORT GLASGOW.

(DR WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

MAUCHLINE, 21st May 1789.

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

you and I, in some snug retreat, may make a jovial party to all eternity!

My direction is at Ellisland, near Dumfries.—Yours,

R. B.

(¹) MR JAMES HAMILTON, GROCER, GLASGOW.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 26th May 1789.

DEAR SIR,—I send you by John Glover, carrier, the above account for Mr Turnbull, as I suppose you know his address.

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

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

With every wish for your welfare and future success.—I am, my dear Sir, sincerely yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

(⁵) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[ELLISLAND, June 1789.*]

MY DEAR SIR,—It is indeed with the highest pleasure that I congratulate you on the return of days of ease, and nights

* This is the last letter that has been preserved of the series addressed to our author's early friend and patron. Cromek introduced it without

of pleasure, after the horrid hours of misery in which I saw you suffering existence when last in Ayrshire; I seldom pray for anybody, "I'm baith dead-swear and wretched ill o't;" but most fervently do I beseech the Power that directs the world, that you may live long and be happy, but live no longer than you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverend care of your health. I know you will make it a point never at one time to drink more than a pint of wine (I mean an English pint), and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time, and that cold drams you will never more taste; and above all things, I am convinced that after drinking perhaps boiling punch, you will never mount your horse and gallop home in a chill, late hour.

Above all things, as I understand you are in the habit of intimacy with that Boanerges of Gospel powers, Father Auld, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, even practising the carnal moral works of charity, humanity, generosity, and forgiveness of things, which you practised so flagrantly that it was evident you delighted in them, neglecting, or perhaps profanely despising the wholesome doctrine of *faith without works*, the only means of salvation. A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion,

date, excepting that he heads it "Dumfries," suggesting an improbable date, seeing the text alludes to Hamilton's "habits of intimacy with Father Auld." That "Boanerges of the gospel" died on 13th December 1791, before the Dumfries period of the poet's career had well begun; so that an earlier date must be found for this letter. Cunningham coolly dates it "Edinburgh, December 1787," and marks it as "now published for the first time in the correspondence of Burns." Chambers has adopted Cunningham's date without remark, and it fits very awkwardly at that period. We have little hesitation in assigning this as the time it was written, shortly after the poet's return to Ellisland from a visit to Ayrshire. In a few weeks thereafter, Burns composed "The Kirk's Alarm," some stanzas of which he sent to Hamilton, as we learn from the poet's letter to John Logan, 7th August 1789.

be highly becoming from you at present, and in my zeal for your well-being, I earnestly press on you to be diligent in chaunting over the two enclosed pieces of sacred poesy.

My best compliments to Mrs Hamilton and Miss Kennedy.—Yours in the Lord. ROBT. BURNS.

(¹) TO MR JOHN M'AULEY, DUMBARTON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 4th June 1789.

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

* This was, in all likelihood, Mr John Kennedy, the poet's correspondent of 1786, who seems about this period to have removed from his employment at Dumfries House, to a similar occupation on the estate of the Earl of Breadalbane, where he continued for 18 years. His headstone in the Old Calton at Edinburgh, records that he died 19th June 1812, aged 55. Mr John M'Auley was a writer in Dumbarton, who would appear to have entertained Burns while returning from his Inverary tour.

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

R. B.

(¹²) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 8th June 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am perfectly ashamed of myself when I look at the date of your last. It is not that I forget the friend of my heart and the companion of my peregrinations; but I have been condemned to drudgery beyond sufferance, though not, thank God, beyond redemption. I have had a collection of poems by a lady put into my hands to prepare

them for the press;* which horrid task, with sowing corn with my own hand, a parcel of masons, wrights, plasterers, &c., to attend to, roaming on business through Ayrshire—all this was against me, and the very first dreadful article was of itself too much for me.

13th. I have not had a moment to spare from incessant toil since the 8th. Life, my dear Sir, is a serious matter. You know by experience that a man's individual self is a good deal; but believe me, a wife and family of children, whenever you have the honor to be a husband and a father, will show you that your present and most anxious hours of solitude are spent on trifles. The welfare of those who are very dear to us, whose only support, hope and stay we are—this, to a generous mind, is another sort of more important object of care than any concerns whatever which centre merely in the individual. On the other hand, let no young, unmarried, rakehell dog among you, make a song of his pretended liberty and freedom from care. If the relations we stand in to king, country, kindred, and friends, be any thing but the visionary fancies of dreaming metaphysicians; if religion, virtue, magnanimity, generosity, humanity, and justice, be aught but empty sounds; then the man who may be said to live only for others, for the beloved, honorable female whose tender faithful embrace endears life, and for the helpless little innocents who are to be the men and women, the worshippers of his God, the subjects of his king, and the support, nay the very vital existence of his COUNTRY, in the ensuing age;—compare such a man with any fellow whatever, who, whether he bustle and push in business among laborers, clerks, states-

* We suspect that the reference here is to a parcel of poems, and particularly a very long one by Helen Maria Williams, on "The Slave Trade," which were sent to him from London, to peruse and criticise. He performed his task and sent his remarks to that lady about the end of July: his letter and review will be given in course.

men ; or whether he roar and rant, and drink and sing in taverns—a fellow over whose grave no one will breathe a single heigh-ho, except from the cobweb tie of what is called good-fellowship—who has no view nor aim but what terminates in himself—if there be any grovelling earthborn wretch of our species, a renegado to common sense, who would fain believe that the noble creature Man is no better than a sort of fungus, generated out of nothing, nobody knows how, and soon dissipating in nothing, nobody knows where ; such a stupid beast, such a crawling reptile, might balance the foregoing unexaggerated comparison, but no one else would have the patience.

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

R. B.

(²³) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 21st June 1789.

DEAR MADAM,—Will you take the effusions, the miserable effusions of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring. I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages. . . .

Monday Evening.

I have just heard Mr Kilpatrick give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him ; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord deliver me ! Religion, my honored friend, is surely a simple business,

as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensible Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery, and consequent outward deportment of this creature which he has made; these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and consequently, that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave; must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther, and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance*, he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore, Jesus Christ was from God. * * * *

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, Madam, of my creed? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one, whose good opinion I value almost next to the approbation of my own mind.

R. B.

(1) TO MISS H. M. WILLIAMS, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1801.)*

ELLISLAND, [*July*] 1789.

MADAM,—Of the many problems in the nature of that wonderful creature, Man, this is one of the most extraordinary, that he shall go on from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, or perhaps from year to year, suffering a hundred times more in an hour from the impotent consciousness of neglecting what he ought to do, than the very doing of it would cost him. I am deeply indebted to you first for a most elegant poetic compliment;† then for a polite, obliging letter; and, lastly, for your excellent poem on the Slave-Trade; and yet, wretch that I am! though the debts were debts of honor, and the creditor a lady, I have put off and put off even the very acknowledgment of the obligation, until you must indeed be the very angel I take you for, if you can forgive me.

Your poem I have read with the highest pleasure. I have a way, whenever I read a book, I mean a book in our own trade, Madam, a poetic one, and when it is my own property, that I take a pencil and mark at the end of verses, or note on margins and odd paper, little criticisms of approbation or disapprobation as I peruse along. I will make no apology for presenting you with a few unconnected thoughts that occurred to me in my repeated perusals of your poem. I want to shew you that I have honesty enough to tell you what I take to be truths, even when

* Dr Currie did not include this letter in his first edition, nor at all publish the poet's long critical observations on the Poem. We first notice these in Chambers's edition 1852, and he does not say he copied them from the original MS., which is now or lately was in the possession of Mr Francis Harvey, 4 St James's Street, London. It is thus endorsed:—"A few Strictures on Miss Williams's Poem on the Slave Trade."

† See Miss Williams' Sonnet on Burns, page 196, Vol. IV.

they are not quite on the side of approbation; and I do it in the firm faith, that you have equal greatness of mind to hear them with pleasure.

I know very little of scientific criticism; so all I can pretend to in that intricate art, is merely to note as I read along, what passages strike me as being uncommonly beautiful, and where the expression seems to be perplexed or faulty.

The poem opens finely. There are none of those idle prefatory lines which one may skip over before one comes to the subject; verses 9th and 10th in particular:—

——— “where ocean’s unseen bound,
Leaves a drear world of waters round.”

are truly beautiful. The simile of the hurricane is likewise fine; and, indeed, beautiful as the poem is, almost all the similes rise decidedly above it. From verse 31st to verse 50th is a pretty eulogy on Britain. Verse 36th, “That foul drama deep with wrong,” is nobly expressive. Verse 46th, I am afraid, is rather unworthy of the rest; “to dare to feel” is an idea that I do not altogether like. The contrast of valour and mercy, from the 46th verse to the 50th, is admirable.

Either my apprehension is dull, or there is something a little confused in the apostrophe to Mr Pitt. Verse 55th is the antecedent to verses 57th and 58th, but in verse 58th the connexion seems ungrammatical:—

“Powers

With no gradations mark’d their flight,
But rose at once to glory’s height”—

ris’n should be the word instead of rose. Try it in prose, Powers,—their flight marked by no gradations, but (the same powers) risen at once to the height of glory. Likewise, verse 53rd, “For this,” is evidently meant to lead on the

sense of the verses 59th, 60th, 61st, and 62nd : but let us try how the thread of connexion runs,—

“For this

 The deeds of mercy, that embrace
 A distant sphere, an alien race,
 Shall virtue's lips record and claim
 The fairest honours of thy name.”

I beg pardon if I misapprehend the matter, but this appears to me the only imperfect passage in the poem. The comparison of the sunbeam is fine.

The compliment to the Duke of Richmond is, I hope, as just as it is certainly elegant. The thought,

“Virtue

 Sends, from her unsullied source,
 The gems of thought in purest force,

is exceedingly beautiful. The idea, from verse 81st to the 85th, that the “blest decree” is like the beams of morning ushering in the glorious day of liberty, ought not to pass unnoticed or unapplauded. From verse 85th to verse 108th, is an animated contrast between the unfeeling selfishness of the oppressor on the one hand, and the misery of the captive on the other. Verse 88th might perhaps be amended thus: “Nor ever *quit* her narrow maze.” We are said to *pass* a bound, but we *quit* a maze. Verse 100th is exquisitely beautiful:—

“They, whom wasted blessings tire.”

Verse 110th is, I doubt, a clashing of metaphors; “to load a span” is, I am afraid, an unwarrantable expression. In verse 114th, “Cast the universe in shade,” is a fine idea. From the 115th verse to the 142nd is a striking description of the wrongs of the poor African. Verse 120th, “The load of unremitted pain,” is a remarkable, strong expression. The address to the advocates for abolishing the slave-trade, from

verse 143rd to verse 208th is animated with the true life of genius. The picture of oppression,—

“While she links her impious chain,
And calculates the price of pain ;
Weighs agony in sordid scales,
And marks if life or death prevails,”—

is nobly executed.

What a tender idea is in verse 180th ! Indeed, that whole description of home may vie with Thomson’s description of home, somewhere in the beginning of his “Autumn.” I do not remember to have seen a stronger expression of misery than is contained in these verses :—

“Condemned, severe extreme, to live
When all is fled that life can give :”

the comparison of our distant joys to distant objects is equally original and striking.

The character and manners of the dealer in the infernal traffic is a well done, though a horrid picture. I am not sure how far introducing the Sailor was right ; for though the sailor’s common characteristic is generosity, yet in this case he is certainly not only an unconcerned witness, but in some degree an efficient agent in the business. Verse 224th is a nervous . . . expression—“The heart convulsive anguish breaks.” The description of the captive wretch when he arrives in the West Indies is carried on with equal spirit. The thought that the oppressor’s sorrow on seeing the slave pine, like the butcher’s regret when his lamb dies a natural death is exceedingly fine.

I am got so much into the cant of criticism, that I begin to be afraid lest I have nothing except the cant of it ; and instead of elucidating my author, am only benighting myself. For this reason, I will not pretend to go through the whole poem. Some few remaining beautiful lines, however, I

cannot pass over. Verse 280th is the strongest description of selfishness I ever saw. The comparison in verse 285th and 286th is new and fine; and the line, "Your arms to penury you lend" is excellent.

In verse 317th, "like" should certainly be "as" or "so;" for instance:—

"His sway the harden'd bosom leads
To cruelty's remorseless deeds;
As (or so) the blue lightning when it springs,
With fury on its livid wings,
Darts on the goal with rapid force,
Nor heeds that ruin marks its course."

If you insert the word "*like*" where I have placed "as," you must alter "darts" to *darting*, and "heeds" to *heeding*, in order to make it grammar. A tempest is a favourite subject with the poets, but I do not remember anything, even in Thomson's "Winter," superior to your verses from the 347th to the 351st. Indeed, the last simile, beginning with "Fancy may dress," &c., and ending with the 350th verse, is, in my opinion, the most beautiful passage in the poem: it would do honor to the greatest names that ever graced our profession.

I will not beg your pardon, Madam, for these strictures, as my conscience tells me that for once in my life I have acted up to the duties of a Christian, in doing as I would be done by.

I had lately the honor of a letter from Dr Moore, where he tells me that he has sent me some books: they are not yet come to hand, but I hear they are on the way.

Wishing you all success in your progress in the path of fame, and that you may equally escape the danger of stumbling through incautious speed, or losing ground through loitering neglect, I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

Miss Williams, in a short letter dated 7th August 1789, acknowledged Burns's communication, admitting that his criticism is a very flattering proof that her poem had been read with attention. She added thus :—"A much less portion of applause from *you* would have been gratifying to me, since I think its value depends entirely upon the source from whence it proceeds—the incense of praise, like other incense, is more grateful from the quality than the quantity of the odour."

This authoress first attracted public notice by her "Ode on the Peace," namely the Peace that was brought about by the Earl of Shelburne, afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne. She afterwards wrote in favour of the savage anarchy which prevailed in France, from the summer of 1789, onwards till the Republic merged into a military Empire. She walked without horror over the ground at the Tuilleries when it was strewed with the naked bodies of the Swiss Guards.

Miss Williams, like many other early enthusiastic approvers of the French Revolution, latterly altered her opinions very considerably. She died in 1828, aged 65.

(⁵) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

ELLISLAND, 31st *July* 1789.

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

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

that you will always give me credit for the sincerest, chastest gratitude ! The callous hypocrite may be louder than I in his grateful professions—professions which he never felt ; or the selfish heart of the covetous may pocket the bounties of beneficence with more rejoicing exultation ; but for the brimful eye, springing from the ardent throbbings of an

honest bosom, at the goodness of a kindly active benefactor and politely generous friend, I dare call the Searcher of hearts and Author of all goodness to witness how truly these are mine to you.

Mr Mitchell * did not wait my calling on him, but sent me a kind letter, giving me a hint of the business, and on my waiting on him yesterday, he entered with the most friendly ardor into my views and interests. He seems to think, and from my own private knowledge I am certain he is right, that removing the officer who now does, and for these many years has done, duty in the division in the middle of which I live, will be productive of at least no disadvantage to the revenue, and may likewise be done without any detriment to him. Should the Honorable Board think so, and should they deem it eligible to appoint me to officiate in his present place, I am then at the top of my wishes. The emoluments of my office will enable me to carry on and enjoy these improvements in my farm, which, but for this additional assistance, I might in a year or two have abandoned. Should it be judged improper to place me in this division, I am deliberating whether I had not better give up my farming altogether, and go into the Excise whenever I can find employment. Now that the salary is £50 per annum, the Excise is surely a much superior object to a farm, which, without some foreign assistance, must, for half a lease, be a losing bargain. The worst of it is I know there are some respectable characters who do me the honor to interest themselves in my welfare and behaviour, and as leaving the farm so soon may have an unsteady, giddy-headed appearance, I had perhaps better lose a little money than hazard such people's esteem.

You see, Sir, with what freedom I lay before you all my

* Collector Mitchell, to whom the poet addressed a poetic epistle in December 1795.

little matters—little indeed to the world, but of the most important magnitude to me. You are so good, that I trust I am not troublesome. [I have heard and read a good deal of Philanthropy, Benevolence, and Greatness of soul, and when rounded with the flourish of declamatory periods, or poured in the mellifluence of Parnassian measure, they have a tolerable effect on a musical ear; but when these high-sounding professions are compared with the very act and deed as it is usually performed, I do not think there is any thing in or belonging to Human Nature so badly disproportionate. In fact, were it not for a very few of our kind (among whom an honored friend of mine, that to you Sir, I will not name, is a distinguished instance), the very existence of Magnanimity, Generosity, and all their kindred virtues, would be as much a question with metaphysicians as the existence of Witchcraft.]* Perhaps the nature of man is not so much to blame for all this, as the situation in which, by some miscarriage or other, he is placed in this world. The poor, naked, helpless wretch, with such voracious appetites and such a famine of provision for them, is under a cursed necessity of turning selfish in his own defence. Except here and there a *scelerat* who seems to be a scoundrel from the womb of original Sin, thorough-paced selfishness is always the work of time. Indeed, in a little time, we generally grow so attentive to ourselves, and so regardless of others, that I have often in poetic frenzy looked on this world as one vast ocean, occupied and commoved by innumerable vortices, each whirling round its centre, which vortices are the children of men; and that the great design and merit, if I may say so, of every particular vortex consists in how wide

* The portion within square brackets is found in the poet's autograph in the British Museum, transcribed on the back of a copy of "The Kirk's Alarm," and catalogued as "a fragment of some severe reflections on human kind." That "fragment" appears in Cromek's *Reliques*, page 370, first edition.

it can extend the influence of its circle, and how much floating trash it can suck in and absorb.*

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

I hope this will find my amiable young acquaintance, John, recovered from his indisposition, and all the members of your charming fireside circle well and happy. I am sure I am anxiously interested in all your welfares; I wish it with all my soul; nay, I believe I sometimes catch myself praying for it. I am not impatient of my own impotence under that immense debt which I owe to your goodness, but I wish and beseech that BEING who has all good things in His hands, to bless and reward you with all those comforts and pleasures which He knows I would bestow on you, were they mine to give.

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

An apology for the impertinent length of this epistle would only add to the evil.—I have the honor to be, Sir, your deeply indebted, humble serv^t. ROBT. BURNS.

* On this subject of human selfishness, see Letter to Ainslie, page 134 *supra*; also letter to Peter Hill, 2d March 1790, page 304 *infra*.

(1) TO MR DAVID SILLAR, MERCHANT, IRVINE.

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

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 5th Aug. 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,—I was half in thoughts not to have written to you at all, by way of revenge for the two d—d business letters you sent me. I wanted to know all and about your Publication—what were your views, your hopes, fears, etc., etc., in commencing poet in print. In short, I wanted you to write to *Robin* like his old acquaintance *Davie*; and not in the style of Mr Tare to Mr Tret:—"Mr Tret—Sir, This comes to advise you that fifteen barrels of herrings

* The above interesting letter we happened to stumble on, in course of turning over the leaves of the early minute-book of the Irvine Burns Club, instituted in 1827. David Sillar, who was a member of the club, produced at one of its meetings the original letter addressed to him, and by order of the meeting, it was engrossed by their clerk in the records of the club. Had it not been for that circumstance the letter in all likelihood, had been lost, for the autograph seems not to have been preserved by Sillar's representatives. He died at Irvine in 1830, aged 70, having been born just one year after Burns. He had engaged in the trade of a Grocer, which he changed for the profession of a Teacher; and between his own savings and a windfall that came to him on the death of two brothers who had been in a lucrative trade on the African coast, he amassed considerable means. He was much sought after in consequence of his early connexion with Burns; but so penurious had he grown that he refused to subscribe to the fund for the bard's Doon Monument in 1820. His son Zachary Sillar, M.D., removed to Liverpool and long survived him.

The original Members of the Irvine Burns Club numbered twenty, and included Dr John Mackenzie, *Chairman*; David Sillar, *Croupier*; James Dobie, Writer, Beith; Dr Zachary Sillar, Irvine; Patrick Blair, Writer; James Johnston, Town Clerk; John Fletcher, Surgeon; Daniel Stewart, Rector of Irvine Academy; James Dick, Artist; &c., &c. Lieut. Charles Gray, R.N., joined the club in 1829. About ten years ago the club purchased the old tenement in which James Montgomery the poet, is said to have been born; we were shown a handsome silver drinking-cup, with two handles, which had been presented to the club, bearing this inscription, "M.DCCC.LXIX.—To the IRVINE BURNS CLUB, Mr John Rhodes of Sheffield, presents this Drinking-Cup, to commemorate the purchasing by the club of the House in which James Montgomery, the Christian Poet, was born."

were, by the blessing of God, shipped safe on board the 'Lovely Janet,' Q. D. C., Duncan M'Leerie, master, etc., etc."

I hear you have commenced married man—so much the better for it. I know not whether the Nine Gypsies are jealous of my Lucky; but they are a good deal shyer since I could boast the important relation of Husband.

I have got, I think, about eleven subscribers for your book. When you send Mr Auld, in Dumfries, his copies, you may with them pack me eleven; should I need more, I can write you; should they be too many, they can be returned. My best compliments to Mrs Sillar, and believe me to be, dear David, ever yours, ROBT. BURNS.

(^b) TO [ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ., AYR.]

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[Aug. 1789.]

DEAR SIR,—Whether in the way of my trade, I can be of any service to the Rev. Doctor,* is I fear very doubtful. Ajax's shield consisted, I think, of seven bull hides and a plate of brass, which altogether set Hector's utmost force at

* The indignant execrations in this letter were immediately followed by production of "The Kirk's Alarm," in favour of Dr Wm. M'Gill of Ayr, then under a charge of Heresy. The letter, unaddressed, was forwarded to Cromek by Professor Walker, who had been on intimate terms with Mr Aiken, the legal defender of M'Gill in the church courts. Its style incurred the censure of Jeffrey in his review of Cromek's *Reliques*, regarding which Walker observed (in 1811) that "the critic's censure would perhaps have been softened, had he been aware that the 'tumidity' which he blames, was no serious attempt at fine writing, but merely a playful effusion in mock-heroic, to divert a friend whom he had formerly succeeded in diverting with similar sallies."

This letter must have been written to either Mr Aiken or Gavin Hamilton. Chambers has misplaced it, and fastidiously suppressed the closing sentences.

defiance. Alas! I am not a Hector, and the worthy Doctor's foes are as securely armed as Ajax was. Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, stupidity, malevolence, self-conceit, envy—all strongly bound in a massy frame of brazen impudence. Good God, Sir! to such a shield, humor is the peck of a sparrow, and satire the pop-gun of a school-boy. Creation-disgracing *scelerats* such as they, God only can mend, and the Devil only can punish. In the comprehending way of Caligula, I wish they had all but one neck. I feel impotent as a child to the ardor of my wishes! O for a withering curse, to blast the germins of their wicked machinations. O for a poisonous Tornado, winged from the Torrid Zone of Tartarus, to sweep the spreading crop of their villainous contrivances to the lowest hell!

R. B.

(²) TO JOHN LOGAN, ESQ., OF KNOCKSHINNOCH.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES,
7th August 1789.

DEAR SIR,—I intended to have written you long ere now, and, as I told you, I had gotten three stanzas and a half on my way in a poetic Epistle to you; but that old enemy of all “good works,” the devil, threw me into a prosaic mire, and for the soul of me, I cannot get out of it. I dare not write you a long letter, as I am going to intrude on your time with a long ballad. I have, as you will shortly see, finished “The Kirk’s Alarm;” but, now that it is done, and that I have laughed once or twice at the conceits in some of the stanzas, I am determined not to let it get into the public; so I send you this copy, the first that I have sent to Ayrshire (except some few of the stanzas which I wrote off in embryo for Gavin Hamilton), under the express provision and request

that you will only read it to *a few of us*, and do not on any account give or permit to be taken, any copy of the ballad.

If I could be of any service to Dr M'Gill, I would do it, though it should be at a much greater expense than irritating a few bigoted priests; but I am afraid serving him in his present *embarras* is a task too hard for me. I have enemies enow, God knows, though I do not wantonly add to the number. Still, as I think there is some merit in two or three of the thoughts, I send it you as a small, but sincere testimony how much, and with what respectful esteem, I am, dear Sir, your obliged, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

Mr John Logan, of Knockshinnoch, as we find from a newspaper obituary, died at Ayr, on 9th March 1816. Dr Wm. M'Gill died, 30th March 1807. In addition to our notes appended to the ballad called "The Kirk's Alarm," p. 240, Vol. II., we here add from the notes of an Ayrshire clergyman who, although "in holy orders" at the close of last century, personally communicated the notes to Chambers in 1831. "Dr M'Gill was a Socinian in principle, although not a disciple of Socinus, whose works he never read. In his personal and domestic character, he was a strange mixture of simplicity and stoicism. He seldom smiled, but often set the table in a roar by his quaint remarks. He was inflexibly regular in the distribution of his time: he studied so much every day, and took his exercise in the open air at the same hour in all kinds of weather. His views of the ordinary dispensations of Providence were widely different from those of the bulk of society. On being told that an old clergyman, an early companion of his own, had suddenly expired on entering his pulpit to commence service, he clapped his hands and said—'That was very desirable; he lived all the days of his life.' The morning after a domestic calamity in his own house, of the most harrowing kind, the devout old pastor, to the surprise of his flock, officiated in church with his usual serenity. He used to converse on self-murder with the coolness of a Roman philosopher."

SONNET TO ROBT. GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

ON RECEIVING A FAVOR, 10TH AUG. 1789.

I call no goddess to inspire my strains ;
 A fabled Muse may suit a Bard that feigns, &c.

See page 224, Vol. II.

This was an Impromptu on receiving intimation from Mr Graham that the Board of Excise had agreed to appoint him Exciseman in the district of which his farm formed nearly the centre. On 18th of same month his Jean presented him with her first child born in wedlock, a boy, named FRANCIS WALLACE in compliment to Mrs Dunlop, who bore the same name. Not long before that event the new farm-house was ready for occupancy, and the poet's household had been transferred to it from the temporary residence at The Isle. Betty Smith who was in service with Burns at the time used to tell that she was desired by him to take the great Family Bible, with a bowl of salt placed thereon in her arms, and make sure that she was the first of the household to enter the new house at the time of this flitting. Chambers says—"this was the old *freit* appropriate to taking possession of a new house, the object being to secure good-luck for the inmates. The poet, like a man of imagination, delighted in such ancient observances, albeit his understanding, on a rigid tasking, would have denied the conclusions."

In the Scots Magazine for August 1789, there is a notice of the erection in Canongate Kirkyard of the tombstone provided by Burns, with its Inscription, executed 2 years and a half after it had been ordered. The London newspapers had copied the notice, as may be inferred from the following letter from the poet to his friend Mr Stuart, editor of *The Star*.

(²) TO MR PETER STUART, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

August 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,—The hurry of a farmer in this particular season, and the indolence of a poet at all times and seasons,

will, I hope, plead my excuse for neglecting so long to answer your obliging letter of the 5th of August.

That you have done well in quitting your laborious concern in * * * * I do not doubt; the weighty reasons you mention were, I hope, very, and deservedly indeed, weighty ones, and your health is a matter of the last importance; but whether the remaining proprietors of the paper have also done well, is what I much doubt. The * * * * so far as I was a reader, exhibited such a brilliancy of point, such an elegance of paragraph, and such a variety of intelligence, that I can hardly conceive it possible to continue a daily paper in the same degree of excellence: but if there was a man who had abilities equal to the task, that man's assistance the proprietors have lost. * * *

When I received your letter I was transcribing for [the *Star*] my letter to the magistrates of the Canongate, Edinburgh, begging their permission to place a tomb-stone over poor Fergusson, and their edict in consequence of my petition; but now I shall send them to . . . Poor Fergusson! If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is; and if there be a good God presiding over all nature, which I am sure there is—thou art now enjoying existence in a glorious world, where worth of the heart alone is distinction in the man; where riches, deprived of all their pleasure-purchasing powers, return to their native sordid matter; where titles and honors are the disregarded reveries of an idle dream; and where that heavy virtue, which is the negative consequence of steady dulness, and those thoughtless, though often destructive follies, which are the unavoidable aberrations of frail human nature, will be thrown into equal oblivion as if they had never been!

Adieu, my dear Sir! So soon as your present views and schemes are concentrated in an aim, I shall be glad to hear from you; as your welfare and happiness is by no means a subject indifferent to, yours,

R. B.

Mr Stuart's letter to Burns in 1789, contained some anecdotes of Fergusson the poet which Currie withheld. That biographer in a footnote, says, "These interesting anecdotes we should have been happy to insert, if they could have been authenticated." In the letter of 5th August 1789, Mr Stuart thus refers to that poet—"I cannot express my happiness sufficiently at the instance of your attachment to my late inestimable friend, Bob Fergusson, who was particularly intimate with myself and relations. That Mr Burns has surpassed him in the art of poetry, must readily be admitted; but notwithstanding many favourable representations, I am yet to learn that he inherits his convivial powers.

"There was such a richness of conversation, such a plenitude of fancy and attraction in him, that when I call the happy period of our intercourse to my memory, I feel myself in a state of delirium. I was younger than him by eight or ten years; but his manner was so felicitous, that he enraptured every person around him, and infused into the hearts of young and old, the spirit and animation which operated in his own mind."

(⁶) TO MR WILLIAM BURNS,

SADDLER, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

ELLISLAND, 14th Aug. 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,—I received your letter, and am very happy to hear that you have got settled for the winter. I enclose you the two guinea-notes of the Bank of Scotland, which I hope will serve your need. It is indeed not quite so convenient for me to spare money as it once was, but I know your situation, and, I will say it, in some respects your worth. I have no time to write at present, but I beg you will endeavour to pluck up a *little* more of the Man than you used to have. Remember my favorite

quotation—

“On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in Man ;”

“What proves the Hero truly great
Is never, never to despair.”

Your mother and sisters * desire their compliments.—A
Dieu je vous commende, ROBT. BURNS.†

(²⁴) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 6th Sep. 1789.

DEAR MADAM,—I have mentioned in my last my appointment to the Excise, and the birth of the little Frank ; who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honorable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older ; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling bridge.

I had some time ago an epistle, part poetic, and part prosaic, from your poetess, Miss J. Little, a very ingenious, but modest composition.‡ I should have written her as

* The poet's mother had a double errand in coming to Ellisland at this period. She brought young *Robert* home, now about three years old, and she waited on Mrs Burns during her confinement with Francis Wallace (born 18th August.)

† The original MS. was parted with by Mrs Begg to a Mr Forrest in Tranent, and after passing through various hands, it came into the possession of the widow of Dr. Burns, Toronto.

‡ Janet Little was a dairymaid then employed at Loudoun Castle, at that time rented by Mrs Henrie, a daughter of Mrs Dunlop. She had read and appreciated the poems of Burns, and in a letter dated 12th July 1789, appended some complimentary stanzas, ten in number, of which we shall

she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country; and I am happy to add, always to the honor of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and, except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August, struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present. * * *

Would I could write you a letter of comfort ! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure, as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition that should equal “The Iliad.” Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort ! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence ; a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least near four thousand years, have, in some mode or other, firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch ; but, when I reflected, that I was opposing the most

give one as a sample. In 1792, she was induced to publish a volume of her rhymes. She was a tall, masculine looking nymph with dark hair and coarse features. Eventually she married a widower, one John Richmond, who was a labourer on the Loudoun property. She died in 1813, aged 54, and a tablet is placed over her remains, in the burial-ground at Loudoun Kirk. The following is the verse on Burns :—

Did Addison or Pope but hear,
Or Sam, that critic most severe,
A ploughboy sing with throat sac clear,
 They in a rage
Their Works would a' in pieces tear,
 And curse their page.

ardent wishes, and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favorite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the book of Job,

"Against the day of battle and of war"—

spoken of religion :

" 'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
 'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night :
 When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few
 When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue ;
 'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
 Disarms affliction, or repels his dart ;
 Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
 Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies."

I have been very busy with "Zeluco."* The Doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion on it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall however digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. "Zeluco" is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende.*

R. B.

During the Summer and Autumn of this year, Burns had occasional meetings with Captain Grose at the convivial board of

* "Zeluco" was a novel by Dr Moore, of some note in its day. It appeared in June 1789, and was reviewed in the Scots Magazine for August. It is a moral tale, designed to show the inevitable misery of Vice.

Burns's copy with pencil notes on its margins was presented to Mrs Dunlop with an inscription, and was long preserved by her descendants. Unfortunately the 2nd volume was destroyed by ants in India; the companion volume, the first, is still possessed by her great-grandson, Wallace Dunlop, C.B. The poet's notes are very scant. The inscription on fly-leaf, reads—"To my much esteemed Friend, Mrs Dunlop, of Dunlop.

ROBT. BURNS."

his friend, Mr Robert Riddell, at Friars Carse. Some account of them will be found in connexion with the Poems at pp. 232, and 233, Vol. II.

An equally notable event of the same season was that William Nicol and Allan Masterton, both of the High School, Edinburgh, came to reside in the poet's neighbourhood, the former being in country quarters near Moffat to enjoy his vacations in angling excursions, and the latter was employed to give lessons in penmanship and music to the young ladies at Dalswinton. The three companions, Willie, Rab, and Allan, met over a "peck o' maut," well brewed and as well distilled, in Nicol's lodgings, and the result was the unmatched Bacchanalian Song, "O Willie brew'd a peck o' maut," which is printed at page 246, Vol. II.

Evidence exists to show that the song which celebrated the sederunt of those "three merry boys" near Moffat, immediately became popular at Friars Carse; the squire and his associates must often have made the rafters of his sitting parlour ring to the chorus—

"We are na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our e'e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
But ay we'll taste the barley bree."

That song indeed seems to have suggested a similar symposium in which the trio consisted of three gentlemen of quality, the main variation being that old claret was substituted for the "barley bree," of the humbler three merry boys. At the mansion of Squire Johnston of Cowhill, there met, probably as a small dinner-party, on 10th October 1789, six brethren in the same degree, who, under the inspiration of after-dinner libations (and perhaps after joining in the above chorus), resolved on a betting scheme to the following effect:—Sir Robert Laurie of Maxwelton, one of the company, possessed a noted ebony whistle, which an ancestor of his had won at a drinking-bout with a drunken Dane. It was now proposed that the present holder of the whistle, with Alexander Ferguson of Craigdarroch, should at Friars Carse join their relative, Robert Riddell of Glenriddell, six days thereafter; and there in presence of two chosen witnesses and an umpire, contend for the championship of the whistle. The terms laid down were, that the com-

batants must drink bottle for bottle of claret with each other, until victory should declare itself by two of their number becoming incapable of sounding the whistle, while the third continued able to do so. A memorandum of the Bet was drawn up on the spot, and signed by the three proposed contenders, and by Mr John M'Murdo of Drumlanrig, the stipulated umpire, together with Messrs Patrick Miller of Dalswinton and George Johnston of Cowhill as the witnesses. This premised, the following letter of Burns will explain itself.

(²) TO CAPTAIN RIDDELL, OF FRIARS CARSE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 16th Oct. 1789.

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

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

“The whistle and the man I sing;
The man that won the whistle,” &c.

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

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

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

R. B.

Nothing can be clearer from the terms of the above letter than the fact that Mr. Riddell had made Burns acquainted with every particular of the arrangements concerning the “mighty claret-shed” of 16th October. The quotation of a couple of stanzas of his grand drinking-song that had so electrified his convivial neighbours, speaks volumes : but his manner of travestying the last couplet goes into the very detail of the *Bot*.—

“Wha *last* beside his chair shall fa',
 He is the King among us three.”

Allan Masterton, who composed the melody of the song, had now left the locality where he had been teaching it, with Burns's words, to the neighbouring Squires, and the poet wishes to dispatch a letter to him : he has “some misgivings” that he takes too much upon him in requesting Mr Riddell to get his guest, Sir

Robert Laurie, to frank it; but he does so, and "will send a servant in the evening for it." That is not the language of one who expected to be a guest *himself* that night, and to sit at the same table with the Baronet and his brethren of the quorum? * Certainly the services of Burns as a laureate had been bespoke to celebrate the contest and its result; but of that fray he was a *hearsay* witness only—"For me, as Thomson, in his *Winter*, says of the storm, I shall

"hear astonish'd, and astonish'd sing!"

