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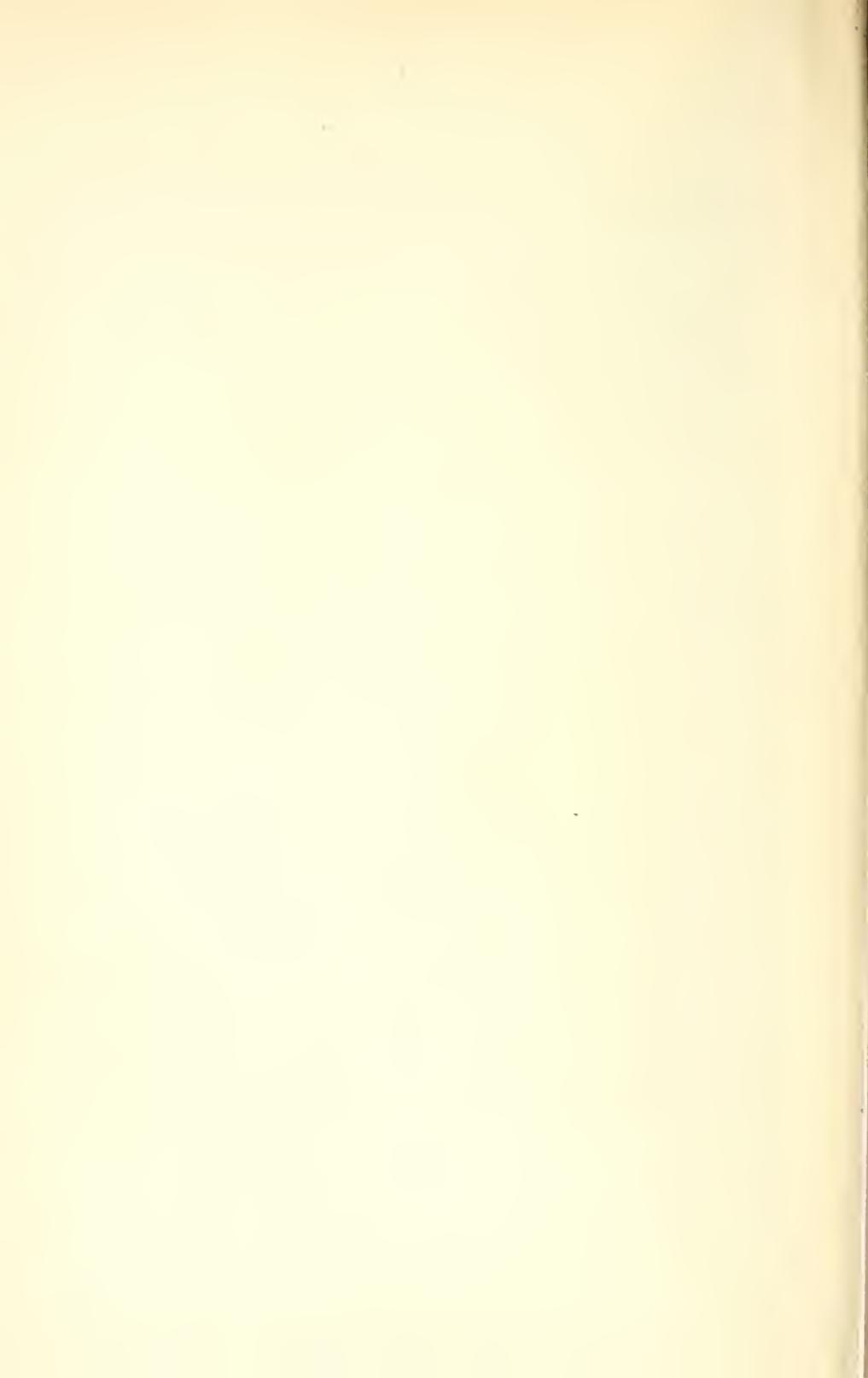


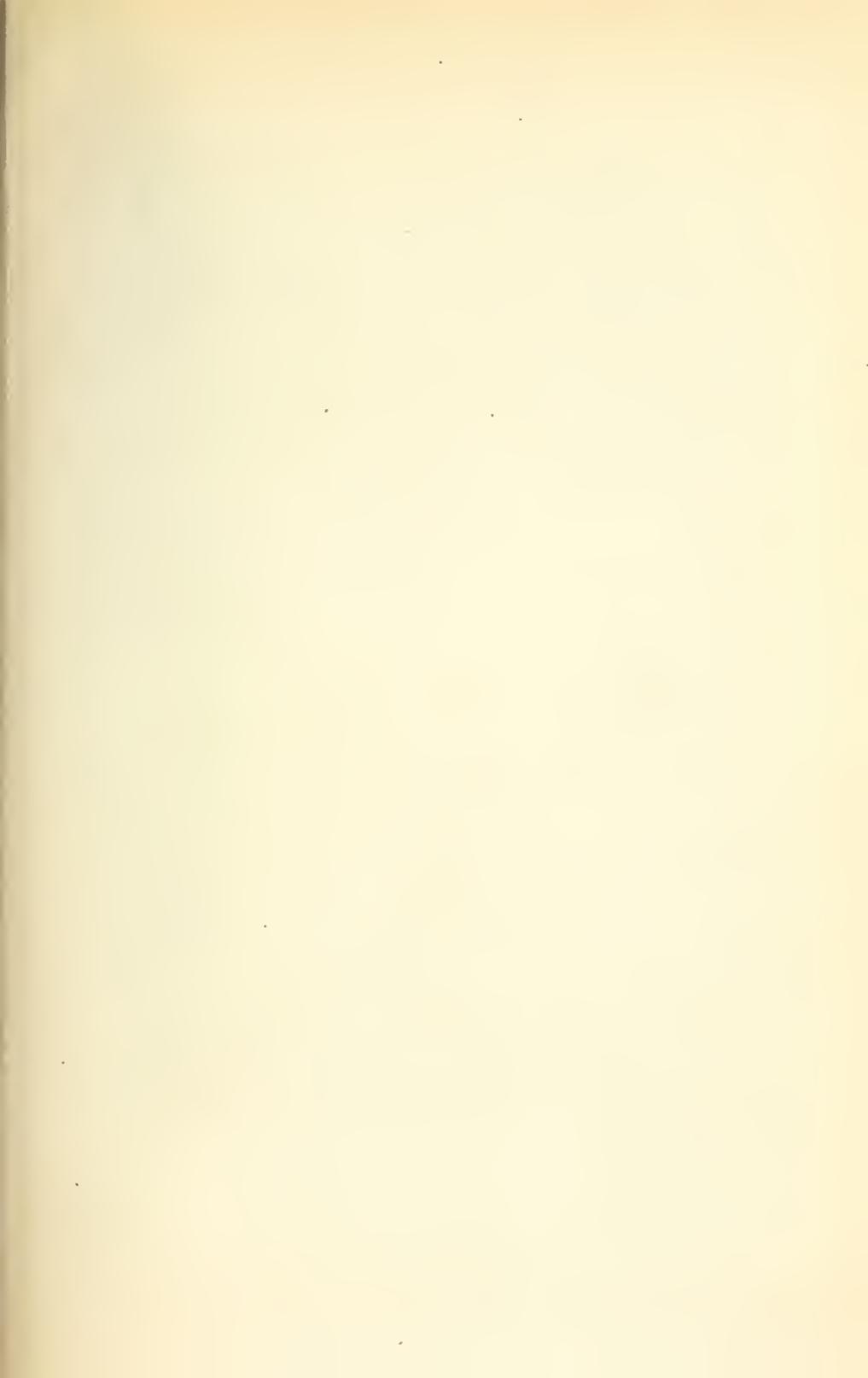
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THE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS







111



The Brigs of Ayr

'I'll be a brig when ye're a shapeless cairn'



THE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS

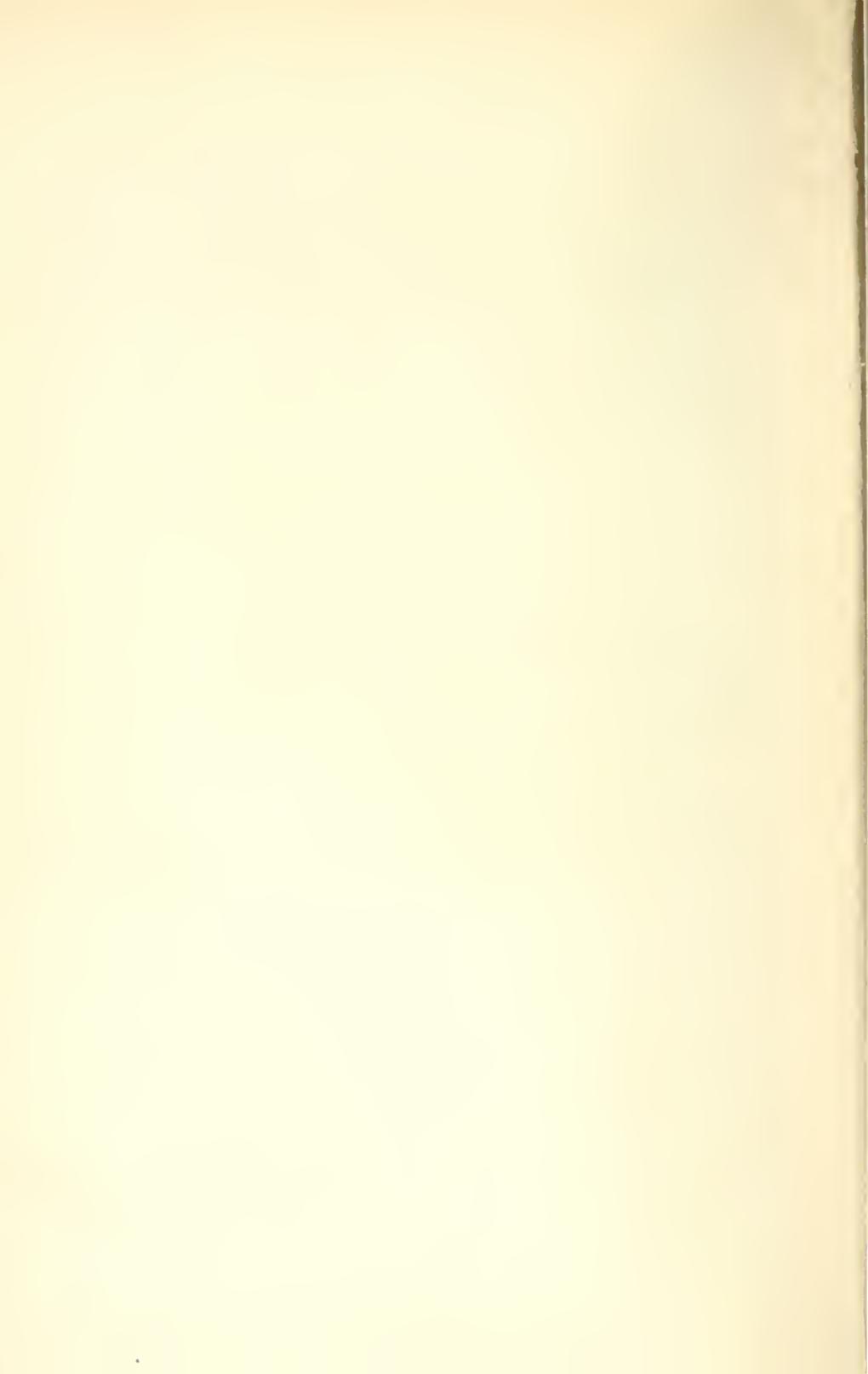


VOLUME SIXTH

PROSE

Edinburgh

JAMES THIN, PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY
1895



ADVERTISEMENT TO THE READER.

THE present volume, which completes the editor's work, represents the Dumfries period, or closing five years of the life and labours of Burns. When the publisher's prospectus of this edition was issued, a division into three volumes of *poetry* and three of *prose* was adopted, on the calculation that the space required for the latter would be rather less than that occupied by the former, with the relative notes. The result however is, that the prose writings of the Bard considerably exceed his poetry in bulk, which fact has involved the necessity, on the editor's part, of using the utmost brevity in his own annotations. This unlooked-for limitation of space must also be accepted as a fair excuse for the non-appearance of the promised Essay by Professor Nichol of Glasgow, on the Poet's "Life, Character, and Literary Influence."

There may, after all, be small ground for regret that in these volumes Burns is allowed to be so much his own interpreter and biographer; for little was really wanting beyond an accurate chronological arrangement and full record of his writings, to convey a thorough apprehension of the author's unique qualities, both literary and personal. In this view, the vast importance of rectifying false dates to the bard's letters, and restoring wilful alterations and suppressions of essential portions of his genuine writings, must be apparent. To effect such improvements, to furnish the completest possible collection of the author's works, and to lop off misleading mythical fungi which had clustered

round sterling facts in his life, have been the chief anxiety of the editor. Allan Cunningham's chart of the qualifications requisite in a biographer and editor of Burns is rather amusing. In the preface to his eight volume edition, 1834, he says :—" My knowledge of the domestic manners, feelings, and opinions of the husbandmen and mechanics of Scotland, and my acquaintance with all that pertains to the plough, the loom, the anvil, the axe, the mallet, and the mill, rendered the labour easy,—and no one deficient in such intelligence may hope to write the Life and edit the Works of Burns with success." Allan's labours in behalf of our poet are now regarded as practically worthless by readers who prefer honest fact to fiction.

Of what is new and distinguishing in the present edition, our readers, who earnestly compare it with earlier ones, must judge for themselves ; but regarding our large additions to the author's text, both in poetry and prose, we may here state that, while Cunningham in 1834 boasted of his volumes containing nearly one hundred and fifty pieces of verse beyond those in Currie's octavos, we include one hundred and thirty more than Cunningham's number. In the prose department we give five hundred and thirty-four of the bard's letters, while the full number in Cunningham's edition is three hundred and twenty-seven, and many of these are considerably abridged.

We cannot conclude without expressing our belief that, notwithstanding the exertions made to render this collection of the poet's letters complete, some of these are still hoarded in the cabinets of possessors. For instance, the world has not yet been permitted to see a letter which Burns wrote shortly after receiving Dr Gregory's uncere-
monious criticism on the poem of *The Wounded Hare* (June 1789). Only by means of Dr Currie's footnote to Gregory's communication are we made aware of such a letter, in

which occurs this familiar and oft-quoted passage—“Dr Gregory is a good man, but he crucifies me. I believe in the iron justice of Dr G. ; but, like the devils, I believe and tremble !” What has become of that letter ? Currie did not publish more of it. This hint we trust will not be thrown away on manuscript hunters and future editors of Burns.

W. S. D.

EDINBURGH, *October 1879.*

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PROSE WORKS.

—o—

THE DUMFRIES PERIOD.

FROM MARTINMAS 1791 TO 21ST JULY 1796.

Mrs Burns, in her memoranda noted down by Mr M'Diarmid, says—"We did not come empty-handed to Dumfries. The Ellisland sale was a very good one, and was well attended. A cow in her first calf brought eighteen guineas, and the purchaser never rued his bargain. Two other cows brought good prices. They had been presented by Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop. Burns neither failed as a farmer, nor in any other capacity. At Martinmas 1791, he repaired to Dumfries, and took up his abode in Bank Street. His salary as an Exciseman never exceeded £70, and that he only got as Port-officer."

The house which Burns occupied comprised three small apartments of a second floor on the north side of Bank Street, then called "the Wee Vennel," and is thus described by Chambers:—"The small central room, about the size of a bed-closet, is the only place in which he may seclude himself for study. On the ground floor immediately underneath, his friend John Syme has his office for the distribution of stamps. Overhead (in the third floor) is an honest blacksmith, called John Haugh, whom Burns treats on a familiar footing as a neighbour. On the opposite side of the street is the poet's landlord, Captain Hamilton, a gentleman of fortune and worth, who admires Burns, and often asks him to a family Sunday dinner."

It is a curious circumstance—perhaps an ominous one, that the earliest letter of Burns we have to record after his removal to Dumfries is a most melancholy one. Dr Currie printed it without date, placing it among the Ellisland letters in the autumn

of 1791; but the postscript decidedly indicates a change of locality in the writer's address—"I have one or two good fellows *here*, whom you would be glad to know." Ainslie had been a guest at Ellisland, and introduced to all the "good fellows" there.

(¹⁴) TO ROBERT AINSLIE, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, Nov. 1791.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,—Can you minister to a mind diseased? Can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, headache, nausea, and all the rest of the hounds of hell that beset a poor wretch who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul?

Misérable perdu that I am! I have tried everything that used to amuse me, but in vain: here must I sit, a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every click of the clock as it slowly—slowly, numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours who (d—n them !) are ranked up before me, every one at his neighbour's backside, and every one with a burden of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me. My wife scolds me! my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow. When I tell you, even * * * * has lost its power to please, you will guess something of my hell within, and all around me. I began "Elibanks and Elibraes," but the stanzas fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue; at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours that lay by me in my bookcase, and I felt something, for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence.—Well—I begin to

breathe a little since I began to write you. How are you, and what are you doing? How goes law? Apropos, for connection's sake do not address me as "Supervisor," for that is an honor I cannot pretend to—I am on the list, as we call it, for a Supervisorship, and will be called out by and by to act as one; but at present, I am a simple Gauger, tho' t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of £25 *per ann.* better than the rest. My present income, down money, is £70 *per ann.*

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

R. B.

Perhaps the following remarkable letter, received by Burns from his *quondam* love-correspondent Mrs M'Lehose, just about this time, had something to do with the penitential horrors above described.

(⁽²²⁾ MRS M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CLAR. CORR., 1843.)

EDINBURGH, November, 1791.

SIR,—I take the liberty of addressing a few lines in behalf of your old acquaintance, Jenny Clow, who, to all appearance, is at this moment dying. Obliged, from all the symptoms of a rapid decay, to quit her service, she is gone to a room almost without common necessities, untended and unmourned. In circumstances so distressing, to whom can she so naturally look for aid as to the father of her child, the man for whose sake she suffered many a sad and anxious night, shut from the world, with no other companion than Guilt and Solitude? You have now an opportunity to evince you indeed possess those fine feelings you have delineated, so as to claim the just admiration of your country.

I am convinced I need add nothing farther to persuade you to act as every consideration of humanity, as well as gratitude, must dictate. I am, Sir, your sincere well-wisher, A. M.

The reader has already seen from the letter to Peter Hill, of the preceding month, that Burns intended a visit to Edinburgh about Martinmas—“a week’s excursion to see old acquaintance.” Accordingly he replied promptly to Mrs M’Lehose, telling her that he will be in Edinburgh on Tuesday 29th November.

(⁴⁴) TO MRS M’LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(CLAR. CORR., 1843.)

DUMFRIES, 23d November, 1791.

IT is extremely difficult, my dear Madam, for me to deny a lady anything; but to a lady whom I regard with all the endearing epithets of respectful esteem and old friendship, how shall I find the language of refusal? I have, indeed, a shade of the lady, which I keep and shall ever keep in the *sanctum sanctorum* of my most anxious care. That lady, though an unfortunate and irresistible conjuncture of circumstances has lost me her esteem, yet she shall be ever, to me—

“Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart.”

I am rather anxious for her sake, as to her voyage, I pray God my fears may be groundless. By the way, I have this moment a letter from her, with a paragraph or two conceived in so stately a style, that I would not pardon it in any created being except herself; but, as the subject interests me much, I shall answer it to you, as I do not know her present address. I am sure she must have told you of a girl, a Jenny Clow, who had the misfortune to make me a father (with contrition I own it), contrary to

the laws of our most excellent constitution, in our holy Presbyterian hierarchy.

Mrs M—— tells me a tale of the poor girl's distress that makes my very heart weep blood. I will trust that your goodness will apologize to your delicacy for me, when I beg of you, for Heaven's sake, to send a porter to the poor woman (Mrs M., it seems, knows where she is to be found), with five shillings in my name ; and, as I shall be in Edinburgh on Tuesday first, for certain, make the poor wench leave a line for me, before Tuesday, at Mr Mackay's, White Hart Inn, Grassmarket, where I shall put up ; and, before I am two hours in town, I shall see the girl, and try what is to be done for her relief. I would have taken my boy from her long ago, but she would never consent.

I shall do myself the very great pleasure to call for you when I come to town, and repay you the sum your goodness shall have advanced. * * * * and most obedient

ROB^T. BURNS.

Accordingly, Burns made his last visit to Edinburgh on 29th November, where he remained over a week, during which period a complete reconciliation was established between him and the lady whom he had formerly celebrated as "Clarinda." She was on the eve of sailing to the West Indies to join her husband : how often the poet and Mrs M'Lehose met during that week it is impossible to say ; but the farewell meeting took place on the evening of Tuesday the sixth of December, the warmth and seclusiveness of which the bard is understood to have thus expressed in song :—

"O May, thy morn was ne'er sae bright
As the mirk night o' December !
For sparkling was the rosy wine,
And private was the chamber ;
And dear was she I dare na name,
But I will ay remember," &c.
(See page 53, Vol. III.)

The lady did not sail till the following February, and during the interval, her Platonic lover composed and sent to her the world-famous lyric, “Ae fond kiss, and then we sever,” and some others which will be found at pp. 55 to 59, Vol. III. A correspondent has recently forwarded to us the following simple and very expressive melody for the last-mentioned song. It is so admirably adapted to the words (treated in the ballad style of four lines to every stanza), that we think it must recommend itself to musical readers with native predilections.

On returning to Dumfries after the exciting visit to his Edinburgh friends, the Bard's letters to Mrs M'Lehose were neither few nor far between; but of these only two have reached the public, namely that which we now subjoin—the sixth of the series—and the very precious one in which he transcribed the song, “Ae fond kiss” (already given to our readers in *fac simile*), with two other lyrics on the same theme.

(⁴⁵) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.*

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

DUMFRIES, 15th Dec. 1791.

I HAVE some merit, my ever-dearest of women, in attracting and securing the heart of “Clarinda.” In her I met with the most accomplished of all womankind, the first of all

* The original MS. of this letter was purchased by the late George Thomson (Burns's musical correspondent), when the *Clarinda Correspondence* was cut up into lots and disposed of by the lady's grandson, shortly after their publication in 1843. At the sale of Thomson's effects, which took place after his death, the late Lord Dalhousie was the purchaser (on 17th Nov. 1852) of this letter, forming number 61 of the 62 lots of Burns's MSS., which comprised his purchase. In an inventory of that very valuable collection exhibited at Brechin Castle, there is a note, apparently in his lordship's hand, intimating that lots 60 and 61 were stolen by some

God's works ; and yet I, even I, had the good fortune to appear amiable in her sight.

By the bye, this is the sixth letter that I have written since I left you ; and if you were an ordinary being, as you are a creature very extraordinary—an instance of what God Almighty in the plenitude of His power and the fulness of His goodness can make ! I would never forgive you for not answering my letters.

I have sent in your hair (a part of the parcel you gave me), with a measure, to Mr Bruce the Jeweller in Princes Street, to get a ring done for me. I have likewise sent the verses on Sensibility, altered to

“ Sensibility, how charming,
Dearest Nancy, thou canst tell,” &c.,

to the editor of the *Scots Songs*, of which you have three volumes, to set to a most beautiful air, out of compliment to the first of women, my ever-beloved, my ever-sacred “ Clarinda.”

I shall probably write you to-morrow. In the meantime, from a man who is literally drunk, accept and forgive !!

R. B.

(³²) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, 17th December 1791.*]

MANY thanks to you, Madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard, and will be answered up to

covetous visitor. Lot 60 was a holograph copy of the poet's well-known epigram on Captain Grose—“The devil got notice that Grose was a-dying.”

* Dr Currie dated this letter from “Ellisland,” which must be a mistake if his date be correct. The immediately preceding letter to Mrs Dunlop, dated 11th April 1791, speaks of young Henri having the small-pox, and the “good news” here spoken of probably refer to the mother and child's safe arrival in France, at the invitation of the deceased Mr Henri's relatives.

the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent ; and then Mrs Heuri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in everything but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song which, to a lady the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

Scene—A field of battle—time of the day, evening ; the wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following

SONG OF DEATH.

Farewell thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies,
Now gay with the bright setting sun ;
Farewell loves and friendships, ye dear, tender ties—
Our race of existence is run ! &c.—See page 45, Vol. III.

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was—looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled *Oran an Aoig*, or “The Song of Death,” to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces, which, ere yon full-orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at Mother Earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commande.*

ROB^T. BURNS.

(⁴⁶) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, LAMONT'S LAND,
CANONGATE, EDINBURGH.*

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843.)

DUMFRIES, 27th Dec. 1791.

I HAVE yours, my ever-dearest Nancy, this moment, I have just ten minutes before the post goes, and these I shall

* The original MS. of this letter forms one of the extensive collection of W. F. Watson, Esq., Edinburgh.

employ in sending you some songs I have just been composing to different tunes, for the Collection of Songs, of which you have three volumes, and of which you shall have the fourth.

[Then follow transcripts of the songs “Ae fond kiss”—“Behold the hour, the boat arrive!” and eight lines of “Gloomy December.”]

The rest of this song is on the wheels.—Adieu ! Adieu !

ROB^T. BURNS.

A.D. 1792.

(¹) TO MR JAMES CLARKE, SCHOOLMASTER,
MOFFAT.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, 10th January 1792.

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

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

And Dr Young :—

“On Reason build Resolve,
That column of true Majesty in man.”

To-morrow you shall know the result of my consultation with Captain Riddell. Yours, R. B.

Captain Riddell, of Carse and Glenriddell, had a younger brother, Mr Walter Riddell, who possessed an estate in the

Island of Antigua, and had recently returned to his native country to enjoy, in a more temperate climate and in more agreeable society, the proceeds of his possessions. His wife, a gay young Creole, under twenty, although already a mother, was blessed with personal beauty, agreeable manners and many accomplishments, to which were superadded a taste for natural history and polite literature. It appears that Burns was introduced to her on taking up his residence in Dumfries, and as she delighted in the society of men of talent and spirit he soon became a frequent visitor at Woodley Park, the residence of her husband, situated about four miles south from the town. The name thus given to their newly acquired residence, formerly called "Goldielea," was bestowed in honour of the lady's family name, her father being Mr Woodley, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of St Kitts, and the Leeward Islands.

In course of her voyage to this country, Mrs Riddell had passed some time at the Leeward Isles, and at Madeira, where she made scientific observations and notes of their natural history ; these notes were now arranged in form of a volume which she resolved on publishing.* Having learned that Mr William Smellie, of Edinburgh, author of a work on natural history, was the printer of Burns's Edinburgh edition, she applied to the poet to give her a letter of introduction to the scientific printer, which was promptly acceded to, in the following amusing fashion.

(¹) TO MR WILLIAM SMELLIE, PRINTER,
EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 22d January 1792.

I SIT down, my dear Sir, to introduce a young lady to you, and a lady in the first ranks of fashion too. What a

* Mrs Riddell's work is thus announced in the Scots Magazine of November, 1792, as just published :—" Voyages to Madeira and Leeward Caribee Islands ; with Sketches of the Natural History of these Islands. By MARIA R---, Cadell, London ; Hill, Edinburgh.

task ! to you—who care no more for the herd of animals called young ladies, than you do for the herd of animals called young gentlemen. To you—who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of fashion, as an idiot painter that seems industrious to place staring fools and unprincipled knaves in the foreground of his picture, while men of sense and honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs Riddell, who will take this letter to town with her and send it to you, is a character that, even in your own way, as a naturalist and a philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The lady too is a votary of the muses; and as I think myself somewhat of a judge of my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct, and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the *lady poetesses* of the day. She is a great admirer of your book, and hearing me say that I was acquainted with you, she begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian capital. I told her that her best way was, to desire her near relation, and your intimate friend, Craigdarroch, to have you at his house while she was there; and lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the lady's merits, she has one unlucky failing ! a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will as easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself—where she dislikes or despises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it, than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you with the unmeaning “compliments of the season,” but I will send you my warmest wishes and most ardent prayers that *Fortune* may never throw your

subsistence to the mercy of a *Knave*, or set your *character* on the judgment of a *Fool*; but that, upright and erect, you may walk to an honest grave, where men of letters shall say:—"Here lies a man who did honor to science," and men of worth shall say:—"Here lies a man who did honor to human nature."

ROB^T. BURNS.

The hour was fast approaching, in anticipation of which the poet thus addressed Mrs M'Lehose:—

"Behold the hour—the boat arrive,
My dearest Nancy, O fareweel!
Sever'd from thee, can I survive—
Frae thee whom I hae lo'ed sae weel?"

That lady wrote to Burns on 21st January, but the letter has not been preserved; and, failing to receive an answer, she again addressed him on his birthday.

(²³) MRS M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

(CLAR. CORRES. 1843.)

EDINBURGH, 25th January 1792.

Agitated, hurried to death, I sit down to write a few lines to you, my ever dear Friend! We are ordered aboard on Saturday, to sail on Sunday. And now, my dearest Sir, I have a few things to say to you, as the last advice of her who could have lived or died with you! I am happy to know of your applying so steadily to the business you have engaged in; but, O remember this life is a short, passing scene! Seek God's favour—keep His Commandments—be solicitous to prepare for a happy eternity! There, I trust, we shall meet in perfect and never-ending bliss. Read my former letters attentively: let the religious tenets there expressed sink deep into your mind; meditate on them with candour, and your accurate judgment must be convinced that they accord with the words of Eternal Truth. Laugh no more at holy things or holy men: remember that "without holiness no man shall see God." Another thing, and I have done: as you value my peace do not write me to Jamaica, until I let you

know you may with safety. Write Mary * often. She feels for you, and judges of your present feelings by her own. I am sure you will be happy to hear of my happiness; and I trust you shall —soon. If there is time, you may drop me a line ere I go, to inform me if you get this and another letter I wrote you, dated the 21st, which I am afraid of having neglected to be put into the post-office.

So it was the "Roselle" you were to have gone in! I read your letter to-day, and reflected deeply on the ways of Heaven. To us they oft appear dark and doubtful; but let us do our duty faithfully, and sooner or later we shall have our reward, because "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Every upright mind has here cause to rejoice. And now, adieu! May Almighty God bless you and yours!—take you into His blessed favour here, and afterwards receive you into His glory!

Farewell! I will ever remain, your *real* Friend, A. M.

(¹²) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, 5th Feb., 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I send you by the bearer, Mr Clarke, a particular friend of mine, six pounds and a shilling, which you will dispose of as follows:—£5, 10s. per acct., I owe to Mr Robt. Burn, architect, for erecting the stone over poor Fergusson. He was two years in erecting it after I commissioned him for it, and I have been two years in paying him after he sent his account, so he and I are quits. He had the hardness to ask me interest on the sum; but, considering that the money was due by one Poet for putting a tombstone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank Heaven that ever he saw a farthing of it.

With the remainder of the money, pay yourself for the

* Miss Mary Peacock. See footnote, p. 16, Vol. V.

“Office of a Messenger” that I bought of you; and send me by Mr Clarke a note of its price. Send me, likewise, the fifth volume of the “Observer,” by Mr Clarke; and if any money remain, let it stand to account.

My best compliments to Mrs Hill. I sent you a *Maukin* by last week's Fly which I hope you received.
Yours most sincerely,

ROB^T. BURNS.

The original MS. of the above letter is now in possession of Thomas Arnott, Esq., Laurel Bank, Partick, Glasgow, and the architect's account referred to is preserved in the poet's monument at Edinburgh. The following is a literal transcript:—

Mr Robert Burns,

To J. & R. Burn.

June 23, 1789.

54 Feet polished Craigleith Stone for a Headstone for

Robert Ferguson, at 1s.,	.	.	.	.	£2	14	0
10 Feet 8 inches dble. Base Moulding, at 1s. 6d.,	.	.	.	.	0	16	0
4 Large Iron Cramps,	.	.	.	.	0	2	10
2 Stones to set the base on, at 1s.,	.	.	.	.	0	2	0
320 Letters on do., at 8s.,	.	.	.	.	1	5	8
Head, and setting up ditto,	.	.	.	.	0	5	0
Gravedigger's dues,	.	.	.	.	0	5	0

In the letter which enclosed the account to the poet in 1789, Mr Robert Burn,* apologises for the delay that had taken place in erecting the stone, and facetiously adds:—“I shall be happy to receive orders of a like nature for as many more of your friends that have gone hence as you please.”

(²) TO MR JAMES CLARKE, SCHOOLMASTER,
MOFFAT.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, 17th Feb., 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—If this finds you at Moffat, or as soon as it finds you at Moffat, you must without delay wait on

* “Died at Edinburgh, June 5, 1815, Mr Robert Burn, architect.”—*Scots Magazine.*

Mr Riddell, as he has been very kindly thinking of you in an affair that has occurred of a clerk's place in Manchester, which, if your hopes are desperate in your present business, he proposes procuring for you. I know your gratitude for past, as well as hopes of future, favours will induce you to pay every attention to Glenriddell's wishes; as he is almost the only, and undoubtedly the best friend that your unlucky fate has left you.

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

Yours,

R. B.

Down to the present date, the reader has seen little or nothing of any interest which Burns took in the progress of the French Revolution. Just about the time when he was corresponding with Helen Maria Williams of London, and criticising her poem on Slavery, in July 1789, the Bastile was destroyed and the Princes of the Blood and chief Noblesse were fain to escape from France. In October following, poor Louis XVI. was brought to Paris, and forced to accept the "Declaration of the Rights of Man." This was immediately followed by a Decree of the National Assembly re-constructing France into Departments; and Monastic Institutions and Titles of Nobility were suppressed. The King, who was kept a close prisoner, failed in an attempt to escape, in June 1791, and was forced formally to accept the new Constitution. Such was the position of matters at the date we have now reached. A minute examination of the daily chronicles of that period indicates little or no

* Notwithstanding the "triumph," it is certain that Clarke still continued to require, and did obtain, assistance from our poet, and he soon relinquished his situation at Moffat for a similar one in Forfar. The reader will hear of him again in 1796.

apprehension in this country, that as a nation we were soon to become the enemies of the French. Certainly, from the first outbreak, Edmund Burke threw out what he deemed patriotic warnings of a bloody future; but, as yet, little suspicion of evil consequences was exhibited by the British public.* In January 1792, George III. opened parliament with congratulations on the peace and internal prosperity of the country; and Burns was only one of the many thousands at home who felt and expressed sympathy with the "French reformers."

At page 76, Vol. iii., we have, in connexion with the song, "The deil's awa wi' th' Exciseman," introduced Lockhart's account of the capture of a smuggling craft in February 1792 by Burns and his party, of the sale of the stores and arms of the captured vessel, and of the purchase by the poet of four carronades, said to have been afterwards forwarded by him as a present to the French National Assembly. That story may be either a fact or an invention; but it does not justify Mr Lockhart's condemnation of the poet's act of sympathy with what he reckoned the cause of human freedom. He was doing no more than was being done around him on every side. In the latter part of January 1792, a subscription was opened in Glasgow "to aid the French in carrying on the war against the emigrant princes, or any foreign power by whom they may be attacked." The newspaper paragraph in which the announcement appeared, adds that "a sum of £1200 has already been subscribed." Burns, it is true, was a servant of the government at the time he is alleged to have been guilty of "an absurd and presumptuous breach of decorum" in sending the four pieces of small ordnance to France; but he did the act *openly*, if it was done at all, and nowhere does it appear that any person entitled to take notice of and challenge his conduct, was of opinion that he committed a fault.

* "The Revolution in France, which patriots behold with admiration, and angels with applause, is vilified and traduced by Burke."—Letter of "Philo-Theodosius" in the *Scots Magazine*, June 1790.

TO J. LEVEN, ESQ.,
GEN. SUPERVISOR, EXCISE OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)*

[*March, 1792.*]

SIR,—I have sealed and secured Lawson's Tea, but no permit has yet appeared, nor can it appear before Tuesday at the nearest; so there is the greater chance of the condemnation. I shrewdly suspect the Newcastle House, Rankine and Sons, is the firm; they will think that the goods being regularly delivered to a Carrier, with proper permit, will exonerate them as to farther responsibility; and Lawson, on his part, is determined not to have anything to do with it; so our process may be the easier managed.

The moment that the permits arrive, as I am pretty certain they will, I shall inform you; but, in the meantime, when the three remaining boxes arrive, as they cannot, *in quality*, correspond with the permit, and besides, will be at least beyond the limited time a full week—are not they seizable?

Mr Mitchell mentioned to you a ballad, which I composed, and sung at one of his Excise Court dinners: here it is:—

THE DEIL'S AWA WI' TH' EXCISEMAN.

Tune—“Madam Cossy.”

Chorus—The deil's awa, the deil's awa,
The deil's awa wi' th' Exciseman,
He's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa,
He's danc'd awa wi' th' Exciseman,
&c., &c., See page 76, Vol. iii.

If you honor my ballad by making it one of your

* To Alexander Laing, Esq., Newburgh on Tay, we are indebted for obtaining a copy of this letter from the poet's holograph, now in possession of the widow of James Painter, Esq., St John's Wood, London, who was a nephew of the gentleman addressed.

charming *bon vivant* effusions, it will secure it undoubted celebrity.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged and devoted
humble serv^t.,

ROB^T. BURNS.*

On 10th April 1792. The Royal Archers of Scotland complimented Burns by granting him a Diploma as a member of their corporation, which was duly forwarded to him at Dumfries. The poet refers to that honour conferred on him in his letter to Cunningham of 10th September following.

The Diploma is now preserved in the bard's Monument at Edinburgh.

(²) TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ., BOOKSELLER.

(*Here first published.*)

DUMFRIES, 16th April 1792.

SIR,—I this moment have yours, and were it not that habit, as usual, has deadened conscience, my criminal indolence should lead me an uneasy life of reproach. I ought long ago to have written you on this very business.†

Now, to try a language of which I am not half master, I shall assume as well as I can, the man of business. I suppose, at a gross guess, that I could add of new materials to your two volumes, about fifty pages. I would also correct and retrench a good deal. These said fifty pages you know are as much mine as the thumb-stall I have just now drawn on my finger which I unfortunately gashed in mending my pen. A few books which I very much want are all the recompence I crave, together with as many

* In our note at page 76, Vol. III., attached to the popular song referred to, we found on this letter, as helping to overturn the romantic story communicated by Mr Joseph Train to Sir Walter Scott in 1827, concerning the occasion which prompted the song.

† See page 402, Vol. V.

copies of this new edition of my own works as Friendship or Gratitude shall prompt me to present. There are three men whom you know, and whose friendly patronage I think I can trouble so far—Messrs M'Kenzie, D. Stewart, and F. Tytler; to any of these I shall submit my MSS. for their strictures; and also let *them* say on my informing them—I mean any of them—what *Authors* I want, to what value of them I am entitled. If he adjudge me a “Tom Thumb” I am content. The “Man of Feeling,” and Professor Stewart are, I hear, busy with works of their own, for which reason I shall prefer Tytler. So soon as I hear from you, I shall write Mr Tytler, and in a fortnight more I shall put my MSS. in his hands.

If the thing were possible that I could receive the proof-sheets by our Dumfries Fly, which runs three times a week, I would earnestly wish to correct them myself.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your very humble servt.,
ROB^T. BURNS.*

(⁶) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER,
LAWNMARKET, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)†

DUMFRIES, May 1792.

DR. SIR,—This will be presented to you by one of your subscribers, and a gentleman to whose musical talents you are much indebted for getting you Scotch tunes. Let him know your progress, and how you come on with the work. Inclosed is one song out of many I have yet to send you; and likewise I inclose you another, and I think, a better

* For access to the original MS. of this important letter, we are indebted to the representatives of Mr Creech.

† From the original MS. in the British Museum, London.

set of Craigieburnwood, which you will give to Mr Clarke to compare with the former set, as I am extremely anxious to have that song right,—I am, dr. Sir, yours

ROB^T. BURNS.

(¹) TO MR STEPHEN CLARKE, ORGANIST,
EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, 16th July 1792.

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

But half a line conveying half a meaning from Mr C. would make Mr B. the very happiest of mortals.

PREFACE TO VOL. IV. OF JOHNSON'S MUSEUM.

When the Editor published the third volume of this work, he had reason to conclude that one volume more

would finish the Publication. Still, however, he has a considerable number of Scots airs and Songs more than his plan allowed him to include in this fourth volume. These, though in all probability they will not amount to what he has hitherto published as one volume, he shall yet give to the world; that the Scots Musical Museum may be a Collection of every Scots song extant.

To those who object that his Publication contains pieces of inferior, or little, value, the Editor answers by referring to his plan. All our Songs cannot have equal merit. Besides, as the world has not agreed on any unerring balance, any undisputed standard, in matters of taste, what to one person yields no manner of pleasure, may to another be a high enjoyment.

EDIN., *August 13, 1792.**

(³) TO ROBERT RIDDELL, ESQ., OF GLENRIDDELL.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

[Dumfries 1792.]

MY DEAR SIR,—On rummaging over some old papers I lighted on a manuscript of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out; as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would have been

* It may be of some interest here to enumerate a few of the more popular songs of Burns that made their first appearance in the volume above referred to:

 Ae fond kiss, and then we sever.
 An' O for aye aud twenty Tam.
 Bonie wee thing, cannie wee thing.
 The Song of Death.
 Flow gently sweet Afton.
 The Whistle of worth.
 The Posie.
 The gallant Weaver.

 What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?

 O meikle thinks my loveo' my beauty.
 Craigieburn Wood.
 She's fair and fause.
 Turn again, thou fair Eliza.
 My bonie Bell.
 The deil's awa wi' the Exciseman.
 Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon.
 Willie Wastle dwelt on Tweed.

nonsense. I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope that, some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It sets off thus:—

“OBSERVATIONS, HINTS, SONGS, SCRAPS OF POETRY, &c., BY R. B.
(See page 53, Vol. IV.)

The foregoing is extracted from the MS. book of Letters, collected by the author for his friend, Captain Riddell, and forms the Introduction to an Abridgement of his first Common-place Book, which we have already given *in extenso*. In that abridged copy, the poet made a few verbal alterations in course of transcribing, but these are unimportant; for instance, the substitution of the expression “courted,” for *coveted*, and “language of the Hebrew bard,” for *language of Scripture*. He closes the selections in these words:—“This is all that, and perhaps more than, is worth quoting in my MSS.”

We come now to a letter which is very difficult to place in its proper chronological order. It is impossible to say at what date our author was prevailed on by his kind friend Mr M'Murdo to undergo an introduction to, and personal interview with, the Duke of Queensberry, the bare mention of whose name had, for a series of years, been sufficient to rouse him into indignation. Certain it is, however, that such a personal meeting between the poet and the Whig Peer did take place, as the following letter addressed to the Duke shortly thereafter, informs us. It is copied into the Glenriddell collection of the poet's letters, without any date attached or suggested; and we present it under the latest probable date, as the bard was not likely to send, in manuscript, his poem of the Whistle to any one after it was published to the world. This Peer would be about 66 years old in 1792. He survived till 23rd December 1810.

(1) TO THE DUKE OF QUEENSBERRY,

ENCLOSING THE BALLAD OF “THE WHISTLE.”

(Here first published).

MY LORD DUKE,—Will your Grace pardon this approach in a poor Poet, who perhaps intrudes on your converse with Princes, to present you—all he has to offer—his best ballad, and to beg of you—all he has to ask—your gracious acceptance of it? Whatever might be my opinion of the merits of the poem, I would not have dared to take the liberty of presenting it thus, but for your Grace’s acquaintance with the *Dramatis Personæ* of the piece.*

When I first thought of sending my poem to your Grace, I had some misgivings of heart about it—something within me seemed to say:—“A nobleman of the first rank and the first taste, and who has lived in the first Court of Europe, what will he care for either you or your ballad? Depend upon it that he will look on this business as some one or other of the many modifications of that servility of soul with which authors, and particularly you poets, have ever approached the Great.”

No! said I to myself, I am conscious of the purity of my motives; and as I never crouch to any man but the man I have wronged, nor even him unless he forgives me, I will approach his Grace with tolerable upright confidence, that were I and my ballad poorer stuff than we are, the Duke of Queensberry’s polite affability would make me welcome,

* The identical Whistle won by Craigdarroch at the celebrated bacchanalian contest on 16th October 1789, was produced at the anniversary dinner of the Edinburgh Burns Club, 1867, by its vice-president, Mr Maitland of Eccles, the legal guardian of young Mr Fergusson of Craigdarroch, custodian of that interesting heir-loom. Mr Maitland was then, and for several years thereafter, an office-bearer in the Club.

as my sole motive is to show how sincerely I have the honor to be,

My Lord Duke,
Your Grace's most obedient, humble servant,
ROB^T. BURNS.

This was written shortly after I had the honor of being introduced to the Duke, at which introduction I spent the evening with him, when he treated me with the most distinguished politeness and marked attention. Though I am afraid his Grace's character as a Man of Worth is very equivocal, yet he certainly is a Nobleman of the first taste, and a Gentleman of the first manners. R. B.

(³³) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

Annan Water Foot, 22nd August 1792.

Do not blame me for it, Madam ;—my own conscience, hackneyed and weatherbeaten as it is, in watching and reprobining my vagaries, follies, indolence, &c., has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently.

* * * * *

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured Friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for many favors, to esteem for much worth, and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now, old acquaintance, and I hope and am sure, of progressive, increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much-beloved Friend and her wide-scattered connexions, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can ?

Apropos (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain), do you not know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours?—Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word Love, owing to the *intermingledoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know, then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a Messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home, among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting, and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Baillie, your neighbour, at Mayfield. Mr B. with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honor of calling on me; on which I took my horse* (though God knows I could ill spare the time), and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and, riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with—

“ My bonie Lizzie Baillie,
I'll rowe thee in my plaidie,” &c.

* We are not to conclude from this expression, “my horse,” that Burns, with his slender income, was able to purchase and maintain a riding horse. In special journeys to distant places, on excise business, he was permitted to hire a horse and charge it as an item of expenditure.

so I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, “unanointed, unanneal’d,” as Hamlet says:—

O saw ye bonie Lesley,
As she gaed o'er the border ?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther, &c.

See page 83, Vol. III.

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people who would be the happier the oftener they met together, are, almost without exception, always so placed as never to meet but once or twice a-year; which, considering the few years of a man’s life, is a very great “evil under the sun,” which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that, “we meet to part no more.”

* * * * *

“Tell us, ye dead,
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What ’tis you are, and we must shortly be ?”

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. “O that some courteous ghost would blab it out ?” but it cannot be: you and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary by making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little godson, and

every little creature that shall call me father, shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labour of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua. R. B.

(⁹) TO MR ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, WRITER,
46 SOUTH HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH.

SOME LITTLE TIME AFTER HIS MARRIAGE, AND AFTER, THROUGH HIS RECOMMENDATION, I HAD BEEN PRESENTED WITH A DIPLOMA FROM THE EDINBURGH COMPANY OF ROYAL ARCHERS.

(CURRIE, 1800.)*

DUMFRIES, 10th September 1792.

No ! I will not attempt an apology. Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise ; making ballads, and then drinking and singing them to my drink ; and, over and above all, the correcting the press-work of two different publications :† still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, when I am snatching an hour near “witching time of night,” and scrawling a page or two—I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage ; or I might have thanked the Caledonian Archers for the honor they have done me, (though to do myself

* Currie's version is not so complete as the one in our text, which is taken from the poet's own transcript.

† There can be little doubt that the poet refers here to (1) the forthcoming edition, in two volumes, of his own poems ; and (2) to the preparing and correcting of the sheets of Volume V. of Johnson's Museum, which however remained unpublished till after his own death.

justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both before now). Well then, here is your good health! for I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me by way of spell to keep away the meikle horned Deil, or any of his subaltern imps who may be on their nightly rounds.

But what shall I write to you?—"The voice said cry," and I said, "What shall I cry?" O thou Spirit! whatever thou art, or wherever thou makest thyself visible! be thou a Bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herd-callan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the fauld! Be thou a Brownie, set, at dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle, or in the solitary barn, where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself, as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy ample cog of substantial brose. Be thou a Kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse, or in the tumbling boat! Or, lastly, be thou a Ghost, paying thy nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of the time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent ghastly dwellings of the dead beside thee; or, taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, portraying on their dreaming fancy, pictures, dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed Deity!—Come, thou Spirit, but not in these horrid forms: come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations, which thou breathest round the wig of a prating advocate, or the *tête-à-tête* of a tea-bibbing gossip, while their tongues run at the light-horse gallop of clashmaclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an

idea among half a hundred words ; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark worth recording !

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

But of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical ; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the by, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a religious turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart ? They are

orderly ; they may be just ; nay, I have known them merciful ; but still your children of super-sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril-snuffing putre-scence, and a foot—spurning filth ; in short, with that conceited dignity that your titled Douglasses, Hamiltons, Gordons, or any other of your Scottish lordlings, of seven centuries standing, display, when they accidentally mix among the many apron'd sons of mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or that a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys !—Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a ——. But hold (Here's t'ye again !) this rum is damn'd generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

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

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

Thou, bonie Lesley, art a queen,
 Thy subjects we before thee ;
 Thou, bonie Lesley, art divine,
 The hearts o' men adore thee.
 The very deil he could na scaith
 Whatever wad belang thee ?
 He'd look into thy bonie face
 And say, "I canna wrang thee."

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

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

(²) TO MR CORBET, SUPERVISOR-GENERAL OF EXCISE.

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

[DUMFRIES, Sep. 1792.]

SIR,—When I was honored with your most obliging letter, I said to myself, "A simple letter of thanks will be a very

* The closing paragraph of this long epistle may be compared with a similar one in the letter to Mr Peter Hill, at page 385, Vol. V.

poor return for so much kindness. I shall likewise send the gentleman a cargo of my best and newest rhymes." However, my new division holds me so very busy, and several things in it being rather new to me, my time has hitherto been totally engrossed. When a man is strongly impressed with a sense of something he ought to do, at the same time that want of leisure, or want of opportunity, or want of assistance, or want of information, or want of paper, pen, and ink, or any other of the many wants which flesh is heir to—when sense of duty pulls one way, and necessity (or, alas! too often indolence under necessity's garb) pulls another—you are too well-acquainted with poor human nature to be told what a devil of a life that arch-vixen Conscience leads us.

Old as I am in acquaintance, and growing grey in connexion, with slips, frips, failings, frailties, backslidings in the paths of grace, and all other light-horse militia of iniquity, never did my poor back suffer such scarification from the scourge of Conscience as during these three weeks that your kind epistle has lain by me unanswered. A negro-wench under the rod of a West India mistress, a nurse under the caprices of a spoilt child, the only son and heir of a booby squire; nay, a hen-pecked husband under the displeasure of his virago wife, were enviable predicaments to mine. At last, by way of compromise, I return you by this my most grateful thanks for all the generous friendship and disinterested patronage for which now and formerly I have the honor to be indebted to you, and as to my rhymes—another edition, in two volumes, of my poems being in the press—I shall beg leave to present a copy to Mrs Corbet as my first, and I will venture to add, most effectual mediator with you on my behalf,—I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

Early in September 1792 commenced that correspondence betwixt Mr George Thomson, principal Clerk in the office of the Trustees for the encouragement of Arts and Manufactures, and our Bard, which continued uninterruptedly from that date till the death of the latter. Mr Thomson was an amateur performer on the violin, who conceived the idea of publishing the select vocal melodies of Scotland, set to new words where the old ones were defective, and embellished with pianoforte accompaniments by the first masters of the art. To Burns that gentleman applied for his aid in improving the old words of popular airs, or in furnishing original words to suit the ancient melodies when necessary. That being an employment very congenial to our poet, he at once sympathised in the scheme, and lent his genius to forward it. We purpose to deal with that lyrical correspondence, as we did with the Clarinda episode, in order to obviate a tediously digressive interruption to the current of our author's general correspondence. We shall therefore defer that branch of our subject till we can take up the Thomson correspondence in its entirety and without impediment.

(²⁴) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 24th Sep. 1792.

I HAVE this moment, my dear Madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, &c., are out of my head when I read and think on Mrs Henri's situation.* Good God! a heart-wounded helpless young woman—in a strange, foreign land, and that land convulsed with every horror that can harrow the human feelings—sick—looking, longing for a comforter, but finding none—a mother's feelings, too—but it is too much: He who wounded—(He only can) may He heal!

* * * * *

* This lady who, as the reader knows, was a daughter of Mrs Dunlop, had gone to the south of France with her infant son, where she died a few days prior to the date of this letter.

I wish the farmer great joy of his new acquisition to his family. * * * * I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, a *cursed life!* As to a laird farming his own property; sowing his own corn in hope; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness; knowing that none can say unto him, 'what dost thou?'—fattening his herds; shearing his flocks; rejoicing at Christmas; and begetting sons and daughters, until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life! but Devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat!

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified, as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs Burns, until her nine months' race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She too seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as let me have them in the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to shew a set of boys that will do honor to my cares and name! but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor—a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos: your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory, and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart—you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

R. B.

Notwithstanding the poet's timidity about being a parent of daughters, it so happened that on 21st November of this year

Mrs Burns brought him a girl, whom he named “Elizabeth Riddell,” after the amiable wife of his friend Robert Riddell of Friar’s Carse (not, as Chambers has thoughtlessly recorded, after Mrs Walter Riddell of Woodley Park, whose name was Maria). The child however, was not destined to a long life, for she predeceased her father by ten months, and was buried at Mauchline, whither she had been sent in the hope that change of air might prove beneficial.

(³⁵) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, October 1792.]

I HAD been from home, and did not receive your letter until my return the other day.* What shall I say to comfort you, my much valued, much afflicted Friend? I can but grieve with you; consolation I have none to offer, except that which Religion holds out to the children of Affliction—(*children of Affliction!* how just the expression!) and like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see, and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, Madam! who would wish for many years! what is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire, and leave us in a night of misery; like the gloom which blots out the stars one by one, from the face of night, and leaves us without a ray of comfort in the howling waste!

I am interrupted, and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

R. B.

* A letter informing him of the death of her daughter, Mrs Henri. Sep. 15, 1792. Died “at Muges, Asguillon, Mrs Henry, widow of the late James Henry, Esq.”—*Scots May*.

On 14th November 1792, our bard sent to Mr George Thomson the most pathetic of all his songs—

“ Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o’ Montgomerie ;”
(See page 88, Vol. III.)

and on the day immediately preceding he penned and forwarded the following letter, which indicates the dangerous political ground on which Burns was now venturing. On June 20th an armed mob forced into the Tuileries, and insulted the King of France, a riotous procedure which was renewed, with cruel aggravation, on the 10th of August, when the King and Queen took refuge in the House of the National Assembly, from which they were sent to prison in the Temple. The Royal Swiss Guards were massacred, and the King’s authority was formally declared at an end. In the beginning of September, Paris flowed with blood for two days, when state-prisoners and all suspected royalists were butchered in the open streets by the infuriated mob; and on 21st September, France was decreed to be a Republic. The combined armies of Austria and Prussia had taken the field with a view to oppose the progress of the French revolution; but, as yet, Britain offered no interference, and the liberal portion of the community, with their political leaders, hitherto seemed to sympathise in the changes that were being effected in France. Paine’s “Essay on the Rights of Man” was widely circulated, and numerous societies sprung up, adopting the title of “Friends of the People,” to promote “a redress of grievances, and a full, free and equal representation of the people in parliament.” Burns, as a matter of course, sided openly with the reforming party, although it does not appear that he joined any of the political societies, which Government soon took means to suppress. In Edinburgh, a certain “Captain Wm. Johnstone” issued the prospectus of a new periodical which he proposed to edit, named “The Edinburgh Gazetteer,” and Burns addressed a letter to him, intimating his wish to be a subscriber.

(1) TO CAPT. WM. JOHNSTONE, EDINBURGH.

(BLACKIE'S ED., 1846.)

DUMFRIES, 13th November 1792.

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

Go on, Sir ! Lay bare with undaunted heart and steady hand that horrid mass of corruption called politics and state-craft. Dare to draw in their native colours those “calm-thinking villains whom no faith can fire,” whatever be the shibboleth of their pretended party.

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

ROBT. BURNS.

(1) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

[DUMFRIES, Nov. 1792.]

MADAM,—I return you my most sincere thanks for the honor you have done me in presenting me with a copy of your Book.* Be assured I shall ever keep it sacred. * * R. B.

* See page 10 *supra*.

(2) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, Nov. 1792.]

I AM thinking to send my “Address” to some periodical publication, but it has not got your sanction: so pray look over it.

As to Tuesday’s play, let me beg of you, my dear Madam —let me beg of you to give us “The Wonder, a Woman keeps a Secret;” to which please add “The Spoilt Child.” You will highly oblige me by so doing.

Ah, what an enviable creature you are! There now, this cursed gloomy blue-devil day, you are going to a party of choice spirits

—“To play the shapes
Of frolic fancy, and incessant form
Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
Of fleet ideas, never joined before,
Where lively Wit excites to gay surprise;
Or folly-painting Humour, grave himself,
Calls laughter forth, deep shaking every nerve.”

But as you rejoice with them that do rejoice, do also remember to weep with them that weep, and pity your melancholy friend.

R. B.

The “Address” referred to in the above note, was that on “The Rights of Woman,” given at page 90, Vol. III., which was written for Miss Fontenelle, and delivered by her in Dumfries Theatre on her Benefit-night, 26 Nov. 1792. Burns enclosed it to that lady in the following letter.

(1) TO MISS FONTENELLE, DUMFRIES.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MADAM,—In such a bad world as ours, those who add to the scanty sum of our pleasures are positively our bene-

factors. To you, Madam, on our humble Dumfries boards, I have been more indebted for entertainment than ever I was in prouder theatres. Your charms as a woman would insure applause to the most indifferent actress, and your theatrical talents would insure admiration to the plainest figure. This, Madam, is not the unmeaning or insidious compliment of the frivolous or interested ; I pay it from the same honest impulse that the sublime of Nature excites my admiration, or her beauties give me delight.

Will the foregoing lines be of any service to you in your approaching benefit night ? If they will, I shall be prouder of my muse than ever. They are nearly extempore ; I know they have no great merit ; but though they should add but little to the entertainment of the evening, they give me the happiness of an opportunity to declare how much I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

(³⁶) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 6th Dec. 1792.

I SHALL be in Ayrshire, I think, next week ; and if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much esteemed Friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop-house.

Alas, Madam ! how seldom do we meet in this world, that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness ! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a newspaper, that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I, and other acquaintances, little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind, makes us cast an anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty, and shudder with appre-

hension for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different individuals? Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life, more than another? A few years ago, I could have lain down in the dust, "careless of the voice of the morning;" and now, not a few, and these most helpless individuals, would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their "staff and shield." By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition; Mrs B. having given me a fine girl since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora*,

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

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly, alas, too peculiarly apposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind;

"Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
Glad o'er the summer main? The tempest comes,
The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
Lamenting—Heavens! if privileged from trial,
How cheap a thing were virtue!"

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favourite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive, or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favourite one, from his *Alfred*.

"Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life; to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose."

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination; so the notes of the former are ex-

tremely apt to run into one another ; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is Religion ; speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says—

“Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright.”

(See *Letter to same lady*—6th Sept. 1789.)

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t'other sheet. We in this country here have many alarms of the reforming, or rather, the republican spirit of your part of the kingdom. Indeed we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am a “placeman,” you know—a very humble one indeed, Heaven knows, but still so much so as to gag me. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter.

* * * * *

I have taken up the subject in another view ; and the other day, for a pretty actress's benefit night, I wrote an Address, which I will give on the other page, called

“THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN.”

I shall have the honor of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop.

R. B.

(¹) TO MISS MARY PEACOCK, EDINBURGH.

(ALDINE EDITION, 1829.)

DUMFRIES, Dec. 6, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,—I have written so often to you and have got no answer, that I had resolved never to lift up a pen to you again ; but this eventful day, *the sixth of December*,

recalls to my memory such a scene ! Heaven and earth ! when I remember a far-distant person !—but no more of this until I learn from you a proper address, and why my letters have lain by you unanswered, as this is the third I have sent you. The opportunities will be all gone now I fear, of sending over the book I mentioned in my last. Do not write me for a week, as I shall not be at home, but as soon after that as possible—

Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December !
Ance mair I hail thee wi' sorrow and care ;
Dire was the parting thou bidst me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, oh, ne'er to meet mair !

Yours,

R. B.

“Clarinda’s” visit to the West Indies, in hopes to accomplish a re-union with her husband, had proved a failure. She was coldly received, and was mortified to find him in the midst of a plentiful brood of young Creoles who called him father. A medical adviser at same time admonished her that in the present state of her health, she could not long bear the effects of a warm climate. She therefore returned by the same vessel that had brought her, and arrived home in August 1792. It is evident from the preceding letter addressed to the “Mary” of the *Clarinda episode*, that the return of Mrs M’Lehose was yet unknown to Burns. Chambers regards the date of this letter as an instance of the poet’s sensibility to anniversaries, so strongly evidenced in the case of Highland Mary.

About the 12th of December, our bard made a journey into Ayrshire, resting by the way at his friend Bailie Whigham’s Inn at Sanquhar. He seems to have spent a jolly night there, if we are to judge from a song he despatched from thence to his Edinburgh associate, Robert Cleghorn. What his particular errand was does not appear; but he spent four days at Dunlop House, and returned before Christmas to Dumfries, where something not very pleasant was preparing for him.

(4) TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS,
EDINBURGH, ENCLOSING A TIPPLING BALLAD.

(Here first Published).

MY DEAR CLEGHORN,—By our good friend Crosbie I send you a song, just finished this moment. May the —— follow with a blessing. Amen ! ROB^T. BURNS.

SANQUHAR, 12 December 1792.

When Princes and Prelates, and hot-headed zealots
A' Europe had set in a lowe, a lowe,
The poor man lies down, nor envies a crown,
And comforts himself as he dow, dow, dow.