But we have said enough of the silly controversy about "real presence" and "real absence" of the poet on that occasion, in our notes to the ballad of "The Whistle," at page 265, Vol. II.

The precise date when Burns entered on actual practice as an officer of Excise can only be inferred from his correspondence. The first letter which notes the circumstance is that to Ainslie of 1st November 1789; and there he does not distinctly admit that he had commenced the duties, but says "I am now appointed to an Excise division," adding however these words: "you need

* Dr Waddell follows Dr Chambers as an inveterate stickler for the "real-presence theory;" he thinks it would be to the "disadvantage" of Burns were it proved that he was absent from the claret-contest at the Carse. We see the matter in a different light. Those lairds who thus deliberately sat down to inebriate themselves for a little vain-glory, would not like to expose their naked frailties even to such a witness as Burns, and neither would he have relished the position which, under the poetic license, he did assume in his ballad. The inventive genius of the bard shines with a double lustre, when we know that his highly dramatic picture is more indebted to the artist's lively conception than to bald facts: instead of narrating in the ballad that other three gentlemen sat beside the champions, to see that fair-play was maintained, he picturesquely says:—

"A bard was selected to witness the fray
And tell future ages the feats of the day."

And when the fight was over, instead of saying that Mr M^cMurdo delivered his verdict in favour of Craigdarroch, because Glenriddell had yielded, and Sir Robert had fallen from his chair dead drunk, he says:—

"Then up rose our bard, like a prophet in drink;
'Craigdarroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink,
Thine be the laurel, and mine be the bay;
The field thou hast won, by yon bright god of day!'"

not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business." Writing to Blacklock on 21st October, he says :—

"I'm turned a Gauger—Peace be here !
Parnassian queans, I fear, I fear,
Ye'll now disdain me !
And then my fifty pounds a year
Will little gain me."

The Muses, however, did not disdain him when he composed his sublime address to "Mary in Heaven" about this very period. The vignette to Vol. III. of this work shows that we are willing to adopt the popular belief that on the night before that anniversary of Mary's death, he wandered solitary on the banks of the Nith in the vicinity of his farm, "in the extremest agitation of mind nearly the whole night." As the approaching dawn wiped out the stars one by one, his eyes followed a particular planet which seemed to "linger with lessening ray" till it also disappeared. More than this we cannot know, and it is all plainly told in the lyric itself: the picture is sensational enough, and requires not to have anything added to it. We do not believe that Mrs Burns ever divined the cause of his sadness, or knew any more of the history of that secret passion—probably she knew less—than is now patent to the world. There was, no doubt, good reason for the poet's mystifications regarding that passion: perhaps chiefly on Mrs Burns's account he was willing to throw back into a visionary distance, what he could not well acknowledge as belonging to his mature life.

(¹³) TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 1st Nov. 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I had written you long ere now, could I have guessed where to find you, for I am sure you have more good sense than to waste precious days of vacation-time in the dirt of business in Edinburgh. Wherever you are

God bless you, and lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil!

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

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

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence in the most favourable situations does not abound with pleasures, and has its inconveniences and ills; capricious foolish man mistakes these inconveniences and ills, as if they were the peculiar

* Burns elsewhere observes that he would have “some wayward feelings about appearing, simply as a gauger, in a part of the country where he is only known to fame as a poet.”

property of his particular situation ; and hence that eternal fickleness, that love of change, which has ruined, and daily does ruin many a fine fellow, as well as many a blockhead ; and is almost, without exception, a constant source of disappointment and misery. So far from being dissatisfied with my present lot, I earnestly pray the Great Disposer of events that it may never be worse, and I think I can lay my hand on my heart and say “ I shall be content ? ”

I long to hear from you how you go on—not so much in business as in life. Are you pretty well satisfied with your own exertions, and tolerably at ease in your internal reflections ? ’Tis much to be a great character as a lawyer, but beyond comparison more to be a great character as a man.

That you may be both the one and the other is the earnest wish—and that you will be both, is the firm persuasion of, my dear Sir, &c. R. B.

(7) TO MR RICHARD BROWN, PORT GLASGOW.

(DR WALKER’S ED., 1811.)

ELLISLAND, 4th November, 1789.

I HAVE been so hurried, my ever-dear friend, that though I got both your letters, I have not been able to command an hour to answer them as I wished ; and even now, you are to look on this as merely confessing debt, and craving days. Few things could have given me so much pleasure as the news that you were once more safe and sound on terra firma, and happy in that place where happiness is alone to be found—in the fireside circle. May the benevolent Director of all things peculiarly bless you in all those endearing connexions consequent on the tender and venerable

names of husband and father! I have indeed been extremely lucky in getting an additional income of £50 a year, while, at the same time, the appointment will not cost me above £10 or £12 per annum of expenses more than I must have inevitably incurred. The worst circumstance is, that the Excise division which I have got is so extensive—no less than ten parishes to ride over; and it abounds besides with so much business, that I can scarcely steal a spare moment. However, labor endears rest, and both together are absolutely necessary for the proper enjoyment of human existence. I cannot meet you any where. No less than an order from the Board of Excise, at Edinburgh, is necessary before I can have so much time as to meet you in Ayrshire. But do you come, and see me. We must have a social day, and perhaps lengthen it out half the night, before you go again to sea. You are the earliest friend I now have on earth, my brothers excepted: and is not that an endearing circumstance? When you and I first met, we were at the green period of human life. The twig would easily take a bent, but would as easily return to its former state. You and I not only took a mutual bent, but, by the melancholy, though strong influence of being both of the family of the unfortunate, we were entwined with one another in our growth towards advanced age; and blasted be the sacrilegious hand that shall attempt to undo the union!* You and I must have one bumper to my favourite toast: “May the companions of our youth be the friends of our old age!” Come and see me one year; I shall see you at Port Glasgow

* This is the last of the poet's letters to Richard Brown that have been preserved. We are indebted to Professor Walker for having recovered the whole series—seven in number, through the medium of Mr David Sillar of Irvine, and he remarks that, “written as they were at a period when the Poet was in the meridian of his reputation, they show that he was at no time so dazzled with success as to forget the friends who had anticipated the public by discovering his merit.”

the next; and if we can contrive to have a gossiping between our two bedfellows, it will be so much additional pleasure. Mrs Burns joins me in kind compliments to you and Mrs Brown.

Adieu! I am ever, my dear Sir, yours. R. B.

(i) TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER, MORPETH.

(CHAMBERS', 1852.)

ELLISLAND, 10th Nov., 1789.

DEAR WILLIAM,—I would have written you sooner, but I am so hurried and fatigued with my Excise business, that I can scarcely pluck up resolution to go through the effort of a letter to anybody. Indeed you hardly deserve a letter from me, considering that you have spare hours in which you have nothing to do at all, and yet it was near three months between your two last letters.

I know not if you heard lately from Gilbert. I expect him here with me about the latter end of this week. * * * My mother is returned, now that she has seen my little boy Francis fairly set to the world. I suppose Gilbert has informed you that you have got a new nephew. He is a fine thriving fellow, and promises to do honor to the name he bears. I have named him Francis Wallace, after my worthy friend, Mrs Dunlop, of Dunlop.

The only Ayrshire news that I remember in which I think you will be interested, is that Mr Ronald is bankrupt.* You will easily guess, that from his insolent vanity in his sunshine of life, he will now feel a little retaliation from those who thought themselves eclipsed by him; for, poor fellow, I do not think he ever intentionally injured any one. I might

* Oct., 23, 1789. Sequestration, Mr Wm. Ronald, Tobacconist, Mauchline.

indeed, perhaps, except his wife, whom he certainly has used very ill ; but she is still fond of him to distraction, and bears up wonderfully—much superior to him—under this severe shock of fortune. Women have a kind of sturdy sufferance, which qualifies them to endure beyond, much beyond, the common run of men ; but perhaps part of that fortitude is owing to their short-sightedness, for they are by no means famous for seeing remote consequences in all their real importance.

I am very glad at your resolution to live within your income, be that what it will. Had poor Ronald done so, he had not this day been a prey to the dreadful miseries of insolvency.

You are at the time of life when those habitudes are begun which are to mark the character of the future man. Go on and persevere, and depend on less or more success, I am, dear William, your brother,

R. B.

(^c) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CURRIE, 1800—CHAMBERS', 1856.)

9th December 1789.

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

interested yourself in my welfare, and principally as such still, you permit me to approach you.

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

If you know or have ever seen Captain Grose, the antiquarian, you will enter into any humor that is in the verses on him. Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London newspaper.† Though, I daresay, you have none of the Solemn-League-and-Covenant fire, which shone so conspicuous in Lord George Gordon, and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet I think you must have heard of Dr M'Gill, one of the Clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help him, poor man! Though he is

* The quotation here is from Blair's "Grave"—

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

Thomas Campbell, with a fine ear for alliteration, thus improved on Blair:—

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

However, the germ of the favourite line proceeded from John Norris, an old English versifier who has—

"Like angels' visits, short and bright."

† From the London newspaper the poem was reprinted in the "Kelso Chronicle" of 4th September 1789, with the signature "Thomas A. Linn," appended. Probably Grose was busy with his drawing of Kelso Abbey at the time; and some of his associates there would cause the insertion.

one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest of the whole priesthood of the Kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor Doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being thrown out to the mercy of the winter winds. The enclosed ballad on that business is, I confess, too local, but I laughed myself at some conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.*

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

* "The Kirk of Scotland's Alarm," p. 236, Vol. II.

† "The Five Carlines," p. 276, Vol. II.

‡ The reference here is to the Duke of Queensberry."

club your curse with the execrating voice of the country. I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for, individuals of both parties; but a man who has it in his power to be the Father of a Country, and who is only known to that country by the mischiefs he does in it, is a character of which one cannot speak with patience.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ROBT. BURNS.

(²⁵) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 13th December, 1789.

MANY thanks, dear Madam, for your sheet-full of rhymes. Though at present I am below the veriest prose, yet from you every thing pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system; a system, the state of which is most conducive to our happiness, or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks I have been so ill with a nervous head-ache, that I have been obliged to give up for a time my Excise-books, being scarce able to lift my head, much less to ride once a week over ten muir

parishes. What is Man!—To-day in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter.* Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life is a something at which he recoils.

“————— Tell us, ye dead;
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
'Tis no matter — a little time
Will make us learn'd as you are, and as close.”

Can it be possible, that when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more to those that knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles, and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable Sages and holy Flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories, of another world beyond death; or are they all alike, baseless visions, and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must only be for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it? There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world, against which he so long and so bravely struggled. There should I

* With exception of the query, “What is man?” we fail to see, with Chambers, that this grand letter is merely “a deliberate transcription, with some amplifications, of an entry in the Poet’s Journal,” given at page 129 *supra*.

meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life ; the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me.—Muir !* thy weaknesses were the aberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with every thing generous, manly and noble ; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine ! There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost, my ever dear Mary ! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honor, constancy, and love.†

My Mary, dear departed shade !

Where is thy place of heavenly rest ?

Seest thou thy lover lowly laid ?

Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters ! I trust thou art no impostor, and that thy revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave, is not one of the many impositions which time after time have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee “shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” by being yet connected together in a better world, where every tie that bound heart to heart, in this state of existence, shall be, far beyond our present conceptions, more endearing.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who maintain, that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think ; and but to you I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch, who is impaired in more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl, which the

* Mr Robert Muir, of Kilmarnock, who died, April 23d, 1788.

† This is the earliest mention of “Highland Mary,” in the poet's correspondence. We suspect that Burns had shortly before this date forwarded “Thou lingering star,” to Mrs Dunlop, and informed her that she was a juvenile sweetheart ; otherwise she would be at a loss to understand this allusion.

writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better, or indeed any thing at all.

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news of James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know; as I promise you on the sincerity of a man, who is weary of one world, and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honored friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre miserable*. R. B.

(¹) TO LADY GLENCAIRN.*

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, [Dec. 1789.]

MY LADY,—The honor you have done your poor poet, in writing him so very obliging a letter, and the pleasure the inclosed beautiful verses have given him, came very seasonably to his aid amid the cheerless gloom and sinking despondency of diseased nerves and December weather. As to forgetting the family of Glencairn, heaven is my witness with what sincerity I could use those old verses, which please me more in their rude simplicity than the most elegant lines I ever saw.

If thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand.

My tongue to my mouth's roof let cleave,
If I do thee forget,
Jerusalem! and thee above
My chief joy do not set.

* This was the Countess Dowager Glencairn, mother of Earl James, the patron of Burns.

When I am tempted to do any thing improper, I dare not, because I look on myself as accountable to your ladyship and family. Now and then, when I have the honor to be called to the tables of the great, if I happen to meet with any mortification from the stately stupidity of self-sufficient squires, or the luxuriant insolence of upstart nabobs, I get above the creatures by calling to remembrance that I am patronized by the noble House of Glencairn; and at galatimes, such as New-year's day, a christening, or the kirknight, when my punch bowl is brought from its dusty corner, and filled up in honor of the occasion, I begin with,—*The Countess of Glencairn!* My good woman, with the enthusiasm of a grateful heart, next cries, *My Lord!* and so the toast goes on, until I end with *Lady Harriet's* * *little angel!* whose epithalamium I have pledged myself to write.

When I received your Ladyship's letter, I was just in the act of transcribing for you some verses I have lately composed; and meant to have sent them my first leisure hour, and acquainted you with my late change of life. I mentioned to my Lord, my fears concerning my farm. Those fears were indeed too true; it is a bargain would have ruined me, but for the lucky circumstance of my having an Excise commission.

People may talk as they please, of the ignominy of the Excise: £50 a year will support my wife and children and keep me independent of the world; and I would much rather have it said that my profession borrowed credit from me, than that I borrowed credit from my profession. Another advantage I have in this business, is the knowledge it gives me of the various shades of human character, consequently assisting me vastly in my poetic pursuits. I

* Lady Harriet Don, sister of the poet's patron. Her "little angel" is understood to have been the late accomplished Sir Alexander Don, of Newton-Don, Bart.

had the most ardent enthusiasm for the Muses when nobody knew me, but myself, and that ardour is by no means cooled now that my Lord Glencairn's goodness has introduced me to all the world. Not that I am in haste for the press. I have no idea of publishing, else I certainly had consulted my generous noble patron; but after acting the part of an honest man, and supporting my family, my whole wishes and views are directed to poetic pursuits. I am aware that though I were to give performances to the world superior to my former works, still if they were of the same kind with those, the comparative reception they would meet with would mortify me. I have turned my thoughts on the Drama. I do not mean the stately buskin of the Tragic Muse. Does not your Ladyship think that an Edinburgh theatre would be more amused with affectation, folly, and whim of true Scottish growth, than manners, which by far the greatest part of the audience can only know at second-hand? I have the honor to be your Ladyship's ever devoted and grateful, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹) TO LADY WINIFRED MAXWELL CONSTABLE.

(LOCKHART, 1828.)

ELLISLAND, 16th Dec. 1789.

MY LADY,—In vain have I from day to day expected to hear from Mrs Young, as she promised me at Dalswinton that she would do me the honor to introduce me at Tinwald; and it was impossible not from your Ladyship's accessibility, but from my own feelings, that I could go alone. Lately, indeed, Mr Maxwell, of Currachan, in his usual goodness offered to accompany me, when an unlucky indisposition on my part hindered my embracing the opportunity. To court the notice, or the tables, of the great, except where I sometimes have had a little matter to ask of them, or more

often the pleasanter task of witnessing my gratitude to them, is what I never have done, and I trust never shall do. But with your Ladyship I have the honor to be connected by one of the strongest and most endearing ties in the whole world. Common sufferers, in a cause where even to be unfortunate is glorious, the cause of heroic loyalty ! Though my fathers had not illustrious honors and vast properties to hazard in the contest, though they left their humble cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders, yet what they could they did, and what they had they lost : with unshaken firmness and unconcealed political attachments, they shook hands with ruin for what they esteemed the cause of their king and their country.* This language and the enclosed verses are for your ladyship's eye alone.† Poets are not very famous for their prudence ; but as I can do nothing for a cause which is now nearly no more, I do not wish to hurt myself.

I have the honor to be, my lady, your ladyship's obliged and obedient humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹) TO PROVOST MAXWELL, OF LOCHMABEN.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

ELLISLAND, 20th Dec. 1789.

DEAR PROVOST,—As my friend Mr Graham goes for your good town to-morrow, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines ; and as I have nothing to say, I have chosen this sheet of foolscap, and begun, as you see, at the top of the first page, because I have ever observed that when once

* This passage is what Sir Walter Scott referred to in sending the letter to Mr Lockhart to assist him in his *Biography of Burns* :—"Here Burns plays high Jacobite to that singular old curmudgeon, Lady Winifred Constable, and on that account the letter is curious ; though I imagine his Jacobitism, like my own, belonged to the fancy rather than the reason."

† This was the address to Wm. Tytler, Esq. of Woodhouselee, Defender of Mary Queen of Scots, given at page 70, vol. II.

people have fairly set out, they know not where to stop. Now that my first sentence is concluded, I have nothing to do but to pray Heaven to help me on to another. Shall I write you on politics, or religion?—two master-subjects for your sayers of nothing. Of the first, I dare say by this time you are nearly surfeited; and for the last, whatever they may talk of it who make it a kind of company concern, I never could endure it beyond a soliloquy. I might write you on farming, on building, on marketing; but my poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedeviled with the task of the superlatively damned, to make *one guinea do the business of three*, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word “business,” though no less than four letters of my very short surname are in it.

Well, to make a matter short, I shall betake myself to a subject ever fruitful of themes—a subject, the turtle feast of the sons of Satan, and the delicious sugar-plum of the babes of grace—a subject sparkling with all the jewels that it can find in the mines of Genius, and pregnant with all the stores of learning, from Moses and Confucius to Franklin and Priestley—in short, may it please your Lordship, I intend to write [*Here, according to Cunningham, who first published the letter, the poet inserted an indecent ballad.*]

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

* See the Election Ballad, addressed to Mr Graham, of Fintry,—p. 298, Vol. II., stanza 8:—

“And bent on winning borough towns,
Came shaking hands wi’ wabster loons,
And kissing barefit carlious.”

Jeffrey, or any of his amiable family,* I beg you will give them my best compliments.

R. B.

(¹) TO MR GEORGE S. SUTHERLAND.

(*Here first published.*)†

ELLISLAND, *Thursday Morning*, [Dec. 31, 1789.]

SIR,—Jogging home yesternight, it occurred to me that as your next night is the first night of the New Year, a few lines allusive to the Season by way of Prologue, Interlude, or what you please, might take pretty well. The enclosed verses are very incorrect, because they are almost the first crude suggestions of my Muse, by way of bearing me company in my darkling journey. I am sensible it is too late to send you them; but if they can any way serve you, use, alter, or, if you please, neglect them. I shall not be in the least mortified though they are never heard of; but if they can be of any service to Mr Sutherland and his friends, I shall kiss my hands to my lady Muse, and own myself much her debtor. —I am Sir, your very humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

MR GEORGE S. SUTHERLAND,
Playwright, near Dumfries,
at J. Hutchison's, the Post Office.

The piece enclosed was the Prologue, spoken at the theatre, Dumfries, on New-Year's-Day evening 1790, beginning—

“No song nor dance I bring from yon great city,
That queens it o'er our taste—the more's the pity.”

See p. 282, Vol. II.

* The Rev. Mr Jeffrey was father of the young lady whom the poet celebrated in the song “I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen.” She became the wife of a gentleman named Renwick, of Liverpool, who latterly removed to New York in the United States. She took great offence at Cunningham's note to the above letter, and affected to doubt the authenticity of some portions of the latter, which she fancied to display a “want of reverence for her father.” Unprejudiced readers will scarcely detect any disrespect on Burns's part, in the epithet applied to Mr Jeffrey.

† From the poet's holograph, possessed by J. B. Greenshields, Esq., of Kerse, Leicestershire.

1790.

(2) TO MR GILBERT BURNS, MOSSGIEL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 11th January 1790.

DEAR BROTHER,—I mean to take advantage of the frank, though I have not, in my present frame of mind, much appetite for exertion in writing. My nerves are in a cursed state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself. It is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go to hell! I'll fight it out and be off with it.

We have got a set of very decent players here just now. I have seen them an evening or two. David Campbell, in Ayr, wrote to me by the manager of the company, a Mr Sutherland, who is a man of apparent worth. On New-Year's-day evening I gave him the following prologue, which he spouted to his audience with applause.

No song nor dance I bring from yon great city
That queens it o'er our taste—the more's the pity:
Tho', by the bye, abroad why will you roam?
Good sense and taste are natives here at home, &c.

I can no more.—If once I was clear of this cursed farm,
I should respire more at ease. R. B.

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

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL, 1835.)

ELLISLAND, 14th January 1790.

SINCE we are here creatures of a day—since “a few summer days and a few winter nights, and the life of man is at an end,” why, my dear much esteemed Sir, should you and I let negligent indolence—for I know it is nothing worse—step

in between us and bar the enjoyment of a mutual correspondence? We are not shapen out of the common, heavy, methodical clod, the elemental stuff of the plodding selfish race, the sons of Arithmetic and Prudence; our feelings and hearts are not benumbed and poisoned by the cursed influence of riches, which, whatever blessing they may be in other prospects, are no friends to the nobler qualities of the heart: in the name of random Sensibility, then, let never the moon change on our silence any more. I have had a tract of bad health most part of this winter, else you had heard from me long ere now. Thank Heaven, I am now got so much better as to be able to partake a little in the enjoyments of life.

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

Feb. 2.

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

But, my dear Sir, little ones that look up to you for paternal protection are an important charge. I have already two fine, healthy, stout little fellows, and I wish to throw some light upon them. I have a thousand reveries and schemes about them, and their future destiny—not that I am a Utopian projector in these things; but I am resolved never to breed up a son of mine to any of the learned professions. I know the value of independence;

and since I cannot give my sons an independent fortune, I shall give them an independent line of life. What a chaos of hurry, chance, and changes is this world, when one sits soberly down to reflect on it! To a father, who himself knows the world, the thought that he shall have sons to usher into it must fill him with dread; but if he have daughters, the prospect in a thoughtful moment is apt to shock him.

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

R. B.

(²⁶) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 25th *January*, 1790.

It has been owing to unremitting hurry of business that I have not written to you, Madam, long ere now. My health is greatly better, and I now begin once more to share in satisfaction and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creatures.

Many thanks, my much esteemed friend, for your kind letters: but why will you make me run the risk of being

contemptible and mercenary in my own eyes? When I pique myself on my independent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic licence, nor poetic rant; and I am so flattered with the honor you have done me, in making me your compeer in friendship and friendly correspondence, that I cannot without pain, and a degree of mortification, be reminded of the real inequality between our situations.

Most sincerely do I rejoice with you, dear Madam, in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the *Shipwreck*, which you so much admire, is no more. After weathering the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem, and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the Aurora frigate! I forget what part of Scotland had the honor of giving him birth, but he was the son of obscurity and misfortune.* He was one of those daring adventurous spirits, which Scotland beyond any other country is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor fellow may hereafter wander, and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart:

"Little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die!"†

Old Scottish songs are, you know, a favourite study and

* Falconer was the son of a tradesman near John Knox's Corner, Netherbow, Edinburgh.

† This is one of the stanzas in the ballad, called "The Queen's Maries."

pursuit of mine : and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanzas of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female, lamenting her fate. She concludes with this pathetic wish :

“ O that my father had ne’er on me smil’d ;
O that my mother had ne’er to me sung !
O that my cradle had never been rock’d ;
But that I had died when I was young !

O that the grave it were my bed,
My blankets were my winding sheet ;
The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a’ ;
And O sae sound as I should sleep !”

I do not remember in all my reading, to have met with anything more truly the language of misery than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love ; to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson the small-pox. They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him, acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest, and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of the head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry until you are tired of it next time I have the honor of assuring you how truly I am, &c.

R. B.

(42) TO MRS McLEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1834.)

[ELLISLAND, *Feb.* 1790].

I HAVE indeed been ill, Madam, the whole winter. An incessant headache, depression of spirits, and all the truly miserable consequences of a deranged nervous system, have made dreadful havoc of my health and peace. Add to all this, a line of life into which I have lately entered obliges me to ride, upon an average, at least two hundred miles every week. However, thank Heaven, I am now greatly better in health.

[I could not answer your last letter but one. When you in so many words tell a man that you look on his letters with a smile of contempt, in what language, Madam, can he answer you? Though I were conscious that I had acted wrong—and I am conscious I have acted wrong—yet would I not be bullied into repentance.]

I cannot, will not, enter into extenuatory circumstances; else I could show you how my precipitate, headlong, unthinking conduct, leagued with a conjuncture of unlucky events to thrust me out of a possibility of keeping the path of rectitude, to curse me by an irreconcilable war between my duty and my nearest wishes, and to damn me with a choice only of different species of error and misconduct.

I dare not trust myself farther with the subject. The following song is one of my latest productions, and I send it you, as I would do any thing else, because it pleases myself:—

TO MARY IN HEAVEN.

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.

See p. 268, Vol. II.

R. B.

In the volume of "Clarinda Correspondence" edited by the lady's grandson in 1843, the date suggested of this letter is "Spring of 1791," but the allusions in the first paragraph verify the date we assign to it. There is a break at the end of that paragraph which points out a suppressed or missing passage: the explanation is that the manuscript had got into a dilapidated state, and a fragment which suggests itself to be the missing portion, has recently turned up in other hands. That fragment bears an endorsement by Mrs M'Lehose, "received Feb. 5, 1790," and accordingly we introduce the passage in the text within brackets to distinguish it. The verses referred to are wanting in the printed copy in the Clarinda volume of 1843, but they are partly transcribed on the back of the fragment. The editor of the volume referred to, being unaware what the verses were, assumed that the poet had then communicated the warm effusion,

"Thine am I my faithful Fair,
Thine, my lovely Nancy ;"

but that song was not composed till October 1793, and it is out of all harmony with the letter in the text.

PREFACE TO JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, VOL. III.

Now that the editor gives this third Volume of The Scots Musical Museum to the public, he hopes it will not be found unworthy of the Volumes already published. As this is not one of those many Publications which are hourly ushered into the world merely to catch the eye of Fashion in her frenzy of a day, the Editor has little to hope or fear from the herd of readers.

Consciousness of the well-known merit of our Scottish Music, and the national fondness of a Scotchman for the productions of his own country, are at once the Editor's motive and apology for this undertaking; and where any

of the pieces in the collection may perhaps be found wanting at the Critical Bar of the *first*, he appeals to the honest prejudices of the *last*.

EDIN^R., *February 2nd*, 1790.

In the above volume, besides the favourite songs "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw," "O were I on Parnassus hill," "Tam Glen," "John Anderson my Jo," and "O Willie brew'd a peck o' maut," appeared the recently composed address "To Mary in Heaven." For the poet's notes to Songs in the first four volumes of *Johnson*, see Appendix, article B.

(²) TO MR G. S. SUTHERLAND, DUMFRIES
THEATRE.

(STEWART, 1801.)

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

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

I shall see you on Wednesday forenoon. In the greatest
hurry, &c. R. B.

Monday Morning, [1st Feb. 1790.]

The foregoing note was accompanied by the Scots Prologue.

What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on,
How this new Play, and that new Sang is comin'?

P. 286, Vol. II.

(6) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CROMEK, in part, and here more completely.)*

ELLISLAND, 2nd Feb. 1790.

No ! I will not say one word about apologies and excuses for not writing you. I am a poor damn'd, rascally gauger, condemned to gallop at least 200 miles every week to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels, and where can I find time to write to, or importance to interest, anybody ? The upbraidings of my conscience, nay, the upbraidings of my wife, have persecuted me on your account these two or three months past. I wish to God I was a great man, that my correspondence might throw light upon you to let the world see what you really are ; and then I would make your fortune without putting my hand in my pocket for you, which, like all other great men, I suppose I would avoid as much as possible. What are you doing, and how are you doing ? Have you lately seen any of my few friends ? What has become of the BOROUGH REFORM ? or, how is the fate of my poor namesake, Mademoiselle Burns, decided ? † Which of their grave lordships can lay his hand on his heart, and say that he has not taken advantage of such frailty ? Nay, if we may judge by near 6,000 years' experience, can the world do without such frailty ? O Man ! but for thee and thy selfish appetites and dishonest artifices, that beauteous form, and that once innocent and still ingenuous mind, might have shone conspicuous and

* Our thanks are due to George Wilson, Esq., a grandson of Mr Peter Hill, for access to the original letter in his possession, whereby we are enabled to add so considerably to its interesting contents.

† See the Poet's "Lines written under the picture of the celebrated Miss Burns"—page 67, Vol. II. The note contains some account of the Mademoiselle alluded to. See also the letter to Peter Hill, dated 2nd April 1789, page 223 *supra*.

lovely in the faithful wife and the affectionate mother ; and shall the unfortunate sacrifice to thy pleasures have no claim on thy humanity ? As for those flinty-bosomed, puritanical prosecutors of female frailty, and persecutors of female charms—I am quite sober—I am dispassionate—to show that I am so, I shall mend my pen ere I proceed. It is written, “Thou shalt not take the name of the L—d thy G—d in vain ;” so I neither say “G— curse them !” nor “G— blast them !” nor “G— damn them !” but, may Woman curse them ! may Woman blast them ! may Woman damn them ! . . . And when many years and much port, and great business, have delivered them over to vulture gout and aspen palsies, then may they be tantalised with the impotent desires, which like ghosts haunt their bosoms, when all their powers to give or receive enjoyment are for ever asleep in the sepulchre of their fathers !!!

Now for business. Our book society owe you still £1 4s. : a friend of mine will, I suppose, have given you some money for me (It is about £3, 10s., or so), from which pay yourself the Monkland Friendly Society’s account, and likewise Mr Neilson’s account, and send me a copy of it. The gentleman that will have given you the money will be Mr Allan Masterton, writing master in Carrubber’s Close. I saw lately in a Review some extracts from a new poem called “The Village Curate,” I think ; send it me. I want likewise a cheap copy of “The World.” Mr Armstrong, the young poet, who does me the honor to mention me so kindly in his works, please give him my best thanks for the copy of his book. I shall write him my first leisure hour. I like his poetry much, but I think his style in prose quite astonishing.

What is become of that veteran in Genius, Wit, and B * * dry, Smellie, and his book ? Give him my compliments. Does Mr Graham of Gartmore ever enter your shop

now? He is the noblest instance of great talents, great fortune, and great worth, that ever I saw in conjunction.

Remember me to Mrs Hill; and believe me to be, my dear Sir, ever yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

The Scots Magazine of the period has the following notice in reference to the subject so largely dwelt on in the foregoing letter: "To rid the city of a part of those unfortunate females, and if possible to introduce them again into the world with habits of honest industry, one of the magistrates (Creech) in harvest time 1789, ordered all those who were in confinement for openly exercising their pernicious calling to be brought before him in the Council Chambers, and after addressing them, handed each one shilling, and a reaper's sickle, and liberated the whole (about 30), under their promise to apply for harvest work. But in three days the greater part of them were again apprehended for offences similar to those for which they had been previously convicted."

Miss Margaret Burns, *alias* Matthews, after some years' absence in England, returned to Edinburgh in 1789, accompanied by a Miss Sanderson, with whom she set up a fine house in Rose Street. The back windows of Lord Swinton's house looked into this establishment, and he soon became so annoyed with midnight brawls and other disturbances that he brought a complaint against the frail sisters before the magistrates. The special protector of Miss Burns was Mr Robert Anderson of St Germain's, and the late Henry Guthrie befriended the other, who thereafter in gratitude adopted the name of "Mrs Guthrie." Notwithstanding a stout defence, the Bench, presided over by Creech, convicted them of the offences with which they were charged, and condemned them to be "banished furth of this city and liberties forever." A bill of suspension, followed by a reclaiming petition, was brought before the Court of Session, who after various proceedings, passed the bill on 22nd December, giving the cause in favour of the petitioners.

The case created considerable excitement and some amusement among those who felt interested in such actions. The Hon. Henry Erskine was counsel for Miss Burns, and Lord Braxfield

on one occasion interrupted him while pleading, by asking the question—"Mr Erskine, can you tell me the reason that in the record whenever Mr Creech's name is mentioned, it is printed in *italics*?" Mr Erskine replied, "Indeed, my lord, I can hardly tell you, unless it is done to show that none but an *Italian* would have used Miss Burns as Mr Creech has done." This was a sly reference to Mr Creech's very effeminate voice and smooth face.

The closing chapter in the history of poor Mademoiselle is very affecting. She fell into a deep decline and was removed to lodgings in Roslin for change of air, where she died in 1792, and was interred in the common burial ground there, which is, or was then, unenclosed. An aged friend in 1843 wrote to Dr Carruthers of the Inverness Courier, regarding her fate thus:—"I never saw Miss Burns in the *flesh*, but I did in the *bones*. I remember when a stripling, popping into Elliot's Auction Room to witness the sale of her skeleton, which had been catalogued among other articles of *virtu*. The auctioneer encouraged the lagging bidders with this assurance—"Gentlemen, I can vouch for it, Miss Burns did *not* die of small pox, as some allege. No risk here, I assure you!" The *lovely Burns* was sold for about seven guineas!"

(⁴) TO MR WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 9th Feb. 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,—That d-mned mare of yours is dead. I would freely have given her price to have saved her; she has vexed me beyond description. Indebted as I was to your goodness beyond what I can ever repay, I eagerly grasped at your offer to have the mare with me. That I might at least show my readiness in wishing to be grateful, I took every care of her in my power. She was never crossed for riding above half a score of times by me, or in my keeping. I drew her in the plough, one of three, for one poor week. I refused 55 shillings for her, which was

the highest bode I could squeeze for her. I fed her up and had her in fine order for Dumfries fair; when four or five days before the fair, she was seized with an unaccountable disorder in the sinews, or somewhere in the bones of the neck; with a weakness or total want of power in her fillets; and in short the whole vertebræ of her spine seemed to be diseased and unbinged, and in eight-and-forty hours, in spite of the two best farriers in the country, she died, and be d-mned to her! The farriers said that she had been quite strained in the fillets beyond cure before you had bought her; and that she poor devil, though she might keep a little flesh, had been jaded and quite worn out with fatigue and oppression. While she was with me, she was under my own eye; and I assure you, my much valued friend, every thing was done for her that could be done; and the accident has vexed me to the heart. In fact, I could not pluck up spirits to write you, on account of the unfortunate business.

There is little new in this country. Our theatrical company, of which you must have heard, leave us in a week. Their merit and character are indeed very great, both on the stage and in private life; not a worthless creature among them; and their encouragement has been accordingly. Their usual run is from eighteen to twenty-five pounds a night; seldom less than the one, and the house will hold no more than the other. There have been repeated instances of sending away six, and eight, and ten pounds in a night, for want of room. A new theatre is to be built by subscription; the first stone is to be laid on Friday first to come. 300 guineas have been raised by 30 subscribers, and 30 more might have been got if wanted. The manager, Mr Sutherland, was introduced to me by a friend from Ayr; and a worthier or cleverer fellow I have rarely met with. Some of our clergy have slipt in by stealth now and then; but they have got up a farce of their own. You must have

heard how the Rev^d. Mr Lawson of Kirkmahoe,* seconded by the Rev^d. Mr Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate and Rev. Mr Heron of Kirkgunyeon, that in ordaining Mr Neilson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he, the said Heron, feloniously and treasonably bound the said Neilson to the Confession of Faith, “*so far as it is agreeable to reason and the word of God!*”

Mrs B. begs to be remembered most gratefully to you. Little Bobby and Frank are charmingly well and healthy. I am jaded to death with fatigue. For these two or three months, on an average, I have not ridden less than 200 miles per week. I have done little in the poetic way. I have given Mr Sutherland two prologues: one of which was delivered last week. I have likewise strung four or five barbarous stanzas, to the tune of Chevy Chase, by way of elegy on your poor unfortunate mare, beginning (the name she got here was Peg Nicholson),

‘Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare.’—See page 291, Vol. II.