See page 99, Vol. III.

Soon after his return to Dumfries, the poor Bard found, to his dismay, that some malicious person or party had lodged information against him with the Excise authorities, in reference to his political opinions and incautious utterances; and the Dumfries Collector was instructed to inquire into the matter, as appears from the following excited letter to Mr Graham.

(5) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, Decem. 1792.

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

Sir, you are a husband and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones turned adrift into the

* The Commissioners at that period were George Brown, Thomas Wharton, James Stodart, Robert Graham (of Fintry,) and John Grieve, Esqrs.

world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas ! Sir, must I think that such soon will be my lot ! and from the d—d dark insinuations of hellish, groundless Envy too ! I believe, Sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head, and I say that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie ! To the British Constitution, on revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached ! You, Sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, Sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent ; has given you patronage, and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity ; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin ; for at the worst, “Death’s thousand doors stand open :” but, good God ! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage, and wither resolution ! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim ; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due : to these, Sir, permit me to appeal ; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved.

R. B.

The foregoing letter, in the opinion of one of the poet’s fondest admirers—Dr Hately Waddell—is deficient in dignity, and forms, in that respect, a marked contrast with the next letter (10) to the same correspondent, on the same topic.

A.D. 1793.

(37) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, *Dec. 31, 1792.*

DEAR MADAM,—A hurry of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgements to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for that hospitable kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof, four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed.—Alas, my dearest Friend! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures! On my road to Ayrshire, I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued; a man whose days promised to be many; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust!

[*Jan. 2, 1793.*]

I have just received yours of the 30th, and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself, I am better, though not quite free of my complaint. You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned; it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over.

Mr Corbet can be of little service to me at present; at least I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a supervisor, for several years. I must wait the rotation of the list, and there are twenty names before

mine. I might indeed get a job of officiating, where a settled supervisor was ill, or aged; but that hauls me from my family, as I could not remove them on such an uncertainty. Besides, some envious, malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips, as to these unlucky polities; but to you, I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in everything else, I shall show the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate; misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But

* * * * *

(CURRIE, 1800.)

5th January 1793.

You see my hurried life, Madam: I can only command starts of time; however, I am glad of one thing; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham, for the board had made me the subject of their animadversions; and now I have the pleasure of informing you, that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to —— but hold! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall as swearing in this.

Alas! how little do the wantonly or idly officious think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence, or thoughtless blabbings. What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candor, benevolence, generosity, kindness,—in all the charities and all the virtues, between one class of human beings and another! For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of Dunlop, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated, dignified minds—their informed and

polished understandings—what a contrast, when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege—with the soul of the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him, and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife, and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin !

Your cup, my dear Madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I, with great formality, produced my whigmeleerie cup,* and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This roused such an enthusiasm that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it; and by and by, never did your great ancestor lay a *Suthron* more completely to rest, than for a time did your cup my two friends. Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear Friend, and bless me, the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season ! May all good things attend you and yours, wherever they are scattered over the earth !

R. B.

The concluding paragraph of this letter refers to a curious incident that used to be related by the Rev. Mr M'Morine, of Caerlaverock. Burns had met him on the second of January and engaged him to come to his house next forenoon to baptise his recently born infant; and the minister came accordingly, but perhaps at an earlier hour than he was expected. On being shewn into Burns's parlour, he found a party composed of the poet and two companions, who had evidently sat since the previous evening. The description which the clergyman gave of the two visitors corresponds exactly with what Burns hints at in his

* This cup, of cocoa-nut mounted on a stalk and rimmed with silver, fell into the possession of the late Archibald Hastie, Esq., M.P. for Paisley the owner also of the poet's punch-bowl of Inverary marble, now in the British Museum, London.

account of the “whigmeleerie cup.” The poet seemed taken by surprise, but in perfect possession of himself, and he very quickly put matters in decent order for the performance of the baptismal ceremony. Chambers, whose narration we borrow, remarks that “Mr M’Morine, though he clung to Burns’s friendship when others of the district clergymen looked coldly on him, used to relate the story with an unfavourable leaning towards the poet. He was shocked by the idea of so prolonged a debauch, and thought meanly of the appearance of the two guests. But he was not aware that there was a special feeling about the *Wallace Cup* which had operated in promoting the conviviality, not to speak of the recognised licence of the New-year season, and in Burns’s eyes, his companions were “two worthy fellows.”

(¹⁰) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

DUMFRIES, 5th Jan. 1793.

SIR,—I am this moment honored with your letter: with what feelings I received this other instance of your goodness, I shall not pretend to describe.

Now to the charges which malice and misrepresentation have brought against me. It has been said, it seems, that I not only belong to, but head a disaffected party in this place. I know of no party in this place, either Republican or Reform, except an old party of Burgh-reform, with which I never had anything to do. Individuals, both republican and reform, we have, though not many of either: but if they have associated, it is more than I have the least knowledge of, and if there exists such an association, it must consist of such obscure, nameless beings, as precludes any possibility of my being known to them, or they to me.

I was in the playhouse one night when *CA IRA* was

called for. I was in the middle of the pit, and from the pit the clamour arose. One or two individuals, with whom I occasionally associate, were of the party, but I neither knew of the plot, nor joined in the plot, nor ever opened my lips either to hiss or huzza *that*, or any other political tune whatever. I looked on myself as far too obscure a man to have any weight in quelling a riot, and at the same time, as a character of higher respectability than to yell to the howlings of a rabble. This was the conduct of all the first characters in the place; and these characters know, and will avow, that such was my conduct.*

I never uttered any invectives against the king. His private worth it is altogether impossible that such a man as I can appreciate; but in his public capacity I always revered, and always will, with the soundest loyalty, revere the monarch of GREAT BRITAIN, as (to speak in Masonic) the sacred KEYSTONE of OUR ROYAL ARCH CONSTITUTION.

As to REFORM PRINCIPLES, I look upon the British Constitution, as settled at the Revolution, to be the most glorious Constitution on earth, or that perhaps the wit of man can frame; at the same time, I think—and you know

* It is pleasant to find the poet so candidly recording this incident, which has so often, since then, been told by unfavourable reporters with undue exaggeration. The reader may be amused with the following, which was sent to Allan Cunningham by Mr Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, and has not yet appeared in print. But as Mr Sharpe says nothing about “*Cà Ira*,” he may refer to a different incident.

“I think you do human nature injustice as to malicious people entrapping Burns in his political conversations; for I know that he was most woefully indiscreet on that point, and I remember one proof. We were at the play in Dumfries, in October 1792—the Caledonian Hunt being then in the town. The play was ‘As you like it’; Miss Fontenelle, *Rosalind*, when ‘God save the King’ was called for and sung; we all stood up uncovered, but Burns sat still in the middle of the pit with his hat on his head. There was a great tumult, with shouts of ‘Turn him out!—shame, Burns,’ &c., which continu’d a good while. At last he was either expelled or forced to take off his hat—I forget which; nor can my mother remember. This silly conduct all sensible persons condemned.”

what high and distinguished characters have for some time thought so—that we have a good deal deviated from the original principles of that Constitution; particularly, that an alarming system of corruption has pervaded the connexion between the Executive power and the House of Commons. This is the truth, and the whole truth, of my Reform opinions, which, before I was aware of the complexion of these innovating times, I, too unguardedly (now I see it) sported with; but henceforth I seal up my lips. However, I never dictated to, corresponded with, or had the least connexion with any political association whatever—except that when the magistrates and principal inhabitants of this town met to declare their attachment to the Constitution, and their abhorrence of riot, which declaration you would see in the papers, I—as I thought my duty as a subject at large, and a citizen in particular, called upon me—subscribed the same declaratory creed.

Of Johnstone, the publisher of the "*Edinburgh Gazetteer*," I know nothing. One evening, in company with four or five friends, we met with his *Prospectus*, which we thought manly and independent; and I wrote to him ordering his paper for us. If you think that I act improperly in allowing his paper to come addressed to me, I shall immediately countermand it. I never, so judge me God! wrote a line of prose for the *Gazetteer* in my life. An occasional address, spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her benefit night here, which I called "*The Rights of Woman*," I sent to the *Gazetteer*, as also some extempore stanzas on the commemoration of Thomson; both of these I will subjoin for your perusal. You will see they have nothing whatever to do with politics. At the time when I sent Johnstone one of these poems (but which one I do not remember), I enclosed, at the request of my warm and worthy friend, Robert Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell, a prose essay signed *Cato*, written by him, and

addressed to the delegates for County Reform, of which he was one for this County. With the merits or demerits of that essay, I have nothing to do, farther than transmitting it in the same frank, which frank he procured me.

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

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

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

If, Sir, I have been so fortunate as to do away with these misapprehensions of my conduct and character, I shall, with the confidence which you were wont to allow me, apply to your goodness on every opening in the way of business where I think I with propriety may offer myself—An instance that occurs just now. Mr M'Farlane, Supervisor of the Galloway district, is and has been for sometime very ill. I spoke to Mr Mitchell as to his wishes to forward my appli-

* Savoy was annexed to France, 27th November 1792.

cation for the job ; but though he expressed, and ever does express, every kindness for me, he hesitates, in hopes that the disease may be of short continuance. However, as it seems to be a paralytic affection, I fear that it may be some time ere he can take charge of so extended a district. There is a great deal of fatigue and very little business in the district—two things suitable enough to my hardy constitution, and inexperience in that line of life.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your ever grateful, and as highly obliged, humble servant,

ROB^T BURNS.

TO MRS GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN,*

An Occasional Address, spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her Benefit night, 26 Nov^r. 1792.

See page 90, Vol. III.

To Mrs Graham of Fintry, this little Poem, written in haste on the spur of the occasion, and therefore inaccurate, but a sincere compliment to that sex, the *most amiable of the works of God*, is most respectfully presented by

THE AUTHOR.

DUMFRIES, 5 Jan. 1793.

* The title and subject adopted by Burns in this Theatrical Address are intimately associated with the name of Mary Wollstonecraft, an interesting authoress, cotemporary with Burns, whose life and writings are still remembered with respect. Like Clarinda, she was born in the same year with our poet, and like her was a strange compound of religious enthusiasm and romantic devotion to the object of her fancy. At the age of thirty-two, in the same year that Paine produced his “Rights of Man,” she published “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.” The book is an appeal against Rousseau’s theory that women were made for the pleasure of man, and that their education should fit them to be our mistresses rather than our companions. It protests against the false gallantries which lower

At this unhappy period, the bard looked to his Muse for consolation. Jean Lorimer, about the beginning of 1793, came to reside in Dumfries, and the spell of her charms was soon thrown over him. During this month he produced the beautiful songs "Gala Water," "Poortith Cauld," and "Lord Gregory." Above all, on the morning of his own Birthday, the following sweet sonnet was suggested to him on hearing a thrush utter its melting notes amid the bleakness of winter.

Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough,

Sing on, sweet bard, I listen to thy strain ;

See aged Winter, 'mid his surly reign,

At thy blythe carol clears his furrow'd brow.

So, in lone Poverty's dominion drear,

Sits meek Content with light unanxious heart ;

Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,

Nor asks if they bring ought to hope or fear.

I thank thee, Author of this opening day !

Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon orient skies !

Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys—

What Wealth could neither give nor take away !

Yet come, thou child of Poverty and care,

The mite high Heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I'll share.

We may now consider that the "political blast which threatened our Bard's welfare is overblown," and everything "set to rights with the Board;" even under the cruel impediment that "all hopes of his getting officially forward are blasted." The following amusing letter from his old friend William Nicol of the High School, Edinburgh, will indicate what kind of rumours had

women under pretext of raising them, and claims for them a perfect social and political equality with man. She had hitherto lived a blameless single life; but, attracted by the inviting aspect of the dawn of the French Revolution, she removed from London to Paris, where, in the spring of 1793, she attached herself to, and lived with, Gilbert Imlay, an American, who eventually turned out to be a heartless fellow. He deserted her after the birth of a child, and returning to London, she attempted to drown herself about the close of 1795. She was rescued, and six months thereafter became the wife of the eccentric William Godwin. On 10th September 1797 she died in giving birth to a daughter, who afterwards became the wife of the poet Shelley, and survived to 1851.

reached "the buckish tradesmen and stately patricians" of the capital about the affair.

MR WILLIAM NICOL TO ROBERT BURNS.

(*Here first published.*)*

EDINBURGH, 10th February 1793.

DEAR CHRISTLESS BOBBIE,—What is become of thee? Has the Devil flown off with thee, as the gled does with a bird? If he should do so there is little matter, if the reports concerning thy *imprudence* are true. What concerns it thee whether the lousy Dumfriesian fiddlers play "Cà Ira," or "God save the King"? Suppose you *had* an aversion to the King, you could not, as a gentleman, wish God to use him worse than he has done. The infliction of idiocy is no sign of Friendship, or Love; and I am sure damnation is a matter far beyond your wishes or ideas. But reports of this kind are only the insidious suggestions of ill-minded persons; for your good sense will ever point out to you, as well as to me, a bright model of political conduct, who flourished in the victorious reign of Queen Anne, viz., the Vicar of Bray, who, during the convulsions of Great Britain which were without any former example, saw eight reigns, in perfect security; because he remembered that precept of the *sensible, shrewd, temporising* Apostle, "We ought not to resist the Higher Powers."

You will think I have gotten a pension from the Government; but I assure you, no such a thing has been offered me. In this respect my vanity prompts me to say, they have not been so *wise* as I would have wished them to be;

* We print this letter in the type of the text, because Burns inscribed it in his own holograph, among his own letters in the Glenriddell collection. The reader has here an opportunity to judge of the correctness of Lockhart's estimate of Nicol's letters, quoted in our footnote at page 243, Vol. IV.

for I think their Honors have often employed as impotent scribblers.

Enough of Politics. What is become of Mrs Burns and the dear bairns ? How is my Willie ? Tell her, though I do not write often my best wishes shall ever attend her and the family. My wife, who is in a high devotional fit this evening, wishes that she and her children may be reckoned the favorites of the Lord, and numbered with the elect. She indeed leaves your honor and me to shift for ourselves ; as, so far as she can judge from the criteria laid down in Guthrie's "Trial of a Saving Interest" that both you and I are stamped with the marks of Reprobation.

May all the curses from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation light, materially and effectually, on thy enemies ; and may all the blessings of the Covenant be eminently exemplified in thy person, to the glory of a forgiving Deity !

Here, or elsewhere, I am always thine sincerely,

WILL^M. NICOL.

The above letter is introduced under the following heading :— "From my worthy friend, Mr Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh, alluding to some temeraire conduct of mine, in the political opinions of the day." Burns made the following reply, which has hitherto been misplaced in the chronology of our author's correspondence.

(⁶) TO MR WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800, in part, and here completed).

DUMFRIES, 20th Feb. 1793.

O THOU, wisest among the Wise, meridian blaze of Prudence, full-moon of Discretion, and chief of many Counsellors ! How infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-

headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units, up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions ! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration descending from the holy and undefiled Priesthood against the head of the Unrighteous,—may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that father of Proverbs and master of Maxims, that antipode of Folly, and magnate among the Sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol ! Amen ! Amen ! Yea, so be it !

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

Thou mirror of Purity, when shall the elfin-lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers !—As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and

* The reference here is to a small estate called Laggan, in the parish of Glencairn, Dumfriesshire, near Maxwellton, bought by Nicol in 1790.

thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness, and the pleasures of darkness, pollute the sacred flame of thy sky-descended and heavenward desires ; never did the vapours of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine were the tenor of my life, like thine the tenor of my conversation ! then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness ! Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid. May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for—O thou lamp of Wisdom and mirror of Morality !

Thy devoted slave,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(¹⁰) TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.,
EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)*

DUMFRIES, 20th Feb. 1793.

WHAT are you doing ? What hurry have you got on your head, my dear Cunningham, that I have not heard from you ? Are you deeply engaged in the mazes of the law, the mysteries of love, or in the profound wisdom of modern politics ?—Curse on the word which ended the period !

Quere.—What is Politics ?

Answer.—Politics is a science wherewith, by means of nefarious cunning and hypocritical pretence, we govern civil politics for the emolument of ourselves and adherents.

Quere.—What is a Minister ?

Answer.—A Minister is an unprincipled fellow, who, by the influence of hereditary or acquired wealth—by superior

* From the holograph in possession of the late James Cunningham, Esq., W.S., son of the poet's correspondent. The father died in 1812, and the son in 1878.

abilities, or by a lucky conjuncture of circumstances, obtains a principal place in the administration of the affairs of government.

Quere.—What is a Patriot?

Answer.—A Patriot is an individual exactly of the same description as a Minister, only out of place.

I am interrupted in my catechism, and am returned at a late hour, just to subscribe my name, to put you in mind that there is a forgotten friend of yours of that name, still in the land of the living, though I can hardly say, “in the place of hope.”

I made the following Sonnet the other day, which has been so lucky as to obtain the approbation of no ordinary judge—our friend Syme.

“Sonnet on hearing a thrush in a morning walk,
25th January, 1793.”

Adieu,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(⁶) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, Feb. 1793.]

MADAM,—You were so very good as to promise me to honor my friend with your presence on his benefit night. That night is fixed for Friday first; the play a most interesting one—“The way to keep him.” I have the pleasure to know Mr G. very well. His merit as an actor is generally acknowledged. He has genius and worth which would do honor to patronage: he is a poor and modest man; claims which, from their very *silence*, have the more forcible power on the generous heart. Alas, for pity! that through the indolence of those who have the good things of life in their gift, too often does brazen-fronted importunity snatch that boon,

the rightful due of retiring humble want ! Of all the qualities we assign to the Author and Director of Nature, by far the most enviable is—to be able “to wipe away all tears from all eyes.” O what insignificant, sordid wretches are they, however chance may have loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent mausoleums, with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor, honest heart happy !

But I crave your pardon, Madam ; I came to beg, not to preach,

R. B.

(³) TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ., BOOKSELLER.

(*Here first published.*)*

DUMFRIES, 28th Feb. 1793.

SIR,—I understand that my book is published, I beg that you will, as soon as possible, send me twenty copies of it. As I mean to present them among a few Great Folk whom I respect, and a few Little Folk whom I love ; these twenty will not interfere with your sale. If you have not twenty copies ready, send me any number you can. It will confer a particular obligation to let me have them by first carrier.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient, humble servant,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(⁴⁷) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(CLAR. CORRES., 1843, in part, and here completed.)

DUMFRIES, March 1793.

I SUPPOSE, my dear Madam, that by your neglecting to inform me of your arrival in Europe—a circumstance that

* From the holograph of the poet, in possession of Mr Creech's relatives.

could not be indifferent to me, as indeed no occurrence relating to you can—you meant to leave me to guess and gather that a correspondence I once had the honor and felicity to enjoy, is to be no more. Alas ! what heavy-laden sounds are these—“No more !” The wretch who has never tasted pleasure, has never known woe ; what drives the soul to madness is the recollection of joys that are “no more !” But this is not language to the world ; they do not understand it. But come, ye few—the children of Feeling and Sentiment ! ye whose trembling bosom-chords ache to unutterable anguish, as recollection gushes on the heart !—ye who are capable of an attachment, keen as the arrow of Death, and strong as the vigour of Immortal Being—come ! and your ears shall drink a tale—but hush ! I must not, cannot tell it : agony is in the recollection, and frenzy in the recital !

But Madam, to leave the paths that lead to madness, I congratulate your friends on your return ; and I hope that the precious health, which Miss Peacock tells me is so much injured, is restored, or restoring. There is a fatality attends Miss Peacock’s correspondence and mine. Two of my letters, it seems, she never received ; and her last, which came when I was in Ayrshire, was unfortunately mislaid, and only found about ten days or a fortnight ago, on removing a desk of drawers.

I present you a book :* may I hope you will accept of it. I daresay you will have brought your books with you. The fourth volume of the Scots Songs is published ; I will presume to send it you. Shall I hear from you ? But first hear me. No cold language—no prudential documents ; I despise advice, and scorn control. If you are not to write such language, such sentiments as you know I shall wish, shall delight to receive, I conjure you, by wounded pride !

* A copy of the new edition of his poems, then just published.

by ruined peace ! by frantic, disappointed passion ! by all the many ills that constitute that sum of human woes, a broken heart ! ! ! —to me be silent for ever. If ever you insult me with the unfeeling apophthegms of cold-blooded caution, may all the—but hold ! a fiend could not breathe a malevolent wish on the head of my angel ! Mind my request—If you send me a page baptised in the font of sanctimonious prudence, by heaven, earth, and hell, I will tear it to atoms ! Adieu ; may all good things attend you.

B.

Burns inserted the foregoing extravagant composition in the volume of his MS. Letters, transcribed for his friend Mr Riddell, where it is placed near the close of the book. It is headed “Letter to a Lady, never scrolled, but copied from the original Letter,” and at the end he appends a note thus :—“I need scarcely remark that the foregoing was the fustian rant of enthusiastic youth.” The poet was *thirty-four years old* at the date of that letter ; and during his three remaining years of life, he wrote to her only once more.

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

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL'S ED., 1835.)

DUMFRIES, *March 1793.*

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

THE AUTHOR.

(¹) TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN,*
WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, *March 1793.*

MY LORD,—When you cast your eye on the name at the bottom of this letter, and on the title page of the book I do myself the honor to send your Lordship, a more pleasurable feeling than my vanity tells me that it must be a name not entirely unknown to you. The generous patronage of your late illustrious brother found me in the utmost obscurity: he introduced my rustic muse to the partiality of my country; and to him I owe all. My sense of his goodness, and the anguish of my soul at losing my truly noble protector and friend, I have endeavoured to express in a poem to his memory, which I have now published. This edition is just from the press; and in my gratitude to the dead and my respect for the living (Fame belies you, my Lord, if you possess not the same dignity of man, which was your noble brother's characteristic feature), I had destined a copy for the Earl of Glencairn. I learnt just now that you are in town: allow me to present it you.

I know, my Lord, such is the vile, venal contagion which pervades the whole world of letters, that professions of respect from an author, particularly from a Poet to a Lord, are more than suspicious. I claim my by-past conduct, and my feelings at this moment, as exceptions to the too just conclusion. Exalted as are the honors of your Lordship's name, and unnoted as is the obscurity of mine, with the uprightness of an honest man I come before your Lordship, with an offering, however humble—'tis all I have to give—

* John, 15th Earl; see notice of him, page 361, Vol. V.

of my grateful respect ; and to beg of you, my Lord--'tis all I have to ask of you—that you will do me the honor to accept of it.

I have the honor to be, your Lordship's humble servant,
ROB^T. BURNS.

(³) TO MRS GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

DUMFRIES, *March 1793.*

It is probable, Madam, that this page may be read when the hand that now writes it shall be mouldering in the dust : may it then bear witness that I present you these volumes as a tribute of gratitude on my part ardent and sincere, as your and Mr Graham's goodness to me has been generous and noble ! May every child of yours, in the hour of need, find such a friend as I shall teach every child of mine, that their father found in you ! ROB^T. BURNS.

(⁴) TO ROBT. RIDDELL, ESQ., OF GLENRIDDELL,

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS,

(*Here first published.*)

DUMFRIES, *March 1793.*

WHEN you and I, my dear Sir, have passed that bourne whence no traveller returns, should these volumes survive us, I wish the future reader of this page to be informed that they are the pledge of Friendship, ardent and grateful on my part, as it was kind and generous on yours. That Enjoyment may mark your days, and Pleasure number your

years, is the earnest prayer of, my dear Sir,—Your much indebted Friend,

THE AUTHOR.

Among the documents which passed through the hands of Dr. Currie, but were not used by him in his edition of the “Life and Works of Burns,” was a letter addressed to the poet at this period by Miss Deborah Duff Davies—the “Bonie wee Thing” of his well-known lyric—who had removed to France for the sake of its milder climate. We nowhere find the date of her death recorded, but apparently she did not outlive Burns. The “Mr Gordon” mentioned in her letter was the Hon. Adam Gordon, who, after the lady’s decease, sent the following lines to Dr. Maxwell of Dumfries, as her epitaph:—

“The boisterous world was never meant for thee,
Fair bud of virtuous sensibility !
On Earth no longer God would let her stay,
And fondly called her to Himself away :
The mandate she obeyed, well satisfied,
And—loved by all, by all lamented—died.”

MISS DEBORAH D. DAVIES TO ROBERT BURNS.

(Here first published.)

SIR,—How can I return you thanks for one favour, when I mean to solicit another?—which is, that you will be so indulgent as to send me a copy of the song you shewed to me at Woodley Park—copied by your own hand, to render it more valuable. I might get it from the Collection,* but that is not what I wish; as you flattered me by saying that you had some faint idea of my insignificant person when you wrote it. You will laugh at my credulity, as it might have been written on one more worthy of the encomiums you have bestowed in it upon the person you had in view. If this is the case, I still think it has so much merit and simplicity in it, and the thoughts altogether so new, that I cannot help admiring it.

* Johnson’s Museum, song 341, or “Lovely Davies,” song 349.

And now give me leave to thank you for the favours I this morning received by Mr Gordon, which I shall carefully keep in remembrance, as a flattering proof of your attention that can never be obliterated from the mind of D. D. DAVIES.

FONTAINBLEAU, *March 14, 1793.*

The foregoing has come into the publisher's hands since our note regarding that interesting lady at page 344, Vol. II., was printed, and even since the Bard's letters to her at pp. 385, 387, Vol. V. were sent to press. Accompanying the lady's letter is the Epitaph in the handwriting of Mr Gordon, together with a lock of brown hair, supposed to be that of "Lovely Davies."

(¹) TO MISS BENSON, YORK.*

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, *21st of March 1793.*

MADAM,—Among many things for which I envy those hale long-lived old fellows before the flood, is this in particular, that when they met with anybody after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now in this short, stormy winter day of our fleeting existence, when you now and then, in the Chapter of Accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you, that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as this miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it, that if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill-run of the chances shall be so against you, that in the overtakings, turnings and jostlings of life, pop! at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you, and

* Afterwards Mrs Basil Montague.

will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's repose. As I am a sturdy believer in the Powers of darkness, I take these to be the doings of that old author of mischief, the Devil. It is well-known that he has some kind of short-hand way of taking down our thoughts, and I make no doubt that he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments respecting Miss Benson ; how much I admired her abilities and valued her worth, and how very fortunate I thought myself in her acquaintance. For this last reason, my dear Madam, I must entertain no hopes of the very great pleasure of meeting with you again.

Miss Hamilton* tells me that she is sending a packet to you, and I beg leave to send you the enclosed Sonnet,† though, to tell you the real truth, the sonnet is a mere pretence, that I may have the opportunity of declaring with how much respectful esteem I have the honor to be, &c.,

R. B.

(¹) TO THE HON. THE LORD PROVOST, BAILIES,
AND TOWN COUNCIL OF DUMFRIES.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

March 1793.

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,—The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various

* Daughter of Captain Hamilton, his landlord, a connexion of Mr Craik of Arbigland, *see page 320, Vol. V.* It was at Arbigland that the poet met with Miss Benson, who thus recorded a reminiscence of that meeting:—“I dined with Mr Burns at Arbigland ; he was witty, drank as others drank, and was long in coming to the tea-table. It was then the fashion for young ladies to be busy with something—I was working a flower, and asked the poet if he would do a bit of my work. ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘you think my hand is unsteady with wine, I cannot work a flower, Madam, but I can thread a needle.’ He pulled the thread from the needle, and re-threaded it in a moment—‘Can a tipsy man do that?’ He talked to me of his children, particularly his eldest boy, whom he praised as a lad of promise. ‘And yet, Madam,’ he said with a sarcastic glance, ‘I hope he will turn out a glorious blockhead, and so make his fortune.’”

† The Sonnet was probably that on his own birthday, 1793.

departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school-fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me.

Some years ago your good town did me the honor of making me an Honorary Burgess.—Will your honors allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on the footing of a real Freeman of the Town, in the schools ?

That I may not appear altogether unworthy of this favor, allow me to state to you some little services I have lately done to a branch of your revenue. The two-pennies exigible on foreign ale vended within your limits—in this rather neglected article of your income I am ready to shew that, within these few weeks, my exertions have secured for you of those duties nearly the sum of Ten Pounds; and in this too, I was the only one of the gentlemen of the Excise (except Mr Mitchell, whom *you pay* for his trouble) who took the least concern in the business.*

If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where, in that or any other way, I can officially serve you; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honor to be,

My Lord and Gentlemen, your devoted, humble serv^t.

ROB^T. BURNS.

From the poet's holograph of the above, now in the British Museum, London, we give a fuller and more accurate copy of this

* This paragraph, which perhaps is not in the best of taste, had been omitted by previous editors till Dr Waddell inserted it. Our collation has been made from the original MS. in the British Museum, London.

document than has hitherto been published. The prayer of the petition was immediately granted, and the poet's eldest boy Robert, then seven years old, was received into the Academy or Grammar School of the burgh ; and he, along with one or two of his brothers, was in the way of receiving an excellent education, at small expense, when their distinguished father died. The principal teacher in the school was Mr White, a man locally eminent as a mathematician. Mr James Gray (afterwards of the High School, Edinburgh), was appointed Rector of the Academy early in the following year, and both in Peterkin's and Gilbert Burns's editions of the poet's works, eloquent letters, giving particulars of his intercourse with Burns and his family, are inserted in the Appendices.

TO MR WHITE, TEACHER, DUMFRIES ACADEMY,
WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(*Here first printed.*)

April 1793.

Mr White will accept of this Book as a mark of the most sincere Friendship from a man who has ever had too much respect for his Friends, and too much contempt for his enemies, to flatter either the one or the other,

THE AUTHOR.

(¹) TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ., OF DALSWINTON,
WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, April 1793.

SIR,—My poems having just come out in another edition, will you do me the honor to accept of a copy ? A mark of my gratitude to you, as a gentleman to whose goodness I have been much indebted ; of my respect for you, as a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country ; and of my venera-

tion for you, as a man, whose benevolence of heart does honor to human nature.

There *was* a time, Sir, when I was your dependant ; this language *then* would have been like the vile incense of flattery—I could not have used it. Now that that connexion is at an end, do me the honor to accept of this *honest* tribute of respect from, Sir, your much indebted, humble servant,

ROB^T. BURNS.

Notwithstanding his assertion in January of this year to Mrs Dunlop, that henceforth he would “set a seal on his lips as to these unlucky politics,” Burns was by no means a silent observer of the progress of events in France. When Dumourier, after achieving great victories over the armed enemies of the Republic, suddenly deserted the French army, on April 5, 1793, some person in the poet’s hearing having expressed joy over that renegade step, as a triumph to the cause of order, Burns immediately chanted his well-known parody of “Robin Adair,” improvised on the spot :—

“ You ‘re welcome to Despots, Dumourier.”

See page 125, Vol. III.