My best compl^s. to Mrs Nicol, and little Neddy, and all the family. I hope Ned is a good scholar, and will come out to gather nuts and apples with me next harvest. I am ever, my dearest Friend, yours,

ROB^t. BURNS.

(2) WILLIAM BURNS TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

NEWCASTLE, 24th Jan. 1790.

DEAR BROTHER,—I wrote you about six weeks ago,† and I have expected to hear from you every post since, but I suppose your

* Obit.—“Dec. 14, 1796. At the manse of Kirkmahoe, the Rev. Archibald Lawson, minister of that parish.”

† Chambers informs his readers that William Burns’s letter to the poet, dated “Morpeth, 29th Nov. 1789,” was in his possession, and he thus

Excise business, which you hinted at in your last, has prevented you from writing. By the bye, when and how have you got into the Excise; and what division have you got about Dumfries? These questions please answer in your next, if more important matter do not occur. But in the mean time let me have the letter to John Murdoch (which Gilbert wrote me you meant to send): inclose it in your's to me, and let me have them as soon as possible, for I intend to sail for London in a fortnight, or three weeks at farthest.

You promised me when I was intending to go to Edinburgh, to write me some instructions about behaviour in companies rather above my station, to which I might be eventually introduced. As I may be introduced into such companies at Murdoch's, or on his account, when I go to London, I wish you would write me some such instructions now; I never had more need of them, for having spent little of my time in company of any sort since I came to Newcastle, I have almost forgot the common civilities of life. To these instructions pray add some of a moral kind, for though (either through the strength of early impressions, or the frigidity of my constitution) I have hitherto withstood the temptation to those vices to which young fellows of my station and time of life are so much addicted, yet, I do not know if my virtue will be able to withstand the more powerful temptations of the metropolis; yet, through God's assistance and your instructions, I hope to weather the storm.

Give the compliments of the season and my love to my sisters, and all the rest of your family. Tell Gilbert the first time you write him, that I am well, and that I will write him either when I sail or when I arrive at London. I am, &c. W. B.

indicates its contents: he hopes that "young Wallace bids fair to rival his great predecessor in strength and wisdom," and apologises for not writing oftener, pleading in excuse that all his leisure is devoted to devouring the contents of a circulating library—"I have read Kames's '*Sketches of the History of Man*,' Boswell's '*Tour to the Hebrides*,' *Burns's Poems*, and 'Beattie's *Dissertations*,' and will be glad if you would name a few other books which I should enquire for."

(⁸) TO MR WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER,
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)*

MY DEAR WILLIAM,—I would have written you sooner, but I have mislaid Mr Murdoch's letter, and cannot for my life lay my hand on it; so I cannot write him for want of a direction. If I find it afterwards, I will write him and inclose it to you in London. Now that you are setting out for that place, put on manly resolve, and determine to persevere; and in that case you will less or more be sure of success. One or two things allow me to particularise to you. London swarms with worthless wretches, who prey on their fellow-creatures' thoughtlessness or inexperience. Be cautious in forming connections with comrades and companions. You can be pretty good company to yourself, and you cannot be too shy of letting anybody know you further than to know you as a Saddler. Another caution: I give you great credit for your sobriety with respect to that universal vice, bad women. It is an impulse the hardest to be restrained; for if once a man accustoms himself to gratifications of that impulse, it is then nearly, or altogether impossible to restrain it. W——g is a most ruinous, expensive species of dissipation. Is spending a poor fellow's money, with which he ought to clothe and support himself, nothing? W——g has ninety-nine chances in a hundred to bring on a man the most nauseous and excruciating diseases to which human nature is liable. Are disease and an impaired constitution trifling considerations? all this independent of the criminality of it.

I have gotten the Excise division, in the middle of which I live. Poor little Frank is this morning at the height in

* We are indebted to Mr Robert Burns Begg, Solicitor, Kinross, for enabling us to supply some hitherto suppressed passages of this letter.

the small-pox. I got him inoculated, and I hope he is in a good way.

Write me before you leave Newcastle, and as soon as you reach London. In a word, if ever you be, as perhaps you may be, in a strait for a little ready cash, you know my direction. I shall not see you beat, while you fight like a man. Farewell! God bless you! ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 10th Feb. 1790.

TO DR MUNDELL, DUMFRIES.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)*

ELLISLAND, *Tuesday Morning.*

DEAR DOCTOR,—The bearer, Janet Nievison, is a neighbour, and occasionally a laborer of mine. She has got some complaint in her shoulder, and wants me to find her out a Doctor that will cure her, so I have sent her to you. You will remember that she is just in the jaws of matrimony, so for heaven's sake, get her "hale and sound" as soon as possible. We are all pretty well; only the little boy's sore mouth has again inflamed Mrs B.'s nipples.—I am, yours, ROBT. BURNS.

[Feb. 1790.]

TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., WRITER, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 13th February 1790.

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

"My poverty but not my will consents."

* Printed from a fac-simile of the original MS.

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

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

[December, 1789.

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

What strange beings we are! Since we have a portion

* The present letter was specially in reply to one from Cunningham dated 28th January, 1790, printed by Currie. He writes, "In these days of merriment, I have frequently heard your name proclaimed at the jovial board, under the roof of our hospitable friend at Stenhouse Mills, where there were no 'lingering moments numbered wi' care.'" (The words in inverted commas are quoted from *The Chevalier's Lament*, which the reader will recollect was written for Cleghorn.)

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

Sunday, 14th February 1790.

God help me! I am now obliged to

“Join night to day, and Sunday to the week.”

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

Tuesday 16th.

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

“Tell us, ye dead ! will none of you in pity
To those you left behind, reveal the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be !”

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

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

ROBERT BURNS.

(7) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CURRIE, 1800).*

ELLISLAND, *2nd March* 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,—At a late meeting of the Monkland Friendly Society, it was resolved to augment the Library by the following books which you are to send us as soon as possible:—The Mirror, The Lounger, Man of Feeling, Man of the World (these, for my own sake, I wish to have by the first carrier); Knox's History of the Reformation; Rae's History of the Rebellion in 1715; any good History of the Rebellion 1745; A Display of the Secession Act and Testimony, by Mr Gib; Hervey's Meditations; Beveridge's Thoughts; and another copy of Watson's Body of Divinity. This last heavy performance is so much admired by many of our members, that they will not be content with one copy; so Capⁿ. Riddell our president and patron agreed with me to give you private instructions not to send *Watson*, but to say that you could not procure a copy of the book so cheap as the one you sent formerly, and therefore, you wait further orders.

I wrote to Mr A. Masterton three or four months ago, to pay some money he owed me into your hands, and lately I wrote to you to the same purpose, but I have heard from neither one nor other of you.

In addition to the books I commissioned in my last, I want very much, "An Index to the Excise Laws, or an Abridgement of all the Statutes now in force, relative to the Excise," by Zellinger Symons. I want three copies of this book; if the book is now to be had, cheap or dear, get it for me. An honest country neighbour of mine wants too a Family Bible, the larger the better; but second-handed, for

* By favour of George Wilson, Esq. of Dalmarnock, we are enabled to supply here some portions of this letter that were omitted by Dr. Currie.

he does not chuse to give above ten shillings for the book. I want likewise for myself, as you can pick them up, second-handed or anything cheap, copies of Otway's Dramatic Works, Ben Jonson's Do.; Dryden's, Congreve's, Wycherley's, Vanbrugh's, Cibber's; or any dramatic works of the more modern Macklin, Garrick, Foote, Colman, or Sheridan. A good copy, too, of Molière in French I much want. Any other good French dramatic authors in their native language, I want these: I mean comic authors chiefly, though I should wish Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire too. I am in no hurry for all, or any of these, but if you accidentally meet with them very cheap, get them for me.

And now, to quit the dry walk of business, how do you do, my dear friend! and how is Mrs Hill? I trust, if now and then not so *elegantly* handsome, at least as amiable, and sings as divinely as ever. My Goodwife too has a charming "wood-note wild;" now, could we four get anyway snugly together in a corner, in the New Jerusalem (remember, I bespeak your company there), you and I, though Heaven knows we are no singers; yet, as we are all to have harps, you know, we shall continue to support the ladies' pipes, as we have oft done before, with all the powers of our instruments.

I am out of all patience with this vile world for one thing. Mankind are by nature benevolent creatures, except in a few scoundrelly instances. I do not think that avarice of the good things we chance to have is born with us; but we are placed here amid so much nakedness and hunger, and poverty and want, that we are under a damning necessity of studying selfishness, in order that we may EXIST! Still there are, in every age, a few souls that all the wants and woes of life cannot debase to selfishness, or even give the necessary alloy of caution and prudence. If ever I am in danger of vanity, it is when I contemplate myself on this

side of my disposition and character. God knows I am no saint; I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for; but if I could, (and I believe I do it as far as I can), I would "wipe away all tears from all eyes." Even the knaves who have injured me, I would oblige them; though, to tell the truth, it would be more out of vengeance, to shew them that I was independent of and above them, than out of the overflowings of my benevolence. Adieu! ROBT. BURNS.

(³) WILLIAM BURNS TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

LONDON, 21st *March* 1790.

DEAR BROTHER,—I have been here three weeks come Tuesday, and would have written you sooner but was not settled in a place of work:—We were ten days on our passage from Shields; the weather being calm I was not sick, except one day when it blew pretty hard. I got into work the Friday after I came to town; I wrought there only eight days, their job being done. I got work again in a shop in the Strand, the next day after I left my former master. It is only a temporary place, but I expect to be settled soon in a shop to my mind, although it will be a harder task than I at first imagined, for there are such swarms of fresh hands just come from the country, that the town is quite overstocked, and except one is a particularly good workman (which you know I am not, nor I am afraid ever will be), it is hard to get a place: However, I don't yet despair to bring up my lee-way, and shall endeavour if possible to sail within three or four points of the wind. The encouragement here is not what I expected, wages being very low in proportion to the expense of living, but yet, if I can only lay by the money that is spent by others in my situation in dissipation and riot, I expect soon to return you the money I borrowed of you and live comfortably besides.

In the mean time I wish you would send up all my best linen shirts to London, which you may easily do by sending them to

some of your Edinburgh friends, to be shipped from Leith. Some of them are too little; don't send any but what are good, and I wish one of my sisters could find as much time as to trim my shirts at the breast, for there is no such thing to be seen here as a plain shirt, even for wearing, which is what I want these for. I mean to get one or two new shirts here for Sundays, but I assure you that linen here is a very expensive article. I am going to write to Gilbert to send me an Ayrshire cheese; if he can spare it he will send it to you, and you may send it with the shirts, but I expect to hear from you before that time. The cheese I could get here; but I will have a pride in eating Ayrshire cheese in London, and the expense of sending it will be little, as you are sending the shirts any how.

I write this by J. Stevenson, in his lodgings, while he is writing to Gilbert. He is well and hearty, which is a blessing to me as well as to him: We were at Covent Garden chapel this forenoon, to hear the *Calf* preach; he is grown very fat, and is as boisterous as ever.* There is a whole colony of Kilmarnock people here, so we don't want for acquaintance.

Remember me to my sisters and all the family. I shall give you all the observations I have made on London in my next, when I shall have seen more of it.—I am, Dear Brother, yours, &c.,

W. B.

The foregoing is the last which has been preserved of the interesting series of letters that passed between Burns and his brother William. Unfortunately, for want of John Murdoch's address, the latter had been nearly four months in London before he fell in with the old tutor, who then had a little shop in Bloomsbury Square, for selling stationery, &c. Within a fortnight after his first and only meeting with Murdoch, poor William was seized with a malignant fever, and died on 24th July, before his friend Murdoch was apprised of his illness. See onward for Burns's letter to Murdoch, 16th July 1790.

* The Rev. James Steven: "The Calf"—See p. 339, Vol. I.

(27) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 10th April 1790.

I HAVE just now, my ever honored friend, enjoyed a very high luxury, in reading a paper of the *Lounger*. You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Adventurer*, *Rambler*, and *World*; but still with a certain regret, that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union, that can counterbalance the annihilation of her independence, and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith—

“ —States of native liberty possess,
Tho’ very poor, may yet be very blest.”

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, “English ambassador, English court,” &c. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by “the Commons of England.” Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe, in my conscience, such ideas as, “my country; her independence; her honor; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land;” &c.—I believe these, among your *men of the world*; men who in fact guide, for the most part, and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrong-headedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms, to rouse or lead THE RABBLE: but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed, or now exist, when they talk of right and wrong, they only mean proper and improper; and their measure of conduct is not, what they ought, but *what they dare*. For the truth of this, I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men, and himself one

of the ablest men that ever lived—the celebrated earl of Chesterfield. In fact, a man who could thoroughly control his vices whenever they interfered with his interest, and who could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purposes, is, on the Stanhopian plan, the *perfect man*; a man to lead nations.* But are great abilities, complete without a flaw, and polished without a blemish, the standard of human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *men of the world*; but I call on honor, virtue, and worth, to give the Stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that, if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, *then*, the true measure of human conduct is *proper* and *improper*: virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are, in that case, of scarcely the same import and value to the world at large, as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honor, like a nice ear for music, though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstasy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet, considering the harsh gratings, and inharmonic jars, in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society, as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the “Mirror” and “Lounger” for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I’ve just read (*Lounger*, No. 61), has cost me more honest tears than anything I have read for a long time.† Mackenzie has been called “the Addison

* Lord Chesterfield died in 1773. In the year following were published his celebrated letters to his bastard son, Mr Stanhope, who was for some time British envoy at Dresden.

† This paper relates to the attachments between servants and masters, and concludes with the story of “Albert Bane.”

of the Scots," and in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humor, he as certainly outdoes him in the tender and the pathetic. His "Man of Feeling"—but I am not counsel-learned in the laws of criticism—I estimate as the first performance of the kind I ever saw. From what book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence—in short, more of all that ennobles the soul to herself, or endears her to others, than from the simple, affecting tale of poor Harley?

Still, with all my admiration of Mackenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, Madam, that among the few favored of heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are), there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay, in some degree, absolutely disqualifying for the truly important business of making a man's way into life? If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend Anthony, is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude, for I, a common acquaintance, or as my vanity will have it, an humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy—or peculiarly miserable.

I have been manufacturing some verses lately; but as I have got the most hurried season of excise business over, I hope to have more leisure to transcribe any thing that may show how much I have the honor to be, Madam, yours, &c.

R. B.

(1) TO MR ALEX. FINDLATER, DUMFRIES.

(Here first published.)

DEAR SIR,—Mrs B., like a true good wife, looking on my taste as a standard, and knowing that she cannot give me anything eatable more agreeable than a new-laid egg, she begs your acceptance of a few. They are all of them *couch*, not thirty hours out.

I am, dear Sir, your obliged, humble serv^t.

ROB^t. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, *Saturday Morning.*

The poet's holograph of this note is now preserved in his monument at Edinburgh. Originally were appended to it five verses of extempore poetry, beginning thus,

“Dear Sir—our Lucky humbly begs
Ye'll prie her caller, new-laid eggs;
Lord grant the cock may keep her legs
Aboon the chuckies,” &c., &c.;

but the verses have long been detached from the prose note. They were sold among a lot of the Pickering manuscripts that were reckoned too gross for publication, and are doubtless yet in existence. In sentiment they remind us of a passage in one of the poet's letters to Mrs Dunlop:—“If miry ridges and dirty dung-hills are to engross the best part of my soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to the breaking of clods and picking up grubs; not to mention barn-door cocks and mallards—creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time.” The two closing stanzas are the only ones fully quotable:

“Nae cursed, clerical excise
On honest Nature's laws and ties:
Free as the vernal breeze that flies
At early day,
We'd tasted Nature's richest joys,
But stint or stay.

But as this subject's something kittle,
 Our wisest way's to say but little,
 Yet, while my Muse is at her mettle,
 I am most fervent,
 Or, may I die upon a whistle,
 Your friend and servant.
 ROBERT BURNS.

(⁶) TO DR JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, EXCISE-OFFICE, 14th *July* 1790.

SIR,—Coming into town this morning to attend my duty in this office, it being collection-day, I met with a gentleman who tells me he is on his way to London; so I take the opportunity of writing to you, as franking is at present under a temporary death. I still have some snatches of leisure through the day, amid our horrid business and bustle, and I shall improve them as well as I can; but let my letter be as stupid as * * * * *, as miscellaneous as a newspaper, as short as a hungry grace-before-meat, or as long as a law-paper in the Douglas cause; as ill-spelt as country John's billet-doux, or as unsightly a scrawl as Betty Byre-mucker's answer to it; I hope, considering circumstances, you will forgive it; and as it will put you to no expense of postage, I shall have the less reflection about it.

I am sadly ungrateful in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, "Zeluco." In fact, you are in some degree blameable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work, which so flattered me that nothing less would serve my overweening fancy, than a formal criticism on the book. In fact, I have gravely planned a comparative view of you, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollet, in your different qualities and merits as novel-writers. This, I own, betrays my ridiculous vanity, and I may probably never bring the

business to bear ; but I am fond of the spirit young Elihu shews in the book of Job—"And I said, I will also declare my opinion." I have quite disfigured my copy of the book with my annotations. I never take it up without at the same time taking my pencil and marking with asterisms, parentheses, &c., wherever I meet with an original thought, a nervous remark on life and manners, a remarkably well-turned period, or a character sketched with uncommon precision.

Though I shall hardly think of fairly writing out my "Comparative View," I shall certainly trouble you with my remarks, such as they are.

I have just received from my gentleman that horrid summons in the book of Revelation, that "time shall be no more !"

The little collection of sonnets have some charming poetry in them. If *indeed* I am indebted to the fair author for the book, and not, as I rather suspect, to a celebrated author of the other sex, I should certainly have written to the lady, with my grateful acknowledgments, and my own ideas of the comparative excellence of her pieces.* I would do this last, not from any vanity of thinking that my remarks could be of much consequence to Mrs Smith, but merely from my own feelings as an author, doing as I would be done by.

R. B.

(²) TO MR MURDOCH, TEACHER OF FRENCH,
LONDON.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 16th July 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,—I received a letter from you a long time ago, but unfortunately, as it was in the time of my

* This book was the Sonnets of Charlotte Smith.

peregrinations and journeyings through Scotland, I mislaid or lost it, and by consequence your direction along with it. Luckily my good star brought me acquainted with Mr Kennedy,* who, I understand, is an acquaintance of yours : and by his means and mediation I hope to replace that link which my unfortunate negligence had so unluckily broke in the chain of our correspondence. I was the more vexed at the vile accident, as my brother William, a journeyman saddler, has been for some time in London ; and wished above all things for your direction, that he might have paid his respects to his father's friend.

His last address he sent to me was, "Wm. Burns, at Mr Barber's, saddler, No. 181 Strand." I writ him by Mr Kennedy, but neglected to ask him for your address ; so, if you find a spare half-minute, please let my brother know by a card where and when he will find you, and the poor fellow will joyfully wait on you, as one of the few surviving friends of the man whose name, and Christian name too, he has the honor to bear.

The next letter I write you shall be a long one. I have much to tell you of "hair-breadth 'scapes in th' imminent deadly breach," with all the eventful history of a life, the early years of which owed so much to your kind tutorage ; but this at an hour of leisure. My kindest compliments to Mrs Murdoch and family. I am ever, my dear Sir, your obliged friend,

ROBT. BURNS.

* This was probably Thomas Kennedy, whose epitaph under the title of "Tam the Chapman" was an early production of Burns, (see p. 79, Vol. I.). Wm. Cobbett, in whose Magazine the lines first appeared, described him as "an aged person resident in London."

FROM MR MURDOCH TO THE BARD,
GIVING HIM AN ACCOUNT OF HIS BROTHER WILLIAM'S DEATH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY SQUARE, LONDON,
September 14th 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Yours of the 16th of July I received on the 26th, in the afternoon, per favor of my friend Mr Kennedy, and at the same time was informed that your brother was ill. Being engaged in business till late that evening, I set out next morning to see him, and had thought of three or four medical gentlemen of my acquaintance, to one or other of whom I might apply for advice, provided it should be necessary. But when I went to Mr Barber's, to my great astonishment and heartfelt grief, I found that my young friend had, on Saturday, bid an everlasting farewell to all sublunary things.* It was about a fortnight before that he had found me out, by Mr Stevenson's accidentally calling at my shop to buy something. We had only one interview, and that was highly entertaining to me in several respects. He mentioned some instruction I had given him when very young, to which he said he owed, in a great measure, the philanthropy he possessed.—He also took notice of my exhorting you all, when I wrote, about eight years ago, to the man who, of all mankind that I ever knew, stood highest in my esteem, “not to let go your integrity.”—You may easily conceive that such conversation was both pleasing and encouraging to me: I anticipated a deal of rational happiness from future conversations.—Vain are our expectations and hopes. They are so almost always—perhaps (nay, certainly) for our good. Were it not for disappointed hopes we could hardly spend a thought

* The 26th July 1790, was a Monday, and when Mr Murdoch called for Wm. Burns at his lodgings on Tuesday morning, he found that his poor young friend had died on the previous Saturday of a putrid fever. Consequently Wm. Burns's death happened on 24th July, and a few days thereafter he was buried in St Paul's Churchyard, Mr Murdoch attending in the capacity of chief-mourner. It seems odd that Murdoch should have so long delayed to send intelligence of this calamity to Burns.

The poet remitted to Mr Barber, his brother's landlord, the expense of the funeral, on 5th October thereafter.

on another state of existence, or be in any degree reconciled to the quitting of this.

I know of no one source of consolation to those who have lost young relatives equal to that of their being of a good disposition, and of a promising character. . . .

* * * * *

Your letter to Dr Moore, I delivered at his house, and shall most likely know your opinion of "Zeluco" the first time I meet with him. I wish and hope for a long letter. Be particular about your mother's health. I hope she is too much a Christian to be afflicted above measure, or to sorrow as those who have no hope.

One of the most pleasing hopes I have is to visit you all; but I am commonly disappointed in what I most ardently wish for. I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

JOHN MURDOCH.

(3) TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN,

SAUGHTON MILLS, NEAR EDINBURGH.

(Here first published.)*

ELLISLAND, 23rd July 1790.

Do not ask me, my dear Sir, why I have neglected so long to write to you. Accuse me of indolence, my line of life, of hurry, my stars of perverseness—in short, accuse anything but me of forgetfulness. You knew Matthew Henderson. At the time of his death† I composed an elegiac stanza or two, as he was a man I much regarded; but something came in my way, so that the design of an Elegy to his memory I gave up. Meeting with the frag-

* We are indebted to the kindness of A. C. Lamb, Esq., Dundee, for the use of the manuscript of this letter and the precious first draft of the "Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson," which accompanied it. In our note to that poem at page 310, Vol. II., by some mistake the name of "Paterson" instead of Lamb is printed, as being the owner of that MS. We are happy to have this opportunity of correcting the error.

† "Nov. 21, 1788, died at Edinburgh, Matthew Henderson, Esq."—*Scots Magazine*.

ment the other day among some old waste papers, I tried to finish the piece, and have this moment put the last hand to it. This I am going to write you is the first fair copy of it :—

O Death! thou tyrant fell and bloody !
 The mickle devil wi' a woodie,
 Haur! thee hame to his black smiddie, &c.
 See page 305, Vol. II.

Let me know how you like the foregoing. My best compliments to Mrs Cleghorn and family. I am, most truly, my dear Sir, yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

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

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

ELLISLAND, *2nd Aug.* 1790.

SIR,—Now that you are over with the Sirens of Flattery, the Harpies of Corruption, and the Furies of Ambition—those infernal deities that on all sides, and in all parties, preside over the villanous business of Politics—permit a rustic Muse of your acquaintance to do her best to soothe you with a song.

You knew Henderson—I have not flattered his memory, I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

ROB^T BURNS.

The “soothing song” which accompanied the above brief note was, of course, the “Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson,” and the opening reference in the note is to the close of the great election contest for the parliamentary representation of the Dumfries Burghs, that had been agitating the county for nearly ten months. As the Duke of Queensberry was the prime mover

on the Whig side, the M'Murdo family, as in duty bound, had to muster "beneath Drumlanrig's banners."

"M'Murdo and his lovely spouse,
(Th' enamour'd laurels kiss her brows)
Led on the Loves and Graces ;
She won each gaping burgess heart,
While he, all-conquering, played his part
Among their wives and lasses."

In reference to the subject of the admired *Elegy* communicated by Burns to his correspondents in the two foregoing letters, we are enabled here to give a little more "documentary contemporary evidence," regarding "Henderson the Man, the Brother," whom Chambers was at one time almost driven to regard as "a myth." In a tract by Lord Chief Commissioner Adam, entitled "Two short Essays on the study of History," printed privately in 1836, the author gives a list of eminent Scotchmen, his contemporaries ; and of those in Edinburgh he enumerates "Thomas, Earl of Kelly, Thomas, Earl of Haddington, Mr Nisbet of Dirleton, and Captain Matthew Henderson." James Boswell, the biographer of Johnson, has not left him unnoticed. * In the company of Foote, Macklin, Matthew Henderson and others, Boswell made the admission that he believed in spirits and witches. "No doubt of that," cried Matthew, "Johnson inoculates him by moonlight." Boswell gives another of Matthew's jokes, thus :—"A very awkward fellow was dancing before him at the Assembly, and Matthew remarked to those near him—"He looks like a Professor of dislocation."

(²⁸) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 8th Aug. 1790.

DEAR MADAM,—After a long day's toil, plague, and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long? It was owing to hurry, indolence, and fifty

* Boswelliana, edited by Dr Charles Rogers, 1874.

other things; in short, to anything but forgetfulness of *la plus aimable de son sexe*. By the bye, you are indebted your best curtesy to me for this last compliment, as I pay it from my sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to *you* will ease a little my troubled soul. Sores have it been bruised to-day! A *ci-devant* friend of mine, and an intimate acquaintance of yours, has given my feelings a wound that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure. He has wounded my pride! *

R. B.

(⁵) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., WRITER,
EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 8th August 1790.

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

I laid down my goose feather to beat my brains for an apt simile, and had some thoughts of a country grannum at a family christening; a bride on the market-day before her marriage; an orthodox clergyman at a Paisley sacrament; an Edinburgh bawd on a Sunday evening; or a tavern-keeper at an election-dinner; &c. &c.—but the resemblance that hits my fancy best, is that blackguard miscreant, Satan, who, as Holy Writ tells us, roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching* whom he may devour. However, tossed

* Who this personage was, no one of the poet's editors has ventured to say, or even suggest. In the letter to Cunningham which follows (dated on the same Sunday, 8th August), he writes in a like strain of bitterness; but Currie has suppressed the most indignant passages of invective.

about as I am, if I chuse (and who would not chuse) to bind down with the crampets of attention, the brazen foundation of integrity, I may rear up the superstructure of Independence, and from its daring turrets, bid defiance to the storms of fate. And is this not a "consummation devoutly to be wished?"

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

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

On 1st Sept. 1790.—Dr Blacklock addressed a rhyming letter to Burns along with the prospectus of a new periodical called "The Bee," which was projected by Dr James Anderson. He introduced Dr Anderson to his notice and requested the poet to be an occasional contributor to that work, which commenced in Dec. following, and kept itself afloat during three years. Burns thus addressed Dr Anderson on the subject:—

(¹) TO DR JAMES ANDERSON, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

SIR,—I am much indebted to my worthy friend, Dr Blacklock, for introducing me to a gentleman of Dr Anderson's celebrity; but when you do me the honor to ask my assistance in your proposed publication, alas! Sir, you might as

well think to cheapen a little honesty at the sign of an Advocate's wig, or humility under the Geneva band. I am a miserable hurried devil, worn to the marrow in the friction of holding the noses of the poor publicans to the grindstone of the Excise! and like Milton's Satan, for private reasons, am forced "to do what yet tho' damn'd I would abhor;" and, except a couplet or two of honest execration, * * *

R. B.

(¹) TO MISS H. CRAIK, ARBIEGLAND.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, *Aug.* 1790.*

MADAM,—Some rather unlooked-for accidents have prevented me from doing myself the honor of a second visit to Arbieglan, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant to have done. However, I still hope to have that pleasure before the busy months of harvest begin.

I inclose you two of my late pieces, as some kind of return for the pleasure I have received in perusing a certain MS. volume of poems in the possession of Captain Riddel. To repay one with an *old song* is a proverb, whose force you, Madam, I know will not allow. What is said of illustrious descent is, I believe, equally true of a talent for poesy; none ever despised it who had any pretensions to it. It is often a train of thought of mine when I am disposed to be melancholy—the fates and characters of the rhyming tribe. There is not among all the martyrologies ever

* In Dr Currie's edition this letter is dated "August 1793," upon what authority we know not. Burns transcribed it into Capt. Riddel's collection of his letters, where most distinctly the poet has dated it "1789 or 90." The poet's reference to harvest occupations seems to identify this letter with the Ellisland period. Currie had also taken liberties with the structure of some of the sentences, which we here restore. Arbieglan is in the stewardry of Kirkeudbright.

penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind, give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility, which between them will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man ; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as arranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of wanton butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase ; lastly, fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity, and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet. To you, Madam, I need not recount the fairy pleasures the muse bestows to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. Bewitching poesy is like bewitching woman ; she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the counsels of wisdom and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with poverty, branding them with infamy, and plunging them in the whirling vortex of ruin ; yet, where is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worth the name—that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisaical bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun rising over a frozen region, compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures that we owe to the lovely Queen of the heart of Man !

R. B.

(¹) TO MR DAVID NEWALL, WRITER, DUMFRIES.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

[*Sep.* 1790.]

DR. SIR,—Enclosed is a state of the account between you and me and James Halliday respecting the drain. I have stated it at 20d. per rood, as, in fact even at that, they have not the wages they ought to have had, and I cannot for the soul of me see a poor devil a loser at my hand.

Humanity, I hope, as well as Charity, will cover a multitude of sins, a mantle, of which—between you and me—I have some little need. I am, Sir, yours R. B.

(²) TO ROBT. GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

DUMFRIES, GLOBE INN, 4th *Sep.* 1790.

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

‘Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes.’

As my division consists of ten large parishes, and I am sorry to say, hitherto very carelessly surveyed, I had a good deal of business for the Justices; and I believe my decret* will amount to between fifty and sixty pounds. I took, I fancy, rather a new way with my frauds: I recorded every

* This “decret” was the amount adjudicated to him, in shape of reward as informer against convicted offenders, in course of a given time. No bad perquisite for one year.

defaulter, but at the court I myself begged off every poor body that was unable to pay, which seeming candour gave me so much implicit credit with the honorable Bench, that, with high compliments, they gave me such ample vengeance on the rest, that my *decreet* is double the amount of any Division in the district.

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

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

than crawl in, a dust-licking petitioner, before the lofty presence of a mighty man, and bear, amid all the mortifying pangs of self-annihilation, the swelling consequence of his d——d state, and the cold monosyllables of his hollow heart!

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

I enclose you a tribute I have just been paying to the memory of my friend, Matthew Henderson, whom I daresay you must have known! I had acknowledged your goodness sooner, but for want of time to transcribe the poem. Poor Matthew? I can forgive Poverty for hiding virtue and piety. They are not only plants that flourish best in the shade, but they also produce their sacred fruits, more especially for another world; but when the haggard beldam throws her invidious veil over wit, spirit, &c.,—but I trust another world will cast light on the subject.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your deeply obliged and very humble serv^t.

ROB^t. BURNS.

(¹) TO ALEX. FERGUSSON, ESQ., J. P.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

GLOBE INN, Noon, Wednesday, [*Sep.* 1790.]

Blessed be he that kindly doth

The poor man's case consider.

I HAVE sought you all over the town, good Sir, to learn what

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

The foregoing letter forms an apt illustration of "the business before the Justices," which the poet refers to in his long letter to Mr Graham. In the Burns Monument at Edinburgh is preserved another illustration of the same; but displaying the poet's conscientious fidelity in the interests of the Excise, by refusing to cover real offenders or to connive at fraud. Thomas Johnston, a farmer at Mirecleugh, had been convicted and fined £5 by the Justices for making fifty-four bushels of malt, "without entry, notice, or licence." The convicted party lodged a reclaiming appeal to the Quarter Sessions, and Burns, as the informing officer, was requested to state in writing his answers to Johnson's exculpatory allegations, and this he did as follows. The letter to Collector Mitchell is on the same subject.

ANSWER TO THE PETITION OF THOMAS JOHNSTON.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

[Sep. 1790.]

1. Whether the Petitioner has been in use formerly to malt all his grain at one operation, is foreign to the purpose:

this last season he certainly malted his crop at four or five operations; but be that as it may, Mr J. ought to have known that by express act of parliament no malt, however small the quantity, can be legally manufactured until previous entry be made in writing of all the ponds, barns, floors, &c., so as to be used before the grain can be put to steep. In the Excise entry-books for the division, there is not a syllable of T. J.'s name for a number of years bygone.

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

All this time, though I was telling the son and servant the nature of the premunire they had incurred, though they

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

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

Now, indeed, he says he is willing to swear; he has been exercising his conscience in private, and will perhaps stretch a point. But the fact to which he is to swear was equally and in all parts known to him on that day when he refused to swear as to-day: nothing can give him further light as to the intention of his mind, respecting his meaning or not meaning a fraud in the affair. No time can cast further light on the present resolves of the mind; but time will reconcile, and has reconciled many a man to that iniquity which he at first abhorred.

(1) TO COLLECTOR MITCHELL, DUMFRIES.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

ELLISLAND, [*Sep.* 1790.]

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

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

ROBT. BURNS.

Mr Ramsay of Auchtertyre on Teith, communicated to Dr Currie an incident of this autumn which falls to be reproduced here. We gave it in the writer’s own words :—

“I had an adventure with Burns in the year 1790, when passing through Dumfriesshire, on a tour to the South, with Dr Stewart of Luss. Seeing him pass quickly near Closeburn, I said to my companion, ‘that is Burns.’ On coming to the inn, the ostler told us he would be back in a few hours to grant permits ; that where he met with anything seizable, he was no better than

any other gauger; in everything else, that he was perfectly a gentleman. After leaving a note to be delivered to him on his return, I proceeded to his house, being curious to see his Jean, &c. I was much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis*,* and the poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary rustics. In the evening he suddenly bounced in upon us, and said, as he entered, 'I come (to use the words of Shakespeare) stewed in haste.' In fact, he had ridden incredibly fast after receiving my note. We fell into conversation directly, and soon got into the *mare magnum* of poetry. He told me that he had now gotten a story for a Drama, which he was to call 'Rob Macquechan's Elshon,' from a popular story of Robert Bruce being defeated on the water of Caern, when the heel of his boot having loosened in his flight, he applied to Robert Macquechan to fix it; who, to make sure, ran his awl nine inches up the King's heel. We were now going on at a great rate, when Mr Stewart popped in his head, which put a stop to our discourse that had become very interesting. Yet in a little while it was resumed, and such was the force and versatility of the bard's genius, that he made the tears run down Mr Stewart's cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain.

"From that time we met no more, and I was grieved at the reports of him afterwards. Poor Burns! we shall hardly ever see his like again. He was in truth, a sort of comet in literature, irregular in its motions, which did not do good proportioned to the blaze of light it displayed."

(1) TO CRAUFORD TAIT, ESQ., W.S., EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, 15th Oct. 1790.

DEAR SIR,—Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer, Mr William Duncan, a friend of mine, whom I have long known, and long loved. His father, whose only son he is, has a decent little property in Ayrshire, and has

* Horace V. Ode 2.

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

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

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

I am the worst hand in the world at asking a favor. That indirect address, that insinuating implication, which, without any positive request, plainly expresses your wish, is a talent not to be acquired at a plough-tail. Tell me then, for you can, in what periphrasis of language, in what circumvolution of phrase, I shall envelope, yet not conceal,

this plain story.—“My dear Mr Tait, my friend Mr Duncan, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you, is a young lad of your own profession, and a gentleman of much modesty and great worth. Perhaps it may be in your power to assist him in the, to him, important consideration of getting a place; but at all events, your notice and acquaintance will be a very great acquisition to him; and I dare pledge myself that he will never disgrace your favor.”