John Francis Erskine, Esq., of Mar, grandson of the rebel earl of 1715, and recently restored to his ancestral privileges, having been told that Burns was placed under a species of official persecution in consequence of the liberality of his opinions, put himself in communication with Mr Riddell of Glenriddell, expressing his sympathy for the poet, and suggesting means to relieve him from his thraldom. This brought forth a grateful letter from Burns addressed to Mr Erskine, characterised by Dr Currie as displaying “great elevation of sentiment,” in which, while giving an account of the whole transaction, he “defends himself from the imputation of disloyalty on the one hand, and from the charge of having made unworthy submissions on the other hand, for the sake of his office.” We take the text of that letter from the Glenriddell MSS., where the author has headed it with the following Preface, hitherto unpublished.

(1) TO JOHN FRANCIS ERSKINE, ESQ., OF MAR.

(CURRIE and CROMEK, in part, and here completed.)

In the year 1792-93, when Royalist and Jacobin had set all Britain by the ears—because I unguardedly, rather under the temptation of being witty than disaffected, had declared my sentiments in favor of Parliamentary Reform, in the manner of that time, I was accused to the Board of Excise of being a Republican, and was very near being turned adrift in the wide world on that account, Mr Erskine of Mar, a *gentleman* indeed, wrote to my friend Glenriddell to know if I was really out of place on account of my political principles, and if so, he proposed a subscription among the friends of Liberty for me, which he offered to head, that I might be no pecuniary loser by my political Integrity. This was the more generous, as I had not the honor of being known to Mr Erskine.* I wrote to him as follows :—

DUMFRIES, 13th April, 1793.

SIR,—Degenerate as human nature is said to be—and in many instances worthless and unprincipled it certainly is—still there are bright examples to the contrary ; examples that, even in the eyes of superior beings, must shied a lustre on the name of man.

Such an example have I now before me, when you, Sir, came forward to patronize and befriend a distant, obscure stranger, merely because poverty had made him helpless, and his British hardihood of mind had provoked the arbitrary wantonness of power. My much esteemed friend, Mr Riddell of Glenriddell, has just read me a paragraph of a letter he had from you. Accept, Sir, of the silent throb

* Died at Edinburgh, Aug. 21, 1825, the Right Hon. John Francis Erskine, Earl of Mar.—*Scots Mag.*

of gratitude ! for words would but mock the emotions of my soul.

You have been misinformed as to my final dismissal from the Excise ; I am still in the service.—Indeed, but for the exertions of a gentleman who must be known to you, Mr Graham of Fintry, a gentleman who has ever been my warm and generous friend, I had, without so much as a hearing, or the smallest previous intimation, been turned adrift, with my helpless family, to all the horrors of want. Had I had any other resource, probably I might have saved them the trouble of a dismissal ; but the little money I gained by my publication is, almost every guinea, embarked to save from ruin an only brother, who, though one of the worthiest, is by no means one of the most fortunate of men.

In my defence to their accusations, I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I abjured the idea !—That a CONSTITUTION which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory,—that, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally, or as an author, in the present business of REFORM ; but that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious CONSTITUTION ; and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended.—Some such sentiments as these I stated in a letter to my generous patron, Mr Graham, which he laid before the Board at large ; where, it seems, my last remark gave great offence ; and one of our supervisors-general, a Mr Corbet, was instructed to enquire on the spot, into my conduct, and to

document me,—“that *my* business was to *act*, not to *think* ; and that whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be silent and obedient.”

Mr Corbet was likewise my steady friend ; so between Mr Graham and him, I have been partly forgiven : only, I understand that all hopes of my getting officially forward are blasted.

Now, Sir, to the business in which I would more immediately interest you. The partiality of my countrymen has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a Character to support. In the Poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I trust will be found in the Man. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and children, have pointed out as the eligible, and indeed, the only eligible line of life for me, my present occupation. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern ; and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of the degrading epithets that Malice or Misrepresentation may affix to my name. I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney magazine scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exulting in his hireling paragraphs that “Burns, notwithstanding the fanfaronade of Independence to be found in his works, and after having been held forth to public view and to public estimation as a man of some genius; yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, he dwindled into a paltry Exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the vilest of mankind.”

In your illustrious hands, Sir, permit me to lodge my strong disavowal, and defiance of these slanderous falsehoods. Burns was a poor man from birth, and an exciseman by necessity ; but I will say it ! the sterling of his honest worth no poverty could debase, and his independent British

mind, oppression might bend, but could not subdue. Have not I, to me, a more precious stake in my country's welfare than the richest dukedom in it?—I have a large family of children, and the probability of more. I have three sons, who, I see already, have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES.—Can I look tamely on, and see any machination to wrest from them the birthright of my boys—the little independent BRITONS, in whose veins runs my own blood?—No! I will not! should my heart's blood stream around my attempt to defend it!

Does any man tell me, that my feeble efforts can be of no service, and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concerns of a people? I tell him, that it is on such individuals as I that, for the hand of support and the eye of intelligence, a nation has to rest. The uniformed MOB may swell a nation's bulk; and the titled, tinsel, courtly throng may be its feathered ornament; but the number of those who are elevated enough in life to reason and to reflect, and yet low enough to keep clear of the venal contagion of a court!—these are a nation's strength.

One small request more—when you have honored this letter with a perusal, please commit it to the flames. BURNS, in whose behalf you have so generously interested yourself, I have here in his native colours drawn as he is; but should any of the people in whose hands is the very bread he eats get the least knowledge of the picture, it would ruin the poor BARD for ever!

My poems having just come out in another edition, I beg leave to present you with a copy, as a small mark of that high esteem and ardent gratitude, with which I have the honor to be, Sir, your deeply indebted, and ever devoted humble servant,

Rob^t. BURNS.

On the first of February preceding, the French Convention had declared war against this nation,—just ten days after they had beheaded the unfortunate king of France ; and from that time more or less during upwards of twenty years, we were embroiled in a martial struggle with that country both by sea and land. In the month of April, our poet composed one of his tenderest ballads:—“The Sodger’s Return,” hopefully looking forward to a day he did not live to see—

“ When wild War’s deadly blast is blawn,
And gentle Peace returning.”

The pathetic picture in Professor Fergusson’s house which brought the tear into his eye in presence of young Walter Scott, recurred to his thoughts when he framed the couplet which completes the opening stanza of the ballad :—

“ Wi’ mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning.”

(¹³) MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

(CHAMBERS, 1852, in part, and here completed).*

DUMFRIES, *April* 1793.

I would have written you sooner, my dear Friend ; but as our Treasurer was out of town until to-day, I did not wish to write except I could write to the purpose. To-day, I believe, our T. remits you the cash ; on Monday next our committee meet, when you shall have a new order.

I hope and trust that this unlucky blast which has overturned so many (and many worthy characters who, four months ago, little dreaded any such thing), will spare my Friend.

Oh ! may the wrath and curse of all mankind haunt and harass these turbulent, unprincipled miscreants who have involved a People in this ruinous business !

* From the original MS., now possessed by George Wilson, Esq., of Dalmarnock.

I have not a moment more. Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee ! And the wretch whose envious malice would injure thee, may the Giver of every good and perfect gift say unto him—"Thou shalt not prosper !"

R. B.

(⁴) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

FRIDAY, Noon, [April 1793.]

* * * * I must tell you that all the haberdashers here are on the alarm as to the necessary article of French gloves. You must know that French gloves are contraband goods, and expressly forbidden by the laws of this wisely-governed realm of ours. A satirist would say this is the reason why the ladies are so fond of them ; but I, who have not one grain of *gull* in my composition, shall allege that it is the patriotism of the dear goddess of man's idolatry that makes them so fond of dress from the land of liberty and equality.

. I have discovered one haberdasher who, at my request, will clothe your fair hands as they ought to be, to keep them from being profaned by the rude gaze of the gloating eye, or (horrid !) by the unhallowed lips of that Satyr man.

So much for this important matter. I have received a long letter from Mr Thomson, who presides over the publication of Scotch music, &c., which I mentioned to you. Would you honor the publication with a song from you ? I have just sent him a new song to "The last time I came o'er the moor ;" * but I don't know if I have succeeded. I enclose it for your strictures. *Mary* was the name I intended my heroine to bear, but I altered it into your ladyship's as being infinitely more musical R. B.

* See page 127, Vol. III.

(5) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

[April 1793.]

ON Monday, my dear Madam, I shall most certainly do myself the honor of waiting on you, whether the Muses will wait on me is, I fear, dubious. Please accept a new song which I have this moment received from Urbani. It is a trifling present, but "Give all thou can'st." R. B.

(6) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[April 1793.]

I HAVE often told you, my dear friend, that you had a spiece of caprice in your composition, and you have as often disavowed it; even perhaps while your opinions were, at the moment, irrefragably proving it. Could *anything* estrange me from a friend such as you? No! To-morrow I shall have the honor of waiting on you.

Farewell, thou first of friends, and most accomplished of women; even with all thy little caprices! R. B.

(15) TO ROBERT AINSLIE, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[April 26th, 1793.]

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

I received your last, and was much entertained with it; but I will not at this time, or at any other time, answer it.

—Answer a letter ! I never could answer a letter in my life !—I have written many a letter in return for letters I have received ; but then—they were original matter—spurtaway ! zig, here ; zag, there ; as if the devil that, my grannie (an old woman indeed !) often told me, rode on Will-o'-wisp, or, in her more classic phrase, SPUNKIE, were looking over my elbow.—Happy thought that idea has engendered in my head ! SPUNKIE,—thou shalt henceforth be my symbol, signature, and tutelary genius ! Like thee, hap-step-and-lowp, here-awa-there-awa, higglety, pigglety, pell-mell, hither-and-yon, ram-stam, happy-go-lucky, up tails-a'-by-the-light-o'-the-moon ; has been, is, and shall be, my progress through the mosses and moors of this vile, bleak, barren wilderness of a life of ours.

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

Spunkie's wanderings could not copied be ;
Amid these perils none durst walk but he—*

* * * * *

* In 1834 the Ettrick Shepherd made a note here, thus :—“What a strange hipperty-skipperty letter this is to Ainslie ! that is to say, to Ainslie as we know him now—the author of “The Father’s Gift,” and many beautiful little religious works ! Ainslie, since ever I knew him, —and that is considerably upwards of twenty years, has been much the same—a downright honest, sleepy-headed, kind-hearted gentleman, his good humour never failing him, not even in his sleep, with which he generally favours the company once or twice in an evening. But even then, there is a benevolence in his countenance, that beams more intensely than when he is awake. I have seen him fall asleep in the blue parlour at Ambrose’s, with North in the chair, and myself as croupier. Honest Ainslie ! that is a constitutional failing which he cannot help ; for a man of kinder or better intentions was never born. He is now, alas ! the only relic I know of the real intimate acquaintances of Burns.” Ainslie survived to 1838.

I have no doubt but scholarcraft may be caught as a Scotsman catches the itch,—by friction. How else can you account for it, that born blockheads, by mere dint of *handling* books, grow so wise that even they themselves are equally convinced of and surprised at their own parts? I once carried this philosophy to that degree that in a knot of country folks who had a library amongst them, and who, to the honor of their good sense, made me factotum in the business; one of our members—a little, wise-looking, squat, upright, jabbering body of a tailor—I advised him, instead of turning over the leaves, *to bind the book on his back*.—Johnnie took the hint; and as our meetings were every fourth Saturday, and Pricklouse having a good Scots mile to walk in coming, and of course another in returning, Bodkin was sure to lay his hand on some heavy quarto or ponderous folio, with, and under which, wrapt up in his grey plaid, he grew wise as he grew weary, all the way home. He carried this so far, that an old musty Hebrew concordance, which we had a present of from a neighbouring priest, by mere dint of applying it, as doctors do a blistering plaster, between his shoulders, Stitch, in a dozen pilgrimages, acquired as much rational theology as the said priest had done by forty years' perusal of the pages.

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

SPUNKIE.

At Whitsunday 1793, after a residence of eighteen months in the house before described, the poet with his family removed to a small self-contained abode of two floors with an attic flat, in the Mill Vennel, now called Burns Street. Ascending three steps to the front door, we find in the lower story a kitchen and parlour, the latter, a fine commodious room; and in the floor above are two rooms of unequal size, the smaller one being that in which the poet breathed his last. Above all are two attic bedrooms where the children slept, and between these a closet, nine feet

square, which the bard used as a study, or private retiring place. “It is just possible,” wrote Robert Chambers, “that by the time the house came to be occupied, the cheerful views under which it had been taken were somewhat overcast; for the first few months of the war had intervened, producing a general difficulty throughout the nation.”

So far as now appears, the first lyric suggested to Burns in the little *sanctum sanctorum* we have just described, was a song dedicated to the charms of Miss Lesley Baillie, of whom he had lately said—

“To see her is to love her, and love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is, and never made another.”

He now addressed to her the following letter enclosing the new song referred to.

(¹) TO MISS LESLEY BAILLIE, OF MAYFIELD.

(*Here first included in the correspondence.*)

[DUMFRIES, end of May, 1793.]

MADAM,—I have just put the last hand to the enclosed song, and I think that I may say of it, as Nature can say of you—“*There is a work of mine, finished in my very finest style.*”

Among your sighing swains, if there should be one whose ardent sentiment and ingenuous modesty fetter his power of speech in your presence; with that look and attitude so native to your manner, and of all others the most bewitching—beauty listening to compassion—put my ballad in the poor fellow’s hand, just to give a little breathing to the fervor of his soul.*

I have some pretence, Madam, to make you up the theme of my song, as you and I are two downright singularities in human nature. You will probably start at this assertion; but I believe it will be allowed that a woman exquisitely charming, without the least seeming

* Marriage, June 1799.—“At Mayville, Robert Cumming of Logie, Esq., to Miss Lesley Baillie, daughter of Robert Baillie of Mayville, Esq.”—*Scots May.*

consciousness of it, and a poet who never paid a compliment but where it was justly due, are two of the greatest rarities on earth. I have the honor to be, &c., R. B.

SONG,—*Tune*—“The Quaker’s Wife.”

Blythe hae I been on yon hill,
As the lambs before me ;
Careless ilk a thought and free
As the breeze flew o’er me, &c.

(See page 128, Vol. III.)

On 25th June 1793 our poet wrote to George Thomson, enclosing a new song to the tune of “Logan Braes,” in which occurs this indignant stanza,

“Oh wae be to you, Men o’ state,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate !
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return !
How can your flinty hearts enjoy
The widow’s tears, the orphan’s cry ?
Oh, soon may Peace bring happy days,
And Willie hame to Logan Braes !”

and the following question is put to his correspondent—“Have you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation, on reading, or seeing how these mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay Nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions ?” In a few days thereafter (2nd July), melted into his usual tenderness, he selected a different theme for his musings, and thus wrote to Thomson:—“I have just finished the following ballad, and as I do think it is in my very best style I send it you—

“There was a lass and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen ;
When a’ our fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonie Jean,” &c.

(See page 133, Vol. III.)

(¹) TO MISS M'MURDO, DRUMLANRIG,
ENCLOSING A BALLAD I HAD COMPOSED ON HER.

(Here first included in the correspondence.)

DUMFRIES, July 1793.

MADAM,—Amid the profusion of compliments and addresses which your age, sex, and accomplishments will now bring you, permit me to approach with my *devoirs*, which, however deficient may be their consequence in other respects, have the double novelty and merit, in these frivolous, hollow times, of being poetic and sincere. In the inclosed ballad I have, I think, hit off a few outlines of your portrait. The personal charms, the purity of mind, the ingenious *naïvete* of heart and manners in my heroine are, I flatter myself, a pretty just likeness of Miss M'Murdo in a cottage. Every composition of this kind must have a series of dramatic incidents in it, so I have had recourse to my invention to finish the rest of my ballad.

So much from the poet. Now let me add a few wishes which every man who has himself the honor of being a father must breathe when he sees female youth, beauty, and innocence about to enter into this chequered, and very precarious world. May you, my young Madam, escape that frivolity which threatens universally to pervade the minds and manners of fashionable life, though it may pass by the rougher and more degenerate sex. The mob of fashionable female youth, what are they? are they anything? They prattle, laugh, sing, dance, finger a lesson, or perhaps turn over the parts of a fashionable novel, but are their minds stored with any information worthy of the noble powers of reason and judgment? or do their hearts glow with sentiment, ardent, generous, or humane? Were I to poctise on

the subject, I would call them the butterflies of the human kind, remarkable only for, and distinguished only by, the idle variety of their ordinary glare, sillily straying from one blossoming weed to another, without a meaning and without an aim, the idiot prey of every pirate of the skies who thinks them worth his while as he wings his way by them, and speedily by wintry time swept to that oblivion whence they might as well never have appeared.

Amid this crowd of nothings may you, Madam, be something—may yours be a character dignified; a rational and immortal being.

A still more formidable plague in life—unfeeling, interested selfishness, is a contagion too impure to touch you. The selfish drift to bless yourself alone, to build your fame on another's ruin, to look on the child of misfortune without commiseration, or even the victim of folly without pity—these, and every other feature of a heart rotten at the core, are what you are totally incapable of.

These wishes, Madam, are of no consequence to you, but to me they are of the utmost, as they give me an opportunity of declaring with what respect I have the honor to be, &c.,*

R. B.

* The foregoing rather prosy, moralising letter (as it seems to us under the circumstances) is extracted from the volume of the author's letters collected for Mr Riddell of Glenriddell. There is nothing of later date contained in that book, although this one ranks number 10 out of 28 examples so recorded. We shall find that at Christmas following the author was still employed in transcribing these letters into the collection.

(7) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., WRITER,
MAUCHLINE?

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

DUMFRIES, 16th July 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—I understand that our friend, Mrs Muir, of Tarbolton Mill, is likely to be involved in great difficulties as to the Settlement the late Miller made.† Will you be so obliging as to let me know the state of the case; and if you think it would answer any good purpose to advocate the cause to Edinburgh at once, I can answer for her—a Writer to the Signet, an intimate friend of mine, will cheerfully undertake the business, without a single sixpence of fees; and our countryman, David Cathcart, lies under promise to me to advocate at small expense whenever I represent female poverty in distress. I am much interested for her, and will, as far as I have interest in either, move heaven and earth in her behalf. My interest in the first is vastly improved since you and I were first acquainted. Oh, there is nothing like matrimony for setting a man's face Zionward; whether it be that it sublimates a man above the visible diurnal sphere, or whether it tires him of this sublunary state, or whether the delicious morsel of happiness which he enjoys in the conjugal yoke gives him a longing for the feasts above, or whether a poor husband thinks he has every chance in his favour, as, should he go to hell, he can be no worse—I shall leave to a weel-waled Presbytery of orthodox Ayrshire priests to determine.—Yours most sincerely,

ROB^T. BURNS.

* The original MS., which wants the address (here supplied from conjecture) is in Detroit, U.S. of America. We print from a copy in the "Scottish American Journal."

† This was Wm. Muir whose Epitaph is printed at page 62, Vol. I., and who occupied the "Willie's Mill" of "Death and Dr Hornbook."

In July of this year, Mr George Thomson, published the first half volume of his Select Scottish Melodies, containing five of the songs written by Burns for that work. On receiving a copy of it, the poet thus wrote to the musical editor:—"Allow me to congratulate you now as a brother of the quill. You have committed your character and fame, which will be tried for ages to come by the illustrious jury of the Sons and Daughters of Taste—all whom poesy can please, or music charm. Being a bard of Nature, I have some pretensions to second-sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm, that your great-great-grandchild will hold up your volumes, and say with honest pride:—'This so-much-admired selection was the work of my ancestor!'"*

It was at this time that Burns, under the influence of a morbid sentiment of independence, wrote in angry terms to Thomson for having presumed to remit him five pounds, "as a small mark of gratitude." "Your pecuniary parcel," he thus wrote, "degrades me in my own eyes; however, to return it would savour of bombast affectation. . . . Burns's character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants which the cold, unfeeling ore can supply; at least I shall take care that such a character he shall deserve." The poet's indignant protestation contrasts strangely with the following fragment of a letter which has been preserved, addressed apparently about this time to

(⁵) JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ., DRUMLANRIG. (?)

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

THIS is a painful, disagreeable letter, and the first of the kind I ever wrote. I am truly in serious distress for three or four guineas; can you, my dear sir, accommodate me? These accursed times, by tripping up importation, have, for this year at least, lopped off a full third of my income; and with my large family this is to me a distressing matter.

R. B.

* It is perhaps not universally known that the sons and daughters of the late Charles Dickens are the great-grandchildren of George Thomson.

Dr Currie tells us that “during this time Burns made several excursions into the neighbouring country, of one of which through Galloway, an account is preserved in a letter of Mr Syme, written soon after;” and, as that production gives an animated picture of the poet, by a correct and masterly hand, he gladly recorded it as a valuable portion of the biography of Burns.

EXCURSION INTO GALLOWAY WITH MR SYME.

I got Burns a grey Highland sheltie to ride on. We dined the first day, 27th July 1793, at Glendenwynes of Parton; a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening we walked out and ascended a gentle eminence, from which we had as fine a view of Alpine scenery as can well be imagined. A delightful soft evening showed all its wilder as well as its grander graces. Immediately opposite, and within a mile of us, we saw Airds, a charming romantic place, where dwelt Lowe, the author of “Mary, weep no more for me.” This was classic ground for Burns. He viewed the highest hill, which rises o'er the source of Dee, and would have staid till the “passing spirit” had appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmure that night. We arrived as Mr and Mrs Gordon were sitting down to supper.

Here is a genuine baron's seat. The castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat. In front, the Ken winds for several miles through the most fertile and beautiful holm; till it expands into a lake twelve miles long, the banks of which, on the south, present a fine and soft landscape of green knolls, natural wood, and here and there a grey rock. On the north the aspect is great, wild, and, I may say, tremendous. In short, I can scarcely conceive a scene more terribly romantic than the castle of Kenmure. Burns thinks so highly of it, that he meditates a description of it in poetry. Indeed I believe he has begun the work. We spent three days with Mr Gordon, whose polished hospitality is of an original and endearing kind. Mrs Gordon's lap-dog “Echo” was dead. She would have an epitaph for him. Several had been made. Burns was asked for one. This was setting Hercules to the distaff. He disliked the subject, but, to please the lady, he would try. Here is what he produced:—

“In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,
Your heavy loss deplore ;
Now, half extinct your powers of song—
Sweet Echo is no more.
Ye jarring, screeching things around,
Scream your discordant joys ;
Now, half your din of tuneless sound
With Echo silent lies.”

We left Kenmure, and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor-road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil ; it became lowering and dark. The hollow winds sighed, the lightnings gleamed, the thunder rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall ; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements “rumble their bellyful” upon our defenceless heads. “Oh, oh ! ‘twas foul.” We got utterly wet ; and, to revenge ourselves, Burns insisted at Gatehouse, on our getting utterly drunk.

From Gatehouse we went next day to Kirkcudbright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of “Jemmy” boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such a manner, that it was not possible to get them on again. The brawny poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whiffling vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to St. Mary’s Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach and a headache lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accabé*. I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us, how he did fume and rage ! Nothing could reinstate him in temper. I tried various expedients, and at last hit on one that succeeded. I showed him the house of Garlieston, across the Bay of Wigton. Against the Earl of Galloway with whom he was offended, he expectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humour indeed ! He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one Morine whom he does not love. He had a passing blow at him :

"When Morine deceas'd to the devil went down,
 'Twas nothing would serve him but Satan's own crown :
 Thy fool's head, quoth Satan, that crown shall wear never,
 I grant thou'rt as wicked, but not quite so clever."

Well, I am to bring my reader to Kirkcudbright along with our poet without boots. I carried the torn ruins across my saddle in spite of his fulminations, and in contempt of appearances; and what is more, Lord Selkirk carried them in his coach to Dumfries. He insisted they were worth mending.

We reached Kirkcudbright about one o'clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, John Dalzell.* But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humour, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr Dalzell to dine with us in the Inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening we set out for St Mary's Isle. Robert had not absolutely regained the milkeness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode along, that St Mary's Isle was the seat of a Lord; yet that lord was not an aristocrat, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o'clock, as the family were at tea and coffee. St Mary's Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft, but not tame object, which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (all beautiful) at home, and some strangers; and among others who but Urbani! The Italian sung us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two young ladies of Selkirk sung also. We had the song of "Lord Gregory," which I asked for, to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite his ballad to that tune. He did recite it; and such was the

* Of Barnerochar, near Kirkcudbright. He was on intimate terms with Gordon of Kenmure who once sent him a snuff-mull as a present. The acknowledgment of the gift would have been worthy of Burns :

" Your present I received, and letter,
 No compliment could please me better,
 EX DONO NO KENMURE I'll put on it,
 And crown it wi' a silver bonnet,—
 In spite of a' the deils in hell,
 Your humble servant, JOHN DALZELL."

effect, that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced. Burns's "Lord Gregory" is, in my opinion, a most beautiful and affecting ballad. The fastidious critic may perhaps say some of the sentiments and imagery are of too elevated a kind for such a style of composition; for instance, "Thou bolt of heav'n that flashest by;" and "Ye mustering thunders from above;" but this is a cold-blooded objection, which will be *said* rather than *felt*.

We enjoyed a most happy evening at Lord Selkirk's. We had in every sense of the word a feast, in which our minds and our senses were equally gratified. The poet was delighted with his company, and acquitted himself to admiration. The lion that had raged so violently in the morning was now as mild and gentle as a lamb. Next day we returned to Dumfries, and so ends our peregrination.

I told you that in the midst of the storm on the wilds of Kenmure, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army along with Bruce, at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner on our ride home from St Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell.

"Scots! wha hae wi' Wallace bled," &c.

Dr Currie gives his readers no clue to discover *for whom* the above lively account was prepared by Syme; but he says it was "written soon after" the events which it describes. If so, Syme could not be mistaken as to the date of *Bruce's Address*, as he tells us the poet presented him with a copy, the day after their return from the tour. As a fact, this is contradicted by the letter from Burns to George Thomson, of 1st September thereafter, which distinctly says that he conceived that famous Ode during his evening walk on the preceding day. Currie must have felt the awkwardness of Syme's dilemma there; for,

in tenderness to the living, he altered the words of the dead, so as to leave the date indefinite in his printed copy of the poet's letter. Instead of the genuine words—"This thought, in my yesternight's evening-walk, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm," he set down the passage thus:—"This thought, in my solitary wanderings, warmed me," &c.

On the 30th day of the same month in which Burns composed Bruce's Address at Bannockburn, he presented, along with three other books, to the Dumfries Subscription Library, "Delolme on the British Constitution," on which he had inscribed the words: "Mr Burns presents this book to the Library, and begs they will take it as a creed of British liberty—until they find a better.—R. B." (See Note page 123, Vol. III).

(¹) TO CAPTAIN MILLER, DALSWINTON,
WITH BRUCE'S ADDRESS AT BANNOCKBURN.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

[DUMFRIES, 1793.]

DEAR SIR,—The following Ode is on a subject which I know you by no means regard with indifference.

"O Liberty,
Thou mak'st the gloomy face of Nature gay,
Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day."

It does me so much good to meet with a man whose honest bosom glows with the generous enthusiasm, the heroic daring of liberty, that I could not forbear sending you a composition of my own on the subject, which I really think is in my best manner. I have the honor to be, dear Sir, &c.,

ROB^T. BURNS.

The new edition of the author's poems in two volumes, which appeared in the preceding February, had taken so well with the public that the number printed was nearly exhausted, and Mr

Creech had again applied to Burns on the subject of a fresh edition. He took some pains to correct the sheets, and introduced several alterations in the text, especially in the "Twa Dogs," the "Earnest Cry and Prayer," and "Death and Doctor Hornbook." The word "Poet" was substituted for "Bardie," which occurred in several of the pieces, and a few other verbal alterations were made; but no new pieces were added. It was by many supposed that those alterations—some of them no improvements—were made, or at least suggested by, Mr A. Fraser Tytler; but we were recently shewn the "printer's copy" of volume first, in which the emendations referred to are inserted in a copy of the edition of 1793, in the bard's own hand. That relic, which once belonged to Archibald Constable the publisher, is now possessed by Captain Colin Mackenzie, London.

(⁶) MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)*

[DUMFRIES, Oct. 1793.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I [have not lately had an opportunity] of writing to you: your songs much [occupy my thoughts, but I am worried by un]avoidable hurry. I am [now busy] correcting a new edition [of my poems, and] this, with my ordinary [business, finds me] in full employment.

[At your leisure, if you] choose, get somebody to class the first lines of the songs alphabetically, and I will draw out an Index of Author's names, as soon as you send the list, and return [corrected proofs of the songs.]

A valued musical acquaintance of [mine in the neigh-

* The original document is a patched and pasted fragment—part of the Hastic collection, in the British Museum. The short insertions within brackets are here put in by conjecture to supply words eaten away from the manuscript. The longer passage at the end within brackets, is supplied from Cromeck who printed it as a portion of another letter to Johnson, of later date; as he failed to decypher the present one, which had evidently been in his hands.

bourhood] of Ayr is thinking [of publishing a] Collection of Strathspeys and Reels. [I have recommended him to you in this matter. Engage with him on the] same terms as you would another; but as you will be promptly paid, let him have your lowest terms. Write to me as to this matter in a post or two at farthest.

As to our Musical Museum, I have better than a dozen songs by me for the fifth volume. Send with Mr Clarke when he comes to you, [whatever new airs you have] got. If we cannot finish the fifth volume any other way, what would you think of Scotch words to some beautiful Irish airs? In the meantime, at your leisure, give a copy of the Museum to my worthy friend, Mr Peter Hill, Bookseller, to bind for me interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the Laird of Glenriddell's, that I [may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever. In haste, yours,

R. B.]

(⁷) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, EDINBURGH.

(DR WADDELL's ED. in part, and here completed.)*

[DUMFRIES, Oct. 1793.]

I WAS much obliged to you, my dear Friend, for making me acquainted with Gow.† He is a modest, intelligent, worthy fellow; besides his being a man of great genius in

* We have collated this note with the poet's holograph in the British Museum, and inserted the passages missing in former printed copies.

† This is supposed to have been a brother of Neil Gow.

his way. I have spent many happy hours with him, in the short while he has been here.

Why did you not send me those tunes and verses that Clarke and you cannot make out? Let me have them as soon as possible, that while he is at hand, I may settle the matter with him. He and I have been very busy providing and laying out materials for your fifth volume. I have got about a dozen by me. If you can conveniently, let me have half a dozen copies of your fourth volume: I want no more. As soon as the bound copy of all the volumes is ready, take the trouble of forwarding it. In haste, yours ever,

R. B.

(7) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

Nov. 1793.

I WILL wait on you, my ever-valued friend, but whether in the morning I am not sure. Sunday closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a species of the human genus that I call the *gin-horse class*: what enviable dogs they are! Round, and round, and round they go—Mundell's ox that drives his cotton-mill is their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a d-mnd melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tene-ment, like a wild finch, caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thurst into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he foretold

—“And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper !” If my resentment is awaked, it is sure to be where it dare not squeak ; and if— * *

Pray that Wisdom and Bliss be more frequent visitors of
R. B.

(⁸) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[November, 1793.]

DEAR MADAM, I meant to have called on you yesternight, but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view, was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon, guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my weather-beaten rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday ; when we may arrange the business of the visit.

* * * * *

Among the profusion of idle compliments, which insidious craft, or unmeaning folly, incessantly offer at your shrine—a shrine, how far exalted above such adoration—permit me, were it but for rarity’s sake, to pay you the honest tribute of a warm heart and an independent mind ; and to assure you, that I am, thou most amiable and most accomplished of thy sex, with the most respectful esteem, and fervent regard, thine, &c.,

R. B.

(²) TO MISS FONTENELLE, DUMFRIES THEATRE.
WITH A PROLOGUE FOR HER BENEFIT NIGHT.

WEDNESDAY, 4th DECR.

(*Here first included in the correspondence.*)

Enclosed is the Address, such as it is, and may it be a prologue to an overflowing house. If all the town put together have half the ardor for your success and welfare of my individual wishes, my prayer will most certainly be granted.

R. B.

[2nd. Dec. 1793.]

Still anxious to secure your partial favour,
And not less anxious sure this night than ever.

See p. 162, Vol. III.

(¹) TO CAPTAIN —————*

ENCLOSING "BRUCE'S ADDRESS AT BANNOCKBURN."

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

Dumfries, 5th December, 1793.

SIR, heated as I was with wine yesternight, I was perhaps rather seemingly impertinent in my anxious wish to be honored with your acquaintance. You will forgive it—it was the impulse of heart-felt respect. "He is the father of Scottish county reform, and is a man who does honor to the business, at the same time the business does honor to him," said my worthy friend Glenriddel to somebody by me, who was talking of your coming to this country with your corps. "Then," I said, "I have a woman's longing to take

* Chambers has suggested the name "Captn. Robertson of Lude" as the person here addressed; but that gentleman was "Major Robertson," see letter to Cunningham, 3rd March 1794.

him by the hand, and say to him, ‘Sir, I honor you as a man to whom the interests of humanity are dear, and as a patriot to whom the rights of your country are sacred.’”

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

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

Mrs Riddell returned to Woodley Park in October, after an absence of several months in London, where her husband left her while he proceeded to the West Indies to look after his affairs there. In a letter which she wrote to Mr Smellie the printer, in November 1793, she said:—“Here am I, as chaste and domestic, but perhaps not quite so industrious, as Penelope in the absence of her hero. I resemble rather ‘the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin’; but I read, I write, I sing, and contrive to wile away the time, as pleasantly as any sociable being like myself can do in a state of solitude, and in some measure, of mortification . . . I shall write you more fully in my next, as to the nature of my present pursuits, and how I found Burns and the other friends here you left behind, for they were not few I assure you.”* Mrs Riddell, however, had the Dumfries Theatre and

* Memoirs of William Smellie, by Robt Kerr.

other attractions in her neighbourhood, every way calculated to yield her some consolation until the Christmas season arrived and brought home Mr Riddell ; and again at Woodley Park

“Twas merry in the hall, when the beards wagg'd all,” &c.

Mr Creech's printer was about this time ready to throw off the sheets of the last edition of our author's poems, which he lived to see published, viz, that of 1794, in two volumes. A letter to Mr Fraser Tytler, refers to that matter.

(¹) TO ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.,
EDINBURGH.

(DR. WADDEL'S ED., 1869.)

SIR, a poor caitiff, driving as I am at this moment with an excise quill, at the rate of “Devil take the hindmost,” is ill qualified to round the period of gratitude, or swell the pathos of sensibility. Gratitude, like some other amiable qualities of the mind, is now-a-days so abused by impostors, that I have sometimes wished that the project of that sly dog Momus, I think it is, had gone into effect—planting a window in the breast of man. In that case, when a poor fellow comes, as I do at this moment, before his benefactor, tongue-tied with the sense of these very obligations, he would have nothing to do but place himself in front of his friend, and lay bare the workings of his bosom.

I again trouble you with another, and my last, parcel of manuscript. I am not interested in any of these ; blot them at your pleasure. I am much indebted to you for taking the trouble of correcting the press work. One instance, indeed, may be rather unlucky ; if the lines to Sir John Whitefoord are printed : they ought to end—

“And tread the *shadowy* path to that dark world unknown.”

“shadowy,” instead of “dreary,” as I believe it stands at

present.* I wish this could be noticed in the Errata. This comes of writing, as I generally do, from the memory.

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

ROB^T. BURNS.

6th Decr., 1793.

(⁶) TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ., DUMFRIES.
WITH A PARCEL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

December 1793.

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

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scots songs I have for some years been making: I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not

* By some overlook or fatality this nice little correction was not attended to; and the line remained as it was until of very recent date, when Dr. Carruthers of Inverness published the present letter, which Colonel Fraser Tytler of Aldourie, had exhibited to him. The date in the MS. is "1793," and upon our representing to Dr. Carruthers the *unlikeness* of that date, he examined the manuscript again and satisfied himself that the date is not in the poet's handwriting; but a conjectural one by some other hand.

conveniently spare them above five or six days, and five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr Clint, of the King's Arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world ; and I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.

R. B.

Mr M'Murdo seems to have been the patron to whom Burns applied during the past summer for a small loan ; and it now appears that having paid an account of Mr Ker's against that gentleman, he was here clearing off his own debt by enclosing Mr Ker's discharge, along with six guineas of balance required to make up the whole personal obligation. The poet here congratulates himself on being now free of pecuniary debt ; but the reader will hereafter find that he had involved himself in a like obligation to his landlord, Captain John Hamilton, in shape of arrears of house-rent, which was not entirely liquidated when he died.*

The "Collection of Scots Songs," referred to in the after part of the letter, was one which our bard had been at the pains to gather and transcribe into a book "for the use of the Crochallan Fencibles." "Unluckily (says Chambers) Burns's collection of these facetiae, including his own essays in the same walk, fell after his death into the hands of one of those publishers who would sacrifice the highest interests of humanity to put an additional penny into their own purses ; and to the lasting grief of all friends of our poet, they were allowed the honors of the press. The mean-looking volume which resulted (under the title of 'The Merry Muses of Caledonia'), should be a warning to all honourable men of letters against the slightest connexion with clandestine literature, much more the degradation of contributing to it."

That considerate editor at same time admits that Burns was induced to collect and imitate those indecorous songs and ballads

* See page 84 *supra*, and also page 135 *infra*.

“apparently for no other object than that of amusing his merry companions in their moments of conviviality ;” and he pleads that he must have been led into this taste “by his enthusiastic reverence for all forms of his country’s elder Muse ; for, with a strange contradiction to the grave and religious character of the Scottish people, they possess a wonderful quantity of that kind of literature. Not (still pleads Chambers) that it is of an inflammatory character, but simply expressive of a profound sense of the ludicrous in connexion with the sexual affections.”

We have seen many of our poet’s holograph copies of his own performances in that way, and they seem to have been transmitted to his Edinburgh fellows of the social club referred to, by the hands of Robert Cleghorn, farmer, Saughton Mills, to whom they are generally found to be addressed. These effusions were sometimes accompanied by prose communications of which the following may be given as a sample.

(⁵) TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS.

(Here first published.)

I HAVE just bought a quire of post, and I am determined, my dear Cleghorn, to give you the maidenhead of it. Indeed that is all my reason for, and all that I can propose to give you by, this present scrawl. From my late hours last night, and the dripping fogs and damn’d east-wind of this stupid day, I have left me as little soul as an oyster—“Sir John, you are so fretful, you cannot live long”—“Why, there is it ! Come, sing me a b—dy song to make me merry !!”

ACT SEDERUNT o’ THE SESSION.

Tune.—“O’er the muir among the heather.”

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Well, the Law is good for something, since we can make a b—dy song out of it. (*N.B.*—I never made anything of it any other way.) There is—there must be some truth in original sin. My violent propensity to b—dy convinces

me of it. Lack a day ! if that species of composition be the special sin, never-to-be-forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come, "I am the most offending soul alive." Mair for token, a fine chiel—a hand-waled friend and crony o' my ain, gat o'er the lugs in love wi' a braw, bonie, fodgel hizzie frac the English side, weel-ken'd i' the burgh of Annan by the name o' "Bonie Mary;" and I tauld the tale as follows : (N.B.—The chorus is auld.)

COME COWE ME, MINNIE, COME COWE ME.

Tune.—“My minnie's ay glowerin o'er me.”

* * * * *

Forgive this wicked scrawl. Thine in all the sincerity
of a brace of honest Port. R. B.

Oct. 25th.

THE PATRIARCH—A WICKED SONG,
AUTHOR'S NAME UNKNOWN.*

Tune.—“The Waukin o' a winter's night.”

THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.—Courteous Reader,—
The following is certainly the production of one of those
licentious, ungodly (too-much-abounding in this our day)
wretches, who take it as a compliment to be called wicked,
provided you allow them to be witty. Pity it is that while
so many tar-barrels in the country are empty, and so many
gibbets untenanted, some example is not made of these
profligates !

* * * * *

* Chambers, who first printed this heading in 1852, records that the
poet's MS. was then possessed by the Town Clerk of Forfar.

(6) TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS.

(Here first published.)

MY best compliments to Mrs Cleghorn, and all your friends of my acquaintance. Many happy returns of the season to you, my worthy Sir, and (pardon me) your fully as worthy bedfellow. The foregoing poem is for her. For you, I make a present of the following new edition of an old Cloaciniad song, a species of composition which I have heard you admire, and a kind of song which I knew you wanted much. It is sung to an old tune, something like “Tak your auld cloak about ye.”

There was twa wives, and twa witty wives,
Sat o'er a stowp o' brandy, &c., &c.

* * * *

God speed the plough, and send a good seed time.
Amen ! Farewell !

ROB^T. BURNS.

The reader may recollect of a letter by Lord Byron, dated 14th Dec. 1813, addressed to his friend Hodgson, in which he writes of some of Burns's manuscript letters thus:—“Will you tell Drury I have a treasure for him—a whole set of original Burns letters never published, nor to be published; for they are full of fearful oaths, and the most nauseous songs—all humorous, but coarse bawdry. However they are curiosities and shew him quite in a new point of view—the mixture, or rather contrast of tenderness, delicacy, obscenity, and coarseness in the same mind is wonderful.” We suspect that Byron has not characterised those manuscripts quite correctly in every particular; for we never found “fearful oaths” in any of our poet's writings, and not one, even of his *wickedest* songs, can truly be termed “nauseous.”

(³³) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 15th Dec. 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND.—As I am in a complete Decemberish humour, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the deity of Dulness herself could wish, I shall not drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathise in it: these four months, a sweet little girl, my youngest child, has been so ill, that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence.* There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the state of husband and father, for God knows they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours these ties have frequently given me. I see a train of helpless little folk; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate; even in all the vigour of manhood as I am, such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock! 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune. A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I—but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave off talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad:—

* This was Elizabeth Riddell Burns, whose birth is announced at page 35 *supra*. She appears to have been from the first, a delicate infant, and at this date was the poet's youngest child; "James Glencairn" followed in August 1794, and Elizabeth was sent to be nursed by the Armours at Mauchline, where she died in Autumn 1795.

“ O that I had ne'er been married,
 I would never had nae care ;
 Now, I’ve gotten a wife and weans,
 And they cry ‘ crowdie ’ evermair :
 Crowdie ance, crowdie twice,
 Crowdie three times in a day ;
 An’ ye crowdie ony mair
 Ye’ll crowdie a’ my meal away.”

December 24th.

We have had a brilliant theatre here this season ; only, as all other business has, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country—want of cash. I mention our theatre merely to lug in an occasional “Address” which I wrote for the benefit night of one of the actresses, which is as follows :—

ADDRESS SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER BENEFIT
 NIGHT.

Wednesday December 4th, 1793, at the Theatre Dumfries.*

“ Still anxious to secure your partial favour,
 And not less anxious, sure this night than ever,” &c.

See page 162, Vol. III.

25th, Christmas Morning.

This, my much loved friend, is a morning of wishes : accept mine—so Heaven hear me, as they are sincere ! that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not ! In the charming words of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*, “ May the great spirit bear up the

* Currie, who dates this letter 1793, has boldly set down the date of this “benefit night” as having been “December 4th, 1793,” and his erroneous date has been hitherto followed by every editor of Burns. The internal evidence, however, for 1793 is too strong to be controverted.

weight of the grey hairs : and blunt the arrow that brings them rest !”

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper ? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem ? The religion of the *Task*; bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature : the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were not you to send me your *Zeluco* in return for mine ? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.*

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters : I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which from time to time I had parcelled by, as trash that was scarce worth preserving, and which yet at the same time I did not care to destroy ; I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

R. B.

The crowning evidence to prove Dr Currie's mis-date of the foregoing letter lies in the closing paragraph where the poet refers to the Glenriddell manuscript book of letters. It may be suggested that this is only another instance of several fragments of the poet's correspondence being, in absence of full dates, conjecturally thrown together in the process of arranging the chronology of the letters ; but it will be found that the text of each of the three divisions renders Dr Currie's date an impossible one. In De-

* At page 352, Vol. V., we have referred to this copy of *Zeluco*, now in the hands of Mrs Dunlop's representatives.

ember 1795, the little girl whose ill health the writer deplores in the first portion of his letter, had been four months dead; and he himself was just getting into a convalescent state after being nearly brought by disease to the gates of death. At such a time, he could not have spoken of himself as being then "in all the vigour of manhood;" neither can we conceive of him at that time writing thus:—"We had a brilliant theatre here this season." In 1793, however, that announcement, with its qualifying context, has its full meaning reflected from his other correspondence of that year. Truly, as Miss Fontenelle is made to say in her prologue, "these were no laughing times!"

"Doomed to that sorest task of man alive—
To make three guineas do the work of five."

In the latter division of this letter, our poet says—"I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters. I have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library." That friend, Mr Robert Riddell, died in April 1794, and how Cunningham, Motherwell, Chambers, Waddell, and other editors of this correspondence, should not have discovered Currie's error is truly surprising. Respecting Currie's misdates of the poet's letters to Mrs Dunlop, near the close of the correspondence, we have a theory of our own, which is noticed at page 165, Vol. III. and we may have occasion again to advert to the unpleasant subject. Meanwhile, as we are certain that the author added no letters to the Glenriddell collection after this date, we shall here present the reader with a list of its contents.

THE GLENRIDDELL MSS. OF BURNS'S LETTERS.
IN THE ATHENÆUM LIBRARY, LIVERPOOL.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE CONTENTS.

1. Abridged copy of the Author's first Common-place Book.
2. To John Arnot of Dalquhatswood, Esq., April 1786.
3. To Mrs Stewart of Stair, 1786.
4. To Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, enclosing song "The Lass o' Balloehmyle, 18 Nov. 1786.

5. To Mr Wm. Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh, 1 June 1787.
6. To John M'Murdo, Esq., Drumlanrig, with a song, January 1789.
7. To my friend Cunningham, on his severe love-disappointment, 24 Jan. 1789.
8. To the Right Hon. William Pitt—an Address from the Scottish Distillers, Feb. 1789.
9. To Miss H. C.—, (Craik) "1789 or 90."
10. To Crawford Tait, Esq., W.S., 15 Oct. 1790.
11. To Charles Sharpe, Esq., of Hoddam, April 22, 1791.
12. To Alex. Cunningham, Esq., Edinburgh, introducing Clarke the Schoolmaster, June 1791.
13. Letter dictated for Clarke, addressed to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, June 1791.
14. To the Rev. Mr Moodie, Edinburgh, in behalf of Clarke, the Schoolmaster, June 1791.
15. To Miss Davies, enclosing a ballad I had made on her, [July] 1791.
16. Letter dictated for Clarke, to Mr Williamson, factotum and favourite of the Earl of Hopetoun, 1791.
17. To Mr Corbet, Supervisor-General of Excise, 1791.
18. To Mr Smellie, printer, Edinburgh, introducing Mrs Walter Riddell, Jan. 1792.
19. To the Duke of Queensberry, with "The Whistle," 1792.
20. To Mr Alex. Cunningham, Writer, Edinburgh, some little time after his marriage, Sep. 10, 1792.
21. To Mr Corbet, Supervisor-General of Excise—thanks for granting request in No. 17, Sep. 1792.
22. Letter from Mr Nicol, alluding to some temeraire conduct of mine in the political opinions of the day, 10 Feb. 1790.
23. Reply to the foregoing, Feb. 1792.
24. Letter to a Lady, (Clarinda), March 1793. *I suppose, my dear Madam.*
(Never scrolled, but copied from the original letter.) *
25. To the Earl of Glencairn, (with copy of my new edition), 1793.

* In Dr Currie's hand, a note occurs here:—

"These Letters appear to be nearly the worst he wrote. J. C."

26. To John F. Erskine, Esq., of Mar, 13th April 1793.
27. To Miss Lesley Baillie of Mayfield, 1793.
28. To Miss M'Murdo, with a Ballad, made in compliment to her, July 1793.

On the title-page of this volume is the inscription—"LETTERS BY MR BURNS, which he selected for Robt. Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell, F.A.S. of London and Edinburgh, and member of the Literary and Philosophical Society at Manchester." Under the title is pasted down an impression of Beugo's engraved head of the Bard, beneath which is written in ornamental letters—

"Robertus Burns, Scotus."

Pasted on the inside of the board is the following holograph letter of the widow of Dr Currie's son, Mr Wallace Currie :—

"TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE ATHENÆUM, LIVERPOOL.

ELLERSLIE, Dec. 6, 1853.

SIR,—Will you allow me to make you the medium of presenting to the Athenæum Library two Manuscript Books, in his own writing, of Poems and Letters of Burns.

I believe they came into possession of Dr Currie when he was engaged in writing the Life of the Poet, and I shall feel gratified by their finding a place in the Library of an Institution in which he took so great an interest.—I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,
S. CURRIE."

A.D. 1794.

To Burns, this year opened as the previous one had closed, in a quiet, routine manner; but short while elapsed when it was manifest that he had even more occasion now than at any previous New Year season to be on his guard against the social temptations to which he was so prone to yield. Just one year ago, he stated his position thus :—"Of exercise in the way of my business I have enough; but occasional hard-drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my re-

solution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned; but it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of the country that do me the mischief." Probably it was of this period of the Bard's life that a lady in London (Mrs Basil Montague, we think it was), told the characteristic anecdote to Bloomfield the poet, which Cromek recorded. She having ventured to remonstrate with Burns regarding his danger from social drinking, he replied, "Madam, they would not thank me for my company if I did not drink with them. I must give them a slice of my constitution!" Bloomfield, in giving the anecdote to Lord Buchan, remarked with true feeling—"How much is it to be regretted that he did not give them thinner slices of his constitution!"

(¹¹) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

DUMFRIES, Jan. 1794.

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

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

I have been myself accustomed to labor, and have no notion that a servant of the public should eat the bread of idleness; so, what I have long digested, and am going to propose, is the reduction of one of our Dumfries divisions. Not only in these unlucky times, but even in the highest flush of business, my division, though by far the heaviest, was mere trifling—the others, still less. I would plan the

reduction as thus : Let the second division be annihilated, and be divided among the others. The duties in it are, two chandlers, a common brewer, and some victuallers ; these, with some tea and spirit stocks, are the whole division. The two chandlers I would give to the third or tobacco division ; it is the idlest of us all. That I may seem impartial, I shall willingly take under my charge the common brewer and the victuallers. The tea and spirit stocks divide between the Bridgend and Dumfries second divisions. They have at present but very little, *comparatively*, to do, and are quite adequate to the task.

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

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

For further information on the subject, permit me to refer you to a young beginner whom you lately sent among us—Mr Andrew Pearson, a gentleman that I am happy to say, from manner, abilities, and attention, promises,

indeed, to be a great acquisition to the service of your honorable board.

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

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

ROB^T. BURNS.

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

R. B.

(³) TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

WITH A COPY OF BRUCE'S ADDRESS AT BANNOCKBURN.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, 12th Jan. 1794.

MY LORD,—Will your Lordship allow me to present you with the inclosed little composition of mine, as a small tribute of gratitude for that acquaintance with which you have been pleased to honor me. Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with any thing in history which interests my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel but able usurper leading on the finest army in Europe, to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly daring, and greatly injured, people: on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation devoting

* John M'Quaker, 43 years of age, 7 of a family, 13 years in the service, 5 years in present district.

themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her.

Liberty ! thou art a prize truly, and indeed invaluable ;
for never canst thou be too dearly bought !

If my little Ode has the honor of your Lordship's approbation, it will gratify my highest ambition.—I have honor to be, &c.,

R. B.

The original MS. of the foregoing letter, with its precious enclosure, is said to have been borrowed from the Earl by Mr Cromeck, while he was in Edinburgh gathering materials for his “Reliques of Burns.” That editor has been traditionally charged with a propensity to delay the return of manuscripts entrusted to him for publication ; and the following letter addressed to him by the Earl (which has recently fallen into our hands) gives some countenance to that tradition.

THE EARL OF BUCHAN TO MR R. H. CROMECK.

EDINBURGH, 23^d Feb. 1809.

SIR,—Mr Brooks, whom I have just seen, is surprised at your negligence in neither returning the drawing of “Nanse Tinnock,”* which he gave you on loan, nor sending him a copy of your fifth

* It is probable that the Earl had purchased a drawing of considerable merit, by an anonymous artist, representing Nanse entering her little parlour with “a tappet hen” in one hand, and “girdle cakes weel-toasted brown” in the other. With characteristic Scotch expression in her face, she seems on the point of dropping a curtsey to her guests, of whom the only two visible are Burns and a douce-like elderly rustic, with whom he conducts an animated discourse over a half-mutchkin stomp, while a newspaper is spread before him, and his collie crouches at his feet. That drawing was well engraved, and published in 1805, as the frontispiece to a thin Svo volume, entitled “Views in North Britain, illustrative of the Works of Robert Burns,” by James Storer and John Greig, engravers, London. A reduced copy of this engraving was given in Hogg and Motherwell’s edition of Burns’s works in 1835. The portrait of Nanse in the print has every appearance of having been taken from the life, while that of Burns is unmistakeably derived from Nasmyth’s head. It may be that Lord Buchan had acquired the artist’s original life-study of Nanse, from which the finished picture was formed.

volume of Burns. I am equally surprised at your not availing yourself of the original letter from Burns to me, enclosing the Address of Bruce to his Troops at the Battle of Bannockburn, to have a Fae-simile thereof, as you promised while you were in Edinburgh.

By such conduct you must necessarily sink in the estimation of the public, and I am heartily sorry for it. You will therefore without delay return to me, through your Bookseller, the drawing of Nanse Tinnock, and the above-mentioned letter. BUCHAN.

(¹) TO MR SAMUEL CLARK, JUN^R., DUMFRIES.

(CROMER 1808).

SUNDAY MORNING, [January 1794].

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

and beg that this morning you will wait on the parties present at the foolish dispute. I shall only add that I am truly sorry that a man, who stood so high in my estimation as Mr Dods, should use me in the manner in which I conceive he has done.

R. B.

The gentleman to whom the above letter is addressed was conjunct Commissary Clerk, and Clerk of the Peace for the County of Dumfries, at that time a young man aged twenty-five. For the knowledge of this fact we are indebted to Mr William M'Dowall's "Memorials of St Michael's Churchyard, Dumfries." Cromeek named him correctly enough ; but Chambers altered the Christian name to Stephen, in the belief that Cromeek was in error. The letter refers to one of those painful political discussions, into which Burns was frequently led at this period by the vehemence of his own zeal in the cause of Liberty, and by his jealousy of the "lobster-coated puppies," as he termed those of the military profession who offensively paraded their loyalty in his presence.

The next letter in our series is addressed to the same gentleman, who, by the way, died in the prime of life in 1814 ; it was printed in Dr Waddell's edition of the correspondence, from the original in possession of Mr Clark's daughter, Mrs Stewart Gladstone, of Capenoch, Dumfriesshire.

(²) TO MR SAMUEL CLARK, JUNIOR, DUMFRIES.

(DR WADDELL'S ED. 1869).

MY DEAR SIR,—I recollect something of a drunken promise yesternight to breakfast with you this morning. I am very sorry that it is impossible. I remember, too, you very obligingly mentioned something of your intimacy with Mr Corbet, our Supervisor-General. Some of our folks about the Excise Office, Edinburgh, had, and perhaps still have, conceived a prejudice against me as being a drunken,

dissipated character. I might be all this, you know, and yet be an honest fellow; but you know that I am an honest fellow, and am nothing of this. You may in your own way, let him know that I am not unworthy of subscribing myself, my dear Clark, your friend,

R. BURNS.

The foregoing letters will prepare the reader for the one which follows, referring to the unhappy results of a saturnalia of intemperance in which the poet mixed one evening at Woodley Park, where he was one of several guests of Mr Walter Riddell. We have (at page 165, Vol. III.) stated as circumstantially as it has ever been told, the whole that is really known of the incident which occasioned Burns to write as follows, from the depths of his remorse:—

(⁹) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800).

DUMFRIES, *January 1794.*

MADAM,—I daresay that this is the first epistle you ever received from the nether world. I write you from the regions of Hell, amid the horrors of the damned. The time and manner of my leaving your earth I do not exactly know; as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your too hospitable mansion; but on my arrival here, I was fairly tried, and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine, for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days; and all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yester-night under your roof. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclining on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormentor, wrinkled, and old, and cruel, his name I think is *Recollection*, with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and

keeps anguish eternally awake. Still, Madam, if I could in any measure be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason I trouble you with this letter. To the men of the company I will make no apology.—Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me; and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt. But to you, Madam, I have much to apologise. Your Good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it. There was a Miss J—— too, a woman of fine sense, gentle and unassuming manners. Do make, on my part, a miserable, d——d wretch's best apology to her. A Mrs G——, a charming woman, did me the honor to be prejudiced in my favour; this makes me hope that I have not outraged her beyond all forgiveness. To all the other ladies please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon. O all ye Powers of decency and decorum! whisper to them that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible to me—but

* * * *

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of, Madam,
your humble slave,

ROB^T. BURNS.

In the notes which we have, in Volume III., appended to the various satires, lampoons, and epigrams, which Burns, shortly after the unhappy incident above bewailed, condescended to

pour forth against Mrs Walter Riddell and her husband, we have endeavoured to trace the progress of the quarrel between those friends, and their ultimate reconciliation.

It is evident from the items of correspondence handed down to us, that the breach betwixt them was not at first so wide as it afterwards became through the officious intermeddling of second parties. And even then, not until our poet had exhausted every honorable means of reconciliation did his wounded pride instigate him to resort to the expedient of making Mrs Riddell and her friends the theme of very ill-natured effusions of his muse. But the most distressing part of this pitiful squabble is that the poet's ancient and most valued friend, Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, was dragged into the *mélée*, and prevailed on to side with his brother's family against Burns. A few words of temperate explanation might have restored matters to their usual position there; but the opportunity for that had not yet arrived when, in the month of April following, the death of Glenriddell was announced.

The two following letters to Mrs Riddell seem to have been penned during the earlier stages of the quarrel between her and Burns.

(¹⁰) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 1794.

MADAM,—I return your common-place book. I have perused it with much pleasure, and would have continued my criticisms, but as it seems the critic has forfeited your esteem, his strictures must lose their value.

If it is true that “offences come only from the heart,” before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of

friendly confidence, *now* to find cold neglect, and contemptuous scorn, is a wrench that my heart can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of miserable good-luck, that while *de-haut-en-bas* rigour may depress an unoffending wretch to the ground, it has a tendency to rouse a stubborn something in his bosom, which, though it cannot heal the wounds of his soul, is at least an opiate to blunt their poignancy.

With the profoundest respect for your abilities; the most sincere esteem and ardent regard for your gentle heart and amiable manners; and the most fervent wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and bliss, I have the honor to be, Madam, your most devoted humble servant,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(¹¹) TO MRS RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 1794.

I HAVE this very moment got the Song from Syme, and I am sorry to see that he has spoilt it a good deal. It shall be a lesson to me how I lend him any thing again.

I have sent you *Werter*; truly happy to have any, the smallest opportunity of obliging you.

'Tis true, Madam, I saw you once since I was at W—— P——; and that once froze the very life-blood of my heart. Your reception of me was such, that a wretch meeting the eye of his Judge, about to pronounce sentence of death on him, could only have envied my feelings and situation. But I hate the theme, and never more shall write or speak of it.

* We have collated and completed this letter from the original MS. in the possession of Alex. J. Warden, Esq., Marybank House, Broughty Ferry.

One thing I shall proudly say, that I can pay Mrs R. a higher tribute of esteem, and appreciate her amiable worth more truly than any man whom I have seen approach her ; nor will I yield the *pas* to any man living, in subscribing myself with the sincerest truth, her devoted humble servt.,

R. B.

(^v) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 25th February 1794.

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

* * * * *

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

Are you deep in the language of consolation ? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings ; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot

preaching the gospel ; he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility.

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

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty FEW, to lead the undiscerning MANY ; or at most as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know any thing of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do. Nor would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what, to me and to others were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a

man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart; and an imagination, delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him, wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all Nature, and thro' Nature up to Nature's God; his soul, by swift delighting degrees, is wrapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson—

“These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God, the rolling year
Is full of thee :”

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

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

(¹⁸) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER,
EDINBURGH.

(CHAMBERS, 1852, in part, and here completed.)†

DUMFRIES, Feb. 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am half angry with you that you are not at any pains to keep squares with our Library here. They

* “They who have been told that Burns was ever a degraded being, who have permitted themselves to believe that his only consolations were those of ‘the opiate guilt applies to grief,’ will do well to pause over this noble letter and judge for themselves. The enemy under which he was destined to sink, had already beaten in the outworks of his constitution when these lines were penned.”—Lockhart’s “Life of Burns.”

† We have been enabled to complete this letter through the politeness of George Wilson, Esq., of Dalmarnock, possessor of the original MS.

complain much of your not attending properly to their orders ; and, but for the exertions of Mr Lewars, a young man whom I once introduced to you, they had applied elsewhere. Apropos, the first volume of Dalrymple's Memoirs, Mr Lewars had the ill-luck to get spoiled in his possession, which unless he can replace will bring him in for the whole book. It was published, I think, in separate volumes, so that, with a little industry, you may possibly be able to supply him. Mr Wallace, the gentleman who will deliver this, can inform you of the edition, &c.

Now that business is over, how are you ? and how do you weather this accursed time ? God only knows what will be the consequence ; but in the meantime, the country—at least our part of it—is still progressive to the devil. For my part, I “jouk and let the jaw flee o'er.” As my hopes in this world are but slender, I am turning rapidly devotee, in the prospect of sharing largely in the world to come.

How is old, sinful Smellie coming on with this world ?—for as to the other, I suppose he has given that up. Is there any talk of his second volume ? If you meet with my much valued old friend, Colonel Dunbar, of the Crochallan Fencibles, remember me most affectionately to him. Alas ! not unfrequently, when my heart is in a wandering humor, I live past scenes over again : to my mind's eye, you, Dunbar, Cleghorn, Cunningham, &c., present their friendly phizes, and my bosom aches with tender recollections,—Adieu,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(^) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, MUSIC ENGRAVER,
EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, in part, and here completed.) *

MY DEAR SIR,—I send you, by my friend Mr Wallace, forty-one songs for your 5th Volume. Mr Clarke has also a good many, if he have not, with his usual indolence, *cast them at the cocks*. I have still a good parcel amongst my hands in scraps and fragments; so that I hope we will make shift with our last volume.