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

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

My best compliments to your father and Miss Tait. If you have an opportunity, please remember me in the solemn league and covenant of friendship to Mrs Lewis Hay. I am a wretch for not writing to her; but I am so hackneyed with self-accusation in that way, that my conscience lies in my bosom with scarce the sensibility of an oyster in its shell. Where is Lady M'Kenzie? wherever she is, God bless her! I likewise beg leave to trouble you with compliments to Mr Wm. Hamilton, Mrs Hamilton and family, and Mrs Chalmers, when you are in that

country. Should you meet with Miss Nimmo, please remember me to her.

R. B.*

(³) TO PROF. DUGALD STEWART, EDINBURGH.

PER FAVOR OF CAPTAIN GROSE.

(Here first included in the Correspondence.)

[ELLISLAND, Oct. 1790.]

SIR,—I will be extremely happy if this letter shall have the honor of introducing you to Captain Grose, a gentleman whose acquaintance you told me you so much coveted. I inclose this to him, and should his pursuits lead him again to Ayrshire, and should his time, and (what I am sorry to say is more precarious) his health permit, I have no doubt but you will have the mutual pleasure of being acquainted.

I am, &c.

R. B.

(¹) TO FRANCIS GROSE, ESQ., F.S.A.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[1790.]

SIR,—I believe among all our Scots literati you have not met with Professor Dugald Stewart, who fills the moral philosophy chair in the University of Edinburgh. To say

* The gentleman to whom the above letter is addressed was a son of Mr John Tait of Harvieston, at whose abode, by the banks of the Devon, Burns spent several happy days in the autumn of 1787. Mr Cranford Tait succeeded to the family estate at his father's death in 1800, and his sister, Miss Elizabeth Tait, noticed in the letter, died at Aberdona in 1802. On 17th June 1795, the poet's correspondent was married to Susan, the fourth daughter of Lord President, Sir Islay Campbell. She died in 1814, leaving a large family, of whom the eldest was the late John Tait, Sheriff of Perthshire, who died in 1877; and the fifth and youngest son was the present Archbishop of Canterbury, Archibald Tait, D.D.

that he is a man of the first parts, and, what is more, a man of the first worth, to a gentleman of your general acquaintance, and who so much enjoys the luxury of unencumbered freedom and undisturbed privacy, is not perhaps recommendation enough; but when I inform you that Mr Stewart's principal characteristic is your favourite feature—*that* sterling independence of mind which, though every man's right, so few men have the courage to claim, and fewer still the magnanimity to support; when I tell you that, unseduced by splendour, and undisgusted by wretchedness, he appreciates the merits of the various actors in the great drama of life merely as they perform their parts*—in short, he is a man after your own heart, and I comply with his earnest request in letting you know that he wishes above all things to meet with you. His house, Catrine, is within less than a mile of Sorn Castle, which you proposed visiting; or if you could transmit him the enclosed, he would, with the greatest pleasure, meet you anywhere in the neighbourhood. I write to Ayrshire to inform Mr Stewart that I have acquitted myself of my promise. Should your time and spirits permit your meeting with Mr Stewart, 'tis well; if not, I hope you will forgive this liberty, and I have at least an opportunity of assuring you with what truth and respect, I am, Sir, your great admirer, and very humble servant, R. B.

* See letter to Mrs Dunlop, page 301, Vol. IV., in which the same compliment is paid to Professor Stewart. See also page 368 *infra*, where the poet claims for *himself* the rare attribute of estimating mankind so impartially.

(2) TO FRANCIS GROSE, ESQ., F.S.A.

(CROMEK, 1808.)*

[1790.]

AMONG the many witch-stories I have heard relating to Alloway Kirk, I distinctly remember only two or three:—

Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind, and bitter blasts of hail—in short, on such a night as the devil would choose to take the air in—a farmer, or farmer's servant, was plodding and plashing homeward with his plough-irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighbouring smithy. His way lay by the Kirk of Alloway; and being rather on the anxious look-out in approaching a place so well known to be a favourite haunt of the devil, and the devil's friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering, through the horrors of the storm and stormy night, a light, which on his nearer approach plainly showed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice. Whether he had been fortified from above, on his devout supplication, as is customary with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan; or whether, according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not pretend to determine: but so it was that he ventured to go up to, nay, into the very kirk. As luck would have it, his temerity came off unpunished.

The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other, and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle, or cauldron, depending from the roof, over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of executed malefactors, &c., for the business of the night.

* This letter was communicated by Mr Gilchrist of Stamford to Sir Egerton Brydges, who published it in the "*Censura Literaria*," 1796.

It was in for a penny in for a pound, with the honest ploughman ; so without ceremony he unhooked the cauldron from off the fire, and pouring out the damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head, and carried it fairly home, where it remained long in the family, a living evidence of the truth of the story.

Another story, which I can prove to be equally authentic, was as follows :—

On a market-day in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick, and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Alloway kirkyard, in order to cross the river Doon at the old bridge, which is about two or three hundred yards farther on than the said gate, had been detained by his business, till by the time he reached Alloway it was the wizard-hour—between night and morning.

Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet as it is a well-known fact that to turn back on these occasions is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirkyard, he was surprised and entertained, through the ribs and arches of an old Gothic window, which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer, stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighbourhood. How the gentleman was dressed tradition does not say ; but that the ladies were all in their smocks ; and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purposes of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled that he involuntarily burst out, with a loud laugh, “ Weel luppen, Maggie wi’ the short sark ” and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse

to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally known fact, that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for notwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge, and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing, vengeful hags were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprang to seize him: but it was too late; nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning: but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly, tail-less condition of the vigorous steed was, to the last hour of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmers, not to stay too late in Ayr Markets.

The last relation I shall give, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former, with regard to the scene: but as the best authorities give it for Alloway, I shall relate it.

On a summer's evening, about the time that nature puts on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a shepherd boy, belonging to a farmer in the immediate neighbourhood of Alloway kirk, had just folded his charge, and was returning home. As he passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crew of men and women, who were busy pulling stems of the plant Ragwort. He observed, that as each person pulled a Ragwort, he or she got astride of it, and called out, “up, horsie!” on which the Ragwort flew off, like Pegasus, through the air with its rider. The foolish boy likewise pulled his Ragwort, and cried, with the rest, “up, horsie!” and strange to tell, away he flew with the company. The first stage at which the cavalcade stopt, was a merchant's wine cellar in Bordeaux,

where, without saying, by your leave, they quaffed away at the best the cellar could afford, until the morning, foe to the imps and works of darkness, threatened to throw light on the matter, and frightened them from their carousals.

The poor shepherd lad, being equally a stranger to the scene and the liquor, heedlessly got himself drunk ; and when the rest took horse, he fell asleep and was found so next day by some of the people belonging to the merchant. Somebody who understood Scotch, asking him what he was, he said he was such-a-one's herd in Alloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived long to tell the world the wondrous tale.—I am, &c., &c. R. B.

Not till the middle of November 1790 do we meet with any reference to the poem of "Tam o' Shanter." Mrs Dunlop sent immediate intimation to Burns of her daughter Mrs Henrie's safe delivery, at Loudoun Castle, of a son and heir who was born on the 15th day of that month. The poet in his reply thus remarks:—"I am much flattered by your approbation of my *Tam o' Shanter* which you express in your former letter. . . . I have a copy ready to send you by the first opportunity ; it is too heavy to send by post." Thus we see that the poem had been some time in existence, and that a transcript of it, more or less complete, had been communicated to that lady in a now missing letter of prior date. We have no letters of Burns dated in December following, but on 17th January 1791 he seems to have enclosed a copy of this poem to his Edinburgh friend, Wm. Dunbar, Esq., W.S., and requested his strictures on the performance. A week later he enclosed a copy of it in a letter to Alexander Cunningham, in which he refers to it as a poem "just finished—my first essay in the way of tales."

(29) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, November, 1790.

“AS cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.”

Fate has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow which I have received. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—“Rejoice with them that do rejoice”—for me, *to sing* for joy, is no new thing; but *to preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally jumped for joy—How could such a mercurial creature as a poet lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best friend? I seized my gilt-headed Wangee rod—an instrument indispensably necessary—in my left hand, in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quick and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of prose was impossible. Mrs Little’s is a more elegant,* but not a more sincere compliment to the sweet little fellow, than I, extempore almost, poured out to him in the following verses:—

Sweet flow’ret, pledge o’ meikle love,
And ward o’ mony a prayer,
What heart o’ stane wad thou na move,
Sae helpless, sweet, and fair.—See Vol. II., page 323.

I am much flattered by your approbation of my *Tam o’ Shanter*, which you express in your former letter; though,

* The milk-maid at Loudoun Castle—of whom, see page 258 *supra*—had composed some rhymes on the same occasion which Mrs Dunlop forwarded to Burns.

by the bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many; to all of which I plead, "not guilty!" Your book is, I hear, on the road to reach me.* As to the printing of poetry, when you prepare it for the press you have only to spell it right, and place the capital letters properly: as to the punctuation, the printers do that themselves.

I have a copy of *Turn o' Shanter* ready to send you by the first opportunity; it is too heavy to send by post.

I heard of Mr Corbet lately.† He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favor me soon with an account of your young folk; if Mrs H. is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.

R. B.

1791.

(4) TO WILLIAM DUNBAR, ESQ., W.S.

(CROMEK, 1808.)‡

ELLISLAND, 17th Jan. 1791.

I AM not gone to Elysium, most noble Colonel, but am still here in this sublunary world, serving my God by propagating his image, and honoring my king by begetting him royal subjects.

Many happy returns of the season await my friend. May

* Mrs Dunlop was then printing for private circulation a few sketches of her own in prose and verse. Few poets would entrust to printers the punctuation of their lines; and neither did Burns do so with his own poetry. Perhaps he reckoned it a matter of indifference how his correspondent's effusions were treated in that respect.

† One of the general Supervisors of Excise with whom Burns afterwards corresponded.

‡ The date and concluding paragraph of this letter were first given in Hogg and Motherwell's edition 1835. The term "noble Colonel" refers to Dunbar's rank in the *corps d'esprit* called "The Crochallan Fencibles."

the thorns of Care never beset his path ! May Peace be an inmate of his bosom, and Rapture a frequent visitor of his soul ! May the bloodhounds of Misfortune never track his steps, nor the screech-owl of Sorrow alarm his dwelling ! May Enjoyment tell thy hours, and Pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the bard ! Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee!!!

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

ROBT. BURNS.

(³) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)*

ELLISLAND, 17th Jan. 1791.

TAKE these three† guineas, and place them over against that damned account of yours, which has gagged my mouth these five or six months ! I can as little write good things as write apologies to the man I owe money to. O the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five ! Not all the labors of Hercules ; not all the

* The reader, on comparing our text with that of Currie, will see what liberties he took with the original. We are indebted to George Wilson, Esq., grandson of Mr Hill, for access to the poet's MS.

† In Currie's edition there is here a misprint of "two" for *three*. The original account between the poet and Peter Hill was lately in the possession of Thomas Thorburn, Esq. of Ryedale, and under date Jan. 20, 1791, Hill credits Burns with a payment of £3 to account, leaving a balance of £3, 7s. 5d.

Hebrews' three centuries of Egyptian bondage, were such an insuperable business, such an infernal task !!

Poverty ! thou half-sister of Death, thou cousin-german of Hell ! where shall I find force of execration equal to thy demerits ? By thee, the venerable Ancient, though in this insidious obscurity grown hoary in the practice of every virtue under heaven, now laden with years and wretchedness, implores from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud, a little, little aid to support his very existence, and is by him denied and insulted. By thee, the man of sentiment, whose heart glows with independence, and melts with sensibility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes, in bitterness of soul, under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. By thee, the man of Genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remark neglected, and his person despised, while shallow Greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of Worth that have reason to complain of thee : the children of Folly and Vice, though in common with thee the offspring of Evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing to thee, the man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education is condemned as a fool for his dissipation ; despised and shunned as a needy wretch when his follies, as usual, have brought him to want ; and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant, and perishes by the justice of his country.

But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early extravagances and follies are fire and spirit ; *his* consequent wants are the embarrassments of an honest fellow ; and when, to remedy the matter, he sets out with a legal commission to plunder distant provinces,

and massacre peaceful nations, he returns laden with the spoils of rapine and murder; lives wicked and respected, and dies a Villain and a Lord. Nay, worst of all—alas for helpless woman! the needy wretch who was shivering at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of casual prostitution, is ridden down by the chariot wheels of the Coroneted RIP, hurrying on to the adulterous assignation; she who, without the same necessities to plead, riots nightly in the same guilty trade!!!

Well! divines may say of it what they please; but I maintain that a hearty blast of execration is to the mind what breaking a vein is to the body; the overloaded sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations. I feel myself vastly easier than when I began my letter, and can now go on to business. You will be so good then as send, by the first Dumfries carrier, all, or as many as you have by you, of the following books. I am, &c.,

R. B.

(⁶) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, *23d January 1791.*

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

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

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

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

I mean the introductory couplets as text verses.

ELEGY ON THE LATE MISS BURNET OF MONBODDO.

(See page 325, Vol. II.)

Let me hear from you soon, Adieu ! ROB^t. BURNS.

(³⁰) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 7th February 1791.*

WHEN I tell you, Madam, that by a fall, not from my horse, but with my horse, I have been a cripple for some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing ; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better, and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease ; as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet, of Monboddo. I had the honor of being pretty well acquainted with her, and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance, as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's works was no more. I have as yet gone no farther than the following fragment, of which please

* Chambers, with a strange defiance of arithmetic has changed this date to "7th April." The boy Francis Wallace was born 18th Aug. 1789, consequently on February 7th 1791, he was just past 17 months old. The accident here referred to must have occurred in January, and according to later correspondence, he was the victim of a similar fall at the end of March following.

let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted, that any new idea on the business is not to be expected; 'tis well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last, you will judge from what follows.

[Here follows the Elegy (see page 325, Vol. II.), same as in the letter to Cunningham above given; but with the following stanza added :]—

The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and care;
So deckt the woodbine sweet yon aged tree,
So, from it ravag'd, leaves it bleak and bare.

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. This last, Madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the smallpox and measles over, has cut several teeth, and never yet had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear the "little floweret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the "mother plant" is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her "cruel wounds" be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear farther from, Madam, yours, R. B.

(^d) TO THE REV. ARCH. ALISON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 14th Feb. 1791.

SIR,—You must by this time have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honor to

present me with a book, which does honor to science and the intellectual powers of man, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you yourself are to blame for it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished to have my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic, and to draw up, forsooth, a deep-learned digest of strictures on a composition, of which, in fact, until I read the book, I did not even know the first principles. I own, Sir, that at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime, than the twingle-twangle of a Jew's harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twigg, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas—these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith. In short, Sir, except Euclid's Elements of Geometry, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fire-side, in the winter evenings of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas, as your "Essays on the Principles of Taste." One thing, Sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon merit in the work, I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I enclose you some poetic bagatelles of my late composition. The one in print is my first essay in the way of telling a tale.—I am, Sir, &c.

R. B.

The gentleman above addressed was an Episcopal minister in Edinburgh whom the poet met one evening, in Feb. 1789, at the house of Professor Dugald Stewart. In the reminiscences of Burns sent by the Professor to Dr Currie, he thus refers to that meeting. "My friend Mr Alison was the only other person in company. I never saw Burns more interesting. A present which Mr Alison sent him afterwards of his 'Essays on Taste' drew from the poet a letter of acknowledgment, 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." The doctrine referred to is now considered to have been one of the dreams of philosophy, which was hastily adopted by a few metaphysical writers in Edinburgh about the close of last century, and then dismissed as baseless, like the fabric of other dreams. Burns's letter on the subject, although apparently earnest enough, reads somewhat like a satire on the new philosophy. Mr Alison was father of Sir Archd. Alison, Bart., Sheriff of Lanarkshire, the author of a History of Europe, from a high Conservative point of sight.

PROSPECTUS OF A NEW EDITION OF POEMS BY MICHAEL BRUCE.

LONDON, February 1791.

"By subscription. Speedily will be published, price Three Shillings, by J. Forbes, Covent Garden, London, a new edition of Poems by the late Michael Bruce, to which will be subjoined a few select pieces by Robert Burns. The profits which may arise from this publication are to be employed solely for the support of Michael Bruce's mother."

The Rev. George Husband Baird, on 8th Feb. 1791, addressed a letter to Burns, which Dr Currie printed as part of the correspondence of our poet. The young clergyman who then applied to Burns on the subject was residing at the Duke of Athole's house in London. In Nov. 1792 he was admitted as minister of New Greyfriars' Church, Edinburgh, and at the same time was appointed joint-Professor of Oriental Languages with Dr James

Robertson, in the college there. Ultimately, Baird was Principal of the University of Edinburgh.

He now solicited the aid of Burns's name and pen in support of the scheme he had embarked in: "May I beg to know (he wrote,) if you will take the trouble of perusing the unpublished manuscripts of Bruce that I am in possession of; and of giving your opinion, and suggesting what curtailments, alterations, or amendments, occur to you as advisable? And will you allow us to let it be known, that a few lines by you will be added to the volume?"

(¹) TO THE REV. G. H. BAIRD, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, [*February*,] 1791.

WHY did you, my dear Sir, write to me in such a hesitating style on the business of poor Bruce? Don't I know, and have I not felt, the many ills, the peculiar ills that poetic flesh is heir to? You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have; and had your letter been so directed as to have reached me sooner (it only came to my hand this moment), I should have directly put you out of suspense on the subject. I only ask that some prefatory advertisement in the book, as well as the subscription bills, may bear that the publication is solely for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would not put it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. I have such a host of peccadilloes, failings, follies, and backslidings (any body but myself might perhaps give some of them a worse appellation), that by way of some balance, however trifling, in the account, I am fain to do any good that occurs in my very limited power to a fellow-creature, just for the selfish purpose of clearing a little the vista of retrospection.

ROBT. BURNS.

Unfortunately, Currie did not think proper to give the whole of the above letter to the public, and the MS. seems now to have been lost. Our own hearty thanks are however due to Mr John Small, A.M., of the University Library of this city, for having recently cleared up the little mystery with which Burns's share in this benevolent movement has been shrouded for eighty years past. The papers of the late Principal Baird, in possession of Professor Balfour, have been carefully examined by Mr Small, in relation to the edition of Bruce's poems referred to; and in a scholarly paper he has all but demonstrated the fact that Logan, and not Bruce, was the author of the "Ode to the Cuckoo." He has discovered also from those Baird papers, that Burns generously offered several of his best unpublished poems to forward the scheme in behalf of the mother of Bruce, and among these he tendered the newly finished "Tam o' Shanter!" He has also ascertained the reason why none of Burns's pieces were added to Bruce's volume. This was "in consequence of the opposition of Dr Blair and Dr Moore, who argued that from the moral tendency of Bruce's poetry, the insertion of Burns's 'Alloway Kirk' would be as gross a violation of propriety, as the exhibition of a farce after a tragedy." For that pious reason, "Alloway Kirk," and other poems offered by Burns, were not accepted! In what public estimation *now*, are the writings of Dr Blair, of Dr Moore, and even of Michael Bruce?

(^d) TO MRS GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[ELLISLAND, *Feb.* 1791.]

MADAM,—Whether it is that the story of our Mary, Queen of Scots, has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet, or whether I have in the enclosed ballad,* succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not; but it has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse for a good while past; on that

* See page 327, Vol. II.

account I enclose it particularly to you. It is true, the purity of my motives may be suspected. I am already deeply indebted to Mr Graham's goodness; and, what *in the usual ways of men* is of infinitely greater importance, Mr G. can do me service of the utmost importance in time to come. I was born a poor dog; and however I may occasionally pick a better bone than I used to do, I know I must live and die poor: but I will indulge the flattering faith that my poetry will considerably outlive my poverty; and without any fustian affectation of spirit, I can promise and affirm, that it must be no ordinary craving of the latter shall ever make me do any thing injurious to the honest fame of the former. Whatever may be my failings, for failings are a part of human nature, may they ever be those of a generous heart, and an independent mind. It is no fault of mine that I was born to dependence; nor is it Mr Graham's chiefest praise that he can command influence; but it is his merit to bestow, not only with the kindness of a brother, but with the politeness of a gentleman; and I trust it shall be mine, to receive with thankfulness, and remember with undiminished gratitude.

R. B.

(⁸) TO DR JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 27th Feb. 1791.

I DO not know, Sir, whether you are a subscriber to Grose's "Antiquities of Scotland." If you are, the enclosed poem will not be altogether new to you. Captain Grose did me the favour to send me a dozen copies of the proof-sheet, of which this is one. Should you have read the piece before, still this will answer the principal end I have in view: it will give me another opportunity of thanking you for all

your goodness to the rustic bard ; and also of shewing you, that the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronize are still employed in the way you wish.

The *Elegy on Captain Henderson*, is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have in this the same advantage as Roman Catholics ; they can be of no service to their friends after they have past that bourn where all other kindness ceases to be of any avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead, is, I fear, very problematical ; but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living : and as a very orthodox text, I forget where, in Scripture, says, “ whatsoever is not of faith, is sin ; ” so say I, whatsoever is not detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankful delight. As almost all my religious tenets originate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea, that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly beloved friend, or still more dearly beloved mistress, who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on Queen Mary was begun while I was busy with “ Percy’s Reliques of English Poetry.” By the way, how much is every honest heart, which has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice, obliged to you for your glorious story of *Buchanan and Targe*. ’Twas an unequivocal proof of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving “Targe” the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.*

* * * * *

I have just read over, once more of many times, your “Zeluco.” I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest ; and

* The story referred to represents *Buchanan*, a Covenanter, disputing with *Targe*, a Jacobite, about the purity of Mary Queen of Scots. A hand-to-hand fight is the outcome, and the novelist gives the palm to *Targe*.

one, or two I think, which, with humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart, is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson indeed might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily, his *dramatis personæ* are beings of some other world; and however they may captivate the inexperienced, romantic, fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper years.

As to my private concerns, I am going on, a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the Earl of Glencairn; the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence; so soon as the prince's friends had got in (and every dog, you know, has his day), my getting forward in the Excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though this was a consummation devoutly to be wished, yet, thank Heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am; and as to my boys, poor little fellows! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life, as I could wish, I shall, if I am favored so much of the Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors this is one of the best, *Better be the head o' the commonality, than the tail o' the gentry.*

But I am got on a subject, which, however interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you ; so I shall give you a short poem on the other page, and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honor to be, yours &c.

R. B.

Written on the blank leaf of a book, which I presented to a very young lady, whom I had formerly characterised under the denomination of *The Rose-Bud*.

(Here was inscribed the Poem at page 200, Vol. II.—Beauteous Rosebud, young and gay.)

The foregoing letter is the last that has been given to the public of Burns's letters to Dr Moore. That gentleman's reply, dated 29th March 1791, was printed by Dr Currie. He begins by admitting that the Rev. Mr Baird had before transmitted to him a copy of the Elegy on Capt. Henderson, and the printed poem on "Alloway Church." His criticisms on these gems of Burns's muse are rather frigid ; and he closes by advising him to avoid the Scottish dialect in his future poems, and make entire use of the modern English : "Why (he asks) should you write only for a part of the island, when you can command the admiration of the whole ?" He also requests Burns to favour him with his observations on "Zeluco," and not to suppress his censure, if he any have : "Trust me it will break no squares between us—I am not akin to the Bishop of Grenada."

Burns's copy of "Zeluco" with his pencil observations on the margin, (as noted at page 260 *supra*,) was presented to Mrs Dunlop. A grandson of hers carried it to the East Indies, where one of the volumes was consumed by the white ants. The other volume (the first) is still preserved, and one of the poet's observations would not have been relished by Dr Moore. At conclusion of Chap. xii. a lady's maid thus addresses her mistress in support of a bashful suitor for the lady's hand : "Although he is languishing for love of your ladyship, yet rather than open his mouth to you on the subject, he will certainly die."—"Die ! nonsense," cried the widow, "Yes, die !" cried the maid, "and what is worse, die in

a dark lanthorn ; at least, I am told that is what he is in danger of." Burns's note is "Rather a bad joke—an unlucky attempt at humour."

On a blank leaf fronting the title-page the poet has inscribed "To my much esteemed Friend, Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop.

ROBT. BURNS."

The notes are not very numerous. The book is now in possession of Mr Wallace Dunlop, C.B., great-grandson of the poet's patroness. To the late Dr Carruthers of Inverness, we were indebted for this account of the poet's annotated copy of "Zeluco."

(⁹) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER,

WITH A EWE-MILK CHEESE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, [*March* 1791.]*

MY DEAR HILL,—I shall say nothing at all to your mad present ; you have long and often been of important service to me, and I suppose you mean to go on conferring obligations until I shall not be able to lift up my face before you. In the mean time, as Sir Roger de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great coats for mourning ; so, because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil : nay, 'tis the devil and hell. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my

* The original MS. of this letter is still preserved in Mr Hill's family, but bears no date : Dr Currie placed it under "*March 1789*," no doubt induced to do so by the reference near the close, to "the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct." There is, however, another reference which compels us to place the letter under a later date :—"Candlish, the earliest friend, except my *only* brother, that I have on earth." The poet's brother William was alive till July 1790, and we have taken the earliest probable occasion to introduce the present letter, after that event. The mention of "the King's Arms inn *here*," suggests a date even later.

appetite at the sight of successful Knavery ; and sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense of self-important Folly. When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner ; the proud man's wine so offends my palate that it choaks me in the gullet ; and the *pulvilis'd*, feathered, pert coxcomb is so horrible in my nostril that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations, let me prescribe for you Patience a bit of my Cheese. I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There, in my eye, is our friend Smellie ; a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I have ever met with ; when you see him—as, alas ! he too often is, smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstance aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness, a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him, but if you add a tankard of brown stout, and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun.

Candlish, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of Friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David,* with his “Courant” comes too across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those damn'd bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned ; so, a

* David Ramsay, already referred to in the letter to Hill of 2nd April 1789. He survived till June 27th, 1813.

fresh egg is a very good thing, but when thrown at a man in a pillory, it does not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious little friend, Colonel Dunbar, I would wish also to be a partaker ; not to digest his spleen, for that he laughs off, but to digest his last night's wine at the last field-day of the Crochallan corps.

Among our common friends I must not forget one of the dearest of them, Cunningham. The brutality, insolence, and selfishness of a world unworthy of having such a fellow as he in it, I know sticks in his stomach, and if you can help him to any thing that will make him a little easier on that score, it will be very obliging.

As to honest John Somerville,* he is such a contented, happy man, that I know not what can annoy him, except perhaps he may not have got the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes, which a certain poet gave him one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of Law, I shall have nothing to do with them professionally—the Faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their *clients*, that is another thing ; God knows they have much to digest !

The clergy I pass by ; their profundity of erudition, and their liberality of sentiment ; their total want of pride, and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth, whom I have the honor to call friend, the Laird of Craigdarroch ; but

* A confidential friend of Burns, whose name appears as a subscriber for four copies of the Edinburgh edition 1787. The poet presented him with a proof impression of his portrait (Bengo's engraving), which came into the possession of the late Mr Alex. Russel of the *Scotsman*. Colonel Somerville (a son of the poet's friend) left a large sum of money, many thousands of which will fall to Mr Russel's family, after the death of a lady annuitant.

I have spoken to the landlord of the King's Arms inn here, to have at the next county meeting, a large ewe-milk cheese on the table, for the benefit of the Dumfriesshire Whigs, to enable them to digest the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage.—So, God bless you! ROB^T. BURNS.

(7) TO MR ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, WRITER,

ST JAMES'S SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

(Partly printed by CURRIE, 1800, and here completed.*)

ELLISLAND, 11th March 1791.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,—I received your *first* letter two days ago; the last came to hand this moment. I was highly delighted with the well carried on allegory in your friend's letter. I read it to two or three acquaintances who have souls to enjoy a good thing, and we had a very hearty laugh at it. I have felt along the line of my Muse's inclination, and I fear your Archery subject would be uphill work with her. I have two or three times in my life composed from the wish, rather than from the impulse, but I never succeeded to any purpose. One of these times I shall ever remember with gnashing of teeth. 'Twas on the death of the late Lord President Dundas. My very worthy and most respected friend, Mr Alex. Wood, Surgeon, urged me to pay a compliment in the way of my trade to his Lordship's memory. Well, to work I went, and produced a copy of Elegiac verses, some of them I own rather

* By favour of James Cunningham, Esq., W.S., Edinburgh, the son of our poet's correspondent, whose death at the venerable age of 78, has occurred while these sheets are being printed.

common-place, and others rather hide-bound, but on the whole, though they were far from being in my best manner, they were tolerable, and might have been thought very clever. I wrote a letter, which however *was* in my very best manner; and inclosing my poem, Mr Wood carried all together to Mr Solicitor Dundas that then was, and not finding him at home, left the parcel for him. His Solicitorship never took the smallest notice of the letter, the Poem, or the Poet. From that time, highly as I respect the talents of their family, I never see the name Dundas, in the column of a newspaper, but my heart seems straitened for room in my bosom; and if I am obliged to read aloud a paragraph relating to one of them, I feel my forehead flush, and my nether lip quiver. Had I been an obscure scribbler, as I was then in the hey-day of my fame; or had I been a dependent hanger-on for favour or pay; or had the bearer of the letter been any other than a gentleman who has done honor to the city in which he lives, to the country that produced him, and to the God that created him, Mr Solicitor might have had some apology—but enough of this ungracious subject.

A friend of mine who transcribed the last parcel I sent you is to be with me in a day or two, and I shall get him to copy out the two poems you mention.* I have this evening sketched out a song which I had a great mind to send you, though I foresee that it will cost you another groat of postage—by the way, you once mentioned to me a method of franking letters to you, but I have forgot the direction—My song is intended to sing to a strathspey, or reel, of which I am very fond, called in Cumming's collection of

* This amanuensis seems to have been the same who about this period transcribed a considerable portion of the poet's unpublished pieces into a bound volume, for Robert Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell. His name has nowhere been stated, but Burns indicates, in a note to a transcript by him of the *Autobiography*, that he was a clergyman or a licentiate of the kirk.

Strathspeys, "Ballendalloch's Reel," and in other collections that I have met with, it is known by the name of "Camdelmore." It takes three stanzas of four lines each to go through the whole tune. I shall give the song to Johnson for the fourth vol. of his publication of Scots songs, which he has just now in hand.

SONG.

Sweet are the banks—the banks o' Doon,
The spreading flowers are fair,
And every thing is blythe and glad,
But I am fu' o' care, &c.

See p. 331, Vol. II.

If the foregoing piece be worth your strictures, let me have them. For my own part, a thing that I have composed, always appears through a double portion of that partial medium in which an Author will ever view his own works. I believe in general Novelty has something in it that inebriates the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication, and leaves the poor patient as usual with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced in the revolution of many a Hymeneal honeymoon. But lest I sink into stupid prose, and so, sacreligiously intrude on the office of my Parish-priest, who is in himself one vast Constellation of dulness, and from his weekly Zenith, rays out his contradictory stupidity to the no small edification and enlightening of the heavy and opaque pericraniums of his gaping admirers, I shall fill up the page in my own way, and give you another song of my late composition which will appear in Johnson's work as well as the former. You must know a beautiful Jacobite air—"There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame." When political combustion ceases to be the object of Princes and Patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of Historians and Poets.

SONG.

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

See page 329, Vol. II.

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

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

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

I look to the west when I gae to rest,
 That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be ;
 For far in the west lives he I loe best—
 The man that is dear to my babie and me!

Good night, once more ; and God bless you !

ROBT. BURNS.

(?) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[*March 1791.*]

WHILE here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens ! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which

the magic of that sound “Auld Toon o’ Ayr” conjured up,
I will send my last song to Mr Ballantine. Here it is :

Ye flowery banks o’ bonie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu’ o’ care !

&c. &c.—*See* page 333, Vol. II.

(4) TO ALEX. DALZIEL, ESQ., FACTOR,
FINDLAYSTON HOUSE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, *March* 19, 1791.

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

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

I will be exceedingly obliged to you indeed, to let me know the news of the noble family, how the poor mother and the two sisters support their loss. I had a packet of poetic bagatelles ready to send to Lady Betty, when I saw the fatal tidings in the newspaper. I see by the same channel that the honoured REMAINS of my noble patron, are

designed to be brought to the family burial place. Dare I trouble you to let me know privately before the day of interment, that I may cross the country, and steal among the crowd, to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression. R. B.

James, fourteenth Earl of Glencairn, the warm-hearted patron of Burns, had sunk into a condition of declining health, and in order to escape the rigour of a Scottish winter had removed to Lisbon in the hope that its milder temperature might prove beneficial. That remedial measure however failed to stay the progress of his disease, and he was advised to return to England; but on his homeward journey he died at Falmouth near the close of January 1791, in the forty-second year of his age. Burns seems to have addressed the above letter to his lordship's factor, very soon after the first intelligence of the lamented occurrence. He must, however, have been misinformed as to the arrangements respecting the funeral; for the Earl's family possessions in Kilmaurs, including the interesting burial vault, had been sold a few years before his lordship's death, and his remains now lie in the church at Falmouth. His brother John, who succeeded to the earldom, died in 1796, and was interred in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, Edinburgh. At a later period (Aug. 12, 1794), the poet expressed his respect for the memory of his deceased patron by naming his fourth son "James Glencairn Burns."

(¹) TO LADY ELIZABETH CUNNINGHAM.

(CURRIE, 1808.)

[ELLISLAND, *March* 1791.]

MY LADY,—I would, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed me, of sending you any thing I compose in my poetical way; but as I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my late benefactor, I determined to make

that the first piece I should do myself the honor of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardor of my heart, the inclosed had been much more worthy your perusal :* as it is, I beg leave to lay it at your ladyship's feet. As all the world knows my obligations to the late Earl of Glencairn, I would wish to shew as openly that my heart glows, and shall ever glow, with the most grateful sense and remembrance of his lordship's goodness. The sables I did myself the honor to wear to his lordship's memory, were not the "mockery of woe." Nor shall my gratitude perish with me !—If, among my children, I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honor and a family debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn !

I was about to say, my lady, that if you think the poem may venture to see the light, I would, in some way or other, give it to the world.

R. B.

(³¹) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND 11th April, 1791.

I AM once more able, my honored friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered—joy and sorrow—for on Saturday morning last, Mrs Burns made me a present of a fine boy ; † rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed I look on your little

* "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn," page 336, Vol. II.

† On April 9th, 1791, the poet's third son Wm. Nicol Burns was born.

namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on "Tam o' Shanter" to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery, that might perhaps be as well spared; but then they also show, in my opinion, a force of genius and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast, as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels, that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is indeed such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by some one or other of the many shades of affectation, and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven, I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such a humble one as mine, we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence. As fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspecting of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest—a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return; these, with a healthy frame, a sound,

vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made.* Do let me hear, by first post, how cher petit Monsieur † comes on with his small pox. May Almighty goodness preserve and restore him !

R. B.

(¹) TO ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, *April* 1791.

SIR—Nothing less than the unfortunate accident I have met with, could have prevented my grateful acknowledgements for your letters. His own favourite poem, and that an essay in a walk of the muses entirely new to him, where consequently his hopes and fears were on the most anxious alarm for his success in the attempt—to have that poem so much applauded by one of the first judges, was the most delicious vibration that ever trilled along the heart-strings of a poor poet. However, Providence, to keep up the

* The letter to Mrs Dunlop of 7th February preceding, announced the writer's convalescence after a fall with his horse in January. On that occasion, his arm was bruised, but not very severely. It appears from the present letter, and two or three which follow, that through a similar accident, towards the end of March, his right arm was broken, and we find him complaining of the consequences down to nearly the end of April. In a letter to Peter Hill dated about Midsummer of the same year, he complains of "a bruised leg;" and again on 6th October thereafter, in a letter to Mr Graham of Fintry, as well as in his poetical epistle to him, he refers to his bruised leg, and "a sheetful of groans wrung from him in his elbow-chair, with one unlucky foot on a stool before him." The year 1791, therefore, was an unlucky one for the poet's limbs.