You should have heard from me long ago; but over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed tunes, I have, all this winter, been plagued with low spirits and blue devils; so that I have almost hung my harp upon the willow trees.

I have got an old Highland durk for which I have great veneration, as it once was the durk of Lord Balmerino. It fell into bad hands who stripped it of the silver mounting, as well as the knife and fork. I have some thoughts of sending it to your care to get it mounted anew. Our friend Clarke owes me an account, somewhere about a pound, which would go a good way in paying the expense. I remember you once settled an account in this way before; and as you still have money matters to settle with him, you might accommodate us both.—I do not, my dear Sir, wish you to do this; and I beg you will not hint it to Mr Clarke; if we do it at all, I will break it to him myself. My best compliments to your worthy old father and your better half.—Yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, [Feb.] 1794.

* From the original MS. in the British Museum. Cromeck had omitted a portion, and incorporated with it part of another letter given at page 90, *supra*.

(²) TO MR ALEXANDER FINDLATER,
SUPERVISOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, [Feb.] 1794.

SIR,—Inclosed are the two schemes.* I would not have troubled you with the Collector's one, but for suspicion lest it be not right. Mr Erskine promised me to make it right, if you will have the goodness to shew him how. As I have no copy of the scheme for myself, and the alterations being very considerable from what it was formerly, I hope that I shall have access to this scheme I send you, when I come to face up my new books. *So much for schemes.*—And that no scheme to betray a FRIEND, or mislead a STRANGER; to seduce a YOUNG GIRL, or rob a HEN-ROOST; to subvert LIBERTY, or bribe an EXCISEMAN; to disturb the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, or annoy a GOSSIPING; to overthrow the credit of ORTHODOXY, or the authority of OLD SONGS; to oppose *your wishes*, or frustrate *my hopes*—MAY PROSPER, is the sincere wish and prayer of

ROB^T. BURNS.

(¹²) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE in part, and here completed.)†

DUMFRIES, 3d March 1794.

Since I wrote you the last lugubrious sheet, I have not had time to write you further. When I say that I had

* This may have some connexion with the district alterations proposed by Burns in his letter to Mr Graham of January preceding. Mr Findlater was just one year older than our Bard: we have seen a letter from him to John Corbet, Esq., Collector of Excise, Dundee, dated Glasgow, 26th Oct. 1839, in which he writes—"I am sadly broke down in health of late, and evidently hastening to that 'bourne from which no traveller returns.'" He died 4th Dec. 1839, aged 81.

† From the original MS. in possession of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq., Edinburgh.

not time ; that, as usual, means that the three demons Indolence, Business, and Ennui, have so completely shared my hours among them as not to leave me a five minutes' fragment to take up a pen in.

Thank heaven, I feel my spirits buoying upwards with the renovating year. Now I shall in good earnest take up Thomson's songs. I daresay he thinks I have used him unkindly, and, I must own, with too much appearance of truth ; though, if offences come only from the heart, I assure him that I am innocent. Apropos, do you know the much admired old Highland air called "The Sutor's Dochter ?" It is a first-rate favorite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it you, set as I think it should be, and as it was sung with great applause in many fashionable groups by Major Robertson, of Lude, who was here with his corps.* By the way, if you do not know him, let me beg of you, as you would relish a high acquisition to your social happiness, to get acquainted with him. He always, every time I had the very great pleasure of being in his company, reminded me of a forcible saying of Charlie Caldwell, a drunken carrier in Ayr :— Charles had a *cara sposa* after his own heart, who used to take caup out with him, till neither could see the other ;

* See this song and relative note at page 166, Vol. III., where we ventured to suggest that Mrs Walter Riddell was its intended heroine. Many of our poet's lyrics, however, were handily employed in paying double compliments throughout the course of his various tender attachments. At one of the Ayr festivals on the occasion of the poet's centenary celebration, Professor Traill, in giving a toast, produced a copy of this song in the bard's holograph, in which the closing stanza gives the heroineship to Jean Lorimer, thus :—

" If it winna, canna be
That thou for thine may chuse me,
Let me, Jeanie, quickly die,
Still trusting that thou lo'es me—
Jeanie, let me quickly die,
Still trusting that thou lo'es me."

then those honest genii of old Scottish social life ("reaming swats" used to transport the tender pair beyond the bounds of sober joy, to the reign of rapture!)—the ardent lover would grapple the yielding fair to his bosom:—"Marget, ye're a glory to God, and the delight o' my soul!"

As I cannot in conscience tax you with the postage of a packet, I must keep this bizarre melange of an epistle until I find the chance of a private conveyance. Here follows the song I have mentioned:—

SONG.

Tune—“The Sutor’s Dochter.”

Wilt thou be my Dearie ?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
O wilt thou let me cheer thee ! &c.

(Page 166, Vol. III.)

There is one commission that I must trouble you with. I lately lost a valuable seal, a present from a departed friend, which vexes me much.* I have gotten one of your Highland pebbles which I fancy would make a very decent one, and I want to cut my armorial bearings on it; will you be so obliging as enquire what will be the expense of such a business? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all; but I have invented one for myself, so, you know I will be chief of the name; and, by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These however I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald, and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly-bush, seeded, proper, in base; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colors, a wood-lark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes: round the top of the crest, "Wood-Notes

* Probably the seal, already more than once referred to, having for device a *heart* transpierced by cross darts.

Wild ;" at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, " Better a wee bush than nae bield." By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters in Arcadia, but a *Stock* and *Horn*, and a *Club*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the "Gentle Shepherd." By the bye, do you know Allan ? He must be a man of very great genius—Why is he not more known ?—Has he no patrons ? or, do " Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy " on him ? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of the noblest pastoral in the world ; and dear as it was, I mean dear as to my pocket, I would have bought it ; but was told it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the only artist who has hit genuine pastoral costume. What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and encallous the heart so ? I think that were I as rich as the sun, I would be as generous as day ; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than every other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a bird-lime quality to the possessor, at which the man in native poverty, would have revolted. What has led me to this, is the idea of so much merit as Mr Allan possesses, and such riches as a nabob, or government contractor possesses, and why do not they form a mutual league ? Let Wealth shelter and cherish unprotected Merit, and the gratitude and celebrity of that merit will richly repay the outlay.

March 22.*

In fact, I am writing you a journal, and not a letter.

* This letter is now, for the first time placed in its proper chronology. Currie's date is March 1792 ; Chambers shifted it forward to 1793 ; but internal as well as extraneous evidence proves our date to be the proper one. George Thomson, in writing to the poet on 17 April 1794, refers to the present letter, as well as that of 25 Feb. 1794 addressed to Cunningham, which that gentleman, owing to family distress, had delayed to shew him.

A bustle of business has laid my epistolary pen aside in silence, since I took it up last to you.

I have just received a letter from Thomson which has filled me with self-reproaches. I will directly, and in good earnest, set about his work. I am sorry I did not know him when I was in Edinburgh; but I will tell you a plot which I have been contriving: you and he shall in the course of this summer, meet me Half-way; that is, at the "Bield Inn;"* and there we will pour out a Drink Offering before the Lord, and enter into a solemn League and Covenant, never to be broken nor forgotten.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward loon is he :
Wha first beside his chair shall fa'
He is the King amang us THREE.

ROB^T. BURNS.

On the 1st of April 1794, the mansion house and grounds of Woodley Park (our poet's recent visit to which had been productive of so much sorrow to him,) were advertised for sale;† and upon the 21st of that month, his warm-hearted friend, the Laird of Glenriddell and Friars Carse breathed his last. As already observed, no opportunity of effecting a reconciliation between them had presented itself, yet the poet, generously forgetting everything but the kindness and worth of the deceased, composed a prompt poetical tribute to his memory, which appeared in the *Dumfries Times*, of the same date with the public announcement of his death. (See the Sonnet on that occasion at page 185, Vol. III.)

Burns, feeling some uneasiness about the ultimate fate of a manuscript volume of his poems which had been deposited by him

* Such a meeting as is here proposed never took place. The *Bield Inn* and the *Crook Inn* are each pretty closely situated on the highroad, exactly half-way between Edinburgh and Dumfries, near Tweedsmuir in Peeblesshire.

† Mr Walter Riddell seems to have been a fast-living squire. At his brother's death, he inherited Friars Carse, and that estate was likewise advertised for sale in June following.

in the library of his deceased friend, addressed the following letter concerning it, to a sister of Mrs Riddell at Friars Carse. The companion volume of his Letters, intended for the same library, had evidently remained undelivered when the intimacy betwixt the two friends was suddenly interrupted.

(¹) TO MISS ——,

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, May 1794.

MADAM,—Nothing short of a kind of absolute necessity could have made me trouble you with this letter. Except my ardent and just esteem for your sense, taste, and worth, every sentiment arising in my breast, as I put pen to paper to you, is painful. The scenes I have past with the friend of my soul, and his amiable connections ! The wrench at my heart to think that he is gone, for ever gone from me, never more to meet in the wanderings of a weary world ! and the cutting reflection of all, that I had most unfortunately, though most undeservedly, lost the confidence of that soul of worth, ere it took its flight !

These, Madam, are sensations of no ordinary anguish.— However, you also may be offended with some *imputed* improprieties of mine ; sensibility you know I possess, and sincerity none will deny me.

To oppose those prejudices which have been raised against me is not the business of this letter. Indeed it is a warfare I know not how to wage. The powers of positive Vice I can in some degree calculate, and against direct Malevolence I can be on my guard ; but who can estimate the fatuity of giddy Caprice, or ward off the unthinking mischief of precipitate Folly ?

I have a favor to request of you, Madam ; and of your sister Mrs Robt. Riddell, through your means. You know that at the wish of my late friend, I made a collection of

all my trifles in verse which I had ever written. They are many of them local, some of them puerile and silly, and all of them unfit for the public eye. As I have some little fame at stake, a fame that I trust may live, when the hate of those who “watch for my halting,” and the contumelious sneer of those whom accident has made my superiors, will, with themselves be gone to the regions of oblivion ; I am uneasy now for the fate of those manuscripts.—Will Mrs Riddell have the goodness to destroy them, or return them to me ? As a pledge of friendship they were bestowed ; and that circumstance indeed was all their merit. Most unhappily for me, that merit they no longer possess, and I hope that Mrs Riddell’s goodness, which I well know, and ever will revere, will not refuse this favour to a man whom she once held in some degree of estimation.*

With the sincerest esteem I have the honor to be,
Madam, &c.,

R. B.

(¹) TO DAVID M'CULLOCH, ESQ., ARDWELL,
GATEHOUSE.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)†

MY DEAR SIR,—My long projected journey through your country is at last fixed ; and on Wednesday next, if you have nothing of more importance than take a saunter down to Gatehouse, about two or three o’clock, I shall be happy to take a draught of M’Kune’s best with you. Collector

* The reader has seen from the article on the Glenriddell MSS. in the Appendix to Vol. V. that the volume was returned to him as desired.

† We collate this letter from the poet’s holograph in the British Museum. The reader will understand that it is addressed to the young gentleman who related the affecting anecdote of Burns, on the occasion of a County Ball in Dumfries, so effectively told by Lockhart. That incident is set down by Chambers as having occurred in connexion with the King’s birthday festivities in the early part of this very month, June 1794.

Syme will be at Glen's about that time, and will meet us about dish-of-tea-hour. Syme goes also to Kerrochtree; and let me remind you of your kind promise to accompany me there. I will need all the friends I can muster, for I am indeed ill at ease whenever I approach your Honorable and Right Honorable. Yours sincerely, ROB^T. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, 21st June 1794.

(³⁰) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

CASTLE DOUGLAS, 25th June 1794.

Here in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may.—Solitary confinement, you know, is Howard's favourite idea of reclaiming sinners; so let me consider by what fatality it happens, that I have so long been exceeding sinful as to neglect the correspondence of the most valued friend I have on earth. To tell you that I have been in poor health, will not be excuse enough, though it is true. I am afraid I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. My medical friends threaten me with a flying gout; but I trust they are mistaken.

I am just going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I paced along the road. The subject is LIBERTY: You know, my honored friend, how dear the theme is to me. I design it as an irregular ode for General Washington's birth-day. After having mentioned the degeneracy of other kingdoms, I come to Scotland thus:

“Thee, Caledonia, thy wild heaths among,” &c.

See page 196, Vol. III.

You will probably have another scrawl from me in a stage or two. R. B

(48) TO MRS M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

(STEWART, 1802).

CASTLE DOUGLAS, 25th June 1794.

BEFORE you ask me why I have not written you, first let me be informed by you, *how* I shall write you? “In friendship,” you say; and I have many a time taken up my pen to try an epistle of “friendship” to you; but it will not do: ‘tis like Jove grasping a pop-gun, after having wielded thunder. When I take up the pen, recollection ruins me. Ah! my ever dearest Clarinda! Clarinda! What a host of memory’s tenderest offspring crowd on my fancy at that sound! But I must not indulge that subject. You have forbidden it.

I am extremely happy to learn that your health is re-established, and that you are once more fit to enjoy that satisfaction in existence which health alone can give us. My old friend Ainslie has indeed been kind to you. I had a letter from him a while ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients, that I could scarce bear to read it, and have not yet answered it. He is a good honest fellow, and *can* write a friendly letter, which would do equal honor to his head and his heart, as a whole sheaf of his letters which I have by me will witness; and though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach *now*, as she did *then*, when he first honored me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground I have a right to.

You would laugh were you to see me where I am just now. Would to Heaven you were here to laugh with me, though I am afraid that crying would be our first employment. Here am I set, a solitary hermit, in the solitary

room of a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine by me, as grave and as stupid as an owl, but like that owl, still faithful to my old song ; in confirmation of which, my dear Mrs Mac., here is your good health ! May the hand-waled benisons o' Heaven bless your bonie face ; and the wratch wha skellies at your welfare, may the auld tinkler deil get him, to clout his rotten heart ! Amen.

You must know, my dearest Madam, that these now many years, wherever I am, in whatever company, when a married lady is called as a toast, I constantly give you ; but as your name has never passed my lips, even to my most intimate friend, I give you by the name of "Mrs Mac." This is so well known among my acquaintances, that when any married lady is called for, the toast-master will say— "O we need not ask him who it is : here's Mrs Mac. !" I have also, among my convivial friends, set on foot a round of toasts, which I call a round of Arcadian Shepherdesses ; that is a round of favorite ladies, under female names celebrated in ancient song ; and then you are my "Clarinda." So, my lovely Clarinda, I devote this glass of wine to a most ardent wish for your happiness.

In vain would Prudence, with decorous sneer,
Point out a censuring world, and bid me fear :
Above that world on wings of love I rise,
I know its worst, and can that worst despise.
"Wrong'd, injur'd, shunn'd, unpitied, unredrest ;
The mock'd quotation of the scorner's jest."
Let Prudence's direst bodements on me fall,
Clarinda, rich reward ! o'erpays them all.

I have been rhyming a little of late, but I do not know if they are worth postage.

Tell me what you think of the following Monody.

MONODY ON A LADY, FAMED FOR HER CAPRICE.

See page 177, Vol. III.

The subject of the foregoing is a woman of fashion in

this country, with whom at one period I was well acquainted. By some scandalous conduct to me, and two or three other gentlemen here as well as me, she steered so far to the north of my good opinion, that I have made her the theme of several ill-natured things. The following epigram, struck me the other day as I passed by her carriage.

If you rattle along like your Mistress's tongue,
Your speed would outstrip the dart ;
But a fly for your load, you'll break down on the road,
If your stuff be as rotten's her heart.

R. B.

The above letter appears to be the very last which our bard addressed to this lady—the “Clarinda” of former years. She survived “Sylvander” naerly half a century, her death having occurred on 22nd October 1841 at her house in Calton Hill, while she was in her eighty-third year. The last reference to Burns which is found in her private Journal is dated about ten years before her death, and reads thus:—“6th Dec. 1831.—This day I never can forget. Parted with Burns in the year 1791, never more to meet in this world. Oh, may we meet in heaven !”

Referring to the closing portion of the foregoing letter, in which Burns has taken the pains to transcribe the very bitter and ungallant satires he had been induced to compose against Mrs Walter Riddell, Robert Chambers thus remarks:—“How astounding is it to find that the bard could think of exhibiting such effusions to another female ! Strange that the generous heart which never failed to have ruth on human woe—which felt even for ‘the ourie cattle and the silly sheep’—which glowed with patriotic fire, and disdained everything like a sordid or shabby action, should have condescended to expressions of coarse and rancorous feeling against a woman, and one who had shown him many kindnesses ! But yet such was Burns—the irritable genius as well as the humane man.” That lady, however, as the reader will soon find, was not slow to forgive and forget those impetuous outbursts of spleen and wounded pride, of which he

had made her the victim. With the tenderest consideration she thus became his advocate when he could no longer defend himself:—" His sensations of pique took their measure of asperity from the overflowings of the opposite sentiments which preceded them; and these latter regained their ascendancy in his bosom on the return of calmer reflection. He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and *his* avowal was a reparation."

(⁹) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER.

AT JOHNSON & CO., MUSIC SHOP, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I thank you for your kind present of poor Riddell's Book.† Depend upon it that your fifth volume shall not be forgotten. In the meantime, I have gotten you two new subscribers, Patrick Heron, Esquire of Kerrochtree, and Major Heron of Kerrochtree. Please put up two sets of your four volumes, and direct them as above, and leave them at Mr Heron's, George Square. Please do it on receipt of this, as there will be a carrier from Kerrochtree in Edinburgh this week.

I have just been getting three or four songs for your book. Pray, will you let me know how many, and what are the songs Urbani has borrowed from your Museum?

Yours,

R. B.

June 29th 1794.

* From the poet's holograph in the British Museum.

† A posthumous work by Mr Robert Riddell of Glenriddell—a "collection of Scots, Galwegian, and Border Tunes."

(1) TO CAPTAIN JOHN HAMILTON, DUMFRIES.

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

[July 1794.]

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

With sincerest gratitude and most respectful esteem, I have the honor to be, Sir, your very humble servt.,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(15) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)‡

[DUMFRIES, Oct. 1794.]

MY DEAR HILL,—By a carrier of yesterday, Henry Osborn by name, I sent you a kippered Salmon, which I trust you

* This rather painful letter, the original of which was in the possession of the late John Adam, Esq., Greenock, appears to be a reply to a craving demand made by the poet's former landlord for some arrears of rent which had been contracted. We shall hear more of this matter early in 1795.

† The reference here apparently is to "Crombie's bill," in the letter to Mr Gracie the banker, page 395, Vol. V.

‡ From the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, New York, Sep. 1848.

will duly receive, and which I also trust will give you many a toothful of satisfaction. If you have the confidence to say that there is anything of the kind in all your great city superior to this in true kipper relish and flavor, I will be revenged by—not sending you another next season. In return, the first party of friends that dine with you (provided that your fellow travellers, and my trusty and well beloved veterans in intimacy, Messrs Ramsay and Cameron,* be of the party,) about that time in the afternoon when a relish or devil, becomes grateful, give them two or three slices of the kipper, and drink a bumper to your friends in Dumfries. Moreover, by last Saturday's Fly, I sent you a hare, which I hope came, and carriage free, safe to your hospitable mansion and social table. So much for business.

How do you like the following pastoral which I wrote the other day, for a tune that I dare say you well know ?

CA' THE YOWES TO THE KNOWES.

page 201, Vol. III.

And how do you like the following ?

ON SEEING MRS KEMBLE IN YARICO.

Kemble, thou cur'st my unbelief
Of Moses and his rod ;
At Yarico's sweet notes of grief,
The rock with tears had flow'd.

Or this ?

ON W—— R——, ESQUIRE.

So vile was poor Wat.—such a miscreant slave,
That the worms even damn'd him when laid in his grave ;
“In his skull there is famine !” a starv'd reptile cries ;
“And his heart it is a poison !” another replies.

* Mr Ramsay was the printer of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, and Mr Cameron was a wholesale stationer and paper manufacturer, brother to the Rev. Wm. Cameron of Kirknewton. These two gentlemen, along with Mr Hill, had been recently visiting Burns at Dumfries.

My best good wishes to Mrs Hill, and believe me to be,
ever yours,*

R. BURNS.

VISIT OF PROFESSOR J. WALKER TO BURNS IN NOV. 1794.

This gentleman, afterwards Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow, had, as the reader is aware, been introduced to the poet by Dr Blacklock in Edinburgh early in the year

* This being the last letter addressed by the poet to Mr Peter Hill, excepting a short note in January 1796, we shall take this opportunity to introduce a brief biographical notice of this cherished correspondent of Burns. He was born in November 1754, and thus was older than our poet by upwards of four years. His father was Mr James Hill, collector of shore dues in Dysart, whence Peter removed with his mother to Leith after his father's death, about 1770. After some service in the nursery and seed shop of Eagle & Henderson, High Street, he was engaged as principal clerk to Mr Creech, the bookseller, about 1784; and in four years thereafter he commenced the bookselling trade on his own account, taking with him Archibald Constable as his first apprentice. From his shop in Parliament Square he removed to the Cross, south side of the street, in 1790.

His wife, who is frequently mentioned by Burns in the correspondence, was Eliza Lindsay, daughter of Sir John Lindsay, second son of Sir Alexander Lindsay, Bart. of Evilick, in Perthshire. A sister of her father was Mrs Murray of Henderland, mother of the late Lord Murray; and another sister was the wife of Allan Ramsay the painter. Peter Hill's marriage took place in 1780, and a large family was the result, of whom Peter, the eldest son, followed his father's business. The readers of "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk" will be familiar with the author's complimentary notice of young Hill's business as well as social habits. Margaret, the eldest daughter, was married to Frank Bridges in 1805, and several members of her family still survive. Two of Peter Hill's daughters are yet alive, namely, ELIZA, now the widow of Provost Normand of Dysart; and LINDSAY HILL, born in 1803, and now the widow of the late George Wilson, Esq. of Dalmarnock, who died in 1861. To his son and namesake we are indebted for access to the manuscripts of Burns's letters addressed to his grandfather, Mr Hill, and much of the information in this note.

In reference to Peter Hill's public life in Edinburgh, we find he was elected "Captain of Orange Colours" in October 1794. In 1805 he was appointed City Treasurer; and from 1809 to 1813, during the provostship of Mr Creech, he acted as Treasurer of George Heriot's Hospital. In 1814 he was appointed chief collector of burghal taxes, which post he occupied till near the close of his life. At the age of 83 he died at his house in Randolph Crescent, on 10th February 1837.

1787. They again met at Blair during the poet's Highland tour, Walker being then resident there in the capacity of tutor to some of the younger branches of the Duke of Athole's family. The entry then made by Burns in his Journal is thus favourable to Walker:—"Confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker." In the year 1811 Mr Walker produced a Biography of Burns, from which we have already made several quotations, and towards its close he introduces an interesting narrative of a visit paid by him to the poet in November 1794 (not 1795, as he has erroneously set down). We shall quote the account entire in the narrator's own words.

"Circumstances having led me to Scotland after an absence of (seven) years, during which my intercourse with Burns had been almost suspended, I felt strongly prompted to visit him. For this purpose I went to Dumfries, and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house of one storey.* He was sitting in a window-seat reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that appearance of snugness and seclusion which a student requires. After conversing with him for some time, he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favourite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed to favour one of the candidates at the last borough election.† He repeated also his fragment of an "Ode to Liberty," with marked and peculiar energy, and showed a disposition which, however, was easily repressed, to throw out political remarks of the same nature as those for which he had been repreahended. On finishing our walk, he passed some time with me at the Inn, and I left him early in the evening, to make another visit at some distance from Dumfries.

"On the second morning after, I returned with a friend who was acquainted with the poet, and we found him ready to pass

* The reader has seen at page 78 *supra*, that the poet's house consisted of two storeys and an attic.

† These must have been the Election Ballads of 1790, given at pp. 276, 281, and 298, Vol. II.

a part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion I did not think him quite so interesting as he had appeared at his outset. His conversation was too elaborate ; and his expression weakened by a frequent endeavour to give it artificial strength. He had been accustomed to speak for applause in the circles which he frequented, and seemed to think it necessary, in making the most common remark, to depart a little from the ordinary simplicity of language, and to couch it in something of epigrammatic point. In his praise and censure he was so decisive, as to render a dissent from his judgment, difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good breeding. His wit was not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. Such were the clouds by which the pleasures of the evening were partially shaded, but frequent corruscations of genius were visible between them. When it began to grow late, he showed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor, with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn, and no condition had been distinctly made, though it might easily have been inferred, had the inference been welcome, that he was to consider himself as our guest, nor was it till he saw us worn out, that he departed, about three in the morning, with a reluctance which probably proceeded less from being deprived of our company, than from being confined to his own.

“ Upon the whole, I found this last interview not quite so gratifying as I had expected ; although I discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stand high in the favour of society, or sufficient to account for the mysterious insinuations which I heard against his character. He, on this occasion, drank freely without being intoxicated, a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials ; for if he had tasted liquor in the morning, he must have yielded to the excess of the evening.”

Professor John Wilson—the “ Christopher North ” of criticism and the belles-lettres, made several observations on the above narration which it will be well to quote, by way of antidote to the depressing effect of Walker’s style. We do so, however, in a greatly abridged form :—

“ Is this the spirit in which people with strong propensities for poetry are privileged to write of poets, long after they had been gathered to their rest ? No tenderness—no pity—no respect—no admiration—no gratitude—no softening of heart—no kindling of spirit—no recollection of his final farewell of Robert Burns ! If the interview had not been satisfactory, those two days should have worn to him (who had known Burns in better times) a mournful complexion ; and the more so, if he believed Burns to have been then a ruined man in *character*, which he had once prized above *life*. On the first day the poet conducted his old acquaintance through some of his beautiful haunts, and for his amusement set off some of his electioneering squibs, which are among the best ever composed and, Whiggish as they are, might have tickled a Tory as they jogged along ; but Jos thought them “inferior to his other pieces.” Perhaps they walked as far as Lincluden, where the bard would repeat his famous fragment of an “Ode to Liberty” with “marked and peculiar energy.” The listener ought to have lost his wits, and to have leapt sky-high. But he felt himself called by the voice that sent him on that mission, to rebuke the bard on the banks of his own river ; for “he showed a disposition (which however was easily repressed) to throw out political remarks, of the same nature with those for which he had been reprehended.” What right had Josiah Walker to repress any remarks made, in the confidence of friendship, by Robert Burns ? And what power ? Had Burns chosen it, he could as easily have *squashed* Josiah as thrown him into the Nith.

“The record of the second day is shameful. To ask any person, however insignificant, to your inn, and then, in a private letter, find fault with him for keeping you out of bed, would not be gentlemanly ; but of such offence many years after his death publicly to accuse Burns ! No mention is made of dinner ; therefore we may assume that Burns had dined at home. However, he gave up two days to the service of his friend, and his friend’s friend, and such was his reward. Why did not this dignified personage ‘repress’ Burns’s licentious wit as well as his political opinions ? And if it was ‘not more licentious than is unhappily too venial in higher circles,’ why mention it at all ? Yet this wretched mixture of meanness, worldliness, and morality, inter-

larded with some liberal sentiment, and spiced with spite, absolutely seems intended for a VINDICATION !

“Josiah Walker, who was himself, if we mistake not, for a good many years in the Customs or Excise at Perth, will not allow Burns to have been even a good gauger. He tells us that ‘the Board of Excise had no power to indulge their poetical taste, or their tenderness for him by whom it had been gratified, at the expense of the public. Burns was therefore in a place where he could turn his peculiar endowments to little advantage; and where he could not, without injustice, be preferred to the most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren, who surpassed him in the humble recommendation of exactness, vigilance, and sobriety.’ —Not for worlds would we say a single syllable derogatory from the merits of the Board of Excise. Its desire and its impotency to promote Burns are granted; but of what incorrectness had Burns been guilty, which it would have been criminal in the Board to pardon? By whom, among the ‘most obtuse and uninteresting of his brethren,’ had he been surpassed in exactness, vigilance, or sobriety? Not by a single one. Read the testimony of his supervisor, Mr Findlater, and of James Gray, the teacher of his children, and a close observer of their father’s habits and qualities. Nothing, we repeat, shall tempt us to blame or abuse the Board. But we venture humbly to confess that we do not clearly see that the Board would have been ‘gratifying its tenderness at the expense of the public’ had it, when told by Burns that he was disabled by the hand of God from performing actively the duties of his temporary supervisorship, requested *its maker* to continue him for a few months on his full salary (£70 a year) instead of reducing it to one half—not because he was a genius, a poet, and the author of many immortal productions—but merely because he was a disabled exciseman, and moreover the father of a few mortal children, who with their mother were in want of bread.”

There had been a long cessation in our poet’s supply of lyrical musings for Thomson’s publication, in consequence of an interruption to that work, caused by the war with France. Pleyell who supplied Thomson with the harmonies and accompaniments to the

songs, was held in thraldom by the democrats who ruled his country, and prevented any export of his compositions across the English channel. About the close of August however (a propitious month for the muse of Burns) our poet shewed indications of activity in the song department, and for a whole year thereafter, his communications to Thomson flowed on uninterruptedly. The first of these was **ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY**, which has some excellent stanzas, although it never became a popular song:—

Peace, thy olive wand extend
And bid wild War his ravage end—
Man with brother Man to meet,
And as a brother kindly greet ;
Heav'n shall then with prosperous gales
Fill my sailor's welcome sails,
And to my arms their charge convey—
My sailor lad that's far away.

In explanation of the following letter, Cromeck tell us that Mr Miller, younger of Dalswinton, had represented to Mr Perry, proprietor of the London *Morning Chronicle*, the insufficiency of Burns's salary to meet the outlay consequent on the requirements of his numerous family. They accordingly suggested a plan of settling the poet in London, and Mr Perry made Burns a handsome offer of an annual stipend for the exercise of his talents, in his newspaper. The poet's reasons for refusing that offer are given in this letter.

(²) TO PATRICK MILLER, JUN., ESQ., M.P.

(CROMECK 1808).

DUMFRIES, Nov. 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your offer is indeed truly generous, and most sincerely do I thank you for it; but in my present situation, I find that I dare not accept it. You well know my political sentiments; and were I an insular individual, unconnected with a wife and a family of children, with the most fervid enthusiasm I would have volunteered my services: I then could and would have despised all consequences that might have ensued.

My prospect in the Excise is something; at least it is, encumbered as I am with the welfare, the very existence of near half-a-score of helpless individuals—what I dare not sport with.

In the mean time, they are most welcome to my Ode;* only, let them insert it as a thing they have met with by accident and unknown to me.—Nay, if Mr Perry, whose honor, after your character of him I cannot doubt; if he will give me an address and channel by which any thing will come safe from those spies with which he may be certain that his correspondence is beset, I will now and then send him any bagatelle that I may write. In the present hurry of Europe, nothing but news and politics will be regarded; but against the days of Peace, which heaven send soon, my little assistance may perhaps fill up an idle column of a newspaper. I have long had it in my head to try my hand in the way of little prose essays, which I propose sending into the world through the medium of some newspaper; and should these be worth his while, to these Mr Perry shall be welcome; and all my reward shall be, his treating me with his paper; which, by the bye, to any body who has the least relish for wit, is a high treat indeed. With the most grateful esteem, I am ever, dear Sir, &c.

R. B.

* We have already suggested, at page 197, Vol. III. that the “Ode” here referred to, was not “Bruce’s Address to his Troops” which had already been freely acknowledged and circulated in manuscript by its author; but a later composition, and one which he would be more disposed to see anonymously printed, namely, the “Ode for General Washington’s Birthday.”—(See 194, Vol. III.)

(40) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800).

DUMFRIES, 20th December 1794.*

I HAVE been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country, and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what is become of you, or whether this may reach you at all. God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits. Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poesy, sermon or song. In this last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honor to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English.

December 29th.

Since I began this letter, I have been appointed to act in the capacity of Supervisor here, and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the pre-

* Dr Currie misdated this letter "December 1795;" the true date is rendered obvious by its contents. The period of the temporary Supervisorship is made certain in the correspondence with George Thomson.

sent incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form—a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

A.D. 1795.

(⁴⁰) TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800, continuation of the foregoing letter.)

[Jan. 1, 1795.]

THIS is the season (New-year's day is now my date) of wishing; and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life to you be a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged is my wish for my own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had in early days religion strongly imprinted on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs, or what creed he believes; but I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a firm prop and sure stay in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress; and a never-failing anchor of hope when he looks beyond the grave.

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12th January 1795.

You will have seen our worthy and ingenious friend the Doctor long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him; I have just been reading over again, I daresay for the hundred-and-fiftieth time, his “View of Society and Manners;” and still I read it with delight. His humor is perfectly original: it is neither the humor of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of anybody but Dr Moore. By the bye, you have deprived me of “Zeluco;” remember *that* when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of my laziness. He has paid me a pretty compliment by quoting me in his last publication.*

R. B.

This year opened with the composition of a song which bears the stamp of Burns as eminently as a gold sovereign does the head of the reigning monarch. On or about New Year's Day, the poet commenced a letter to Thomson in which he transcribed his world-famous effusion beginning

“Is there for honest poverty
That hangs his head an' a' that.”

He resumed his letter thus:—“Jan. 15th.—The foregoing has lain by me this fortnight, for want of a spare moment. The Supervisor of Excise here being ill, I have been acting for him, and I assure you I have hardly five minutes to myself,” &c.

These extra duties account for an apparent dearth in his correspondence at this period. We find him, early in February, inditing a song to Thomson from Ecclefechan, where his Excise avocations had led him, and shortly thereafter he became intensely interested in the progress of an Election contest for the representation of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. The brightened prospect held out by a slight rise of salary at this time, seems to have suggested to Burns the duty of remitting part payment of the

* EDWARD, a novel, by John Moore, M.D.

arrears of rent he owed to his generous landlord Captain Hamilton of Allershaw. There exists a holograph fragment which formed the enclosure of that remittance, couched in these terms :

(2) TO CAPTAIN JOHN HAMILTON.

(*Here first published.*)

DUMFRIES, Jan. 1795.

I ENCLOSE you three guineas, and shall soon settle all with you. I shall not mention your goodness to me; it is beyond my power to describe either the feelings of my wounded soul at not being able to pay you as I ought, or the grateful respect with which I have the honor to be, Sir, your deeply obliged humble servant, ROB^T. BURNS.

Of the above, the acknowledgment has been preserved as follows :—

TO MR ROBERT BURNS.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, 30th Jan. 1795.

DEAR SIR,—At same time that I acknowledge the receipt of three guineas to account of house-rent, will you permit me to enter a complaint of a different nature? When you first came here I courted your acquaintance; I wished to see you; I asked you to call in and take a family-dinner now and then, when it suited your convenience.

For more than twelve months, you have never entered my door, but seemed rather shy when we met. This kept me from sending you any further particular invitation.

If I have in any shape offended, or from inadvertency hurt the delicacy of your feelings, tell me so, and I will endeavour to set it to rights.

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

JOHN HAMILTON.

(3) TO CAPTAIN HAMILTON.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

Saturday Morn, [14th Feb. 1795.]

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

Robert Chambers here remarks that Burns sets forth a rather weak and improbable excuse for keeping at a distance from the friendly Captain. His shyness must have arisen partly from “the sense of his obligation as Hamilton’s debtor, and partly from the consciousness that he was under the ban of a large part of respectable society on account of politics, the Riddell quarrell, and his own many imprudences. But on the other hand, the warmth of Hamilton’s letter (so unlike the spirit of the McCulloch anecdote of June 1794) shows tolerably well how Burns was beginning to recover the good graces of the respectables.” Even Maria Riddell about this time made a movement towards a reconciliation with the poet, as several of his letters to her evince.

(12) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

[March, 1795.]

MR BURNS's compliments to Mrs Riddell—is much obliged to her for her polite attention in sending him the book. Owing to Mr B. being at present acting as Supervisor of Excise, a department that occupies his every hour of the day, he has not that time to spare which is necessary for any *belle-lettre* pursuit ; but, as he will in a week or two again return to his wonted leisure, he will then pay that attention to Mrs R.'s beautiful song “To thee, lov'd Nith,” which it so well deserves.*

When *Anacharsis' Travels*† come to hand, which Mrs Riddell mentioned as her gift to the public library, Mr B. will thank her for a reading of it, previous to her sending it to the library, as it is a book he has never seen, and he wishes to have a longer perusal than the regulations of the library allow.

Friday Eve.

P.S.—Mr Burns will be much obliged to Mrs Riddell if she will favor him with a perusal of any of her poetical pieces which he may not have seen.

DUMFRIES, 1795.

* This is an elegant pastoral song which appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, Nov. 1795. It seems pretty certain that Mrs Riddell intended it as a poetical expression of her feelings concerning the recent estrangement between Burns and her. Chambers says that in sending it to him for criticism, the lady seems to have thought it proper “that Burns should, in the way of his art, help to polish the shaft of tender reproach aimed at his own bosom.” Eight lines of it will suffice as a sample :—

“ I love thee, Nith, thy banks and braes,
Though sad Remembrance wakes the tear
For there he rov'd that broke my heart,
Yet to that heart, ah, still how dear !

The flowers of Spring, how gay they bloom'd,
When last with him I wander'd here !
The flowers of Spring have pass'd away
For Wintry horrors dark and drear.”

† See note, page 180 *infra*.

(¹) TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING
CHRONICLE.*

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, 1795.

SIR,—You will see by your subscribers' list, that I have now been about nine months one of that number.

I am sorry to inform you, that in that time, seven or eight of your papers either have never been sent me, or else have never reached me. To be deprived of any one number of the first newspaper in Great Britain for information, ability and independence, is what I can ill brook and bear; but to be deprived of that most admirable oration of the marquis of Lansdowne, when he made the great, though ineffectual attempt, (in the language of the poet, I fear too true), 'to save a SINKING STATE,' † this was a loss which I neither can, nor will forgive you.—That paper, Gentlemen, never reached me, but I demand it of you. I am a BRITON, and must be interested in the cause of LIBERTY:—I am a MAN, and the RIGHTS OF HUMAN NATURE cannot be indifferent to me. However, do not let me mislead you: I am not a man in that situation of life, which, as your subscriber, can be of any consequence to you, in the eyes of those to whom SITUATION OF LIFE ALONE is the criterion of MAN.—I am but a plain tradesman, in this distant, obscure country town; but that humble domicile in which I shelter my wife and children, is the CASTELLUM of a BRITON; and

* Cromeck in a note informs us that a neighbour of the poet's at Dumfries, who was a subscriber to this paper, complained to him of its irregular delivery. "Why don't you," replied Burns, "write to the Editor about it?" The man expressed his inability to do so, and with a view to serve him, the poet wrote the letter in the text, which however was never forwarded.

† The speech referred to was delivered on 30th December 1794.

that scanty hard-earned income which supports them, is as truly my property, as the most magnificent fortune, of the most PUISSANT MEMBER of your HOUSE of NOBLES.

These, Sir, are my sentiments; and to them I subscribe my name: and were I a man of ability and consequence enough to address the PUBLIC, with that name should they appear.—I am, &c.

LOVE-LETTERS DICTATED FOR AN HONEST
FARMER,

WHO HAD NOT LEARNED THE ART OF COURTSHIP.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.*)

MADAM,—What excuse to make for the liberty I am going to assume in this letter, I am utterly at a loss. If the most unfeigned respect for your accomplished worth—if the most ardent attachment—if sincerity and truth—if these, on my part, will in any degree weigh with you, my apology is these, and these alone. Little as I have had the pleasure of your acquaintance, it has been enough to convince me what enviable happiness must be his whom you shall honor with your particular regard, and more than enough to convince me how unworthy I am to offer myself a candidate for that partiality. In this kind of trembling hope, Madam, I intend very soon doing myself the honor of waiting on you, persuaded that however little Miss G—— may be disposed to attend to the suit of a lover as unworthy of her as I am, she is still too good to despise an

* Our readers are indebted to the late Dr Carruthers, of the Inverness Courier, for having picked up these two love-drafts. They still exist in the poet's holograph. The farmer, in his extremity, applied to Burns for a cast of his hand, and, although the letters are rather stiff in manner, we are told that the suit was successful.

honest man, whose only fault is loving her too much for his own peace,—I have the honor to be, Madam, your most devoted humble servant.

DEAR MADAM,—The passion of love had need to be productive of much delight; as where it takes thorough possession of the man, it almost unfits him for anything else. The lover who is certain of an equal return of affection, is surely the happiest of men; but he who is a prey to the horrors of anxiety and dreaded disappointment, is a being whose situation is by no means enviable. Of this, my present experience gives me sufficient proof. To me, amusement seems impertinent, and business intrusion, while you alone engross every faculty of my mind. May I request you to drop me a line, to inform me when I may wait upon you? For pity's sake, do; and let me have it soon. In the meantime allow me, in all the artless sincerity of truth, to assure you that I truly am, my dearest Madam, your ardent lover, and devoted humble servant.*

(¹) TO MR HERON, OF HERON.

(CURRIE, 1800, and CROMEK, 1808.)

[DUMFRIES, *March 1795.*

SIR,—I enclose you some copies of a couple of political ballads, one of which, I believe, you have never seen. Would to Heaven I could make you master of as many votes in the Stewartry! but

* The foregoing letters are composed much in the style of those to Ellison Begbie, of the author's youthful days. In 1852, the original draughts were possessed by Mr Wm. Smith, perfumer, Dumfries.

“Who does the utmost that he can,
Does well, acts nobly—angels could do no more.”

In order to bring my humble efforts to bear with more effect on the foe, I have privately printed a good many copies of both ballads, and have sent them among friends all over the country. To pillory on Parnassus the rank reprobation of character, the utter dereliction of all principle, in a profligate junto which has not only enraged virtue, but violated common decency, which spurns even hypocrisy as paltry iniquity below their daring,—to unmask their flagitiousness in the broadest day, to deliver such over to their merited fate, is surely not merely innocent, but laudable—is not only propriety but virtue. You have already as your auxiliary the sober detestation of mankind on the head of your opponents; and I swear by the lyre of Thalia to muster on your side all the votaries of honest Laughter, and fair, candid Ridicule! I am extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests in a letter which Mr Syme showed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this:—I am on the Supervisor’s list, and as we come on there by precedence, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed *of course*. *Then*, a FRIEND might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the Kingdom which I would like. A Supervisor’s income varies from about £120 to £200, a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed Supervisor, in the common routine, I may be nominated on the Collector’s List: and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A Collectorship varies much, from better than £200 a year to near £1,000. They also come forward by precedence on the

list ; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, or would not be indebted to, a political friend ; at the same time, Sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I shall petition your goodness with the same frankness as I now do myself the honor to subscribe myself, &c. R. B.

The ballads enclosed in the foregoing letter will be found at pp. 254 and 256, Vol. III. The election-contest there celebrated had arisen in consequence of the death of General Stewart, M.P. for the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright in January preceding. The Tory candidate was Mr Thomas Gordon of Balmaghie, supported by Murray of Broughton, and the Earl of Galloway. The Whig candidate was the gentleman above addressed, to whom Burns, in company of John Syme, and Mr David M'Culloch of Ardwell, had paid a visit in June 1794. The election resulted in Mr Heron's favour, but he had not long entered on his parliamentary duties when a dissolution occurred, which brought on a fresh struggle in 1796. Burns, although then on his death-bed, produced a bitter ballad against Mr Heron's opponents ; but he did not survive to learn the result of the election, which was also in favour of Mr Heron. Alas ! for the poet's hopes of Excise promotion from that quarter, and alas ! for the instability of human affairs ; the result of that election was challenged and subjected to the judgment of a committee by whose award Mr Heron was unseated. The decision seems to have broken his heart, for he died on his way down to Scotland.

(¹⁰) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER,
LAWNMARKET, EDINBURGH.

WITH A PARCEL.

(*Here first published.*)*

DUMFRIES, *March 1795.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—For Hyslop's plate, many thanks for your goodness: I have made him a present of it—a present he well deserved at my hand. Thank you likewise for the copies of my Volunteer Ballad: our friend has done indeed well! 'Tis chaste and beautiful; I have not met with any thing has pleased me so much. You know I am no connoisseur; but that I am an amateur will be allowed me. I return you your packet of Songs; and in a day or two, by post, expect to hear at large from yours affectionately,

R. BURNS.

(¹) TO RICHARD A. OSWALD, ESQ., OF
AUCHINCRUIVE,
ENCLOSING SOME ELECTION BALLADS.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, *23d April 1795.*

SIR,—You see the danger of patronising the rhyming tribe: you flatter the poet's vanity—a most potent ingredient in the composition of a son of rhyme—by a little notice; and he, in return, persecutes your good nature with his acquaint-

* From the original MS. in the British Museum. The "plate" supplied to Mr Hyslop, landlord of the Globe Tavern, seems to have been an engraved Bill-heading. The volunteer ballad, will be found at page 272, Vol. III., followed by its melody composed by Mr Stephen Clarke. Burns had joined a Volunteer corps, being one of two companies which were raised in Dumfries, early in 1795.

ancee. In these days of volunteering, I have come forward with my services as poet-laureate to a highly respectable political party, of which you are a distinguished member. The enclosed are, I hope, only a beginning to the songs of triumph which you will earn in that contest.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged and devoted servant,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(1) TO MR JOHN EDGAR, EXCISE OFFICE,
EDINBURGH.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)*

SIR,—I understand that I am to incur censure by the Wine account of this District not being sent in. Allow me to state the following circumstances to you, which, if they do not apologise for, will at least extenuate, my part of the offence.

The General Letter was put into my hands sometime about the beginning of this month, as I was then in charge of the District, Mr Findlater being indisposed. I immediately, as far as in my power, made a survey of the Wine Stocks; and where I could not personally survey, I wrote the officer of the Division. In a few days more, and previous to collection-week, Mr Findlater resumed charge; and as, in the course of collection, he would have both the officers by him, and the old books among his hands, it very naturally occurred to me the Wine account business would rest with him. At the close of that week, I got a note from the collector that the account-making-up was thrown on my hands. I immediately set about it; but one officer's books (James Graham of Sanquhar) not being at hand, I

* The original MS. of this important letter was recently possessed by John Adam, Esq., Greenock, now deceased.

wrote him to send me them by first post. Mr Graham has not thought proper to pay the least attention to my request, and to-day I have sent an express for his stock-book.

This, Sir, is a plain state of facts ; and if I must still be thought censurable, I hope it will be considered that this officiating job being my first, I cannot be supposed to be completely master of all the etiquette of the business.

If my supposed neglect is to be laid before the Honourable Board, I beg you will have the goodness to accompany the complaint with this letter. I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROB^T. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, 25 April 1795.

This is the second time in course of the poet's correspondence (see June 1791, Letter to A. Findlater) in which he pleads guilty of some degree of remissness in his Excise duties. Dr Waddell has pointed out another instance, recorded in Alex. Findlater's "Round Diary, 10th June to 21st July, 1792," where Burns is "admonished" for some inadvertences which are thus palliated in the Supervisor's report : "An increase of stock wanting permit on the *first* of 7 gallons, and on the *second* of 6 gallons foreign red wine not seized—probably a miscalculation of this large stock, &c., with some trivial inadvertences which I have marked with my initials. Mr Burns promises, and I believe will bestow, due attention in future ; which indeed he is very rarely deficient in." Robert Chambers has referred to another instance of "admonishment" administered to our poet, similarly recorded by Findlater in his *Round Diary*, June 7th to July 18th 1795. We have been favoured with a perusal of that document by its present possessor C. C. Maxwell, Esq., Dundee ; along with some correspondence between Chambers and its *then* possessor, the late John Corbet, Esq., Collector of Excise, Dundee. Mr Corbet wrote, in Dec. 1853 : "The within diary is the only one of Findlater's in my possession. It is accompanied by a fragment of earlier date, in shape of a characteristic letter from the Bard to his accomplished Supervisor. It is dated from Ellisland, and shews that their intercourse was not always official. But

Findlater became aged and devout, and would not give me the part with his address attached." (See Vol. V. page 310).

Chambers, in returning to Mr Corbet the *Diary* of Findlater, says, "It is curious as showing Burns, the only one of a dozen officers, under any censure, and, as might be expected, that he was not quite the most perfect gauger in the world, as well as the most brilliant poet." We note that in the *Diary* of 1795 Burns is set down as being "35," instead of 36, years old, with *eight* of a family. At that date he had only five lawful children; but with the *Globe Tavern* little Bess added, the parents would complete the number, *eight* of a family; the age of John Lewars is there recorded as being 30, and Findlater's is set down at 37.

(¹) TO JOHN SYME, ESQ., DISTRIBUTOR OF STAMPS,

ENCLOSING A SONG.*

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, May 1795.]

YOU know that among other high dignities, you have the honor to be my supreme court of critical judicature, from which there is no appeal. I enclose you a song which I composed since I saw you, and I am going to give you the history of it. Do you know that among much that I admire in the characters and manners of those great folks whom I have now the honor to call my acquaintances—the

* This was "O wat ye wha's in yon toun," given at page 251, Vol. III., a song originally intended to celebrate the poet's own Jean; but whether she was Mrs Burns, or Jean Lorimer, it is needless to enquire. By changing "Jeanie" into *Lucy* it was made to fit his purpose of paying a compliment to the young and beautiful wife of an Ayrshire gentleman of great wealth, who might have an opportunity of doing the author some service. Mr Oswald was married to Miss Lucy Johnston of Hilton, in April 1793; but she soon fell into declining health, and died of consumption at Lisbon in January 1798, in her 31st year.

Oswald family, for instance, there is nothing charms me more than Mr Oswald's unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman? Did you ever, my dear Syme, meet with a man who owed more to the Divine Giver of all good things than Mr O.? A fine fortune, a pleasing exterior, self-evident amiable dispositions, and an ingenuous upright mind; and that informed too, much beyond the usual run of young fellows of his rank and fortune: and to all this, such a woman!—but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying anything adequate.* In my song I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings on seeing, in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Lucy. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I, in my first fervor, thought of sending it to Mrs Oswald, but, on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect might, from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification or other of that servility which my soul abhors. Do let me know, some convenient moment ere the worthy family leave town, that I *with propriety* may wait on them. In the circle of the fashionable herd, those who come either to show their own consequence, or to borrow consequence from the visit—in such a mob I will not appear; mine is a different errand.—Yours,

ROB^T. BURNS.

* Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, has left a MS. note on this subject, much too good to be withheld here:—"This song celebrates an early friend of mine, Mrs Oswald, born Lucy Johnstone. One of the stanzas is nothing but 'Were I laid on Greenland's coast,' in *the Beggar's Opera*. At the time Burns wrote these verses, the fair Lucinda was well turned of thirty, and ten years older than her husband; but still a charming creature. In truth, however, she looked like the mother of her husband, who had a remarkably youthful appearance. Venus and Cupid! I have seen and been acquainted with all Burns's ladies whom he has celebrated, saving Miss Alexander and Mrs M'Lehose, and I could describe their dresses as well as their features."

To this year (1795) has been assigned by previous editors the composition of the severe verses “On the destruction of the Woods of Drumlanrig”* given at page 10, Vol. III., which—on the supposition that they were really written by Burns—we ventured to record at an earlier date. In a MS. correspondence between Cromeck, while editing his “Reliques of Burns,” and Mr Creech of Edinburgh, which we lately perused, some grave doubt is thrown on the authenticity of that poem. Mr Cromeck, in replying to his correspondent, thus writes:—“You mention a poem said to be by Burns, called ‘Nith Personified’ I have it not. I think I have seen something of this kind conveying satire to the Duke of Queensberry, for cutting down and selling trees; but, as I was told it was really written by Mr M’Kenzie, I did not presume to meddle with it.”

(⁴) TO WM. CREECH, ESQ., PUBLISHER,
EDINBURGH.

(CROMECK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, 30th May [1795.]

SIR,—I had intended to have troubled you with a long letter, but at present the delightful sensations of an omnipotent Toothache† so engross all my inner man, as to put it out of my power even to write nonsense. However, as in duty bound, I approach my Bookseller with an offering in my hand—a few poetic clinches and a song. To expect any other kind of offering from the Rhyming

* The reader may be reminded that it first appeared in the *Scots Magazine* of Feb. 1803. In 1817 it was included in a privately printed book, entitled “Poems on several occasions” which were understood to be chiefly the productions of collector Dunlop of Greenock.

† Cromeck’s erroneous date to this letter (May 1789) has led the poet’s chronologists all astray about the composition of his “Address to the Toothache.” Seeing that Burns here alludes to suffering from that complaint, they have assumed the date of the letter to be that of the poem, which was really composed in 1786. Burns complains of toothache in a letter to George Thomson about this very period.

Tribe, would be to know them much less than you do. I do not pretend that there is much merit in these *morceaux*, but I have two reasons for sending them; *primo*, they are mostly ill-natured, so are in unison with my present feelings, while fifty troops of infernal spirits are riding post from ear to ear along my jaw-bones; and *secondly*, they are so short that you cannot leave off in the middle, and so hurt my pride in the idea that you found any work of mine too heavy to get through.

I have a request to beg of you, but conjure you—by all your wishes, and by all your hopes, that the Muse will spare the satiric wink in the moment of your foibles; that she will warble the song of rapture round your Hymeneal couch; and that she will shed on your turf the honest tear of elegiac gratitude! Grant my request as speedily as possible: send me by the very first fly or coach for this place, three copies of the last edition of my Poems, which place to my account.

Now, may the good things of Prose, and the good things of Verse, come among thy hands until they be filled with the *good things of this Life*, prayeth ROB^T. BURNS.

Cromek recorded this letter, most erroneously, as having been written from Ellisland in May 1789. We have been privileged to see the original MS. in possession of Mr Creech's representatives, and find that although the *year* is not given, the poet has most distinctly written "Dumfries, 30th May." Among the "poetic clenches" (seventeen in number) are included several epigrams which are known to have been produced during our author's latter years, and in particular, the lines "On seeing Mrs Kemble in Yarico, 24th October 1794." The absolute certainty of *our* date is proved by the song inclosed in the letter, namely, "My Chloris mark how green the groves," which was written for Thomson in November 1794.

We have also been favoured with a perusal of several letters

addressed by Cromeek to Creech in 1808, in which he tries to frighten the Bookseller to give him some of the poet's manuscripts "to be substituted for several severe remarks on your conduct towards him, which I am about to print and could wish to suppress." By this means he squeezed out of Mr Creech copies of the Selkirk letter with the admired poem "Willie's Awa," and also the present one with its seventeen epigrams. In one of these letters he thus writes:—"It is not my intention to give the least offence to living characters—I mean, to such as are worthy of respect; those who are not, Burns has gibbeted them, and I shall not presume to cut them down. To give you my opinion candidly, though I think most highly of Dr Currie's performance, yet I must say that the fear of giving offence has led him to disfigure the work most strangely. He has cut away one of Burns's testicles entire; but I hope it will never be said of me that I lent a hand to complete the operation.

"To say nothing of whole letters, I have cut away passages of letter after letter that relate to you, till my volume is considerably decreased in its size; and I do assure you, you are the only person to whom I have acted so delicately, *with the exception of a few letters of a very private nature addressed by the poet to Mrs Burns.* You will be surprised when I say that such has been my industry, and the ardour of my enthusiasm, that Burns scarcely ever wrote a Paper of which either the Original or a copy of it has not fallen into my hands—even to his very Journals and private Memorandum-books."

Of the letter in the text (page 90 *Reliques*) Cromeek writes to Creech:—"The whole strain is so much in your favour, and at the same time the compliment is so delicate, that I declare to you, the gentlemen here to whom I have read it are quite *jealous*. I don't know whether it is not as characteristic of Burns as any thing in the whole volume." In his Table of contents, Cromeek styles its latter paragraphs as "another specimen of the Bathos"! The prior specimen of Bathos pointed out by Cromeek, is in the poet's letter to Mr Morrison, p. 161, Vol. V.

Among the epigrammatic pieces communicated to Mr Creech at this time, we find the following:—

ON A LADY REQUESTING ME TO GIVE HER
A SPRAY OF BLOSSOM'D THORN.

From the white-blossom'd sloe my dear Chloris requested
A sprig her fair breast to adorn :
No, by heavens ! I exclaim'd, let me perish if ever
I plant in that bosom a thorn.

See page 205, Vol. III.

Cromek was much taken with this epigram, and tried to persuade Mr Creech to forward to him the poet's autograph, in order that he might engrave the lines in fac-simile ; but the cautious publisher was not so to be caught. Cromek therefore did not even print the epigram, his excuse for excluding it being its prior publication by Thomas Stewart in 1802. The lines were set to music by W. Shield, and published as a sheet song, early in the present century, with four very common-place lines added by Charles Dibdin, to give it reasonable length for a song. The following original air for the words has been composed by the musical friend who has helped us in that department of this work.

THE THORN.

Original Melody.

We have had few opportunities in the prose portion of these volumes to refer to this flaxen-haired beauty who inspired so many of our author's songs composed for Thomson's Collection ; but before we quit that stage in the biography where her spell over the poet's musings reached its climax, and then

suddenly collapsed in gloom, we are constrained to advert to her story. There is some difficulty in determining at what particular period Burns began to adopt her as a kind of artistic life-model, to aid him in giving freshness and vitality to his lyrical effusions. The song of *Craigieburn Wood*—a product of the *Ellisland* period—was, as we have seen, composed to forward the wooing-efforts of a brother-excise-man, John Gillespie, who had conceived a violent affection for Jean Lorimer, which did not become mutual. Chambers gives “March 1793” as the date of her romantic but unfortunate marriage to Whelpdale, and informs us that in a few months thereafter she returned to her parents at Kemishall. Burns was then resident in Dumfries, and very much engrossed with the capricious flirtations of Mrs Maria Riddell. It has not been explained how our poet had such frequent meetings with *Chloris* if she continued to reside at Kemishall, which is about five miles above Dumfries; the probability therefore is that instead of returning to her parents after parting with Whelpdale she made Dumfries her home. So early, however, as New Year’s Day 1793—some three months prior to her marriage, if Chambers be correct in his date—she really was the subject of the song, “*O Poortith cauld, and restless Love,*” then communicated to Thomson. The lines

“ Her een sae bonie blue betray
How she repays my passion ;
But prudence is her o’erword ay—
She talks o’ rank and fashion,”

and indeed, the whole song might pass for another bout of vicarious wooing for John Gillespie. But in April 1793 (one month after the understood date of Miss Lorimer’s marriage), Burns wrote to Thomson, “I have vowed to have a song to the air of *Cauld Kail*, on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, ‘*Poortith cauld, and restless Love,*’” which accordingly he accomplished in August following, by producing the song, “*Come let me take thee to my breast.*” In that effusion, however, there is not a trace of the pleading of a despairing lover :—

“ And do I hear my Jeanie own
That equal transports move her ?
I ask for dearest life alone,
That I may live to love her.”

In the same sheet which conveyed that song, Thomson received “O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad,” which the poet afterwards directly assigned to Chloris—“Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad.” Not however till September 1794 did the reign of “Chloris” fairly set in :

“Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
 Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
 Bewitchingly o'er-arching
 Twa laughin een o' bonie blue.
 Her's are the willing chains o' love,
 By conquering Beauty's sovereign law ;
 And still my Chloris' dearest charm—
 She says she lo'es me best o' a.”

In 1794 Burns presented to Miss Lorimer (for she had discarded the name of Whelpdale) a copy of the Poems of Wm. Collins, with this inscription :—

“To Jean Lorimer, a small but sincere mark of Friendship
 from ROBT. BURNS.”
(under which the lady has written) “JANE LORIMER, 1794.”*

Down to 3rd August 1795, when our author sent to Thomson two of his very finest songs, of which “Chloris” is the theme, she continued to be the mistress of his musings, if not of his heart :

“She's bonie, bloomin, straught and tall,
 And lang has had my heart in thrall ;
 And ay it charms my very saul,
 The kind love that's in her e'e.”

and that other one so exquisite in its purity—

“Yon rosebuds in the morning dew,
 How pure among the leaves sae green
 But purer was the lover's vow
 They witness'd in their shade yestreen.”

* The volume is in the possession of W. R. M'Diarmid, Esq., late of Dumfries, now in Edinburgh. On one of its fly leaves are seen some faint pencillings in the poet's handwriting by way of an attempt, in Collins's manner, to compose an Ode on the Battle of Bannockburn ; an idea evidently thrown aside for that of his simple and grand lyric—“Bruce's Address to his Troops.”

Within a day or two after these songs were posted to Thomson, as we learn from the two following letters, an Edinburgh associate for whom Burns had a high respect, and who was a great enthusiast in Scottish minstrelsy, Mr Robert Cleghorn, paid him a visit at Dumfries, accompanied by two friends, Mr Wight and Mr Allan, one or both of whom were also farmers. Our poet resolved to give them an entertainment in his own house, and Jean Lorimer and her father were invited to meet them there. It is thus very satisfactory to know that his intercourse with Chloris was of no clandestine character. At that meeting Mrs Burns could not fail to delight the company with her “woodnote wild,” giving effect to some of the very songs which “Chloris” had inspired. It appears certain that she did sing one of these—a fresh effusion, to the beautiful Gaelic tune, called “Morag,” which so delighted Cleghorn that on his return to Edinburgh he wrote for a copy of it.

(¹) TO MR WM. LORIMER, SENIOR, FARMER.

(Here first included in the correspondence.)

MY DEAR SIR,—I called for you yester-night, both at your own house, and at your favorite lady's—Mrs Hyslop of the Globe—but could not find you. I want you to dine with me to-day. I have two honest Midlothian Farmers with me, who have travelled threescore miles to renew old friendship with the poet; and I promise you a pleasant party, a plateful of hotch-potch, and a bottle of good sound port.