† The child of Mrs Henri, daughter of Mrs Dunlop, referred to at p. 338 *supra*.

proper proportion of evil with the good, which it seems is necessary in this sublunary state, thought proper to check my exultation by a very serious misfortune. A day or two after I received your letter, my horse came down with me and broke my right arm. As this is the first service my arm has done me since its disaster, I find myself unable to do more than just in general terms to thank you for this additional instance of your patronage and friendship. As to the faults you detected in the piece, they are truly there ; one of them, the hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out ; as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly adduce, it cannot easily be remedied.* Your approbation, Sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honor to be, &c. R. B.

* Mr Tytler's letter to Burns containing a critique, moderately appreciative of *Tam o' Shanter*, is dated 12th March 1791, but it may not have reached the poet for several days after its date. The only fault he pointed out applied to "the winding-up, or conclusion of the story, as not being commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive painting of the preceding parts.—The result (he said) is not adequate to the fine preparation ; but for this you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale." Four lines he judiciously recommended to be suppressed as "they derive all their merit from the satire they contain, and seem really misplaced among the circumstances of pure horror." Burns listened to that advice, the lines being the following :—

" Three Lawyer's tongues turn'd inside out,
 Wi' lies seam'd like a beggar's clout ;
 And priest's hearts, rotten, black as muck,
 Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk."

(¹) TO CHARLES SHARPE, ESQ., OF HODDAM,
UNDER A FICTITIOUS SIGNATURE, ENCLOSING A BALLAD.

(CURRIE, 1801.)

ELLISLAND, 22nd April 1791.*

It is true, Sir, you are a gentleman of rank and fortune, and I am a poor devil; you are a feather in the cap of society, and I am a very hobnail in his shoes; yet I have the honor to belong to the same family with you, and on that score I now address you. You will perhaps suspect that I am going to claim affinity with the ancient and honorable house of Kirkpatrick. No, no, Sir: I cannot indeed be properly said to belong to any house, or even any province or kingdom; as my mother, who for many years was spouse to a marching regiment, gave me into this bad world, aboard the packet-boat, somewhere between Donaghadee and Portpatrick. By our common family, I mean Sir, the family of the Muses. I am a fiddler, and a poet; and you, I am told, play an exquisite violin, and have a standard taste in the *Belles Lettres*. The other day, a brother-catgut gave me a charming Scots air of your composition. If I was pleased with the tune, I was in raptures with the title you have given it; and taking up the idea I have spun it into the three stanzas enclosed.† Will you allow me, Sir, to present you them, as the dearest offering that a misbegotten son of Poverty and Rhyme has to give! I have a longing to take you by the hand, and unburden my heart by saying: "Sir, I honor you as a man who supports the dignity of human nature amid an age when frivolity and avarice have, between them, debased us below

* This is the date attached by Burns to the letter, in his transcript of it in the Glenriddell MSS.

† The verses referred to have not been given, or indicated, in connexion with this clever effusion.

the brutes that perish!" But, alas! Sir, to me you are unapproachable. It is true the Muses baptised me in Castalian streams; but the thoughtless gipsies forgot to give me a name. As the sex have served many a good fellow, the Nine have given me a great deal of pleasure; but, bewitching jades! they have beggared me. Would they but spare me a little of their cast linen! were it only to put it in my power to say that I have a shirt on my back! But the idle wenches, like Solomon's lilies, "they toil not, neither do they spin;" so I must e'en continue to tie my remnant of a cravat, like the hangman's rope, round my naked throat, and coax my galligaskins to keep together their many-coloured fragments. As to the affair of shoes, I have given that up. My pilgrimages in my ballad-trade, from town to town, and on your stony-hearted turnpikes too, are what not even the hide of Job's Behemoth could bear. The coat on my back is no more: I shall not speak evil of the dead. It would be equally unhandsome and ungrateful to find fault with my old surtout, which so kindly supplies and conceals the want of that coat. My hat indeed is a great favourite; and though I got it literally for an old song, I would not exchange it for the best beaver in Britain. I was, during several years, a kind of fac-totum servant to a country clergyman, where I pickt up a good many scraps of learning, particularly in some branches of the mathematics. Whenever I feel inclined to rest myself on my way, I take my seat under a hedge, laying my poetic wallet on the one side, and my fiddle-case on the other, and placing my hat between my legs, I can, by means of its brim, or rather brims, go through the whole doctrine of the conic sections.

However, Sir, don't let me mislead you, as if I would interest your pity. Fortune has so much forsaken me, that she has taught me to live without her; and amid all my

rags and poverty, I am as independent, and much more happy, than a monarch of the world. According to the hackneyed metaphor, I value the several actors in the great drama of life, simply as they act their parts. I can look on a worthless fellow of a duke with unqualified contempt, and can regard an honest scavenger with sincere respect.* As you, Sir, go through your rôle with such distinguished merit, permit me to make one in the chorus of universal applause, and assure you that with the highest respect,—I have the honor to be, &c.

JOHNNY FAA.

(2) TO LADY WINIFRED MAXWELL CONSTABLE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[April 1791.]

MY LADY,—Nothing less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm, could have prevented me, the moment I received your Ladyship's elegant present by Mrs Miller,† from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your Ladyship, I shall set it apart—the symbols of Religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition, the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of others, I shall recollect your Ladyship; when I would interest my

* Several of the author's favourite sentiments are expressed through the medium of this humorous letter, which in style reminds one of some of Goldsmith's essays. The reader may remember that in former parts of this correspondence, Professor Dugald Stewart and Bishop Geddes are complimented by Burns, as having been the sole instances of manhood he ever met, who "value the several actors in the great drama of life precisely as they play their parts."

† The present referred to was a valuable snuff-box, containing on the lid a beautiful inlaid miniature of Queen Mary, which unfortunately was irreparably damaged in India while in the possession of one of the poet's sons.

fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary. I enclose your Ladyship a poetic compliment I lately paid to the memory of our greatly injured, lovely Scottish Queen.*—I have the honor to be, my Lady, your Ladyship's highly obliged and ever devoted, humble servant,

ROB^T. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 25th April 1791.

POEMS WRITTEN BY MR ROBERT BURNS,
AND SELECTED BY HIM FROM HIS UNPRINTED COLLECTION,
FOR ROBERT RIDDELL, OF GLENRIDDELL, ESQ.

PREFACE.

As this collection almost wholly consists of pieces local, or unfinished fragments—the effusion of a poetical moment, and bagatelles strung in rhyme simply *pour passer le temps*, the Author trusts that nobody into whose hands it may come, will, without his permission, give, or allow to be taken, copies of anything here contained; much less to give to the world at large, what he never meant should see the light. At the Gentleman's request, whose from this time it shall be, the Collection was made; and to him, and I will add, to his amiable Lady, it is presented as a sincere though small tribute of gratitude for the many happy hours the Author has spent under their roof. *There*, what Poverty, even though accompanied with Genius, must seldom expect to meet with at the tables and in the circles of Fashionable

* The holograph of this letter is in the Hastic collection at the British Museum. Dr Currie withheld the closing words, through what motive it is difficult to conjecture; but the omission misled Allan Cunningham into the blunder of saying that the poem called “The Lament of Mary Queen of Scots” was composed at the request of Lady Constable, who rewarded him for it, by presenting the beautiful box referred to. The reverse of this seems to have been the order of cause and effect.

Life, his welcome has ever been the cordialty of kindness and the warmth of Friendship. As from the situation in which it is now placed, this MS. may be preserved, and this Preface read, when the hand that now writes, and the heart that now dictates it, may be mouldering in the dust; let these be regarded as the genuine sentiments of a man who seldom flattered any, and never those he loved,

ROBT. BURNS.

27th April 1791.

The whole of the poems, songs, and fragments embraced in the above MS. collection, have now been published—the more important of these having been printed by the Author himself in his enlarged edition of February 1793. In 1874, Henry A. Bright, Esq., Merchant, Liverpool, produced a small quarto volume, printed for private circulation, giving some account of the Glenriddell manuscripts, embracing a complete list of them, and copies of any that then remained unpublished. He executed his generous undertaking with rare taste; and to him we are thankfully beholden for the kind permission to make use of his labours in the present work.

The volume which contains those manuscript poems, and also a companion volume of letters, appear to have been handed back to Burns after the death of Mr Riddell in April 1794; and when Dr Currie undertook to edit the great Liverpool edition of our Author's works for the benefit of his widow and family, the volumes were lodged with him as part of his materials.

Mr Bright records that in 1853 the widow of Mr Wallace Currie (son of Dr Currie, the poet's biographer), presented to the Athenæum Library, at Liverpool, those two interesting volumes; but that down to 1873 they were so carefully preserved in a locked chest, that very few even of the proprietors of the Library knew of their existence. At his suggestion, they were placed within a glass case in the library, for inspection of the public, subject to the regulations of the institution. See Appendix, Art. C.

At a future stage of this work we shall give some account of the Prose volume referred to.

(¹) TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, OF ULBSTER, BART.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 1791.

SIR,—The following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the statistical account, transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale. I beg leave to send it to you, because it is new and may be useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of great importance, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr Riddell got a number of his own tenants, and farming neighbours, to form themselves into a society for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance, or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings: and at each of their meetings, which were held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry-money, and the credit which they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the com-

mencement. What authors they were to purchase, was always decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He whose name stood for that night, first on the list, had his choice of what volume he pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first; the third after the second, and so on to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting, was last at this; he who had been second was first; and so on through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement, the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves; and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.

At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr Riddell's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him, and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes. It will easily be guessed, that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of this little library, were, *Blair's Sermons*, *Robertson's History of Scotland*, *Hume's History of the Stewarts*, *The Spectator*, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Chrysal*, *Don Quixote*, *Joseph Andrews*, &c. A peasant who can read, and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour, who perhaps stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success,—I am, Sir, your humble servant, A PEASANT.*

* The above is extracted from the third volume of Sir John Sinclair's *Statistics*, p. 598.—It was enclosed to Sir John by Mr Riddell himself in the following letter, also printed there :—"SIR JOHN—I enclose you a

TO —————

(CURRIE, 1801.)

[ELLISLAND, 1791.]

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

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

* * * * *

I am ever, dear Sir, yours sincerely, ROBERT BURNS.

TO * * * * *

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

THOU Eunuch of language : thou Englishman, who never was south of the Tweed : thou servile echo of fashionable

letter written by Mr Burns, as an addition to the account of Dunscore parish. It contains an account of a small library which he was so good (at my desire) as to set on foot, in the barony of Monkland (or Friar's Carse), in this parish. As its utility has been felt, particularly among the younger class of people, I think, that if a similar plan were established, in the different parishes of Scotland, it would tend greatly to the speedy improvement of the tenantry, trades people, and work people. Mr Burns was so good as to take the whole charge of this small concern. He was treasurer, librarian, and censor, to this little society, who will long have a grateful sense of his public spirit and exertions for their improvement and information.

I have the honor to be, Sir John, yours most sincerely,

ROBERT RIDDELL."

* It is supposed that the poem here referred to was the "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots." If so, the date would be about May 1791.

barbarisms : thou quack, vending the nostrums of empirical elocution : thou marriage-maker between vowels and consonants, on the Gretna-green of caprice : thou cobbler, botching the flimsy socks of bombast oratory : thou blacksmith, hammering the rivets of absurdity : thou butcher, embruuing thy hands in the bowels of orthography : thou arch-heretic in pronunciation : thou pitch-pipe of affected emphasis : thou carpenter, mortising the awkward joints of jarring sentences : thou squeaking dissonance of cadence : thou pimp of gender : thou Lyon Herald to silly etymology : thou antipode of grammar : thou executioner of construction : thou brood of the speech-distracting builders of the Tower of Babel : thou lingual confusion worse confounded : thou scape-gallows from the land of syntax : thou scavenger of mood and tense : thou murderous accoucheur of infant learning : thou *ignus futuus*, misleading the steps of benighted ignorance : thou pickle-herring in the puppet-show of nonsense : thou faithful recorder of barbarous idiom : thou persecutor of syllabication : thou baleful meteor, foretelling and facilitating the rapid approach of Nox and Erebus.*

(¹) TO MR JOHN SOMERVILLE, WRITER,
EDINBURGH.

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

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 11th May 1791.

ALLOW me, my dear Sir, to introduce a Mr Lorimer, a particular friend of mine, to your acquaintance, as a gentle-

* This singular composition made its appearance in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1832, without date or signature. The original MS. was in the possession of Mr Andrew Henderson, Surgeon, Berwick-upon-Tweed, one of the sons of Mrs Henderson of Jedburgh, daughter of Mr Wm. Cruikshank, High School, Edinburgh.

man worth your knowing, both as a man and (what is case in point), as a man of property and consequence, who goes to town just now, to advise with and employ an Agent in some law-business. By way of serving him, I put him in the best hands when I introduce him to Mr Somerville. My kindest compliments to Mrs Somerville, little Harry, and all your little folks. By the way, about ten months ago, I collected * * *

* a little fellow, whom, for strength, size, figure, and pitch of note, I will match against any boy in Nithsdale, Annandale, or any dale whatever. So, in a mug of porter, here goes the Gudewife o' Diltammies' toast—"The Gudeman an' the bill! for they keep a' the toun in milk," Yours,
 ROB^T. BURNS.

The above curious fragment we print from a newspaper cutting of unknown date; a footnote intimates that the seal of the letter is of black wax, bearing the impression of a heart transpierced by two cross arrows, and explains in reference to the portion represented by asterisks that "our compositor either cannot or will not make it out."

The gentleman to whom the letter is addressed has already been introduced to the reader in the poet's letter to Peter Hill, page 355 *supra*. Here we have the earliest reference to the Lorimer family which occurs in the bard's correspondence. His intercourse with them began when he commenced his excise practice near the close of 1789. The eldest daughter, Jean (born in 1775), who was destined to become the "Chloris" of Burns, was then bursting into precocious womanhood. Already had her charms prompted his muse to make her the subject of a song in which he vicariously wooed her for a brother exciseman; and the names "Jean Lorimer" and "John Gillespie" were engraved on the window panes at Ellisland. The ingenious reader will be at small loss to unriddle the mysterious allusions in the latter part of the above fragment. They undoubtedly refer to the conception and birth of William Nicol Burns, the poet's third son

who first saw daylight about one month prior to the date of this communication to Somerville. Thus—Tristram Shandy-like—the history of Colonel William Nicol Burns begins nine months before his birth-date in the calendar !

The black seal on the letter, with its symbolic impression, is also pregnant with meaning. No single love affection was capable of filling the heart of Burns ; although in his poetic rapture of 1786, when Jean deserted him, he asserted otherwise—

“ This breast, how dreary now and void,
For her too scanty once of room.”

Precisely nine days prior to the birth spoken of in the letter to Mr Somerville, the poet's “ Anna of the gowden-locks ” was delivered of a daughter who, a few weeks after birth, was conveyed to Ellisland by pre-arrangement, and there suckled at the same breast which fed the stout infant boy above referred to. Of all Burns's children, this second “ dear-bought Bess ” (for the mother's life was the cost of that birth) the most resembled him in features. To this subject, Robert Chambers has devoted a page or two of generous pleading in behalf of Burns, in which the leading defence is a reflection on Jean's alleged imprudence in absenting herself from the domestic couch during one or more prolonged visits to Ayrshire. Alas ! where there is a will there is a way. Mrs Burns was certainly not in Ayrshire, or beyond her husband's reach, in June and July 1790, nor was she absent from Ellisland at any time before the summer of 1791, so far as appears from the records laid before the public by the poet's biographers.* To countenance his statement, Chambers quotes an alleged saying of the poet's sister Agnes, who superintended the dairy department at Ellisland for a short period :—
“ I never knew my brother fail to keep good hours at night until

* Jean's first summer at Ellisland was that of 1789, when her son Francis Wallace was born. That event happened in August, and she was attended by the poet's mother, who journeyed to Dumfriesshire for the occasion. Jean was not absent in October thereafter, when the verses to “ Mary in Heaven ” were composed. The correspondence shews her to have remained at Ellisland during the first half of 1790, and during the latter half her presence there is fully certified, by the accounts of summer visitors, followed by her own description of Burns, while in the act of composing “ Tam o' Shanter.”

Jean's first unlucky absence in Ayrshire." The reader must here be given to understand that this sagacious sister of Burns was the identical "Nannie" of whom another saying is quoted :—" I wonder what gars our Robert make such a wark about the lasses ! For my part, I wad na gie ae lad for half a dozen o' them."

(2) TO MR ALEX. FINDLATER, SUPERVISOR OF
EXCISE.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)*

[ELLISLAND, *June*, 1791.]

DEAR SIR,—I am both much surprised and vexed at that accident of Lorimer's stock. The last survey I made prior to Mr Lorimer's going to Edinburgh, I was very particular in my inspection, and the quantity was certainly in his possession, as I stated it. The surveys I made during his absence might as well have been marked "Key absent," as I never found any body but the lady, who I know is not mistress of keys, &c., to know anything of it, and one of the times, it would have rejoiced all Hell to have seen her so drunk. I have not surveyed there since his return. I know the gentleman's ways are, like the grace of G—, past all comprehension ; but I shall give the house a severe scrutiny to-morrow morning, and send you in the naked facts.

I know, Sir, and regret deeply that this business glances with a malign aspect on my character as an officer ; but as I am really innocent in the affair, and as the gentleman is known to be an illicit dealer, and particularly as this is the *single* instance of the least shadow of carelessness or impropriety in my conduct as an officer, I shall be peculiarly

* This undated letter was first made known in its entire form at Dumfries, by the Secretary of the Burns Club there, in 1869. Mr Findlater had printed the second paragraph in 1814.

unfortunate if my character shall fall a sacrifice to the dark manœuvres of a smuggler. I am, Sir, your obliged and obedient humble servant,

ROR^T. BURNS.

Sunday even.

I send you some rhymes I have just finished which tickle my fancy a little.

The above picture of a smuggler's house at Cairnmill, Kemishall, forms a strange comment on the poet's character of the man, in the immediately preceding letter, addressed to Mr Somerville—"a gentleman worth your knowing, both as a man, and as a man of property and consequence!" It is said that eventually he was engulfed in bankruptcy; but we have evidence that Mr and Mrs Burns continued to be on the most intimate terms with him and his eldest daughter till within a year of the poet's death. Mrs Burns, in her conversations with Mr M'Diarmid, thus speaks of the family:—"Jean Lorimer was the daughter of Wm. Lorimer, farmer at Kemishall, and in good circumstances. He had two daughters and three sons. His wife was given to drinking, and that injured her daughters. Jean used to visit at Ellisland; she had remarkably fair hair, and was perfectly virtuous. She took the fancy of an Englishman at a Moffat Ball, and was married to him at Gretna Green. The man was a reprobate; but his mother allowed her an annuity." Chambers gives the date of that marriage as being March 1793.

(⁸) TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.,
EDINBURGH,
INTRODUCING CLARKE THE SCHOOLMASTER.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

11th June, 1791.

LET me interest you, my dear Cunningham, in behalf of the gentleman who gives you this. He is a Mr Clarke, of

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

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

God help the children of dependence! Hated and perse-

* Dr Robertson, the historian, was Cunningham's uncle.

cuted by their enemies, and too often (alas ! almost un-exceptionally always) received by their friends with insulting disrespect and heart-stinging reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O ! to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his deserts ; rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for a subsistence, precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature ! Every man has his virtues, and no man is without his failings ; and curse on that privileged plain-dealing of friendship, which, in the hour of my calamity, cannot reach forth the helping hand without at the same time pointing out those failings, and assigning their share in my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls you, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues if you please, but do also spare my follies : the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude must be incident to human nature, do thou, Fortune, put it in my power, always from my own pocket, to pay the penalty of those errors ! I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning.

To return in this rambling letter to the subject I set out with, let me recommend my friend Clarke to your acquaintance and good offices ; his worth entitles him to the one, and his gratitude will merit the other. R. B.

The variations in our text from Currie's version of the above letter are taken from the Glenriddell MS. Chambers remarks concerning it, that "there is a condition of great suffering when, though the main source of grief cannot be spoken of, smaller evils will be denounced with a superfluity of splenetic effusion not a little startling to a bystander." Burns here,

while merely sympathizing with a persecuted schoolmaster, launches out into an indignant protest against the friendship which would venture to preach against a man's errors or failings, while kindly endeavouring to redeem their consequences. The exasperation of spirit and occasional acrimony which his letters manifest again and again, from this period of his career, seem to have been caused more by the reckless violence of his own passions, with their bitter after-fruits, than from disappointed ambition or social disregard of any kind. The cause of his unfortunate friend Clarke he seems to have taken up as a pet subject, as will be evinced from several hitherto suppressed letters on that topic now here made public.

(¹) TO THE REV. WILLIAM MOODIE, EDINBURGH.*

(Here first included in the correspondence.)

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—This will be presented to you by a particular friend of mine, a Mr Clarke, schoolmaster in Moffat, who has lately become the unfortunate and undeserved subject of persecution from some of his employers. The ostensible and assigned reason on their part is some instances of severity to the boys under his care; but I have had the best means of knowing the merits of the cause, and I assure you, Sir, that he is falling a sacrifice to the weakness of the many, following in the cry of the villainy of the few.

The business will now come before the patrons of the school, who are the ministers, magistrates, and town council of Edinburgh; and in that view I would interest your

* This clergyman was translated from Kirkcaldy to St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, in 1787, while Burns resided in the city and became acquainted with him. In 1793, he was appointed Professor of Hebrew and the Eastern languages. He died in 1812, and was succeeded in the Professorship by the celebrated Dr Murray.

goodness in his behalf. 'Tis true, Sir, and I feel the full force of the observation, that a man in my powerless, humble situation very much mistakes himself, and very much mistakes the way of the world, when he dares presume to offer influence among so highly respectable a body as the patronage I have mentioned. On that—what could I do? A man of abilities, a man of genius, a man of worth, and my friend—before I would stand quietly and silent by, and see him perish thus, I would go down on my knees to the rocks and mountains, and implore them to fall on his persecutors and crush their malice and them in deserved destruction. Believe me, Sir, he is a greatly injured man.

The humblest individual, though, alas, he cannot so redress the wrong, may yet as ably attest the fact as a lord might do. Mr Moodie's goodness I well know, and that acquaintance with him that I have the honor to boast of will forgive my addressing him thus in favour of a gentleman whom, if he knew as well, he would esteem as I do.

R. B.

LETTER DICTATED FOR CLARKE, ADDRESSED TO THE LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.

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

MY LORD,—It may be deemed presumption in a man, obscure and unknown as I am, and entire stranger to your Lordship, to trouble you in this manner; but when I inform you that the subject on which I address you is of the last importance to me, and is so far connected with you, that on your determination, in a great measure, my fate must

* This letter is inserted in the Glenriddell MS. volume at Liverpool, with a heading by our bard, thus :—"The following letter, which was sent by Mr Clarke to the Provost of Edinburgh, was of my writing."

depend, I rely on your Lordship's goodness that you will think any farther apology unnecessary.

I have been for nearly five years Schoolmaster in Moffat, an appointment of which your Lordship will know, you, with the rest of the Magistracy and Town Council, together with the Clergy of Edinburgh, have the patronage. The trust with which these, my highly respectable patrons had honored me, I have endeavoured to discharge with the utmost fidelity, and I hope with a good degree of success; but of late, one or two powerful individuals* of my employers have been pleased to attack my reputation as a Teacher, have threatened no less than to expel me from the School, and are taking every method, some of them, I will say it, insidious and unfair to the last degree, to put their threats in execution. The fault of which I am accused is some instances of severity to the children under my care. Were I to tell your Lordship that I am innocent of the charge—that any shade of cruelty, particularly that very black one of cruelty to tender infancy, will be allowed by every unbiassed person who knows anything of me to be tints unknown in my disposition; you would certainly look on all this *from me* as words of course; so I shall trouble you with nothing on the merits of my cause, until I have a fair hearing before my Rt. Hon^{ble}. Patrons. A fair hearing, my Lord, is what above all things I want; and what I greatly fear will be attempted to be denied me. It is to be insinuated that I have vacated my place, that I never was legally appointed, with I know not how many pretences more, to hinder the business from coming properly before your Lordship and the other Patrons of the School—all

† The “one or two powerful individuals” referred to seem to have enlisted the sympathies of the Earl of Hopetoun, who, as superior of the ground on which the school stood, or by some other influence, during the summer vacation, applied to the court for an interdict against Clarke's re-opening it.

which I deny, and will insist on holding my appointment until the dignified characters who gave it me shall find me unworthy of it.

In your Lordship's great acquaintance with human life, you must have known and seen many instances of Innocence, nay, of Merit, disguised and obscured, and sometimes for ever buried, by the dark machinations of unprincipled Malevolence, and envious Craft; and until the contrary be made to appear, 'tis at least equally probable that my case is in that unfortunate and undeserved predicament.—I have the honor to be, &c. (Signed) JAMES CLARKE.

[MOFFAT, *June 1791.*]

(²) TO JOHN MITCHELL, ESQ.,
COLLECTOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

(*Here first published.*)*

[ELLISLAND, 16th *June 1791.*]

SIR,—A very pressing occasion, no less than witnessing the wedding of an only brother, calls me to Ayrshire, for which I shall take your permission as granted, except I be countermanded before Sunday, the day I set out. I shall remember that three days are all that I can expect. The enclosed official paper came to my hand, and I take the liberty to lay it before you.—I have the honor to be your obliged, humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

Mr Gilbert Burns, farmer, then of Mossgiel, was married to Miss Jean Breckenridge at Kilmarnock on 21st June 1791. The eldest child of the marriage, William Burns, who was born at Mossgiel on 15th May 1792, is now (1878) alive at Portarlington in

* The poet's holograph of this short letter is in possession of D. Lyell, Esq. W.S., Edinburgh, to whom we are indebted for its use.

Ireland. A younger brother, Gilbert, born in 1803, also survives in County Dublin. A sister, Anne Burns, born in 1805 is also still alive; and these are all that remain of eleven children, the issue of the marriage referred to in the poet's letter.

Gilbert, the poet's brother, died in April 1827, and his wife in September 1841.

(¹⁰) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

[*June 1791.*]*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I take Glenriddell's kind offer of a corner for a postscript to you, though I have got nothing particular to tell you. It is with the greatest pleasure I learn from all hands, and particularly from your warm friend and patron, the Laird here, that you are going on, spreading and thriving like the Palm tree that shades the fragrant vale in the Holy Land of the Prophet. May the richest juices from beneath, and the dews of heaven from above, foster your root and refresh your branches, until you be as conspicuous among your fellows as the stately Goliath towering over the little pigmy Philistines around him! Amen! so be it!!!

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹¹) TO MISS DAVIES,

ENCLOSING A BALLAD MADE UPON HER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

[*Aug. 1791.*]

MADAM,—I understand my very worthy neighbour, Mr Riddell, has informed you that I have made you the subject

* The original letter preserved in Mr Hill's family has no date in the poet's hand; it bears the Dumfries post mark "June," but the year is invisible. It is backed in Glenriddell's hand.

of some verses. There is something [so provoking] * in the idea of being the burden of a ballad that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was; so my worthy friend (what I daresay he never intended) has done me a mischief, and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified, or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman who had some genius, much eccentricity, and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental groups of social life into which one is thrown, whenever this gentleman met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his soul, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely, he said, as a *nota bene*, to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, is my muse to me; and the enclosed verses I do myself the honor to send you are a *memento* exactly of the same kind. It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of my caprice than the delicacy of my taste; but I am so often tired, disgusted, and hurt with the insipidity, affectation, and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person "after my own heart," I positively feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration; and I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse, than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air. A distich or two would be the consequence, though the object which hit my fancy were grey-bearded wrinkled age; but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit, and sentiment are equally striking and

* These two words, not in the original, have been inserted by former editors to help the author's meaning.

unaffected—by Heavens ! though I had lived three score years a married man, and three score years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea : and I am truly sorry that the enclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to such a subject.—I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

The above closes the volume of the author's letters transcribed for Captain Riddell, and unfortunately bears no date. Dr Currie had either considered it unworthy of publication, or felt that by printing another letter addressed to the same lady (that which we next present), he had given sufficient prominence to so minor a heroine of the poet. The ballad enclosed was evidently the lively jingling piece given at page 346, Vol. II., each verse of which introduces an eccentric rhyme to correspond with "the charms of lovely Davies," celebrated in the closing line of every stanza. The other song, "Bonie wee thing, cannie wee thing," which this interesting young lady inspired, has become very popular, as well through its own merits, as from its good fortune to be united to one of the most charming of the Scottish melodies. The reader will find all that requires to be said about the story of Miss Deborah Davies in the note at page 344, Vol. II. The charming sentimental song just referred to was enclosed in the following carefully composed letter. The use which Carlyle made of the passage in inverted commas about "ascending the rock Independence," will here occur to the reader who is familiar with that author's famous review of Lockhart's *Life of Burns*.

(^c) TO MISS DAVIES,

ENCLOSING A SONG INSPIRED BY HER CHARMS.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[Aug. 1791.]

It is impossible, Madam, that the generous warmth and angelic purity of your youthful mind, can have any idea of that moral disease under which I unhappily must rank as

the chief of sinners; I mean a torpitude of the moral powers, that may be called a lethargy of conscience. In vain Remorse rears her horrent crest, and rouses all her snakes: beneath the deadly fixed eye and leaden hand of Indolence, their wildest ire is charmed into the torpor of the bat, slumbering out the rigours of winter in the chink of a ruined wall. Nothing less, Madam, could have made me so long neglect your obliging commands. Indeed I had one apology—the bagatelle was not worth presenting. Besides, so strongly am I interested in Miss Davies's fate and welfare in the serious business of life, amid its chances and changes, that to make her the subject of a silly ballad, is downright mockery of these ardent feelings; 'tis like an impertinent jest to a dying friend.

Gracious Heaven! why this disparity between our wishes and our powers? Why is the most generous wish to make others blest impotent and ineffectual as the idle breeze that crosses the pathless desert? In my walks of life I have met with a few people to whom how gladly would I have said—"Go, be happy! I know that your hearts have been wounded by the scorn of the proud, whom accident has placed above you—or worse still, in whose hands are, perhaps, placed many of the comforts of your life. But there! ascend that rock, Independence, and look justly down on their littleness of soul. Make the worthless tremble under your indignation, and the foolish sink before your contempt; and largely impart that happiness to others, which, I am certain, will give yourselves so much pleasure to bestow!"

Why, dear Madam, must I wake from this delightful reverie, and find it all a dream? Why, amid my generous enthusiasm, must I find myself poor and powerless, incapable of wiping one tear from the eye of pity, or of adding one comfort to the friend I love!—Out upon the world!

say I, that its affairs are administered so ill. They talk of reform; good Heaven! what a reform would I make among the sons, and even the daughters of men! Down immediately should go fools from the high places where misbegotten chance has perked them up, and through life should they skulk, ever haunted by their native insignificance, as the body marches accompanied by its shadow. As for a much more formidable class, the *knaves*, I am at a loss what to do with them: had I a world, there should not be a knave in it,

* * * *

But the hand that could give, I would liberally fill; and I would pour delight on the heart that could kindly forgive, and generously love.

Still the inequalities of life are, among men, comparatively tolerable; but there is a delicacy, a tenderness, accompanying every view in which we can place lovely Woman, that are grated and shocked at the rude, capricious distinctions of fortune. Woman is the blood-royal of life: let there be slight degrees of precedency among them—but let them be ALL sacred. Whether this last sentiment be right or wrong, I am not accountable; it is an original component feature of my mind.

* * *

R. B.

Clarinda had now partially recovered from the shock she received when the reports reached her of the poet's irrevocable matrimonial alliance with Jean Armour. Early in 1790, a letter or two passed betwixt them which paved the way to a reconciliation. Burns sent her a copy of his affecting address to "Mary in Heaven," from which she would infer that his wife did not possess his undivided affections, and consequently that a corner, if not the very core, of his heart might still retain the registered image of his once adored Clarinda.

In the spring of 1791 the new poems, "Tam o' Shanter," and the "Elegy on Matthew Henderson," would create some sensa-

tion in Edinburgh, and revive the talk about Burns. Mrs M'Lehose addressed a letter to the poet, which he allowed to lie unanswered till a second communication from her reached him in course of the summer. This last enclosed some verses of her own composition, which Burns refers to in the following reply. We annex what appears to be the little poem sent by Clarinda on this occasion, taken from an interleaved copy of the printed "Correspondence between Burns and Clarinda," published by the lady's grandson in 1843. That interleaved copy belonged to Mr W. C. M'Lehose, who edited the correspondence, and who died at New York on 2d March 1847.

SYMPATHY.

Assist me, all ye gentle powers
That sweeten Friendship's happy hours,
Whilst I attempt to sing of thee,
Heav'n-born emotion, Sympathy.

When first I saw my rural swain,
The pride of all the tuneful train,
That hour we lov'd—what could it be
But thy sweet magic, Sympathy?

Nor sordid wealth, nor giddy power,
Could e'er confer one happy hour—
One hour like those I've spent with thee,
In love's endearing sympathy!

All hail! the heav'n-inspired mind,
That glows with love of human kind;
'Tis thine to feel the ecstasy—
Soul link'd to soul by Sympathy.

(⁴³) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, LAMOND'S LAND, EDINBURGH.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

[Aug. 1791.]

I HAVE received both your letters, Madam, and ought, and would have answered the first, long ago; but on what subject could I write you? How can you expect a corre-

spondent should write you, when you declare that you mean to preserve his letters, with a view sooner or later, to expose them on the pillory of derision, and the rack of criticism? This is gagging me completely as to speaking the sentiments of my bosom; else, Madam, I could perhaps too truly

“Join grief with grief, and echo sighs to thine.”

I have perused your most beautiful, but most pathetic poem—do not ask me how often, or with what emotions. You know that “I dare to *sin*, but not to *lie*!” Your verses wring the confession from my inmost soul—I will say it, expose it, as you please—that I have more than once in my life, been the victim of a damning conjuncture of circumstances; and that to me you must be ever

“Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes.”

I have just, since I had yours, composed the following stanzas. Let me know your opinion of them.

Sensibility, how charming,
Thou my Friend, canst truly tell;
But Distress, with horrors arming,
Thou, alas! hast known too well!

See page 47, Vol. III.

I have one other piece in your taste; but I have just a snatch of time.

LAMENT OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

A BALLAD.

Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets of daisies white,
Out o'er the grassy lea.

See page 327, Vol. II.

Such, my dearest Nancy, were the words of the amiable but unfortunate Mary. Misfortune seems to take a peculiar pleasure in darting her arrows against “honest men and

bonie lassies." Of this you are too, too just a proof; but may your future fate be a bright exception to the remark! In the words of Hamlet,

"Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me."

ROBT. BURNS.

LEADHILLS, *Thursday Noon.*

From the next letter in course, which is dated 1st September, we learn that "Mrs Burns and family had been in Ayrshire for many weeks." The poet had by this time arranged with his landlord to relinquish the lease of Ellisland, and in the last week of August he sold his standing crops by auction. The utensils of husbandry and other stock were not roused till near Martinmas. Dr Currie has preserved an account of a visit paid to Burns at Ellisland "in the summer of 1791" by two English gentlemen, who furnished that biographer with a narration of their adventure, and the kindly welcome they met from Mr and Mrs Burns. That event (which we have particularised at page 52, Vol. III.) must have happened during midsummer, in order to admit of Mrs Burns's presence. An account by the late Sir Egerton Brydges, of an imaginary visit to Burns at Ellisland, and supposed conversation with him, was inserted by Chambers in his edition, 1852, as an actual occurrence, thereby misleading many readers and writers as to its reality. Allan Cunningham tells us that "the great Glasgow road ran through the poet's ground, and the coach often set down west-country passengers, who, trusting to the air they came from, and the accessibility of the bard, made their sometimes unwelcome appearance at the door of Ellisland." Mrs Burns, however, in her conversations with Mr M'Diarmid, said that "more has been said about the number of persons who visited Ellisland than there is warrant for; occasionally his friends from Dumfries visited him, chiefly on the Sabbath day, such as Mr Findlater, the Supervisor of Excise. The neighbouring gentry sometimes called, and occasionally the bard would visit them; but the influx of visitors was by no means overpowering."

(1) TO MR. THOMAS SLOAN.*

CARE OF WM. KENNEDY, ESQ., MANCHESTER.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

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

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

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

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

“———— on reason build resolve—
That column of true majesty in man !”

and that other favourite one from Thomson’s *Alfred*—

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

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

“For whether doing, SUFFERING, or FORBEARING
You may do miracles by—PERSEVERING.”

I have nothing new to tell you. The few friends we have are going on in the old way. I sold my crop on this

* The MS. of this letter is now preserved within the poet’s Monument at Edinburgh. Mr Sloan was a native of Wanlockhead, with whom Burns formed an acquaintance during his frequent journeys in 1788 and 1789, between Ellisland and Ayrshire.

day se'ennight past, and sold it very well. A guinea an acre, on an average, above value. But such a scene of drunkenness was hardly ever seen in this country. After the rousp was over, about thirty people engaged in a battle, every man for his own hand, and fought it out for three hours. Nor was the scene much better in the house. No fighting indeed, but folks lying drunk on the floor, and decanting until both my dogs got so drunk by attending them, that they could not stand. You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene ; as I was no farther over than you used to see me.

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

Farewell ! and God bless you, my dear friend !

ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 1st Sept. 1791.

(²) TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[Sep. 1791.]

MY LORD,—Language sinks under the ardour of my feelings when I would thank your Lordship for the honor you have done me in inviting me to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson. In my first enthusiasm, in reading the card you did me the honor to write me, I overlooked every obstacle, and determined to go ; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two's absence, in the very middle of my harvest, is what I much doubt I dare not venture on.

Your Lordship hints at an ode for the occasion : but who would write after Collins ? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired. I got indeed to the

length of three or four stanzas, in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your Lordship with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your Lordship, and declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honor to be, &c. R. B.

The above letter enclosed our poet's "Address to the shade of Thomson," given at page 31, Vol. III. The Earl had invited Burns "to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson, on Ednam Hill, on the 22d of September, for which occasion perhaps his muse may inspire a suitable Ode."

In a reply, dated 16th September, the Earl informs Burns that his "Address" had been well received by the public, and suggests "Harvest Home" as a subject for his future musings; but recommends him to write in English, rather than in a "dialect which admits of no elegance or dignity of expression." Such a subject, he adds, "would furnish you with an amiable opportunity of perpetuating the names of Glencairn, Miller, and your other eminent benefactors; which, from what I know of your spirit and have seen of your poems and letters, will not deviate from the chastity of praise that it is so uniformly united to true taste and genius."

(^d) TO JAMES GRACIE, ESQ., BANKER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

GLOBE INN, 8 o'clock p.m. [1791.]

SIR,—I have yours anent Crombie's bill.* Your forbearance has been very great. I did it to accommodate the thoughtless fellow. He asks till Wednesday week. If he fail, I pay it

* This defaulter was a mason at Dalswinton, who had been employed in building the poet's new house at Ellisland, and had been paid for his work.

myself. In the meantime, if horning and caption be absolutely necessary, grip him by the neck, and welcome,
Yours, ROBT. BURNS.

A LETTER FOR MR CLARKE TO SEND TO MR
WILLIAMSON,*

FACTOTUM AND FAVORITE TO THE EARL OF HOPETOUN.

(*Here first published.*)

[ELLISLAND, Sep. 1791.]

SIR,—Most sincerely do I regret that concurrence of accident, prejudice, and mistake, which, most unfortunately for me, has subjected me, as master of Moffat Grammar School, to the displeasure of the Earl of Hopetoun, and those in whom he places confidence. Protestations of my innocence will, from me, be thought words of course. But I hope, and I think I have some well-grounded reasons for that hope, that the gentlemen in whose hands I immediately am, the Right Hon. Patrons of the School, will find the charge against me groundless, and my claims just: and will not allow me to fall a sacrifice to the insidious designs of some, and the well-meant, though misinformed zeal of others. However, as disputes and litigations must be of great hurt, both to the School and me, I most ardently wish that it would suggest itself to Mr Williamson's good sense and wish for the welfare of the country, the propriety of dropping all disputes, and allowing me peaceable admission to my school and the exercise of my function. This, Sir, I am persuaded, will be serving all parties; and will lay *me* under particular and lasting obligations to your goodness. I propose opening

* Died at Edinburgh, 12th July 1805, Alexander Williamson of Balgray, Esq., many years factor to the Earl of Hopetoun.—*Scots Mag.*

School to-morrow ; and the quiet possession of my school-house is what I have to request of you—a request which, if refused, I must be under the very disagreeable necessity of asking in the way pointed out by the laws of the country. Whatever you, Sir, may think of other parts of my conduct, you will at least grant the propriety of a man's straining every nerve in a contest, where not only Ruin but Infamy must attend his defeat, I am, &c. (Signed) JAMES CLARKE.*

THE AFTON LODGE MANUSCRIPTS.

In the latter portion of 1791 the beautiful set of manuscripts presented by Burns to Mrs Stewart of Afton (enumerated at page 29, Vol. III.), seem to have been forwarded with the following note prefixed to them :—

Many verses, on which an author would by no means rest his reputation in print, may yet amuse an idle moment in manuscript ; and many Poems, from the locality of the subject, may be uninteresting, or unintelligible to those who are strangers to that locality. Most of, if not all, the following Poems are in one or other of those predicaments, and the author begs whoever into whose hands they may fall, that they will do him the justice not to publish what he himself thought proper to suppress. R. B.†

[ELLISLAND, Oct. 1791.]

* This subject is resumed under dates Jan. and Feb. 1792. Burns, under his transcript of the present letter in the Glenriddell collection, writes these words "Bravo ! Clarke. In spite of Hopetoun and his myrmidons, thou earnest off victorious."

† First published in M'Kie's Fac-simile edition, 1869.

(¹) TO MR CORBET, SUPERVISOR-GENERAL
OF EXCISE.*

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

[Oct. 1791.]

SIR,—I have in my time taken up the pen on several ticklish subjects, but none that ever cost me half so much as the language of supplication. To lay open one's wants and woes to the mercy of another's benevolence, is a business so prostituted by the worthless and unfeeling, that a man of principle and delicacy shrinks from it as from contamination.

Mr Findlater tells me that you wish to know from myself what are my views in desiring to exchange my excise division. With the wish natural to man of bettering his present situation, I have turned my thoughts towards the practicability of getting into a port division. As I know that the general superiors are omnipotent in these matters, my honored friend Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop offered me to interest you in my behalf.

She told me that she was well acquainted with Mrs Corbet's goodness, and that, on the score of former intimacy, she thought she could promise some influence with her, and added, with her usual sagacity and knowledge of human nature, that the surest road to the good offices of a man was through the mediation of the woman he loved. On this footing, Sir, I venture my application, else not even the known generosity of your character would have emboldened me to address you thus.—I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

* The name of this gentleman is first mentioned in the poet's letter to Mrs Dunlop, of Nov. 1790. The present letter is taken from the Glenriddell MS. Book at Liverpool.

(1) TO COL. FULLERTON OF FULLERTON.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL'S ED., 1835.)

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

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

If the gentleman who accompanied you when you did me the honor of calling on me, is with you, I beg to be respectfully remembered to him.—I have the honor to be, Sir, your highly obliged, and most devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, Oct. 3, 1791.

The original MS. of the foregoing beautiful letter is now in the possession of John Adam, Esq., Greenock. Colonel Fullarton is referred to in “The Vision,” as “Brydone’s brave Ward.” In

1793, he published a "View of Agriculture in Ayrshire," in which he thus compliments Burns, not as a poet, but as a farmer or cattle-owner:—"In order to prevent the danger arising from horned cattle in studs and straw-yards, the best mode is to cut out the budding knob, or root of the horn, while the calf is very young. This was suggested to me by Mr Robert Burns, whose general talents are no less conspicuous than the poetic powers which have done so much honour to the county in which he was born."

About this period, when our bard had determined on abandoning for ever a farmer's life, his attention was mainly directed to attain some increase in his Excise emoluments by changing his present district for one at a sea-port. A year before this he had, through the favour of Collector Mitchell, been appointed to "a vacant foot-walk in Dumfries;" but still he had not attained the position of a "port-officer." The letter addressed to Mr Corbet, above given, explains his views on this matter, and his never-failing patron Mr Graham is again addressed both in verse and prose, to remind him of "Nature's poor, fenceless, naked child, the Bard."

(⁸) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

ENCLOSING THE SECOND POETICAL EPISTLE.*

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

ELLISLAND, *Oct. 5, 1791.*

I OUGHT to have written you long ago; but a mere letter of thanks must to you be an insipid business. I wish to send you something that will give you at least as much amusement as "The Aberdeen New Prognosticator," or "Six Excellent New Songs." Along with two other pieces, I enclose you a sheetful of groans, wrung from me in my elbow-chair, with one unlucky leg on a stool before me. I will make no apology for addressing it to you; I have no

* Commencing "Late crippled of an arm," &c., page 41, Vol. III.

longer a choice of patrons ; the truly noble Glencairn is no more ! I intend soon to do myself the honor of writing Mrs Graham, and sending her some other lesser pieces of late date. My muse will sooner be in mischief than be idle ; so I keep her at work.

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

(¹¹) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)*

ELLISLAND, Oct. 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I was never more unfit for writing. A poor devil, nailed to an elbow-chair, writing in anguish with a bruised leg laid on a stool before him, is in a fine situation truly for saying bright things.

I may perhaps see you about Martinmas. I have sold to my landlord the lease of my farm, and as I rounp off everything then, I have a mind to take a week's excursion to see old acquaintance. At all events, you may reckon on [payment of] your account about that time. So much for business. I do not know if I ever informed you that I am now ranked on the list as a supervisor, and I have pretty good reason to believe that I shall soon be called out to employment. The appointment is worth from one to two

* We have collated former printed copies with the original MS. in possession of Mr Hill's grandson, and made a few corrections and additions.

hundred a year, according to the place of the country in which one is settled. I have not been so lucky in my farming. Mr Miller's kindness has been just such another as Creech's was—but this for your private ear :

“His meddling vanity, a busy fiend,
Still making work his selfish craft must mend.”

By the way I have taken a damned vengeance of Creech. He wrote me a fine, fair letter, telling me that he was going to print a third edition ; and as he had a brother's care of my fame, he wished to add every new thing I have written since, and I should be amply rewarded with—a copy or two to present to my friends ! He has sent me a copy of the last edition to correct, &c., but I have as yet taken no notice of it ; and I hear he has published without me.* You know, and all my friends know, that I do not value money ; but I owed the gentleman a debt, which I am happy to have it in my power to repay.

Farewell, and prosperity attend all your undertakings ! I shall try, if my unlucky limb would give me a little ease, to write you a letter a little better worth reading. Put the enclosed to post. R. B.

As we are now about to close the Ellisland period of Burns's life it may be necessary to record here a few Excise-anecdotes which Cunningham and other biographers have handed down, perhaps on no very reliable authority. We shall head these with one that has been politely sent to us as “original” by the Rev. David Hogg, Kirkmahoe.

In consequence of official information, Burns was ordered to

* Creech issued a reprint of the one volume Edinburgh edition in July 1790. In September 1791 Messrs Cadell and Davies of London, recommended Mr Creech to print an edition of 1000 copies in 2 vols crown 8vo. We shall hereafter see that not till April 1792 did Burns agree to co-operate with Creech in that matter, and undertake to supply him with additional poems to the extent of 50 pages or so.

make some investigation into the doings of a certain canny old woman called "Janet," in the parish of Holywood, who was charged with serving thirsty souls on Sundays with a stronger beverage than treacle-beer, under pretence of selling some home-brewed article that was in great request among her customers. When Burns arrived one day, she, not knowing him, asked if it was a glass of home-brewed he wanted. To her surprise, he answered that he could not drink such wishy-washy stuff, and would prefer something with more smeddum in it. She instantly suspected his errand, and in her trepidation cried out "Mercy on us ! are ye an Exciseman ! God help me, man, ye'll surely no inform on a puir auld body like me, as I hae nae other means o' leevin than sellin my drap o' home-brew'd to decent folk that come to Holywood Kirk." Burns at once put her fears to rest (concludes our respected authority) by patting her on the shoulder while he made the almost heavenly reply—"Janet, sin awa there, and I'll protect ye !"

Cunningham assures us that against the regular smugglers, the looks of Burns were stern, and his hand was heavy, while to the poor country dealer he was mild and lenient. As an instance of the latter he tells that "the poet and a brother exciseman one day suddenly entered a widow woman's shop in Dunscore, and made a seizure of smuggled tobacco. 'Jenny,' said Burns, 'I expected this would be the upshot ; here, Lewars, take a note of the number of rolls as I count them. Now Jock, did ye ever hear an auld wife numbering her threads before check-reels were invented ? Thou's ane, an' thou's ane, an' thou's ane, a' out—listen !' As he handed out the rolls, he went on with his enumeration, but dropping every second roll into Janet's lap. Lewars took the desired note with much gravity, and saw, as if he saw not, the merciful conduct of his companion.

The late Professor Gillespie of St Andrews remembered seeing Burns one August Fair-day, in the village of Thornhill, where a poor woman (Kate Watson) had, for one day, taken up the public-house trade without licence ; "I saw the poet enter her door and anticipated nothing short of an immediate seizure of a certain greybeard and barrel, which to my personal knowledge, contained the contraband commodities our bard was in search of.

A nod, accompanied by a significant movement of the forefinger, brought Kate to the doorway or trance, and I was near enough to hear the following words distinctly uttered: "Kate, are you mad? Don't you know that the Supervisor and I will be in upon you in the course of forty minutes? Good-by t'ye at present." Burns was in the street and in the midst of the crowd in an instant, and I had access to know that the friendly hint was not neglected. It saved a poor widow from a fine of several pounds, for committing a quarterly offence by which the Revenue was probably subject to an annual loss of five shillings."*

The late Joseph Train also communicated an anecdote of the same nature as those above recorded, complimentary enough to an exciseman's humanity, but not quite compatible with his fidelity as a revenue officer: "Jean Dunn, a suspected contraband trader in Kirkpatrick-Durham† observing Burns and Robertson (another exciseman) approaching her house on the morning of a Fair-day, slipped out at the back door, apparently to avoid scrutiny, leaving in the house only a hired assistant, and her own child, a daughter, 'Has there been any brewing for the Fair here to-day?' demanded one of the officers. 'O no, sir,' was the reply of the servant, 'we hae nae licence for that.' 'That's no true,' exclaimed the child, 'the muckle kist is fu' o' the bottles o' yill that my mother sat up brewing for the Fair.' 'Does that bird speak?' said Robertson, pointing to one hanging in a cage. 'There's no use for another speaking-bird here,' said Burns, 'while that little lassie is so good at it. We are in a hurry just now; but as we return from the Fair, we'll examine the muckle kist.' Of course when they returned the kist did not correspond with the lassie's account of it."

The foregoing wreath of anecdotes is crowned with the allegation that the poet's dog, "Thurlow," was trained to go before him into the premises of revenue defaulters and apprise the inmates of his approach. This he did by shaking his head and rattling his loose brass collar, on which was engraved the legend—"Robert Burns, Poet and Exciseman."

* Edinburgh Literary Journal, 1829.

† A correspondent notes that as no fair was ever held at this place, Mr Train must be in error as to the locality.

In the October letter to Mr Hill, our poet writes very hopefully in the prospect of advancement in his Excise career ; while he somewhat ungraciously refers to his past three years' "unlucky" experience as a farmer. There is no evidence that his landlord, Mr Miller, ever acted otherwise than generously and leniently towards his highly-gifted, though erratic tenant ; and yet we see that by some twist of logic peculiarly his own, Burns tried to convince himself and his friends that his unsuccessful farming was somehow attributable to the "selfish craft" of the well-disposed laird. Mr Miller himself appears to have become so dissatisfied with Ellisland at this time—perhaps mainly from his tenant's woeful account of its unproductiveness—that he was fain to sell the farm to a substantial neighbour (Mr Morine) for £2000. The deed of conveyance in favour of the purchaser is dated 19th November 1791, and Burns became a party in the deed by signing the renunciation of his lease. The soil of Ellisland has been much improved since those days, but experienced judges affirm that it never can become of first-rate quality ; at same time we are told that the land which formed the poet's ruinous bargain at £50 per annum, is now reckoned remunerative at a rent of £170. But, apart from utilitarianism, it is certain that a memory of the musings of Burns during his brief sojourn there will for ever hallow that quiet Nithside farm, and bring a constant succession of pilgrims from many lands to gaze with interest on the scene. The Wounded Hare, The Whistle, Mary in Heaven, Willie brew'd a peck o' Maut, Captain Grose, Captain Matthew Henderson, Queen Mary's Lament, and Tam o' Shanter, are all suggested by that locality ; while the melodies of a score of his finest songs are hummed by the whispering foliage, and counter-sung by the rippling Nith. It was there, once upon a time, that the venerable Wordsworth sat and mused, and pencilled down on the spot, the beautiful thoughts which form one of his fine tributes to the memory of Burns. The local spirit of the place wrapt him in a philosophic reverie, and, recalling the image of its former illustrious tenant, led him to

“Think of the moments pure and bright,
And net a few,
When Wisdom prosper'd in his sight,
And Goodness too.”

Only two stanzas of that poem can be aptly quoted in the present stage of our progress :—

“Avoiding each unquiet theme,
Where gentlest judgment might misdeem,
And pleased to welcome every gleam
Of good or fair,
Let us, beside this limpid stream,
Breathe hopeful air.

“How oft, inspir’d, must he have trod
These pathways, yon far-stretching road :
There lurks his Home—in that abode,
With mirth elate,
Or in his nobly pensive mood,
The Rustic sate.”

Just five years before the date we have now arrived at, the rustic poet emerged from the clouds of obscurity in which he had been nursed, and shewed by the light of his genius

“How verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.”

Only five years more of human existence lay before him in dark perspective. Bound in the spirit of illusive hopefulness, once more he abandoned the plough and a country life for the busy hum of men in crowded thoroughfares. There we follow him to track his footsteps, and record the products of his busy brain. The daily occupation that is to provide his household bread is a very humble one ; but his every word and deed continue to “give the world assurance of a man,” and his wild harp of song still instinctively responds to his magic touch. A voice from Friar’s Carse follows him down the Nith into the ancient burgh, where his bones are soon to repose :

“Keep the name of Man in mind,
And dishonour not thy kind :
Reverence with lowly heart
Him, whose wondrous work thou art ;
Keep His Goodness still in view,
Thy trust, and thy example, too.

Stranger, go ! Heaven be thy guide !
Quoth the Bedesman of Nithside.”

APPENDIX

A.

AYRSHIRE VERSIONS OF POPULAR BALLADS.

THE following letter, and ballad-fragments annexed, were published by Cromek in volume second of his "Select Scottish Songs, ancient and modern"—London 1810. We might have introduced these in chronological order at page 263, Volume IV., immediately before the poet's Highland Tour; but, to avoid interruption in the biographic progress, their insertion was deferred till a convenient position could be found for them as an Appendix. Cromek obtained the MS. from Lord Woodhouselee in January 1809, as appears from a letter now before us (the property of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq.) addressed by Alexander Fraser Tytler (Lord Woodhouselee) to Cromek, expressing his admiration of "The Reliques of Burns," then recently published.

(2) TO WILLIAM TYTLER, ESQ. OF WOODHOUSELEE.

(CROMEK, 1810.)

SIR,—Inclosed I have sent you a sample of the old pieces that are still to be found among our peasantry in the West. I had once a great many of such fragments; and some of these *more entire*; but as I had no idea that any body cared for them, I have forgotten them. I invariably hold it sacrilege to add any thing of my own to help out with the shattered wrecks of these venerable old compositions; but they have many various readings. If you have not seen these before, I know they will flatter your true old-style Caledonian feelings; at any rate, I am truly happy to have an opportunity of assuring you how sincerely I am, Revered Sir, your gratefully indebted humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

LAWNMARKET, Aug. 1787.*

* In this, like many other letters of Burns, the year is not given along with the date; and Cromek ventured to insert "1790" in the printed copy—a most palpable error; for the only month of *August* he ever was in Edinburgh was that of 1787.

THE BRAES O' YARROW.

Tune—"Willie's rare."

Nae birdies sang the mirky hour,
 Among the braes of Yarrow,
 But slumber'd on the dewy boughs
 To wait the waukenin morrow.*

Where shall I gang, my ain true Luvie,
 Where shall I gang to hide me?
 For weel ye ken, i' your father's bowe^{er}
 It wad be death to find me.

O go you to yon tavern house,
 An' there count o'er the lawin,
 An' if I be a woman true,
 I'll meet you in the dawin.

O he's gane to yon tavern house,
 An' counted owre his lawin,
 An' ay he drank to her gude health,
 Was to meet him in the dawin.

But e'er he left yon tavern house,
 An' paid the counted lawin,
 There started ben three armed men,
 To meet him in the dawin.

O wae be unto woman's wit,
 It has beguiled many!
 She trysted she wad meet me here,
 And sent three men to slay me

* * * *

Get up, get up now, sister Ann,
 I fear we've wrought you sorrow;
 Get up, you'll find your true Luvie slain
 A down the banks o' Yarrow.

She sought him east, she sought him west,
 She sought him braid and narrow,
 Till, in the clifftin o' a craig,
 She fand him drown'd in Yarrow.

She's taen three links o' her flowin' hair,
 That hung down lang and yellow,
 An' she's tied it about sweet Willie's waist,
 An' drawn him out o' Yarrow.

* * * *

* The beauty of the opening stanza suggests that if the poet reckoned it sacrilege to *add* anything of his own to help out an old fragment, he did not consider it a sin to *prefix* a touch or two for that purpose.

ROB ROY, THE YOUNGER.*

Tune—A rude set of “The Mill, Mill, O.”

Rob Roy from the Highlands came
 Unto the Lawlan' border,
 To steal away a gay ladye,
 To haud his house in order ;
 He came o'er the Loch o' Linn,
 Twenty men his arms did carry ;
 Himsel gaed in an' fand her out,
 Protesting he would marry.

O will ye gae wi' me, he says
 An' will ye be my honey ?
 Or will ye be my wedded wife,
 For I love you the best of any :
 I winna gae wi' you, she says,
 Nor will I be your honey ;
 Nor will I be your wedded wife,
 You love me for my money,

* * * *

But he set her on a coal-black steed,
 Himsel lap on behind her ;
 An' he's awa to the Highland hills,
 An' defied her friends to find her.

The song went on to narrate the forcing her to bed ; and the tune changes to something like “Jenny dang the weaver.”

* * * *

Rob Roy was my father ca'd,
 Macgregor was his name, ladye ;
 He led a band o' heroes bold
 And I am here the same, ladye :

* This hero was the son of Rob Roy Macgregor who figured in the Rebellion of 1715. He was outlawed by sentence of the Justiciary Court for non-appearance in his trial for murder of a man named MacIaren in 1736. During his concealment after outlawry he formed the desperate project of carrying off and forcibly accomplishing a marriage with Jane Kaye, heiress of Edenbellie, with a view to obtain her estate. He and his brother, James Macgregor, at the head of a band of armed followers, entered her mother's house, and having seized his intended bride, dragged her out and tied her across a horse, and conveyed her to a wild sequestered place among the mountains of Argyleshire. There, after show of a marriage ceremony, she was forced to bed with the ruffian.

On discovery of her place of concealment she was rescued by her relatives, and Rob Roy, with his brother James, were apprehended and tried for the crime. James escaped from prison before sentence, and was outlawed ; while Rob was condemned and executed in February 1753.

Be content, be content,
 Be content to stay, ladye ;
 For thou art my wedded wife,
 Until thy dying day, ladye.

He was a hedge unto his friends,
 A heckle to his foes, ladye ;
 Every one that durst him wrong
 He took him by the nose, ladye.
 I'm as bold, I'm as bold,
 I'm as bold, and more, ladye ;
 He that dares my word dispute
 Shall feel my good claymore, ladye.

YOUNG HYN' HORN.

To its ain Tune.

Near Edinburgh was a young son born,
 Hey lily lee, and a how lo lan ;
 And his name it was called young *Hyn' horn*,
 An' its hey down down deedle airo.

Seven long years he serv'd the King, *Hey lily lee, &c.*
 An' its a' for the sake of his daughter Jean,—*An' its hey, &c.*

The King an angry man was he,—*Hey, &c.*
 He sent young *Hyn' horn* to the sea,—*An' its, &c.*

But she outwittens o' the King,—*Hey, &c.*
 Upon his finger slipt a ring,—*An' its, &c.*

While this, your ring, is bright of hue,—*Hey, &c.*
 Then I'm in love with none but you,—*An' its, &c.*

But when the ring grows pale and wan,—*Hey, &c.*
 Then I'm in love with another man,—*An' its, &c.*

* * * *

Upon a day he look'd at his ring,—*Hey, &c.*
 It was as pale as any thing,—*An' its, &c.*

He has left the sea and come to land,—*Hey, &c.*
 And there he met with a beggar man,—*An' its, &c.*

What news, what news, my auld beggar man,—*Hey, &c.*
 What news, what news, by sea or lan' ?—*An' its, &c.*

Nae news, nae news, the auld beggar said,—*Hey, &c.*
 But the King's dochter Jean is going to be wed,—*An' its, &c.*

Cast aff, cast aff thy auld beggar weed,—*Hey, &c.*
 And I'll gie thee my gude grey steed,—*An' its, &c.*

When he came to the King's castle gate,—*Hey, &c.*
 He sought a cup o' wine for young *Hyn' horn's* sake.—*An' its, &c.*

He drank off the wine, and he put in the ring,—*Hey, &c.*
 An' now carry that to the King's dochter Jean.—*An' its, &c.*

O gat ye this by sea, or gat ye this by lan',—*Hey, &c.*
 Or gat ye the ring aff a dead man's han'?—*An' its, &c.*

I gat na't by sea, I got na't by lan',—*Hey, &c.*
 But I got it frae your ain fair han',—*An' its, &c.*

Take off, take off my bridal gown,—*Hey, &c.*
 I'll follow this beggar frae town to town,—*An' its, &c.*

Ye need na doff your bridal gown,—*Hey, &c.*
 For I'll make you ladye o' mony a town,—*An' its, &c.*

B.

REMARKS ON SCOTTISH SONGS AND BALLADS, INSCRIBED BY
 BURNS IN AN INTERLEAVED COPY OF THE FIRST FOUR
 VOLUMES OF JOHNSON'S MUSICAL MUSEUM, BELONGING TO
 ROBERT RIDDELL, ESQ. OF GLENRIDDELL.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[The following interesting annotations exist in the handwriting of Burns in Captain Riddell's copy of the "Scots Musical Museum;" of which the fourth volume was published in August 1792. After Mr Riddell's death in April 1794, his widow presented the volumes to her niece, Miss Eliza Bayley of Manchester, to whom Cromek applied for, and obtained, leave to publish our author's notes therein contained.]

VOL. I. PUBLISHED IN MAY 1787.

Song 1. The Highland Queen.

Both music and poetry were composed by a Mr M'Vicar, purser of the Solway man of war. This I had from Mr Blacklock.

4. *Bess the Gawkie.*

This song shows that the Scottish Muses did not all leave us when we lost Ramsay and Oswald, as I have good reason to believe that the verses and music are both posterior to the days of these two gentlemen.* It is a beautiful song, and in the genuine Scots taste. We have few pastoral compositions—I mean the pastoral of Nature—that are equal to this.

5. *Lord Gregory.*

It is somewhat singular that, in Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, Wigton, Kirkcudbright, and Dumfries Shires, there is scarcely an old song or tune which, from the title, &c., can be guessed to belong to, or be the production of, these counties. This I conjecture, is one of these very few; as the ballad, which is a long one, is called, both by tradition and in printed collections, “The Lass o’ Lochroyan,” which I take to be Lochroyan in Galloway.

6. *The Banks of the Tweed.*

This song is one of the many attempts that English composers have made to imitate the Scottish manner, and which I shall, in these strictures, beg leave to distinguish by the appellation of Anglo-Scottish productions. The music is pretty good, but the verses are just above contempt.

7. *The Beds of Sweet Roses.*

This song, so far as I know, for the first time appears here in print. When I was a boy, it was a very popular song in Ayrshire. I remember to have heard those fanatics, the Buchanites, sing some of their nonsensical rhymes, which they dignify with the name of hymns, to this air.†

* Its author was the Rev. Dr James Muirhead of Logan, minister of Urr, in Galloway, Born 1740, Died 1808. The song first appeared in Herd’s collection, first edition, 1769.

† See page 49, vol. IV. Shakespeare, in his *Winter’s Tale*, speaks of “Puritans who sing psalms to hornpipes.”

8. *Roslin Castle.*

These verses were the production of Richard Hewit, a young man that Dr Blacklock, to whom I am indebted for the anecdote, kept for some years as an amanuensis. I do not know who is the author of the second song to the tune. Tytler, in his amusing history of Scots music, gives the air to Oswald; but in Oswald's own collection of Scots tunes, where he affixes an asterisk to those he himself composed, he does not make the least claim to the tune.*

9. *Saw Ye Johnie Comin? Quo She.*

This song, for genuine humor in the verses, and lively originality in the air, is unparalleled. I take it to be very old.†

11. *Saw Ye Nae My Peggie.*

This charming song is much older, and indeed superior to, Ramsay's verses "The Toast," as he calls them. There is another set of the words, much older still, and which I take to be the original one, but though it has a very great deal of merit it is not quite ladies' reading.

The original words, for they can scarcely be called verses, seem to be as follows; a song familiar from the cradle to every Scottish ear.

"Saw ye my Maggie, saw ye my Maggie,
Saw ye my Maggie linkin' o'er the lea?
High kilted was she, high kilted was she,
High kilted was she, the coat aboon her knee.

What mark has your Maggie? what mark has your Maggie?
What mark has your Maggie, that I may ken her by?"—&c., &c.,

* Burns afterwards points out that the tune No. 373, to his own words—"A posie to my ain dear May," is probably the progenitor of this admired melody.

† This very unique song appeared in David Herd's earlier edition, 1769; but a standard collection called "The Charmer," (published in 1751) appears to have first produced it. Boswell, in the Journal of his Tour to the Hebrides, thus refers to that collection:—"14 Oct. 1773—Johnson sometimes amused himself with very slight reading; from which, however, his conversation shewed that he contrived to extract some benefit. At Captain M'Lean's he read a good deal in 'The Charmer,' a collection of Songs."

Though it by no means follows that the silliest verses to an air must, for that reason, be the original song; yet I take this ballad, of which I have quoted part, to be the old verses. The two songs in Ramsay, one of them evidently his own, are never to be met with in the fireside circle of our peasantry; while that which I take to be the old song, is in every shepherd's mouth. Ramsay, I suppose, had thought the old verses unworthy of a place in his collection.

13. *The Flowers of Edinburgh.*

This song is one of the many effusions of Scots Jacobitism. The title, "The Flowers of Edinburgh" has no manner of connexion with the present verses, so I suspect there has been an older set of words, of which the title is all that remains.

By the bye, it is singular enough that the Scottish Muses were all Jacobites. I have paid more attention to every description of Scots songs than perhaps any body living has done, and I do not recollect one single stanza, or even the title of the most trifling Scots air, which has the least panegyric reference to the families of Nassau or Brunswick; while there are hundreds satirizing them. This may be thought no panegyric on the Scots poets; but I mean it as such. For myself, I would always take it as a compliment to have it said that my heart ran before my head*—and surely the gallant though unfortunate house of Stewart, the kings of our fathers for so many heroic ages, is a theme much more interesting than * * *

* Here in 1810 Cromeek introduced a note, thus:—"Poor Burns! Thy heart indeed ran always before thy head; but never didst thou fail to carry thy reader's heart along with thee. Instead of kindling at the indignities offered to thy native land, hadst thou been a wise and prudent poet, thou would'st have tuned thy lyre to the praise of some powerful family, and carefully abstained from drawing on thy head the resentment of the guilty Great, or their descendants. Thou might'st have rolled in affluence, and ceased to struggle under the insulting taunts of every little upstart in office. Thou might'st have flourished in thy day, and left behind thee an offspring securely treading the path of honours and preferment, instead of leaving thy wife and children poor and penniless, at the mercy of the world. Thy mantle, indeed, has been claimed for the first of a new order of poets, who has done all that thou would'st have disdained to do. The world has seen with astonishment, the solid treasures realized by the

14. *Jamie Gay.*

This is another and a tolerable Anglo-Scottish piece.

15. *My Dear Jockie.*

Another Anglo-Scottish production.

16. *Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' Strae.*

It is self-evident that the first four lines of this song are part of a song more ancient than Ramsay's beautiful verses which are annexed to them. As music is the language of Nature; and poetry, particularly songs, are less or more localized (if I may be allowed the verb) by some of the modifications of time and place, this is the reason why so many of our Scots airs have outlived their original, and perhaps many subsequent sets of verses; except a single name, or phrase, or sometimes one or two lines, simply to distinguish the tunes by.

To this day, among people who know nothing of Ramsay's verses, the following is the song, and all the song that ever I heard:—

“Gin ye meet a bonie lassie
Gie her a kiss and let her gae;
But gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.
Fye, gae rub her, rub her, rub her,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae:
An' gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.”

17. *The Lass o' Livingston.*

The old song, in three eight-line stanzas, is well known, and has merit as to wit and humor; but is rather unfit for insertion. It begins:—

speculating Muse; but the meretricious laurel will soon wither around the wearer's brow, and succeeding generations will turn with contempt from the cold and the courtly strain.” [Scott's “Lay of the last Minstrel” appeared in Jan. 1805; “Marmion” in Feb. 1808; and the “Lady of the Lake” in May 1810. Cromek's reference here is evidently to Walter Scott, as yet untried as a novelist. Cromek did not survive to witness his greater triumphs: he died in March 1812.—ED.]

“ The bonie Lass o’ Liviston,
 Her name ye ken, her name ye ken,
 And she has writt’n in her contract,
 To lie her lane, to lie her lane.”

18. *The last time I came o’er the Moor.*

Ramsay found the first line of this song, which had been preserved as the title of the charming air, and then composed the rest of the verses to suit that line. This has always a finer effect than composing English words, or words with an idea foreign to the spirit of the old title. Where old titles of songs convey any idea at all, it will generally be found to be quite in the spirit of the air.*

19. *The Happy Marriage.*

Another, but very pretty, Anglo-Scottish piece.

20. *The Lass o’ Patie’s Mill.*

In Sinclair’s Statistical Account of Scotland, this song is localized (a verb I must use for want of another to express my idea) somewhere in the North of Scotland, and it is likewise claimed by Ayrshire. The following anecdote I had from the present Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, who had it from the last John, Earl of Loudoun. The then Earl of Loudoun—father to the Earl John before mentioned, had Ramsay at Loudoun, and one day walking together by the banks of Irvine water, near Newmills, at a place yet called “Patie’s Mill,” they were struck with the appearance of a beautiful country girl. His lordship observed that she would be a fine theme for a song. Allan lagged behind in returning to Loudoun Castle, and at dinner produced this identical song.

21 and 22. *The Highland Laddie.*

As this was a favorite theme with our later Scottish Muses, there are several airs and songs of that name. That which I take

* The reader will find an effort of Burns to fit this air, at page 127, Vol. III.

to be the oldest is to be found in this *Museum* (No. 332), beginning "I hae been at Crookie-den." One reason for my thinking so is that Oswald has it in his collection by the name of "The Auld Highland Laddie." It is also known by the name of "Jinglin John," which is a well-known song of four or five stanzas, and seems to be earlier than Jacobite times. As a proof of this, it is little known to the peasantry by the name of "Highland Laddie;" while every body knows "Jinglin Johnie." That song begins :—

"Jinglin John, the meikle man,
He met a lass was blythe and bonie."

Another "Highland Laddie" is also in the *Museum*, Vol. V., (No. 467),* which I take to be Ramsay's original, as he has borrowed the chorus, "O my bonie Highland lad," &c. It consists of three stanzas, besides the chorus, and has humor in its composition. It is an excellent, but somewhat licentious song, beginning :—

"As I cam o'er the Cairney Mount,
And down among the blooming heather," &c.

This air, and the common "Highland Laddie" seem to be only different sets.

Another "Highland Laddie," also in the *Museum*, Vol. V. (No. 468) is the tune of several Jacobite fragments. One of these old songs to it only exists, as far as I know, in these four lines :—

"Whare hae ye been a' day,
Bonie laddie, Highland laddie?
Down the back o' Bell's brae,
Courtin Maggie, courtin Maggie."

Another of this name is Dr Arne's beautiful air (No. 22, Vol. II.) called, the "New Highland Laddie." †

* Here we have Burns referring to the *fifth* volume of the *Museum*, which was not published till after his death. The explanation is that Johnson had made considerable progress with the music-plates of that volume at the period when these notes were penned (1793), and proof sheets were in the bard's hands.

† The following memorandum is entered in one of the poet's note books:—

THE HIGHLANDER'S PRAYER, at SHERIFF-MUIR.

"O Lord be Thou with us : but, if Thou be *not* with us, be not against us ; but leave it between the red coats and us !"

23. *The Turnimspike.*

Tune—"Clout the Caldron."

There is a stanza in this excellent song for local humour, omitted in this set—where I have placed the asterisms (between the ninth and tenth verses).

"They tak the horse then by the head,
And there they make him stand, man
Me tell them, me hae seen the day
They no had sic command, man."

A tradition is mentioned in *The Bee*, that the second Bishop Chisholm of Dunblane used to say, that if he was going to be hanged, nothing would soothe his mind so much by the way, as to hear "Clout the Caldron" played.

I have met with another tradition that the old song "Have you any pots or pans, or any broken chandlers?" was composed on one of the Kenmure family, in the cavalier times; and alluded to an amour he had, while under hiding, in the disguise of an itinerant tinker. The air is also known by the name of "The Blacksmith and his apron," which, from the rhythm, seems to have been a line of some old song to the tune.

25 *Auld Lang Syne.*

Ramsay here, as usual with him, has taken the idea of the song, and the first line, from the old fragment, which will appear in the Museum. Vol. V.*

27. *Johnie's Grey Breeks.*

To sing such a beautiful air to such execrable verses (as "The Gentle Swain") is downright prostitution of common sense! The Scots verses indeed are tolerable.†

* The footnote to No. 21 applies to this also.

† The latter are said to be by John Mayne, author of "Logan Braes," and begin thus :—

Jenny's heart was frank and free
And woers she had mony ; yet
Her sang was ay—Of a' I see,
Commend me to my Johnie yet.
But air or late, he's sic a gate
To mak a body cheerie, that
I wish to be, afore I dee,
His ain kind dearie, yet.

Though this has certainly every evidence of being a Scottish air, yet there is a well-known tune and song in the north of Ireland, called "The Weaver and his shuttle, O," which, though sung much quicker, is every note the very same tune.

28. *He stole my tender heart away.*

This is an Anglo-Scottish production, but by no means a bad one.*

32. *Fairest of the Fair.*

It is too barefaced to take Dr Percy's charming song, and by the means of transposing a few English words into Scots, to offer to pass it for a Scots song. I was not acquainted with the Editor until the first volume was nearly finished, else, had I known in time, I would have prevented such an impudent absurdity.

33. *The Blathrie O't.*†

The following is a set of this song, which was the earliest song I remember to have got by heart. When a child, an old woman‡ sung it to me, and I picked up every word at first hearing.

O Willy, weel I mind, I lent you my hand,
To sing you a song which you then did demand ;
But my memory's so bad, I had a'maist forgot,
That you called it "the gear an' the blathrie o't."

I'll sing not of confusion, delusion, or pride,
I'll sing about a laddie was for a virtuous bride ;
For virtue is an ornament that time will never rot,
And preferable to gear an' the blathrie o't.

* The music is Italian, having been originally composed to Italian words by Signor Thomaso Giordani.

† "Shame fa' the gear and the blathrie o't," is the turn of an old Scottish song, used when a young handsome girl marries an old man, upon the account of his wealth—*Kelly's Scots Proverbs*. "The blathrie o't" means "the silly pleading, or deplorable influence of it."

‡ This might be Betty Davidson, at Mount Oliphant. See page 22, Vol. IV.

Tho' my lassie hae nae scarlets nor silks to put on,
 We envy not the greatest that sits upon a throne ;
 I wad rather hae my lassie, tho' she cam in her smock,
 Than a princess wi' the gear an' the blathrie o't.

Tho' we hae nae horses nor menyie at command
 We will toil on our fit, and we'll work wi' our hand ;
 And when wearied, then our rest will be sweet in any spot,
 And we'll value not the gear and the blathrie o't.

If we hae ony babies, we'll reckon them as lent ;
 Hae we less, hae we mair, we will ay be content ;
 For the cottar has mair pleasure in the winnin o' a groat,
 Than the miser wi' his gear and the blathrie o't.

We'll fash not the affairs o' the kirk or the queen,
 They're nae matters for a sang, let them sink, let them swim ;
 On your kirk I'll ne'er encroach, but I'll hold it still remote,
 Sae take this for " the gear and the blathrie o't."

34. *Dainty Davie.*

This song, tradition says, and the composition itself confirms it, was composed on the Rev. David Williamson's getting the daughter of Lady Cherrytrees with child, while a party of dragoons were searching the house to apprehend him for being an adherent to the solemn league and covenant. The pious woman had put a lady's night-cap on him, and had laid him a-bed with her own daughter, and passed him to the soldiery as a lady, her daughter's bed-fellow. A mutilated stanza or two are to be found in Herd's collection, but the original song consists of five or six stanzas, and were their delicacy equal to their wit and humor, they would merit a place in any collection. The first stanza is—

" Being pursued by the dragoons,
 Within my bed he was laid down ;
 And weel I wat, he was worth his room,
 For he was my dainty Davie."

Ramsay's song " Lucky Nancy," though he calls it an old song with additions, seems to be all his own except the chorus—

I was ay telling you,
 Lucky Nancy, lucky Nancy,
 Auld springs wad ding the new
 But ye would never trow me.

which I should conjecture to be part of a song prior to the affair of Williamson.*

35. *May Eve, or Kate of Aberdeen.*

Kate of Aberdeen is, I believe, the work of poor Cunningham the player, of whom the following anecdote, though told before, deserves a recital. A fat dignitary of the Church coming past Cunningham on Sunday as the poor poet was plying a fishing rod in some stream near Durham, his reverence reprimanded Cunningham very severely for such an occupation on such a day. The poor poet, with that inoffensive gentleness of manner which was his peculiar characteristic, replied that he hoped God and his reverence would forgive his seeming profanity of that sacred day, "as he had no dinner to eat but what lay at the bottom of that pool." This, Mr Woods the player, who knew Cunningham well and esteemed him much, assured me was true.

36. *Tweedside.*

In Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany, he tells us that about thirty of the songs in that publication were the works of some young gentleman of his acquaintance ; which songs are marked with the letters D. C. &c. Old Mr Tytler of Woodhouselee, the worthy and able defender of the beauteous Queen of Scots, told me that the songs marked C. in the "Tea-table," were the composition of a Mr Crawford, of the house of Auchinames, who was afterwards unfortunately drowned coming from France. As Tytler was most intimately acquainted with Allan Ramsay, I think the anecdote may be depended on. Of consequence the beautiful song of "Tweedside" is Mr Crawford's, and indeed does great honor to his poetical talents. He was a Robert Crawford ; the Mary he celebrates was a Mary Stewart, of the Castle-Milk family, afterwards married to a Mr Ritchie.

I have seen a song, calling itself the "Original Tweedside," and said to have been composed by a Lord Yester. It consisted of two stanzas, of which I recollect the first :—

* Lord Woodhouselee notified to Cromek that Lord President Forbes composed "Lucky Nancy."

“ When Maggie and I was aequaint,
 I carried my noddle fu’ high ;
 Nae lintwhite on a’ the green plain,
 Nor gowdspink so happy as I ;
 But I saw her sae fair, and I lo’ed ;
 I woo’d, but I cam nae great speed ;
 So now I maun wander abroad,
 And my bancs far frae the Tweed.”

37. *Mary’s Dream.*

The Mary here alluded to is generally supposed to be Miss Mary M’Ghie, daughter to the Laird of Airds, in Galloway. The poet was a Mr (John) Lowe, who likewise wrote another beautiful song, called “Pompey’s Ghost.”* I have seen a poetic epistle from him in North America, where he now is, or lately was, addressed to a lady in Scotland. By the strain of the verses it appeared that they allude to some love-disappointment.

40. *The Maid that tends the Goats.*

Mr Dudgeon (the author of this song) is a respectable farmer’s son in Berwickshire. (See page 228, Vol. IV.)

41. *I wish my Love were in a Mire.*

I never heard more of the words of this old song than the title.

43 *Allan Water.*

This Allan Water (which the composer of the music has honored with the name of the air) I have been told is Allan Water, in Strathallan. (See page 142 Vol. III. for Burns’s verses to same air.)

44. *There’s nae luck about the House.*

This is one of the most beautiful songs in the Scots, or any language. The lines

“ And will I see his face again !
 And will I hear him speak !

* This appears to be a mistake on Burns’s part. Lowe could not have been the author of “Pompey’s Ghost.” See page 299, Vol. IV.

as well as the two preceding ones,* are unequalled almost by anything I ever heard or read; and the lines

“The present moment is our ain,
The neist we never saw”

are worthy of the first part. It is long posterior to Ramsay's days. About the year 1771, or 72, it came first on the streets as a ballad; and I suppose the composition of the song was not much anterior to that period.

45. *Tarry Woo.*

This is a very pretty song; but I fancy that the first half-stanza, as well as the tune itself, are much older than the rest of the words.

* These “two preceding lines,” so praised by Burns are

“His very tread has music in't
As he comes up the stair:”

the other couplet so commended—“The present moment,” &c., forms part of a double stanza, not found in the original ballad, and which is attributed to Dr Beattie. It is now pretty generally admitted that Mrs Jean Adam, schoolmistress, a native of Crawfordsdyke, Greenock (born 1710, died 1765), was the authoress of the ballad, which was first printed in David Herd's Collection, first Edition, 1769, under the title of the “Mariner's Wife,” where it consists of nine verses of four lines each, with chorus. The following portions of the song, as given in the *Museum*, have been added since its publication by Herd:—

“The cauld blasts o' the winter wind,
That thirled thro' my heart,
They've a' blawn by, I have him safe,
Till death we'll never part;
But what puts parting in my head?
It may be far awa;
The present moment is our ain,
The neist we never saw.

Since Colin's weel, I'm weel content,
I hae nae mair to crave;
Could I but live to mak him blest,
I'm blest aboon the lave;
Then spread the table neat and clean,
Gar ilka thing look braw;
It's a' for love o' my Goodman
For he's been lang awa.

46. *Gramachree.*

This song was composed by Mr Poe, a counsellor-at-law in Dublin. This anecdote I had from a gentleman who knew the lady—the “Molly”—who is the subject of the song, and to whom Mr Poe sent the first manuscript of his most beautiful verses. I do not remember any single line that has more true pathos than

“How can she break that honest heart, that wears her in its core!”

but as the song is Irish, it had nothing to do in this collection.

47. *The Collier's Bonie Lassie.*

The first half-stanza is much older than the days of Ramsay. The old words began thus:—

“The collier has a dochter, and O she's wonder-bonie!
A laird he was that sought her, rich baith in lands and money;
She wadna hae a laird, nor wad she be a lady;
But she wad hae a collier, the color o' her laddie.”

49. *My ain kind Deary, O.*

The old words of this song are omitted here, though much more beautiful than those inserted, which were mostly composed by poor Fergusson, in one of his merry humors.* The old words began thus:—

“I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind deary, O,
I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind deary, O.
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wat,
And I were ne'er sae weary, O,
I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind deary, O.”

51. *Blink o'er the burn, sweet Bettie.*

The old words, all that I remember, are—

“Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,
’Tis a cauld winter night;
It rains, it hails, it thunders,
The moon she gi'es nae light;

* For Burns's own verses to this air, see page 85, Vol. III.

It's for the sake o' sweet Betty,
That e'er I tint my way;
Sweet, let me lie beyond thee,
Until the break o' day.

“O Betty will bake my bread,
And Betty will brew my ale,
And Betty will be my love,
When I come over the dale:
Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,
Blink over the burn to me,
And while I hae life, dear lassie,
My ain sweet Betty thou'se be.*

58. *The Blythsome Bridal.*

Tune—“An the Kirk wad let me be.”

I find the “Blythsome Bridal” in James Watson’s collection of Scots poems, printed at Edinburgh in 1716. This collection, the publisher says, “is the first of its nature which has been published in our own native Scots dialect.” It is now extremely scarce.

Tradition, in the western parts of Scotland, tells us that the old song, “An the Kirk wad let me be” (of which there are still two stanzas extant,) once saved a covenanting clergyman out of a scrape. It was a little prior to the Revolution—a period when being a Scots Covenanter was being a felon—that one of the clergy who was at that time hunted by the merciless soldiery, fell in, by accident, with a party of the military. The soldiers were not exactly acquainted with the person of the reverend gentleman of whom they were in search; but from some suspicious circumstances they fancied that they had got one of that cloth and opprobrious persuasion among them, in the person of this stranger. *Mass John*, to extricate himself, assumed a freedom of manners very unlike the gloomy strictness of his sect; and, among other convivial exhibitions, sung (and some traditions say *composed* on the spur of the occasion) “Kirk wad let me be” with such effect,

* One of the lines of this song is quoted in *King Lear*, Act iii., Scene 6. Edgar, in his pretended ravings, while the storm is howling around the head of the frantic old king, cries out:—“The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale—Come o’er the burn, Bessie, to me.” The “pelting of the pitiless storm” would naturally suggest this song to Edgar—“It rains, it hails, it thunders,” &c.

that the soldiers swore he was a d——d honest fellow, and that it was impossible he could belong to those hellish conventicles; and so gave him his liberty.

The first stanza of this song, a little altered, is a favorite kind of dramatic interlude acted at country weddings, in the south-west parts of the kingdom. A young fellow is dressed up like an old beggar; a peruke, commonly made of carded tow, represents the hoary locks; an old bonnet; a ragged plaid, or surtout, bound with a straw-rope for a girdle; a pair of old shoes, with straw-ropes twisted round the ankles, as is done by shepherds in snowy weather; his face they disguise as like wretched old age as they can: in this plight he is brought into the wedding-house, frequently to the astonishment of strangers who are not in the secret, and begins to sing—

“I am a silly old man,
My name is Auld Glenae,” &c.*

He is asked to drink, and by and by to dance, which, after some uncouth excuses, he is prevailed on to do, the fiddler playing the tune (which here is commonly called “Auld Glenae”); in short, he is all the time so plied with liquor that he is understood to get intoxicated, and with all the ridiculous gesticulations of an old drunken beggar, he dances and staggers until he falls on the floor; yet still in all his riot, nay, in his rolling and tumbling on the floor, with one or other drunken motion of his body, he beats time to the music, till at last, he is supposed to be carried out *dead drunk*.

59. *Sae merry as we twa hae been.*

This song is beautiful. The chorus in particular is truly pathetic. I never could learn anything of its author.

“Sae merry as we twa hae been,
Sae merry as we twa hae been;
My heart it is like for to break
When I think on the days we hae seen.”

* Glenae on the small river Ae, in Annandale; the seat and designation of an ancient branch, and the present representative, of the gallant but unfortunate Dalrymles of Carnwath.—R.B.

67. *John Hay's Bonie Lassie.*

She was the daughter of John Hay, Earl, or Marquis of Tweeddale, and late Countess-dowager of Roxburgh. She died at Broomlands, near Kelso, sometime between the years of 1720 and 1740.

68. *The Bonie Brucket Lassie.*

The idea of this song is to me very original ; the first two lines are all of it that is old. The rest of the song, as well as those songs in the *Museum* marked T, are the works of an obscure, tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler, commonly known by the name of " Balloon Tytler," from his having projected a balloon ; [a mortal, who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God, and Solomon-the-Son-of-David ; yet that same unknown, drunken mortal is author and compiler of three-fourths of Elliot's pompous Encyclopedia Britannica], which he composed at half a guinea a week.*

73. *Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow.*

Mr Robertson, in his statistical account of the parish of Selkirk, says that Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow, was descended from the Dryhope, and married into the Harden family. Her daughter was married to a predecessor of the present Sir Francis Elliot of Stobbs, and of the late Lord Heathfield.

There is a circumstance in their contract of marriage that merits attention, as it strongly marks the predatory spirit of the times. The father-in-law, agrees to keep his daughter for some time after the marriage ; for which the son-in-law binds himself to give him the profits of the first Michaelmas moon !

* It is very curious to note that the portion of these remarks which we enclose within brackets is a verbatim copy of part of a letter to Mrs Dunlop, dated 13th November 1788, published for the first time in this edition.

74. *Down the Burn, Davie.*

I have been informed that the tune of "Down the burn, Davie," was the composition of David Maigh, keeper of the blood slough hounds belonging to the Laird of Riddell, in Tweeddale.

75. *The Banks of the Forth.*

The air is Oswald's.

80. *The Bush aboon Traquair.*

This is another beautiful song of Mr Crawford's composition. In the neighbourhood of Traquair, tradition still shows the "Old Bush," which, when I saw it in the year 1787, was composed of eight or nine ragged birches. The Earl of Traquair has planted a clump of trees near by, which he calls the "New Bush."

82. *My Deary, if thou Die.*

Another beautiful song of Crawford's.

83. *She rose and let me in.*

The old set of this song, which is still to be found in printed collections, is much prettier than this; but somebody (I believe it was Ramsay) took it into his head to clear it of some seeming indelicacies, and made it at once more chaste and more dull.*

* The above note shows how far prejudice will carry even a reasonable mind like that of Burns. Stenhouse informs us that the old indelicate, although certainly poetical, song, by Francis Semple of Beltrees, was "retouched by a masterly hand, who thus presented us with a song at once chaste and elegant, in which all the energetic force and beauty of the original are preserved, without a single idea to crimson the cheek of modesty, or to cause one pang to the innocent and feeling heart." In fact the song still remains in the "Tea-table Miscellany," the "Orpheus Caledonius," and in Herd's collection, in its primitive state of indelicacy.

We first find this improved edition of "She rose and let me in" in a collection called "The Blackbird," 1764, edited by "William Hunter, Philo-Architectonicæ."

85. *Go to the Ewe-bughts, Marion.*

I am not sure if this old and charming air be of the South, as is commonly said, or of the North of Scotland. There is a song, apparently as ancient as “Ewe-bughts, Marion,” which sings to the same tune, and is evidently of the North. It begins thus :—

“The Lord o’ Gordon had three dochters,
Mary, Marget, and Jean,
They wad na stay at bonie Castle Gordon,
But awa to Aberdeen.”

86. *Lewis Gordon.*

This air is a proof how one of our Scots tunes comes to be composed out of another. I have one of the earliest copies of the song, and it has prefixed—“Tune of Tarry Woo ;” of which tune a different set has insensibly varied into a different air. To a Scots critic, the pathos of the line :—

“Tho’ his back be at the wa’,”

must be very striking. It needs not a Jacobite prejudice to be affected with this song. The supposed author of the song was a Mr Geddes, priest at Shenvall, in the Ainzie.*

87. *The Waukin’ o’ the Fauld.*

There are two stanzas still sung to this tune which I take to be the original song, whence Ramsay composed his beautiful song of that name in the Gentle Shepherd. It begins

“O will ye speak at our town,
As ye come frae the fauld.”

I regret that, as in many of our old songs, the delicacy of the old fragment is not equal to its wit and humour.

89. *Oh ono Chrio.*

Dr Blacklock informed me that this song was composed on the infamous massacre of Glencoe.

* For some account of “Priest Geddes,” see page 203 *supra*.

91. *I'll never Leave Thee.*

This is another of Crawford's songs, but I do not think in his happiest manner. What an absurdity to join such names as Adonis and Mary together!

93. *Corn Rigs are Bonie.*

All the old words that ever I could meet to this air were the following, which seem to have been an old chorus.

O corn rigs and rye rigs,
O corn rigs are bonie;
And whene'er you meet a bonie lass,
Preen up her cockernony.

96. *The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre.*

The chorus of this song is old; the rest is the work of "Balloon Tytler."

97. *Bide ye Yet.*

There is a beautiful song to this tune beginning "Alas! my son, you little know," which is the composition of a Miss Jenny Graham, of Dumfries.*

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102. *Tranent Muir.*

Composed by a Mr Skirving, a very worthy, respectable farmer, near Haddington. I have heard the anecdote often that Lieutenant Smith, whom he satirises in the ninth stanza, came to Haddington after the publication of the song, and sent a challenge to Skirving to meet him there, and answer for the unworthy manner in which he had noticed him in the song.—"Gang awa back," said the honest farmer, "and tell Mr Smith that I hae nae leisure to come to Haddington; but tell him to come here, and I'll tak a leuk o' him; and if I think I'm fit to fecht, him, I'll fecht him; and if no, I'll do as he did—I'll rin awa!"

* It appeared in Herd's first edition, 1769.

103. *To the Weaver's gin ye go.**

The chorus of this song is old, the rest of it is mine. Here once for all, let me apologise for many silly compositions of mine in this work. Many beautiful airs wanted words; in the hurry of other avocations, if I could string a parcel of rhymes together anything near tolerable, I was fain to let them pass. He must be an excellent poet indeed, whose every performance is excellent.

104. *Strephon and Lydia.*

The following account of this song I had from Dr Blacklock :—The “Strephon and Lydia” mentioned in the song were perhaps the loveliest couple of their time. The gentleman was commonly known by the name of “Beau Gibson.” The lady was the “Gentle Jean” celebrated somewhere in Mr Hamilton of Bangour’s poems. Having frequently met in public places, they had formed a reciprocal attachment, which their friends thought dangerous, as their resources were by no means adequate to their tastes and habits of life. To elude the bad consequences of such a connexion, Strephon was sent abroad with a commission, and perished in Admiral Vernon’s expedition to Carthage.

The author of the song was William Wallace, Esq., of Cairn-hill, in Ayrshire.

107. *I'm o'er Young to Marry yet.*

The chorus of this song is old. The rest of it—such as it is—is mine. (See page 128, Vol. II.)

109. *Love is the cause of my Mourning.*

The words of “The Shepherd’s Complaint” are by a Mr R. Scott, from the town or neighbourhood of Biggar.

111. *My Jo, Janet.*

Johnson, the publisher, with a foolish delicacy, refused to insert

* See page 129, vol. ii., for Burns’s words.

the last stanza of this humorous ballad, which Ramsay printed entire in the *Tea-table Miscellany* :—

“ My spinnin wheel is auld and stiff,
 The rock o’t winna stand, sir ;
 To keep the temper-pin in tiff,
 Requires right aft my hand, sir ;
 Mak the maist o’t that ye can,
 Janet, Janet,
 But like it never wale a man,
 My Jo, Janet ! ”

113. *The Birks of Aberfeldy.*

I composed these stanzas, standing under the falls of Aberfeldy, at or near Moness. (*See* page 90, Vol. II.)

114. *M’Pherson’s Farewell.*

M’Pherson, a daring robber, in the beginning of this century, was condemned to be hanged at the assizes of Inverness.* He is said, when under sentence of death, to have composed this tune, which he called his own Lament, or Farewell. Gow has published a variation of this fine tune as his own composition, which he calls “The Princess Augusta.”

117. *The Highland Lassie, O.*

This was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was known at all in the world. My “Highland Lassie” was a warm-hearted, charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love. 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 farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of Autumn following she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried

* Error for “Banff,” see page 131, Vol. II.

my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness.*

120. *Fife and a' the lands about it.*

This song is Dr Blacklock's. He, as well as I, often gave Johnson verses, trifling enough perhaps; but they served as a vehicle to the music.

* Cromeek has a note here which has often been quoted, and therefore it may be proper to preserve it in connexion with the text: "There are events in this transitory scene of existence, seasons of joy or of sorrow, of despair or of hope, which, as they powerfully affect us at the time, serve as epochs to the history of our lives. Of this character was the parting of Burns with his 'Highland Mary'—that interesting female, the first object of the youthful poet's love. This adieu was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to inspire awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook; they laved their hands in its limpid stream, and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted—never to meet again!

"The anniversary of Mary Campbell's death, (for that was her name) awakening in the sensitive mind of Burns the most lively emotion, he retired from his family, then residing on the farm of Ellisland, and wandered solitary on the banks of the Nith, and about the farm-yard, in the extremest agitation of mind, nearly the whole of the night. His agitation was so great that he threw himself on the side of a corn stack, and there conceived his sublime and tender elegy—his 'Address to Mary in Heaven.'"

It is observable here that Cromeek is more exact in his indication of the late period of the year when Mary's death occurred, than Mrs Burns was, in her conversation with Mr M'Diarmid, as recorded by Lockhart. According to her, "Burns spent that day, though labouring under a cold, in the usual work of the harvest, and apparently in excellent spirits. But as the twilight deepened, he appeared to grow very sad about something, and at length wandered out into the barn-yard, to which his wife, in her anxiety for his health, followed him, entreating him in vain to observe that frost had set in, and to return to the fireside. On being again and again requested to do so, he promised compliance; but still remained where he was, striding up and down slowly, and contemplating the sky, which was singularly clear and starry. At last Mrs Burns found him stretched on a mass of straw, with his eyes fixed on a beautiful planet 'that shone like another moon;' and prevailed on him to come in. He immediately on entering the house, called for his desk, and wrote—exactly as they now stand, with all the ease of one copying from memory—the sublime and pathetic verses—'Thou lingering star with lessening ray,'" &c. Cromeek's account is also more in unison with the poet's opening words, indicating "the solemn hour when night and morning meet" as the time of his inspiration; rather than the frosty midnight which follows the twilight of a harvest eve.

121. *Were na my heart light, I would die.*

Lord Hailes, in his notes to his collection of Scots poems, says that this song was the composition of a Lady Grisell Baillie, daughter of the first Earl of Marchmont, and wife of George Baillie of Jerviswood.*

125. *The Young Man's Dream.*

This song is a composition of "Balloon Tytler."

132. *Strathallan's Lament.*

This air is the composition of one of the worthiest and best-hearted men living, Allan Masterton, Schoolmaster in Edinburgh. As he and I were both sprouts of Jacobitism, we agreed to dedicate the words and air to that cause. But to tell the matter of fact, except when my passions were heated by some accidental cause, my Jacobitism was merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*.

133. *What will I do gin my Hoggie die?*

Dr Walker, who was Minister in Moffat in 1772, and is now (1791) Professor of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh, told the following anecdote concerning this air. He said that some gentlemen, riding a few years ago through Liddesdale, stopped at a hamlet consisting of a few houses, called MossPaul (in Ewesdale); when they were struck with this tune, which an old woman, spinning on a rock at her door, was singing. All she could tell concerning it was, that she was taught it when a child, and it was called "What will I do gin my Hoggie die?" No person, except a few females at MossPaul, knew this fine old tune; which in all probability would have been lost, had not one of the gentlemen, who happened to have a flute with him, taken it down. (See page 134, Vol. II.)

140. *Up in the Morning Early.*

The chorus of this is old; the two stanzas are mine. (See page 138, Vol. II.)

* This lady was born in 1665, and died in 1746. A fine memoir of her was published by her daughter, Lady Murray of Stanhope.

141. *The Tears of Scotland.*

Dr Blacklock told me that Smollett who was at bottom a great Jacobite, composed these beautiful and pathetic verses on the infamous depredations of the Duke of Cumberland after the battle of Culloden.

146. *I dreamed I lay where Flowers were Springing.*

These two stanzas I composed when I was seventeen ; they are among the oldest of my printed pieces. (*See* page 7, Vol. I.)

151. *Ah ! the poor Shepherd's mournful fate.*

The old tune "Sour Plums o' Gallashiels," probably was the beginning of a song to this air which is now lost.

The tune of Gallashiels was composed about the beginning of the present century by the Laird of Gallashiels's piper.

157. *The Banks of the Devon.*

These verses were composed on a charming girl, a Miss Charlotte Hamilton, who is now married to James M'Kitrick Adair, Esq., physician. She is sister to my worthy friend Gavin Hamilton, of Mauchline, and was born on the banks of Ayr, but was, at the time I wrote these lines, residing at Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, on the romantic banks of the little river Devon. I first heard the air from a lady in Inverness, and got the notes taken down for the work. (*See* page 111, Vol. II.)

158. *Waly ! Waly !*

In the west country I have heard a different edition of the second stanza. Instead of the four lines beginning with "When cockle shells," &c.,* the other way ran thus :—

"O wherefore need I busk my head ?
Or wherefore need I kame my hair ?
Sin' my fause Luvè has me forsook,
And says he'll never loe me mair."

* The wretched four lines introduced in the second stanza thus complained of by Burns, are not found in any of the old editions. In the Teatable Miscellany, Vol. 11., 1726, the words are as quoted above by Burns. So also in the "Charmer," 1751, and David Herd's collection, 1769.

160. *Duncan Gray.*

Dr Blacklock informed me that he had often heard the tradition that this air was composed by a carman in Glasgow.

161. *Dumbarton Drums.*

This is the last of the West Highland Airs ; and from it, over the whole tract of country to the confines of Tweedside, there is hardly a tune or song that one can say has taken its origin from any place or transaction in that part of Scotland. The oldest Ayrshire reel is “Stewarton Lasses,” which was made by the father of the present Sir Walter Montgomery Cunningham, *alias* Lord Lysle, since which period there has indeed been local music in that country in great plenty. “Johnie Faa” is the only old song which I could ever trace as belonging to the extensive district of Ayrshire.

162. *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.*

This song is by the present Duke of Gordon. The old verses are :—

“There’s cauld kail in Aberdeen,
And castocks in Strathbogie ;
When ilka lad maun hae his lass,
Then fye, gie me my coggie.

Chorus —My coggie, sirs, my coggie, sirs,
I canna want my coggie ;
I wadna gie my three-girr’d caup
For e’er a quean in Bogie.

There’s Johnie Smith has got a wife
That scrimps him o’ his coggie ;
If she were mine, upon my life,
I’d douk her in a bogie.

My coggie, sirs,” &c.

163. *For lack of gold.*

The country girls in Ayrshire, instead of the line “She me forsook for a great Duke,” say “For Athole’s Duke she me forsook,” which I take to be the original reading.*

* This song is in “The Charmer” 1751.

These words were composed by the late Dr Austin, physician in Edinburgh. He had courted a lady, to whom he was shortly to be married; but the Duke of Athole having seen her, became so much in love with her, that he made proposals of marriage, which were accepted of, and she “jilted the Doctor.”

166. *Here's a Health to my true love.*

This song is Dr Blacklock's. He told me that tradition gives the air to our James IV. of Scotland.

170. *Hey tutti taitie.*

I have met the tradition universally over Scotland, and particularly about Stirling, in the neighbourhood of the scene, that this air was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn.

173. *Raving winds around her blowing.*

I composed these verses on Miss Isabella Macleod of Rasa, alluding to her feelings on the death of her sister, and the still more melancholy death of her sister's husband, the late Earl of Loudoun, who shot himself out of sheer heart-break at some mortifications he suffered owing to the deranged state of his finances. (*See* page 136, Vol. II.)

174. *Ye Gods, was Strephon's Picture blest?*

Tune—“Fourteenth of October.”

The title of this air shows that it alludes to the famous King Crispan, the patron of the honourable Corporation of Shoemakers. St Crispan's day falls on the fourteenth of October, old style, as the old proverb tells.

“On the fourteenth of October
Was ne'er a sutor sober.” *

176. *Since robbed of all that charm'd my view.*

Tune—“Miss Hamilton's Delight.”

The old name of this air is “The blossom o' the Raspberry.” The song is Dr Blacklock's.

* On the other hand, Ritson contends that the air is in honour of King James VII., whose birthday was on 14th October.

178. *Young Damon.*

The air is by Oswald.

179. *Musing on the roaring Ocean.*

I composed these verses out of compliment to a Mrs M'Lachlan, whose husband is an Officer in the East Indies. (See page 143, Vol. II.)

180. *Blythe was she.*

I composed these verses while I stayed at Ochtertyre with Sir William Murray. The lady, who was also at Ochtertyre at the same time, was a well-known toast, Miss Euphemia Murray of Lintrose, who was called, and very justly, "The Flower of Strathmore." (See page 107, Vol. II.)

181. *Johnie Faa, the Gipsej Laddie.*

The people in Ayrshire begin this song—"The Gypsies cam to Lord Cassilis' yett." They have a great many more stanzas in this song than I ever saw in any printed copy. The castle is still remaining at Maybole, where his Lordship shut up his wayward spouse, and kept her for life in confinement.

182. *To Daunton me.*

The two following old stanzas to this tune have some merit:—

"To daunton me, to daunton me,
O ken ye what it is that'll daunton me?
There's eighty-eight and eighty-nine,
And a' that I hae born sinsyne;
There's cess and press and Presbytrie,
I think it will do meikle for to daunton me.

But to wanton me, to wanton me,
O ken ye what it is that wad wanton me?
To see gude eorn upon the rigs,
And banishment among the Whigs,
And right restored where right sud be,
I think it wad do meikle for to wanton me."

183. *Polwarth on the Green.*

The author is Captain John Drummond M'Grigor, of the family of Bochalddie.

184. *Absence, a song in the manner of Shenstone.*

The song and air are both by Dr Blacklock.

185. *I had a horse and I ha'd nae mair.*

This story is founded on fact. A John Hunter, ancestor to a very respectable farming family who live in a place in the parish (I think) of Galston, called Barr-mill, was the luckless hero that "had a horse and had nae mair." For some little youthful follies he found it necessary to make a retreat to the West Highlands, where he "feed himself to a *Highland* laird," for that is the expression of all the oral editions of the song I ever heard. The present Mr Hunter, who told me the anecdote, is the great grand-child to our hero.*

188. *Up and waur them a', Willie.*

This edition of the song I got from *Tam Neil*, of facetious fame in Edinburgh. The proper expression is "Up and warn a' Willie," alluding to the Crantara, or warning of a Highland Clan to arms. Not understanding this, the Lowlanders in the west, and south, say "Up and *waur* them a' Willie."†

189. *A Rosebud by my early walk.*

This song I composed on Miss Jenny Cruikshank, only child to my worthy friend, Mr Wm. Cruikshank, of the High School, Edinburgh. The air is by David Sillar, *quondam* Merchant, and now schoolmaster in Irvine. He is the "Davie" to whom I address my printed poetical epistle in the measure of "The Cherry and the Slae." (See page 109, Vol. II.)

* We first find this clever song, under the title of "The Surprise," in Herd's collection, first edition, 1769.

† The "Gaelic parson" has certainly misled the poet in this matter. "Up an' *waur* them a'" is the common-sense and characteristic phrase which fits the intention of the song.

191. *Hooly and Fairly.*

It is remark-worthy that the song of “Hooly and Fairly” in all the old editions of it, is called “The Drucken Wife o’ Gallo-way,” which localizes it to that country-side.*

194. *Rattlin, roarin Willie.*

The last stanza of this song is mine ; it was composed out of compliment to one of the worthiest fellows in the world, William Dunbar, Esq., Writer to the Signet, Edinburgh, and Colonel of the Chrochallan corps, a club of wits who took that title at the time of raising the fencible regiments. (See page 46, Vol. II.)

195. *Where, braving angry Winter’s storms.*

This I composed on one of the most accomplished of women, Miss Peggy Chalmers that was, now Mrs Lewis Hay, of Forbes and Co’s Bank, Edinburgh. (See page 113, Vol. II.)

196. *Tibbie, I hae seen the day.*

This song I composed about the age of seventeen. (See page 4, Vol. I.)

197. *Nancy’s Ghost.*

This song is by Dr Blacklock.

199. *Cromlet’s Lilt.*

The following interesting account of this plaintive Dirge was communicated to Mr Riddell by Alexander Fraser Tytler, Esq. of Woodhouselee †—“In the latter end of the 16th century, the

* We find this song, under the title mentioned by Burns, in several old collections, the first of these being “The Charmer,” 1751. Its first line should be “Down in yon meadow a couple did tarry.”

† That gentleman, in a letter to Cromek, dated 22d January 1809, disclaimed all knowledge of this romantic story; so the likelihood is that it came from his father, the venerable William Tytler of Woodhouselee.

eldest son of Chisholm of Cromleck (an estate now possessed by the Drummonds) was much attached to a daughter of Stirling of Ardoch, commonly called Fair Helen of Ardoch. At that period most of our young men of family sought a fortune, or a grave, in France. Cromlus, when he went abroad was induced to leave the management of his correspondence with his mistress to a lay brother of the monastery of Dunblane, in that neighbourhood. This man, unfortunately, became himself deeply attached to Helen, and by keeping up letters and messages entrusted to him, and by telling her stories to the disadvantage of Cromlus, he managed to irritate both of the lovers, and all connexion was broken off betwixt them.

“Helen was inconsolable, and Cromlus retired to a Hermitage where he composed the “Lilt” which is identified with his name; and when the artful monk thought time had sufficiently softened Helen’s sorrow, he proposed himself as a lover. Helen was obdurate; but at length, overcome by her brother’s persuasions, she submitted, rather than consented to the marriage, but there her compliance ended. When forcibly put to bed, she started from it quite frantic, and screaming out that she heard three taps on the wainscot at the bed-head, with these words in the voice of Cromlus—‘Helen, Helen, mind me!’ Soon thereafter Cromlus arrived at home, and discovered the treachery of the confidant—the fraudulent marriage was disannulled, and Helen became Lady Cromleck.

“*N.B.*—Helen’s brother, above referred to, was the father of 31 children, his wife Margaret Murray, being a daughter of Murray of Struan, one of the 17 sons of Tullybardine, and whose youngest son, commonly called the ‘Tutor of Ardoch,’ died in 1715, aged 111 years.”

MUSEUM, Vol. III. published 2d February, 1790.

201. *The Marquis of Huntly’s Reel.*

The song was composed by the Rev. John Skinner, nonjurer Clergyman at Linshart, near Peterhead. He is likewise the author of “Tullochgorum,” “Ewie wi’ the crooked horn,” “John

o' Badenyond," &c., and what is of still more consequence, he is one of the worthiest of mankind. He is also the author of an ecclesiastical history of Scotland. The air is by Mr Marshall, butler to the Duke of Gordon, the first composer of Strathspeys in the age. I have been told by somebody who had it of Marshall himself, that he took the idea of his three most celebrated pieces—"Marquis of Huntly's Reel," his "Farewell," and "Miss Admiral Gordon's Reel,"—from the old air, "The German Lairdie."*

203. *Gil Morrice.*

"This plaintive ballad ought to have been called 'Child Maurice,' and not "Gil Morrice." In its present dress, it has gained immortal honor from Mr Home's taking from it the ground-work of his fine tragedy of "Douglas." But I am of opinion that the present ballad is a modern composition; perhaps not much above the age of the middle of last century; at least I should be glad to see or hear of a copy of the present words prior to 1650. That it was taken from an old ballad, called "Child Maurice," now lost, I am inclined to believe; but the present one may be classed with "Hardycanute" (first printed in 1719), "Kenneth," "Duncan," the "Laird of Woodhouselee," "Lord Livingston," "Binnorie," "The Death of Monteith," and several other modern productions, which have been swallowed by many readers, as ancient fragments of old poems.

"This beautiful, plaintive tune was composed by Mr M'Gibbon, the selector of a collection of Scots tunes."—*Robt. Riddell.*

In addition to the observations on "Gil Morrice," I add, that of the ballads which Captain Riddell mentions, "Kenneth" and "Duncan" are juvenile compositions of Mr M'Kenzie, the "Man of Feeling." Mr M'Kenzie's father shewed them in MSS. to Dr Blacklock, as the productions of his son, from which the Doctor rightly prognosticated that the young poet would make, in his more advanced years, a respectable figure in the world of letters. This I had from Blacklock.—R. B.

* Any reader who is acquainted with this latter tune, as well as Marshall's fine compositions, will smile at the poet's simplicity in giving credence to so unlikely a parentage.

205. *When I upon thy Bosom lean.*

This song was the work of a very worthy, facetious old fellow, John Lapraik, of Dalfram, near Muirkirk; which little property he was obliged to sell in consequence of some connexion as security for some persons concerned in that villanous bubble, *The Ayre Bank*. He has often told me that he composed this song one day when his wife had been fretting over their misfortunes. (*See* page 115, Vol. I.)

207. *Tibbie Dunbar.*

This tune is said to be the composition of John M'Gill, fiddler in Girvan. He called it after his own name.

209. *My Harry was a Gallant gay.*

The oldest title I ever heard to this air was "The Highland Watch's Farewell to Ireland." The chorus I picked up from an old woman in Dumblane; the rest of the song is mine. (*See* page 251, Vol. II.)

210. *The Highland Character.*

This tune was the composition of General Reid, and called by him "The Highland, or 42d Regiment's March." The words ("In the garb of old Gaul") are by Sir Harry Erskine.

211. *Leaderhaughs and Yarrow.*

There is, in several collections, the old song of this name. It seems to have been the work of one of our itinerant minstrels, as he calls himself, at the conclusion of his song "Minstrel Burn."

212. *The Tailor fell thro' the bed, thimble an' a'.*

This air is the march of the Corporation of Tailors. The second and fourth stanzas are mine.

215. *Beware o' Bonie Anne.*

I composed this song out of compliment to Miss Ann Masterton, the daughter of my friend, Allan Masterton, the author of the air "Strathallan's Lament," and two or three others in this work. (See page 201, Vol. II.)

216. *This is no my ain House.*

The first half-stanza is old, the rest is Ramsay's. The tune is an old Highland air, called *Shuan truisk willighan*. The old words are :—

"O this is no my ain house, my ain house, my ain house,
This is no my ain house, I ken by the biggin o't.
There's bread and cheese are my door-cheeks, my door-cheeks, &c.,
There's bread and cheese are my door-cheeks, an' pancakes the riggin o't.
This is no my ain wean, my ain wean, my ain wean,
This is no my ain wean, I ken by the greetie o't,
I'll tak my curchie aff my head, aff my head, aff my head,
I'll tak my curchie aff my head, an row't about the feetie o't."

218. *Laddie, lie near me.*

This song ("Hark the loud tempest shakes") is by Blacklock.

220. *The Gardener wi' his paille.*

The air is the "Gardener's March." The title of the song only is old ; the rest is mine. (See page 216, Vol. II.)

224. *The Day returns, my Bosom burns.*

Tune—"Seventh of November." *

I composed this song out of compliment to one of the happiest and worthiest married couples in the world—Robert Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, and his lady. At their fireside I have enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in this country put together ; and to their kindness and hospitality

* The 7th of November was the marriage day of the worthy couple, and the air was Mr Riddell's composition.

I am indebted for many of the happiest hours of my life. (See page 168, Vol. II.)

226. *The Gaberlunzie Man.*

This song is supposed to commemorate an intrigue of James the V. Mr Callander of Craigforth published, some years ago, an edition of “Christ’s Kirk on the Green,” and the “Gaberlunzie Man,” with notes critical and historical. James the V. is said to have been fond of Gosford, in Aberlady Parish, and it was suspected by his contemporaries that in his frequent excursions to that part of the country he had other purposes in view besides golfing and archery.

Three favourite ladies, Sandilands, Weir, and Oliphant (one of whom resided at Gosford, and the others in the neighbourhood), were occasionally visited by their royal and gallant admirer, which gave rise to the following satirical advice to his Majesty, from Sir David Lindsay, of the Mount ; Lord Lyon :—

“Sow not your seed on Sandy lands,
Spend not your strength in Weir,
And ride not on an Elephant,
For spoiling o’ your gear.”

228. *The Black Eagle.*

This song is by Dr Fordyce, whose merits as a prose writer are well known.

229. *Jamie, come try me.*

This air is Oswald’s ; the song is mine. (See page 220, Vol. II.)

231. *My Bonie Mary.*

This air is Oswald’s ; the first half stanza :—

“Go fetch to me a pint o’ wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie,
That I may drink before I go
A service to my bonie lassie.”

is old, the rest mine. (See page 176, Vol. II., where we have given Oswald’s air. Had we then been acquainted with the

following expressive melody for this song, we would have given it in preference.)

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine, And fill it in a sil-ver tas-sie
That I may drink be-fore I go, A ser-vice to my bo-nie las-sie.
The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith, Fu' loud the wind blows frae the Fer-ry,
The ship rides by the Ber-wick-Law, And I maun leave my bo-nie Ma-ry

232. *The Lazy Mist.*

This song is mine. (See page 171, Vol. II.)

234. *Johnie Cope.*

This satirical song was composed to commemorate General Cope's defeat at Prestonpans in 1745, when he marched against the Clans. The air was the tune of an old song, of which I have heard some verses, but now only remember the title, which was "Will ye go to the coals in the morning."

235. *I love my Jean.*

This air is by Marshall, the song I composed out of compliment to Mrs Burns. *N.B.*—It was during the honeymoon. (See page 154, Vol. II.)

242. *The Mill, Mill, O.*

The original, or at least a song evidently prior to Ramsay's, is still extant. It runs thus:—

"As I cam down yon water side,
And by yon sheelin-hill, O
There I spied, a bonie, bonie lass,
And a lass that I loed right weel, O.

Chorus—The mill, mill, O, and the kill, kill, O,
And the coggin o' Peggy's wheel, 'O,
The sack and the sieve, an' a' she did leave,
For dancin' the miller's reel, O." *

* The reader scarcely needs to be reminded that out of this rough material sprung the charming ballad, "The Soldier's Return."

246. *Cease, cease my dear Friend.*

The song is by Dr Blacklock ; I believe, but am not quite certain, that the air is his too.

247. *Auld Robin Gray.*

This air was formerly called “the Bridegroom greets when the sun gangs down.”

250. *Tak your auld cloak about ye.*

A part of this old song, according to the English set of it, is quoted in Shakspeare. (*In the Drinking scene in Othello.*)

252. *Donald and Flora.*

This is one of those few Gaelic tunes, preserved from time immemorial in the Hebrides ; they seem to be the ground-work of many of our finest Scots pastoral tunes.* The words of this song were written to commemorate the unfortunate expedition of General Burgoyne in America, in 1777.

255. *O were I on Parnassus Hill.*

This air is Oswald's : the song I made out of compliment to Mrs Burns. (*See page 170, Vol. II.*)

257. *The Captive Ribband.*

This air is called *Robie donna Gorach*. (*See page 259, Vol. II.*)

258. *There's a Youth in this city.*

This air is claimed by Neil Gow, who calls it his Lament for his brother. The first half-stanza of the song is old ; the rest is mine. (*See page 229, Vol. II.*)

* The very reverse seems to have been the case. The pastoral tunes of the lowlands travelled northwards, and became the groundwork of what are now styled “Gaelic melodies.”

259. *My Heart's in the Highlands.*

The first half-stanza of this song is old ; the rest is mine.
(See page 260, Vol. II.)

264. *Ca' the Ewes to the Knowes.*

This beautiful song is in the true old Scotch taste, yet I do not know that either air or words were in print before. (See page 248, Vol. II.)

269. *The Bridal o't.*

This song is the work of a Mr Alexander Ross, late School-master at Lochlee ; and author of a beautiful Scots poem, called "The Fortunate Shepherdess."

270. *The Bob o' Dumblane.*

Ramsay, as usual, has modernized this song. The original, which I learned on the spot, from my old hostess in the principal Inn there, is:—

"Lassie, lend me your braw hemp heckle,
And I'll lend you my thrippin-kame ;
My heckle is broken, it canna be gotten,
And we'll gae dance the bob o' Dumblane

Twa gaed to the wood, to the wood, to the wood,
Twa gaed to the wood—three came hame ;
An it be na weel bobbit, weel bobbit, weel bobbit,
An it be na weel bobbit, we'll bob it again."

I insert this song to introduce the following anecdote, which I have heard well authenticated. In the evening of the day of the battle of Dunblane (Sheriff-muir) when the action was over, a Scots officer in Argyle's army, observed to his Grace, that he was afraid the rebels would give out to the world that *they* had gotten the victory. "Weel, weel," answered his Grace, alluding to the foregoing ballad, "if they think it be nae weel bobbit, we'll bob it again."

271. *A Mother's Lament for the Death of her Son.*

Tune—"Finlayston House."

This most beautiful tune is, I think, the happiest composition of that bard-born genius, John Riddell, of the family of Glen-garnock at Ayr. The words were composed to commemorate the much lamented and premature death of James Ferguson, Esq., junior, of Craigdarroch. (See page 169, Vol. II.)

275. *Todden Hame.*

This is, perhaps, the first bottle song that ever was composed.

276. *The Braes o' Ballochmyle.*

This air is the composition of my friend Allan Masterton, in Edinburgh. I composed the verses on the amiable and excellent family of Whitefoord's leaving Ballochmyle, when Sir John's misfortunes had obliged him to sell the estate. (See page 147, Vol. I.)

278. *The Shepherd's Preference.*

This song is Blacklock's. I don't know how it came by the name, but the oldest appellation of the air was "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad." It has little affinity to the tune commonly known by that name.

282. *We ran, and they ran.*

The author was a Rev. Mr Murdoch M'Lennan, minister at Crathie, Deeside.*

284. *The Bonie Banks of Ayr.*

I composed this song as I conveyed my chest so far on the road to Greenock, where I was to embark in a few days for

* This clever ballad on the battle of Sheriff-muir, was printed by David Herd in 1769. Another song on the same subject, in form of a dialogue, was written by Mr Barclay, the Berean minister in Edinburgh. Burns composed a ballad on the model of Mr Barclay's. See p. 253, Vol. II.

Jamaica. I meant it as my farewell Dirge to my native land.
(See page 18, Vol. II.)

285. *John o' Badenjond.*

This excellent song is the composition of my worthy friend, old Skinner at Linshart.

286. *The Rantin Dog the Daddie o't.*

I composed this song pretty early in life, and sent it to a young girl, a very particular acquaintance of mine, who was at that time under a cloud. (See page 253, Vol. I.)

288. *A Waukrife Minnie.*

I picked up this old song and tune from a country girl at Nithsdale. I never met with it elsewhere in Scotland. (See page 258, Vol. II.)

289. *Tullochgorum.*

This, first of songs, is the master-piece of my old friend Skinner. He was passing the day, at the town of Cullen I think it was, in a friend's house whose name was Montgomery. Mrs Montgomery observing, *en passant*, that the beautiful reel of Tullochgorum wanted words, she begged them of Mr Skinner who gratified her wishes, and the wishes of every lover of Scottish song, in this most excellent ballad.

These particulars I had from the author's son, Bishop Skinner of Aberdeen.

290. *For a' that and a' that.*

This song is mine, all except the chorus. (See page 182, Vol. I.)

291. *Willie brew'd a peck o' maut.*

This air is Masterton's; the song mine. The occasion of it was this:—Mr Wm. Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh,

during the autumn vacation being at Moffat, honest Allan (who was at that time on a visit to Dalswinton) and I went to pay Nicol a visit. We had such a joyous meeting that Mr Masterton and I agreed, each in our own way, that we should celebrate the business. (See page 246, Vol. II.)

292. *The Braes o' Killiecrankie.*

The battle of Killiecrankie was the last stand made by the Clans for James, after his abdication. Here the gallant Lord Dundee fell in the moment of victory, and with him fell the hopes of the party. General M'Kay, when he found the Highlanders did not pursue his flying army, said, "Dundee must be killed, or he never would have overlooked this advantage." A great stone marks the spot where Dundee fell. (See page 256, Vol. II.)

293. *The Ewie wi' the crooked horn.*

Another excellent song of old Skinner's.

MUSEUM, Vol. IV. published 13th August 1792.

301. *Craigieburn Wood.*

It is remarkable of this air, that it is the confine of that country where the greatest part of our Lowland music (so far as from the title, words, &c., we can localize it) has been composed. From Craigieburn, near Moffat, until one reaches the West Highlands, we have scarcely one slow air of antiquity.

The song was composed on a passion which a Mr Gillespie, a particular friend of mine, had for a Miss Lorimer, afterwards a Mrs Whelpdale. The young lady was born in Craigieburn Wood. The chorus is part of an old foolish ballad. (See page 341, Vol. II.)

302. *Frae the Friends and Land I love.*

I added the four last lines by way of giving a turn to the theme of the poem, such as it is. (See page 35, Vol. III.)

303. *Hughie Graham.*

There are several editions of this ballad. This, here inserted, is from an oral tradition in Ayrshire, where, when I was a boy, it was a popular song. It originally had a simple old tune, which I have forgotten.

308. *A Southland Jenny.**

This is a popular Ayrshire song, though the notes were never taken down before. It, as well as many of the ballad tunes in this collection, was written down from Mrs Burns's voice.

312. *My Tocher's the Jewel.*

This tune is claimed by Nathaniel Gow. It is notoriously taken from "The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre." It is also to be found, long prior to Nathaniel Gow's era, in Aird's selection of *Airs and Marches*, the first edition, under the name of "The Highway to Edinburgh." (See page 21, Vol. III.)

313. *Then Gudewife count the lawin.*

The chorus of this is part of an old song, one stanza of which I recollect:—

"Every day my wife tells me
That ale and brandy will ruin me;
But if gude liquor be my dead,
This shall be written on my head—

Landlady, count the lawin," &c.

(See page 297, Vol. II.)

315. *There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes hame*

This tune is sometimes called "There are few gude fellows when Willie's awa." But I never have been able to meet in with anything else of the song than the title. (See page 329, Vol. II.)

* First published by Ramsay in his "Tea-table Miscellany."

321. *I do confess thou art so fair.*

This song is altered from a poem by Sir Robert Ayton, private secretary to Mary and Anne, Queens of Scotland. The poem is to be found in "Watson's collection of Scots Poems," the earliest collection printed in Scotland. I think that I have improved the simplicity of the sentiments by giving them a Scots dress. (*See* page 60, Vol. III.)

323. *The Sodger Laddie.*

The first verse of this is old; the rest is by Ramsay. The tune seems to be the same with a slow air, called "Jackey Hume's Lament," or "The Hollin Buss," or "Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?"

324. *Where wad bonie Annie lie.*

The old name of this tune is "Whare'll our Gudeman lie?" A silly old stanza of it ran thus:—

"O whare'll our Gudeman lie, Gudeman lie, Gudeman lie,
O whare'll our Gudeman lie, till he shute o'er the simmer?
Up amang the hen-bawks, the hen-bawks, the hen-bawks,
Up amang the hen-bawks, amang the rotten timmer."

325. *Galloway Tam.*

I have seen an interlude acted at a wedding, to this tune called "The wooing of the Maiden." These entertainments are now much worn out in this part of Scotland. Two are still retained in Nithsdale, viz, "Sully puir Auld Glenae," and this one, "The wooing of the maiden."

326. *As I cam down by yon castle wa'.*

This is a very popular Ayrshire song.

327. *Lord Ronald, my Son.*

This air, a very favourite one in Ayrshire, is evidently the original of "Lochaber." In this manner most of our finest more modern airs have had their origin. Some early minstrel composed the simple, artless original air; which being picked up by the more learned musician, took the improved form it bears.

328. *O'er the moor among the heather.*

This song is the composition of a Jean Glover, a girl who was not only a wh—, but also a thief; and in one or other character has visited most of the Correction Houses in the west. She was born, I believe, in Kilmarnock. I took the song down from her singing as she was strolling through the country, with a slight-of-hand blackguard.

330. *To the Rosebud.*

"All hail to thee, thou balmy bud."

This song is the composition of a Mr Johnson, a joiner in the neighbourhood of Belfast. The tune is by Oswald, altered evidently from "Johnie's Grey Breeks."

331. *Yon wild mossy mountains.*

This tune is by Oswald. The song alludes to a part of my private history, which it is of no consequence to the world to know. (See page 37, Vol. II.)

332. *Jinglin Johnie.*

(Already discussed, under No. 21.)

333. *It is na, Jean, thy bonie face.*

These words were originally English verses; I gave them their Scots dress. (See page 172, Vol. II.)

336. *Eppie M'Nab.*

The old song with this title has more wit than decency. (See page 19, Vol. III.)

337. *Wha is that at my bower door?*

This tune is also known by the name of "Lass an I come near thee." The words are mine. (See page 59, Vol. I.)

338. *Thou art gane away frae me, Mary.*

This tune is the same with "Haud awa frae me, Donald."

340. *The tears I shed must ever fall.*

This song of genius was composed by a Miss Cranstoun. It wanted four lines to make all the stanzas suit the music, which I added, and are the first four of the last stanza.*

341. *The bonie wee Thing.*

Composed on my little idol—"The charming, lovely Davies." (See page 344, Vol. II.)

345. *The tither morn.*

This tune is originally from the Highlands. I have heard a Gaelic song to it, which I was told was very clever, but not by any means a lady's song. (See page 17, Vol. III.)

361. *My Collier Laddie.*

I do not know a blyther old song than this. (See page 65, Vol. III.)

* See page 81, Vol. III. This authoress, in July 1790, became the second wife of Professor Dugald Stewart.

373. *A Posie to my ain dear May.*

It appears evident to me that Oswald composed his “Roslin Castle” on the modulation of this air. In the second part of Oswald’s, in the first three bars, he has either hit on a wonderful similarity to, or else he has entirely borrowed the first three bars of the old air; and the close of both tunes is almost exactly the same. The old verses to which it was sung, when I took down the notes from a country girl’s voice, had no great merit. The following is a specimen :—

There was a pretty May, and a milkin she went,
 Wi her red rosy cheeks, and her coal-black hair;
 And she has met a young man a comin o’er the bent,
With a double and adieu to thee fair May. *

O where are ye goin, my ain pretty maid,
 Wi thy red rosy cheeks, and thy coal-black hair?
 Unto the yowes a milkin’, kind sir, she said,
 [For its rolling on the dew makes the milkmaids fair?]

What if I gang along wi thee, my ain pretty maid,
 Wi thy red rosy cheeks, and thy coal-black hair?
 Wad I be aught the warse o’ that, kind sir, she said,
 [An’ its rolling on the dew makes the milkmaids fair.] †

O tell me thy fortune, my ain pretty maid,
 With thy red rosy cheeks, and thy coal-black hair!
 My face it is my fortune, and quite enough, she said,
 O its rolling on the dew makes the milkmaids fair.

I fear I cannot marry thee, my ain pretty maid,
 With thy red rosy cheeks, and thy coal-black hair!
 You’ll wait until I ask you, silly sir, she said,
 It is rolling on the dew makes the milkmaids fair!

448. *The bonie lass made the bed to me.*

This was composed on an amour of Charles II. when sculking in the North, about Aberdeen, in the time of the Usurpation. He formed *une petite affaire* with a daughter of the House of

* The “country girl” from whose singing the words were noted down, had only caught the *sound* of the proper refrain here, which goes thus :—

“And its rolling on the dew makes the milkmaids fair!”

† Burns omitted the two verses which complete the song; some of our readers will recognise this ballad as a Scotch version of an old English one, having the same point—“My face it is my fortune.”

Portletham, who was “the lass that made the bed” to him.*
(See page 267, Vol. III.)

The foregoing annotations were twice published by Cromek, first in the “Reliques,” 1808, and next in two volumes, produced in 1810, under the title of “SELECT SCOTTISH SONGS, ancient and modern, with critical observations and Biographical notices by ROBERT BURNS.” The text of the songs was embraced in the latter work, and, with the assistance of Allan Cunningham, a considerable number of fresh notes, and songs not contained in *Johnson*, were introduced to swell the volumes, which *externally* present a very handsome appearance. Unfortunately, however, several of the head-notes given there as the work of Burns, seem to be the deliberate manufacture of Cromek’s young co-adjutor. The result has been very confusing; for some of these spurious remarks on Song are quoted as utterances of Burns down to the present day. The poet’s manuscript of the genuine notes is still in existence; but we have not succeeded in getting access to it. Nevertheless, without obtaining the advantage of a collation, we can, from the mere style and matter of the spurious notes, point them out with tolerable precision. Those readers who possess Cromek’s “Select Scottish Songs” may look at and beware of the headnotes to the following:—

| | | | | |
|----------|------|--|---------------------|-----|
| Vol. I. | page | 45. The Boatie Rows | (Number in Johnson) | 427 |
| “ | “ | 61. Yestreen I had a pint o’ wine | “ | 0 |
| “ | “ | 75. O Bothwell Bank | “ | 513 |
| “ | “ | 93. Maggie Lauder | “ | 544 |
| “ | “ | 117. Gude yill comes, and gude yill goes | “ | 542 |
| “ | “ | 127. Braw lads o’ Gala Water | “ | 125 |
| Vol. II. | “ | 9. My Collier Laddie | “ | 361 |
| “ | “ | 35. The Blythesome Bridal—2d paragraph | “ | 58 |
| “ | “ | 40. Can ye labour lea, young man | “ | 394 |
| “ | “ | 53. Woo’d an’ married an’ a’ | “ | 10 |
| “ | “ | 59. Muirland Willie | “ | 369 |
| “ | “ | 64. The Smiling Plains | “ | 204 |
| “ | “ | 67. The Flowers of the Forest | “ | 63 |
| “ | “ | 113. The lovely lass of Inverness | “ | 401 |
| “ | “ | 129. When she cam ben she bobbit | “ | 353 |

* The footnote to song XXI. will account for this annotation by Burns to a song which was not published till after his death.

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-----|
| Vol. II. page 133. | Louis, what reck I by thee? (Number in Johnson) | 414 |
| „ „ | 133. Lady Mary Ann | 377 |
| „ „ | 148. Andro wi' his cutty gun | 180 |
| „ „ | 156. The Bonie Earl of Murray | 177 |
| „ „ | 163. The Carl of Kellyburn Braes | 379 |
| „ „ | 171. O for ane and twenty, Tam | 355 |
| „ „ | 173. Logan Braes | 42 |

We observed in a newspaper notice that in 1870, the four interesting volumes of Johnson's *Museum*, in which Burns inserted his annotations for Captain Riddell, were exposed for sale by Mr John Salkeld, London, along with some other books from the Riddell collection, at the upset price of one hundred and ten guineas. An examination of these would at once confirm or disprove the correctness of our surmises concerning the preceding black list.

The reference to "Mrs Whelpdale," in the poet's note to Song 301, proves that these annotations were not finished till the latter part of 1793. When Cromek's *Reliques of Burns* first appeared, the "Remarks on Scottish Songs" was the portion which attracted most attention from lovers of ballad-literature. We have seen a letter addressed by Henry Mackenzie to Dr Anderson of Edinburgh, which thus gives an estimate of the work:—"I thank you particularly for the *Reliques of Burns*, which are undoubtedly genuine, and breathe the same genius, and the same infirmities, with his former works. I will say a little of it. More science and better company, with his father's worth and sound principles, would have made him one of the best poets this country has produced. He is a bigot for laxity, religious and moral; and hence that jumble of sentiments! After telling me of his father's conversion to Socinianism, he added—'but he continued a Calvinist in his manners and conversation.' The thing I like best in these *Reliques* is the account of Scottish Songs, which coincides with my own sentiments and theories. His curt, sarcastic remarks are truly characteristic; although some of them may be a little inaccurate."

C.

THE GLENRIDDELL MSS. OF BURNS'S POEMS,
In the Athenæum Library, Liverpool.

Chronological List of the Contents.

1. Epitaph on Mr William Muir, Tarbolton.
2. Paraphrase on Jeremiah xv. 10.†
3. A Poet's Welcome to his love-begotten daughter.†
4. Holy Willie's Prayer.†
5. The Belles of Mauchline.†
6. Epistle to John Goldie, in Kilmarnock.†
7. Extempore to Mr M'Adam of Craigengillan.
8. Inscription—"Once fondly loved, and still remembered."
9. Extempore stanzas on Naething.
10. Verses on the death of John Macleod, Esq.
11. On the death of Sir James Hunter Blair, Bart.
12. Copy of the Author's Autobiographical Letter.
13. Lines written by Somebody on a window at Stirling.
14. Written in the Hermitage at Taymouth.
15. Humble Petition of Bruar Water.
16. Lines written at the Fall of Fyers.
17. On Scaring Waterfowl on Loch Turit.
18. Lines by Clarinda—On Burns saying he had "nothing else to do."†
19. Answer to the foregoing—extempore.†
20. The Chevalier's Birthday Ode, 31 Dec. 1787.
21. On the death of Lord President Dundas.†
22. Lines written at Friars Carse Hermitage, 1st version.†
23. Song—"Anna, thy Charms," &c.†
24. Lines written at Friars Carse Hermitage, 2nd version.
25. First Epistle to Mr Graham of Fintry—"When Nature," &c.
26. Ode on Mrs Oswald of Auchincruive.
27. Address to Miss Cruikshank—"Beauteous Rosebud."†
28. Ode to the departed Regency Bill.†
29. A new Psalm for the Chapel of Kilmarnock.†
30. Epigram on Captain Grose.†
31. On Captain Grose's peregrinations.†
32. The Kirk of Scotland's Alarm.†
33. Lines to Mr Graham of Fintry—"I call no Goddess."†
34. The Whistle—a Ballad.†
35. The Five Carlines—a Ballad.†
36. Song—"Yestreen I had a pint o' wine."†
37. Song "I murder hate by flood and field."†

38. Election Ballad—"Fintry my stay in worldly strife."†
39. Ken ye ought o' Captain Grose ?†
40. Tam o' Shanter—a Tale.
41. Sweet Flow'ret, pledge o' meikle luve.†
42. Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots.
43. Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn.†
44. Lines to Sir John Whitefoord.†
45. On Glenriddell's Fox breaking his chain.†
46. Second Epistle to Mr Graham of Fintry—"Late crippled."†
47. Grace before Dinner—"O Thou, who kindly," &c.†

Epigrams.*

48. Ask why God made the gem so small.†
49. That there is falsehood in his looks.†
50. Light lay the earth on Billy's breast.
51. Stop thief ! dame Nature called to Death.†
52. When Lascelles thought fit from this world.†
53. If you rattle along like your Mistress's tongue.†
54. Here lies John Bushby, *honest* man.†
55. When Morine deceas'd, to the devil went down.†
56. Bless Jesus Christ, O Cardoness !†

Those pieces marked thus †, are in the poet's autograph. The others are in the handwriting of an amanuensis, who was a young Licentiate of the Church ; but his name is nowhere indicated. The following autograph note by Burns at the end of No. 12—the Autobiographical letter to Dr Moore—is very characteristic :—

"Know all whom it may concern, that I, the Author, am not answerable for the false spelling and injudicious punctuation in the foregoing transcript of my letter to Dr Moore. I have something generous in my temper that cannot bear to see or hear the Absent wronged, and I am very much hurt to observe that in several instances the transcriber has injured and mangled the proper name and principal title of a Personage of the very

* Burns seems to have finished his work of transcribing these poems in Mr Riddell's book before leaving Ellisland about the close of the year 1791. The Epigrams, however, must have been added, on receiving back the book, after Mr Riddell's death, in April 1794. The colour of the ink and different character of penmanship seems to infer this fact ; but the introduction of the ill-natured epigram, No. 53, against Mrs Walter Riddell, renders the matter certain.

first distinction in all that is valuable among men—antiquity, abilities and power; (virtue, everybody knows, is an obsolete business) I mean, the Devil. Considering that the transcriber was one of the Clergy, an order who owe the very bread they eat to the said Personage's exertions, the affair was absolutely unpardonable.—Ro. B."

We have been at the pains carefully to search the MS. above referred to, in order to find the "several instances" where the Devil's principal title has been mangled by the transcriber; but our search has been fruitless, except in finding that the term *Satan*, or *Devil* nowhere occurs as a proper name; and that the latter phrase is made use of only *twice* in the autobiography—first, at page 7 of our printed copy (line three from bottom,) and next, at page 14, line fourth from top. (1) "Disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry." (2) "My passions raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme."

On the fly-leaf at the beginning of this Liverpool volume, are the arms of Mr Riddell, and a portrait of Burns. On the title-page is the inscription, "Poems written by Mr Robert Burns, and selected by him from his unprinted collection, for Robert Riddell, of Glenriddell, Esq." and then follow ten lines of verse (probably by Roscoe) complimentary to Burns.

"Here native genius, gay, unique, and strong,
Shines through each page, and marks the tuneful song:
Rapt Admiration her warm tribute pays,
And Scotia proudly echoes all she says:
Bold Independance, too, illumes the theme,
And claims a manly privilege to Fame.
Vainly, O Burns! would rank and riches shine,
Compar'd with inborn merit great as thine;
These Chance may take, as Chance has often given,
But powers like thine can only come from Heaven."

D.—(page 392.)

UNPUBLISHED LETTER FROM MRS M'LEHOSE TO MR ROBERT
BURNS, ELLISLAND, DUMFRIES, 2ND AUGUST 1791.*

EDINBURGH, 2nd August [1791].

You surely mistake me, Sir—"Expose your letters to criticism!" Nothing could be further from my intention: read my letters, and you will find nothing to justify such an idea. But I suppose they are burned, so you can't have recourse to them. In an impassioned hour, I once talked of publishing them, but a little cool reflection showed me its impropriety: the idea has been long abandoned, and I wish you to write me with that confidence you would do to a person of whom you entertained a good opinion, and who is sincerely interested in your welfare. To the "every day children of the world" I well know, one cannot speak the sentiments of the bosom.

I am pleased with your reception of the Poem, and no less so with your beautiful stanzas in consequence. The last I think peculiarly elegant—

"Dearly bought the hidden treasure," &c.

It has procured me a short visit from the Muse, who has been a stranger since the *Golden Dream* of '88. The verses are inaccurate, but if worth while, pray correct them for me. Here they are,†—

Yes, Sensibility is charming,
Tho' it may wound the tender mind,
Nature's stores, the bosom warming,
Yield us pleasures most refined.

* Singularly enough, while the closing sheet of the present volume was being sent to press, a hitherto unprinted letter of *Clarinda* to Burns came into the publisher's possession. It turns out to be a reply to our poet's letter addressed to her (No. 43 of our series), given at page 390, *supra*, under the conjectural date [Aug. 1791]. The interesting holograph is in fine preservation and bears the postage mark.

† We have for want of space been compelled to abridge *Clarinda's* little sentimental poem, but the omitted stanzas are in quality considerably inferior to those here presented.

See yonder pair of warbling linnets,
 How their music charms the grove ;
 What else with rapture fills their minutes,
 But Sensibility and Love ?

Ev'n should the sportsmen (cruel rovers !)
 Rob them of their tuneful breath,
 How blest the little life-long lovers,
 Undivided in their death !

A long-loved maid nipt in the blossom,
 May lie in yonder kirkyard green ;
 Yet Mem'ry soothes her lover's bosom,
 Recalling many a raptured scene.

Or, musing by the rolling ocean,
 See him sit, with visage wan,
 As wave succeeding wave in motion,
 Mourns the chequer'd life of Man.

Sensibility ! sweet treasure,
 Still I'll sing in praise of thee :
 All that mortals know of pleasure
 Flows from Sensibility.

Let me know what you think of this poor imitation of your style. 'Tis metre, but not Poetry.

Pray have you seen Greenfield's Poems ? or Miss Carmichael's ? The last are very poor I think.

I have been reading Beattie's Minstrel for the first time. What a delicious treat !

Interrupted—Adieu !

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