Mrs Burns desired me yesternight to beg the favor of Jeany to come and partake with her, and she was so obliging as to promise that she would. Jeany and you, [*Mr Syme, Dr Maxwell, and Dr Mundell] are all the

* The original MS. is mutilated here: the blank is supplied from the information contained in subsequent letters, the connexion between which and the present one is very apparent. We take it from a newspaper cutting supplied to us by the late Dr Carruthers of Inverness.

people, besides my Edinburgh friends, whom I wish to see ; and if you can come I shall take it very kind. Yours,

(Dinner at three.)

ROB^T. BURNS.

(¹) TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN, FARMER.

SAUGHTON, NEAR EDINBURGH.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

DUMFRIES, 21st Aug. 1795.

MY DEAR CLEGHORN,—Inclosed you have Clarke's "Gaffer Gray."* I have not time to copy it, so when you have taken a copy for yourself, please return me the original. I need not caution you against giving copies to any other person. "Peggy Ramsay,"† I shall expect to find in Gaffer Gray's company, when he returns to Dumfries.

I intended to have taken the advantage of the frank, and given you a long letter ; but cross accident has detained me until the Post is just going. Pray, has Mr Wight got the better of his fright ?‡ and how is Mr Allan ? I hope you got all safe home. Dr Maxwell and honest John Syme beg leave to be remembered to you all. They both speak in high terms of the acquisition they have made to their acquaintance. Did Thomson meet you on Sunday ? If so, you would have a world of conversation. Mrs Burns joins in thanks for your obliging, very obliging visit. Yours ever.

R. BURNS.

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

* The "Gaffer Gray" here spoken of was certainly not the one by Holcroft, beginning "Why dost thou shiver, and shake, Gaffer Gray," but some wild parody of it, in character with other free productions composed by our author for his Crochallan friends.

† See p. 241, Vol. III.

‡ Mr Wight had been alarmed by a thunder storm while on his visit.

(') TO DAVID STAIG, ESQ., PROVOST OF
DUMFRIES.

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

I KNOW, Sir, that anything which relates to the burgh of Dumfries's interests will engage your readiest attention, so shall make no apology for this letter. I have been for some time turning my attention to a branch of your good town's revenue, where I think there is much to amend; I mean the "Twa pennies" on ale. The Brewers and Victuallers within the jurisdiction pay accurately; but three common brewers in the Bridgend, whose consumpt is almost entirely in Dumfries, pay nothing; the Annan Brewer, who daily sends in great quantities of ale, pays nothing; because in both cases, ale certificates are never asked for; and of all the English ale, porter, &c., scarcely any of it pays. For my part, I never recorded an ale certificate in Dumfries, and I know most of the other officers are in the same predicament. It makes no part of our official duty, and besides, until it is universally assessed on all dealers, it strikes me as injustice to assess one. I know that our Collector has a per centage on the collection; but as it is no great object to him he gives himself no concern about what is *brought in* to the town. Our supervisor would suit you better. He is an abler and a keener man, and, what is all-important in the business, such is his official influence

* This letter, which manifests the writer's business talents as well as the strong interest he took in the affairs of his adopted town, was first printed in the *Dumfries Courier* in 1858, and thereafter in connexion with a pamphlet on the Established Churches of Dumfries by Mr Wm. R. M'Diarmid, in 1865.

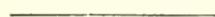
Provost Staig obtained an opinion of Counsel on the question started by Burns, which confirmed the poet's views. The matter was brought before the Town Council of the burgh on 17th July 1796, only four days before the poet's death. The impost was accordingly levied, and continued to be so till the Reform Bill of 1832 put an end to it.

over, and power among his offrs. that were he to signify that such was his wish, not a “pennie” would be left uncollected. It is by no means the case with the Collector. The offrs. are not so immediately among his hands, and they would not pay the same attention to his mandates. Your brewers here, the Richardsons, one of whom, Gabriel, I survey, pay annually in “twa pennies,” about thirty pounds, and they complain, with great justice, of the unfair balancee against them in their competition with the Bridgend, Annan, & English traders. As they are respectable characters, both as citizens and men of business, I am sure they will meet with every encouragement from the Magistracy of Dumfries. For their sakes partly I have interested myself in this business, but still much more on account of many obligations which I feel myself to lie under to Mr Staig’s civility and goodness. Could I be of the smallest service in anything which he has at heart, it would give me great pleasure. I have been at some pains to ascertain what your annual loss on this business may be, and I have reason to think it may amount fully to one-third of what you at present receive. These crude hints, Sir, are entirely for your private use. I have by no means any wish to take a sixpence from Mr Mitchell’s income; nor do I wish to serve Mr Findlater; I wish to shew any attempt I can to do anything that might declare with what sincerity I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

ROB^T. BURNS.*Friday noon, [1795.]*

P.S.—A variety of other methods might be pointed out, and will easily occur to your reflection on the subject.

R. B.



(13) TO MRS RIDDELL, HALLEATHS.

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

[Aug. 1795.]

I have perused with great pleasure your elegiac verscs. In two or three instances I mark inequalities, rather than faults. A line that in an ordinary mediocre production might pass, not only without censure but with applause, in a brilliant composition glares in all its native halting inferiority. The last line of the second stanza I dislike most. If you cannot mend it (I cannot, after beating my brains to pap), I would almost leave out the whole stanza.

A Dieu je vous recommande.

R. B.

(14) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL, HALLEATHS.†

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

[DUMFRIES, Aug. 1795.]

MADAM,—I think there is little doubt but that your interest, if judiciously directed, may procure a Tidewaiter's place for your protégé Shaw; but alas, that is doing little for him! Fifteen pounds per ann. is the salary, and the perquisites, in some lucky stations such as Leith, Glasgow, or Greenock, may be ten more; but in such a place as this, for instance, they will hardly amount to five. The appointment is not in the EXCISE, but in the CUSTOMS. The way of getting appointed is just the application of GREAT FOLKS to the Commissioners of the Customs: the Almanack will

* The original MS. was possessed by the late John Adam, Esq., Greenock.

† We are indebted to the politeness of Robt. Clarke, Esq., Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S., possessor of the poet's MS., for sending us a copy of this interesting letter.

give you their names. The Excise is a superior object, as the salary is fifty per annum. You mention that he has a family ; if he has more than three children, he cannot be admitted as an Excise Officer. To apply there is the same business as at the Customs. Garthland, if you can command his sincere zeal in the cause, is, I think able to do either the one or the other. Find out, among your acquaintances, who are the private friends of the Commissioners of the particular BOARD, at which you wish to apply, and interest them—the more, the better. The Commissioners of both Boards are people quite in the fashionable circle, and must be known to many of your friends. I was going to mention some of your female acquaintance, who might give you a lift, but, on recollection, your interest with the WOMEN is, I believe, a sorry business. So much the better ! 'tis God's judgment upon you for making such a despotic use of your sway over the MEN. *You* a Republican ! You have an Empire over us ; and you know it too ; but the LORD's holy name be praised, you have something of the same propensity to get giddy (intoxicated is not a lady's word) with power ; and a devilish deal of aptitude to the same blind, undistinguishing FAVORITISM which makes other Despots less dangerous to the welfare and repose of mankind than they otherwise might be.

So much for scolding you.

I have perused your MSS. with a great deal of pleasure. I have taken the liberty to make a few marks with my pencil, which I trust you will pardon,—Farewell !

R. BURNS.

(15) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL, HALLEATHS.

*(Here first published.)**

DUMFRIES, Sep. 1795.

MADAM,—A severe domestic misfortune has put all literary business out of my head for some time past. Now I begin to resume my wonted studies. I am much correspondence in your debt: I shall pay it soon. Clarke's Sonatas are of no use to me, and I beg you will keep them.

That you, my Friend, may never experience such a loss as mine, sincerely prays.

R. B.

The “domestic misfortune” lamented in the above note was the death of his daughter Elizabeth Riddell, (born 21st Nov. 1792), who, being in feeble health, was sent for change of air to the Armours in Mauchline, where she died in the autumn of this year, and was buried in the churchyard there.

At the period we have now reached, not only was the poet's harp “hung on the willow trees,” but even his correspondence seems to have been suspended; none of it, at all events, has been preserved. The particulars, or rather, want of particulars in Dr Currie's account of our author's last illness and death, are far from satisfactory; although he tells his readers that these “were obligingly furnished by Dr Maxwell, the physician who attended him.” Gilbert Burns who, along with Mr John Syme, made a journey to Liverpool to put into Dr Currie's hands, and to arrange, the materials for the poet's biography, was afterwards taken to task, for having allowed what are called Dr Currie's “injurious misrepresentations of Burns's character” to pass unchallenged. He thus replied: “The Doctor's work was not submitted to me in manuscript, nor, as far as I know, to any of

* From the original MS. in the possession of Alex. J. Warden, Esq., Marybank House, Broughty Ferry.

my brother's friends at Dumfries ; * so I had it not in my power to set him right in that particular. And considering the excellence of the biography upon the whole, and how much we owed him for that stupendous exertion of his benevolence, I never took any notice to him of my disapprobation, or of the inconsistency of that part of his work."—*Letter to Peterkin, 1814.*

Gilbert, in excuse for Dr Currie, blames the poet's Dumfries friends, or associates, for having propagated damaging reports which the good Biographer "thought it necessary to state in substance, lest the candour of his work should be called in question." In the reprint of Currie's edition which Gilbert edited in 1820, he made the following hard hit at his *quondam* colleague, John Syme:—"Great injury to the Poet's character seems to have arisen from people pretending friendship and intimacy with him, who wished to have something wonderful to tell of a person who had attracted so much of the notice of the world. It is well known that many persons are to be found, whose code of moral obligation does not prevent them from violating truth in embellishing a story, and yet are esteemed by the world *very honourable men*. In the pictures which such men give of life and character, likeness is deliberately sacrificed to effect. Thus, in the foolish story of a sword-cane, brought forward in the *Quarterly Review*, the vanity of some pretended friend of the Poet is displayed by the relation of a powerful admonition addressed by the narrator to the Poet, producing such theatrical starts and agitation, as no one who knew the Poet, or who has even attentively perused his letters and poetry, can give credit to for a moment."

That Syme enjoyed the full confidence and friendship of the poet down to the very close of this year, is evinced by the

* True, Gilbert did not see Currie's *manuscript*, but proof-sheets of the work may occasionally have been submitted to him. Dr Currie's words in the preface to his second edition are these:—"The Biographer of Burns was naturally desirous of hearing the opinion of the friend and brother of the poet, on the manner in which he had executed his task, before a second edition should be committed to the press. He had the satisfaction of receiving this opinion, in a letter dated 24th of August, approving of the life in very obliging terms, and offering one or two trivial corrections, as to names and dates chiefly, which are made in this edition."

Epigram which the latter sent to him in reply to an invitation to dine, with a promise of the best company and the best cookery.

“No more of your guests, be they titled or not,
And cookery the first in the nation ;
Who is proof to thy personal converse and wit,
Is proof to all other temptation.

DUMFRIES, 17th Dec. 1795.”

Mr Syme, who was born four years before Burns, survived till November 1831. He had, in his own pictorial way, told the “sword-cane story” referred to by Gilbert; and Scott thus introduced it in his Review of Cromeck’s Reliques:—“It is a dreadful truth, that when racked and tortured by the well-meant and warm expostulations of an intimate friend, Burns at length started up in a paroxysm of frenzy, and drawing a sword-cane, which he usually wore, made an attempt to plunge it into the body of his adviser. The next instant, he was with difficulty withheld from suicide.” How true it is that a scandalous tale loses nothing in conveyance, is proved by a comparison of the Reviewer’s version with that of the first narrator, which we give in Syme’s own words:—“In my parlour at Ryedale, one afternoon, Burns and I were very gracious and confidential. I did advise him to be temperate in all things. I might have *spoken* daggers, but I did not mean them. He shook to the inmost fibre of his frame—drew the sword-cane,* when I exclaimed, ‘What! wilt thou thus, and in my own house?’ The poor fellow was so stung with remorse, that he dashed himself down on the floor. That ebullition of momentary irritation was followed by a friendship more ardent than ever, between us.”—*Peterkin’s Edition of Burns*, 1815, page lxiv., Vol. I.

It has been ascertained that in course of the year 1795 our poet was, through the medium of Mrs Walter Riddell, brought into correspondence with William Roscoe of Liverpool. A copy of that author’s once very popular song—

“O'er the vine-covered hills and gay lilies of France
See the day-star of Liberty rise,”

still exists in Burns’s hand-writing, copied out by him and

* The identical sword-cane of Burns is now preserved in his monument at Edinburgh—a presentation by the sons of the poet.

presented to Mrs Riddell. After our poet's death that lady forwarded the copy to Mr Roscoe, who in acknowledging receipt of it, said that "Burns, about the time he was seized with his fatal illness was preparing to make a journey to Liverpool to see him, and had done him the honor of writing him to that effect."*

A.D., 1796.

"When ance Life's day draws near the gloamin,
Then fareweel vacant, careless roamin ;
And fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin,
And social noise ;
And fareweel dear, deludin woman,
Thou joy of joys!"

There cannot be a doubt that Dr Currie was made fully acquainted with all the habitual failings as well as the peculiar excellences of Burns, by those who supplied him with the materials for his great biographical undertaking. It was indispensable that the most damaging facts as well as those most favourable and complimentary, should have been thus communicated ; and, on the whole, if we except some considerable overstatement as to the enormity of the poet's drinking habits, Currie's misrepresentations cannot be very heinous.† In giving a private account of his own labours to a correspondent, that kindly-natured and able writer thus remarked :—"The errors and faults, as well as the excellences, of Burns's life and character afford scope for painful and melancholy observation. This part of the subject must be touched with great tenderness ; but it *must* be touched. If his friends do not touch it, his enemies will. To speak my mind to you freely, it appears to me that his misfortunes arose chiefly from his errors. *That* it is unnecessary, and indeed improper, to say ; but his biographer must keep it in mind, to prevent him from running into those bitter invectives against Scotland, &c., which

* Life of Roscoe, Vol. I., page 233.

† It should be borne in mind that Dr Currie, in his medical works, took every opportunity to advocate the duty of abstinence from alcoholic liquors.

the extraordinary attractions and melancholy fate of the poet naturally provoke. Six Liverpool poets have sung the requiem of our admired bard; and every one of them has indulged in the most pointed, and in some degree unjust, invectives against the country and the society in which he lived."

The above quotation will throw some light on the remark of Gilbert Burns, that Dr Currie thought it necessary, lest the candour of his work should be called in question, to state the substance of the damaging reports laid before him; even though this might present an exaggerated view of the poet's failings at that period of his life. With this preparation, we now quote the much challenged paragraphs in Dr Currie's narrative which are so essential to the completeness of this part of the biography:—

"Upwards of a year before his death, there was an evident decline in our poet's personal appearance, and though his appetite continued unimpaired, he was himself sensible that his constitution was sinking. His temper now became irritable and gloomy; he fled from himself into society, often of the lowest kind. And in such company, that part of the convivial scene, in which wine increases sensibility and excites benevolence, was hurried on to reach the succeeding part, over which uncontrolled passion generally presides. He who suffers the pollution of inebriation, how shall he escape other pollution?* But let us refrain from the mention of errors over which delicacy and humanity draw the veil.

"From October, 1795, to the January following, an accidental complaint confined him to the house. A few days after he began to go abroad, he dined at a tavern, and returned home about three o'clock in a very cold morning, benumbed and intoxicated. This was followed by an attack of rheumatism, which confined

* This is the stinging part of Dr Currie's account of the poet's errors which all the censors of that Biographer have fastened upon as a kind of blasphemy against Burns. We indeed wish he had omitted those *thirteen words*, even although the omission might have rendered his picture incomplete. There exists evidence to show that he refers here to a fact that was reluctantly confided to him by Dr Maxwell, which he felt constrained to "touch with great tenderness." Alas! the record was closed eighty years ago, and no reverential eulogist of these days can hope to wipe out the stain by gushing tears or flowing rhetoric. Many of the best qualities of Burns took their luxuriant vigour from the baser propensities of his nature,

him about a week. His appetite now began to fail ; his hands shook, and his voice faltered on any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints, and in the hands and feet, deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much dejected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing on the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sunk into an uniform gloom."

Not altogether "uniform" was the gloom which hung around the hapless bard in these latter days. He did not forget his own philosophy in the song "Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair," which he had given to the world as "a picture of his own mind."

"Blind Chance, let her snapper and stoyte on her way,
Be't to me, be't frae me, e'en let the jade gae :
Come ease, or come travail, come pleasure or pain,
My warst word is 'Welcome, and welcome again !'"

He had occasion, at the close of the year 1795, to borrow a guinea from Collector Mitchell, and the request, thrown into the old familiar epistle-style of versification, is couched in five stanzas in his happiest humorous manner. The postscript thus refers to his severe illness :—

"Ye've heard this while how I've been ticket,
And by fell Death was nearly ticket :
Grim loon ! he gat me by the fecket,
And sair me shook,
But by gude luck I lap a wicket
An' turn'd a neuk."

He had not forgot his promise to Cleghorn to forward him a copy of what appears to have been the last song that was inspired by the witchery of Jean Lorimer—a song which seems to have been

and so we must be content with the entire Burns. Chambers thus supports Dr Currie :—"The poet's convivialities occurred, during the latter years of his life, with a degree of frequency, and were carried to a degree of excess which were much to be deplored. That he spent too many evenings in this way for the comfort of his family, for his own health and peace of mind, and for the preservation of his dignity as a man and a poet, I believe to be true. Nor was this all, for that co-ordinate debasement to which Currie alludes, was not escaped. Let God judge him, a being formed in frailty, and inspired with wild and misdirected impulses ; not I."—Vol. IV., p. 305.

sung at the little dinner-party in the poet's house, already noticed, on the occasion of Cleghorn's visit to Dumfries in August preceding. He took the first opportunity presented by returning strength to write to the hearty farmer, enclosing him the song he had so much admired.

(⁸) TO MR ROBT. CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS.
PER FAVOUR OF MR MUNDELL, SURGEON.

(*Here first published.*)*

SONG.—THE LASSIE O' MY HEART.

Tune—“Morag.”

O wat ye wha that loes me,
And has my heart a keeping ?
O sweet is she that loes me,
Like dews o' summer weeping,
In tears the rosebud steeping, &c.

See page 291, Vol. III.

MY EVER DEAR CLEGHORN,—The foregoing had been sent you long ago, but for reasons which you may have heard. Since I saw you, I have been much the child of disaster. Scarcely begun to recover the loss of an only daughter and darling child, I became myself the victim of a rheumatic fever which brought me to the borders of the grave. After many weeks of a sick-bed, I am just beginning to crawl about.

Thanks—many thanks for my “Gawin Douglas.” This will probably be delivered to you by a friend of mine, Mr Mundell, Surgeon, whom you may remember to have seen at my house. He wants to enquire after Mr Allan. Best compliments to the amiablest of my friends, Mrs Cleghorn, and to little Miss, though she will scarce remember me; and to my thunder-scared friend, Mr Wight. Yours

R. BURNS.

[DUMFRIES, Jan. 1796.]

* The original MS. was forwarded to the publisher by the late David Laing, Esq., LL.D., Edinburgh.

(¹²) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER,
MUSIC SHOP, LAWNMARKET, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.)**

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Mr Clarke will have acquainted you with the unfortunate reasons of my long silence. When I get a little more health you shall hear from me at large on the subject of the songs.

I am highly pleased with Hyslop's bill; only you have, in your usual luck, misspelt two words: the article "Postages and porter," you have made "Porterages and porter"—pray alter that. In the article "Pipes and Tobacco," you have spelt Tobacco thus: "Tobacco," whereas it ought to be spelt with a single b, thus, "Tobacco." When you have amended these two faults, which please do directly, throw off four hundred copies, and send them by the very first coach or fly. Farewell, my ever valued friend!

R. BURNS.

Wednes. Noon, [January 1796.]

(¹⁶) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL, HALLEATHS.

(CURRIE in part, and here completed.)†

DUMFRIES, 29th January 1796.

I cannot express my gratitude to you for allowing me a longer perusal of "Anacharsis." In fact, I never met with

* This note refers to the matter alluded to in the letter (10) page 155 *supra*. Burns had made a present to his kind host and hostess at "The Globe," of an engraved heading for their tavern bill. The poet's holograph was possessed by the late David Laing, Esq., LL.D., Edinburgh.

† The original MS.—a long communication of three folio pages, lately belonging to Dr Corrie of Belfast, was sold, with other manuscripts of the poet, on 5th June, 1878, at Messrs Puttick and Simpson's Salerooms, London, for twenty-six guineas.

a book that bewitched me so much ; and I, as a member of the library, must warmly feel the obligation you have laid us under. Indeed, to me the obligation is stronger than to any other individual of our society, as “Anacharsis,” is an indispensable desideratum to a son of the Muses.*

The health you wished me in your morning’s card is, I think, flown from me for ever. I have not been able to leave my bed to-day till an hour ago. These wickedly unlucky advertisements I lent (I did wrong) to a friend, and I am ill able to go in quest of him.

The Muses have not quite forsaken me. The following detached stanzas I intend to interweave in some disastrous tale of a shepherd “despairing beside a clear stream.”

L’Amour, toujours l’Amour !

The trout in yonder wimpling burn
 That glides, a silver dart,
 And safe, beneath the shady thorn,
 Defies the angler’s art—
 My life was aince that careless stream,
 That wanton trout was I ;
 But Love wi’ unrelenting beam,
 Has scorch’d my fountains dry, &c.

See page 290, Vol. III.

[On the same sheet the poet transcribed several of his songs—the ballad of “Bonie Jean” among these, and then continued his letter thus.]

I cannot help laughing at your friend’s conceit of my

* The ancient *Anacharsis* was a Seythian philosopher who travelled to Athens in the time of Solon, and who after being instructed in Greek science and literature, returned home with a view to introduce there the customs and institutions of Greece. This brought on him the enmity of his countrymen, and he was assassinated by the barbarian king. The modern “Anacharsis” was Baron Jean Baptiste Clootz, a Prussian by birth, but brought up in Paris (1755-94), where he adopted the Revolutionary principles, and styled himself “The Orator of the Human Race.” The published travels and opinions of this latter hero would undoubtedly find admiration and sympathy from Maria Riddell and Robert Burns.

picture, and I suspect you are playing off on me some of that fashionable wit, called *humbug*. Apropos to pictures, I am just sitting to Reid in this town for a miniature, and I think he has hit by far the best likeness of me ever taken.* When you are at any time so idle in town as to call at Reid's painting room, and mention to him that I spoke of such a thing to you, he will shew it to you, else he will not; for both the miniature's existence and its destiny are an inviolable secret, and therefore very properly trusted, in part, to you.

Have you seen Clarke's Sonatas, the subjects from Scots Airs? If not, send for my Copy. R. B.

(¹⁶) TO MR PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER,
CROSS, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)†

DUMFRIES, 29 Jan. 1796.

MY DEAR HILL,—By the chaise, the driver of which brings you this, I send your annual Kipper; but on the express condition that you do not, like a fool as you were last year, put yourself to five times the value in expense of a return.

I have just time to beg that you will make my best compliments to my fair friend Mrs Hill, Cameron "my kinsman," and Ramsay, "my yoke-fellow in the Lord!" God be with you all! In a week or ten days, thou shalt hear at large from thine, R. BURNS.

* See page 188 *infra*, for some account of this miniature.

† From the poet's holograph, in possession of Mr Hill's grandson, George Wilson, Esq. The reader has been informed in a note at page 136 *supra* respecting Cameron and Ramsay.

(41) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 31st *January*, 1796.

THESE many months you have been two packets in my debt.* What sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend, I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas! Madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long “the die spun doubtful;”† until after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have “turned up life,” and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
 Affliction purifies the visual ray,
 Religion hails the drear, the untried night,
 That shuts, for ever shuts! life’s doubtful day.

R. B.

There is a considerable discrepancy between our author’s account of his own illness, and that given by Dr Currie. Both agree as to the date—October 1795 to January 1796; but

* “Two packets,” probably those of 25th June, 1794, and January 1795, unless indeed one or more of the poet’s letters to her of that period have been withheld.

† “—————th’ important die
 Of life and death spun doubtful ere it fell,
 And turn’d up life.”—*Young’s Night Thoughts*, N. vi.

Burns describes his trouble as “a severe rheumatic fever,” while Currie calls it “an accidental complaint, followed, in January, by an attack of rheumatism which confined him about a week.” On 28th January the poet was sufficiently well to attend a Mason Lodge for the purpose of recommending the entry of a Liverpool merchant, and we have seen that on the following day, he wrote to Mr Peter Hill, without alluding to his illness. In February and March the virulence of his trouble seems to have somewhat abated; but in April, although able on one occasion to attend a Mason meeting, his illness became more alarming. He had intimated to Mrs Dunlop, so early as June 1794, that he felt his health on the decline. “I am afraid,” he wrote, “that I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth; my medical friends threaten me with a flying gout.” So also he described his trouble in a letter to Thomson in spring 1796: “I have great hopes that the genial influence of approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout—a damnable business !”

Several of the poet’s biographers have noticed that in consequence of his political opinions and reckless indecorums, both of word and deed, while resident in Dumfries, some of his heartiest friends and admirers grew half-ashamed of being associated with him. To none does this observation apply more strongly than to his early friend Robert Ainslie, and to his patroness, Mrs Dunlop. The last of his letters to the former is dated April 1793, about a year after which we find Burns thus writing of him to Mrs M’Lehose: “I had a letter from him a while ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients, that I could scarce bear to read it, and have not yet answered it. Though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach now as she did when he first honored me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground I have a right to.” A memorial of the poet’s personal regard for Ainslie in shape of a presentation copy of his first Edinburgh edition, in which the blanks in the letterpress are carefully filled up in the author’s hand-writing, was bought, not long after Ainslie’s death,

at a London book-stall for a few shillings. Add to this the fact that several letters of Burns to the same correspondent, intended to be strictly confidential, have in like manner found their way to the world, nobody knows how; and well might Dr Waddell remark, as he has done, when referring to these matters: "There has been a want of sense or sympathy somewhere!"

Dr Currie took special care that Mrs Dunlop's desertion of Burns, for a period of about two years before he died, should not be "conspicuous by the absence" of letters bearing to have been written to her by the poet during that period. The correctly dated letter in the text complains of her long unaccountable silence; and yet Currie, either through inadvertence or design, has one of Burns's letters to her incorrectly dated only one month before, apologising for being so late in answering her last letter! By post-dating several of the poet's communications to her, he plunges into the grossest anachronisms, in the futile attempt to screen Mrs Dunlop's defection from his reader's notice. A letter of 1793, he misdates 1795; and a similar journal-like communication of 1794, he misdates December 1795 and January 1796. We have restored to their proper position these misplaced letters, which indeed proclaim their own dates to any earnest reader. In a foot-note to the bard's last melancholy communication to Mrs Dunlop, penned at Brow, Dr Currie makes this unsupported observation: "Before he died, Burns had the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children. It is probable that the greater part of her letters to him were destroyed by the bard about the time this last letter was written. He did not foresee that his own letters to her were to appear in print, nor conceive the disappointment which will be felt that a few of this excellent Lady's have not served to enrich and adorn this collection."

Chambers, in contradiction of Currie's remark, has informed his readers that "after the death of Burns, Mrs Dunlop paid a visit to her relative Dr Currie, at Liverpool, to arrange respecting the publication of the correspondence, and she positively refused to allow any of her own letters to see the light. She concluded her interview by half-jestingly *purchasing back* her letters to

Burns, one by one, laying down a letter of his for each one of her own till she obtained the whole, and then returned satisfied to Dunlop."

A letter of Gilbert Burns addressed to Dr Maxwell of Dumfries only two months after the poet's death, has recently fallen into our hands, and in it the whole mystery concerning Mrs Dunlop's letters to Burns is revealed. It not only overturns the pretty anecdote of Chambers about the lady's manner of purchasing them back, but reflects discredit on Dr Currie's account of them noted above.

GILBERT BURNS TO DR MAXWELL.

(Here first published).

MOSSGIEL, 25th Sept. 1796.

SIR,—I trouble you at this time on the subject of Mrs Dunlop's letters. I wrote her on my return from Dumfries that it had been thought expedient to establish it as a rule, that the letters from my brother's correspondents found in his repositories should be retained till they would give up at least such of his letters in their hands as might suit publication. She replied that "anxious as she is for the recovery of her own letters, and awkward as she feels at their being in the hands of strangers; yet, so far from the retention of them answering the purpose intended, she must consider her doing anything in consequence of that threat, as betraying a conviction of some impropriety in her letters which she is not conscious of." I have been last week to wait on her at her own house, and she read to me all my brother's letters to her, numbering about seventy. We marked those which we thought would at all suit publication in whole or in part, to the number of perhaps twenty or thirty, several of which, if I am not a partial judge, will do credit to the writer.

Mrs Dunlop proposes copying all the letters marked, and she will allow the editor to compare with the originals such as may be selected for publication; but even this she does not allow me to say till she has got her own letters back, as she would not be supposed to do anything from the fear of their being retained. I beg, therefore, that her letters may be sent to me that I may

forward them to her ; for, besides the opinion I always had that we have no right to retain them, I am now convinced that it can serve no good purpose. Let the letters, such as are recovered, and the rest when they can be collected, be given to Mrs Burns, who will send them by the carrier to me.—I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

GILBERT BURNS.

P.S.—My brother had promised Mrs Dunlop a perusal of the letters he had collected for Mr Riddell. If these could be sent to her along with her own letters, it would be very obliging to her.

G. B.

The above letter of Gilbert's makes it very certain that Mrs Dunlop's anxiety was speedily relieved on the subject of her correspondence with Burns. What she most dreaded was the public exposure of the fact that on her part the correspondence had been withdrawn during the last two years ; and now that she was put in re-possession of her own letters, there could be no danger of their dates and contents indicating the awkward *hiatus* referred to. On the subject of such withdrawal of patronage and friendly intercourse in the poet's experience during his latter years, Professor Walker has some judicious observations that may be worth quoting here.

“ In a town like Dumfries, after deducting the sober and self-respecting part of society, enough can still be found, and that too neither uninteresting nor unfashionable, by a man who has no dread of dissipation or impurity. In company of this description, Burns continued welcome to the last, but towards the close of his life, even this was not enough ; and it is to be suspected that his aversion from domestic privacy, and his craving for convivial tumult, drove him sometimes to associates who disgraced him no less by the sordidness of their condition, than by the laxity of their characters.

“ After all these admissions, however, it is but fair to add that the degree of disrepute to which Burns was condemned, could not, according to the practice of the world, be justified by the nature of his faults. We every day see men, who are addicted to sensual and social excess, in the enjoyment of general favour ; and why, we may ask, was the Bard to be treated with less in-

dulgence? The truth is that the world is a partial and self-interested censor, and will forgive the grossest vice far more readily than any instance of disrespect to itself. It will forgive the man who is at the trouble of attending to certain forms in the conduct and management of his immoralities, and though the veil he spreads be so transparent as to conceal nothing, yet, to be at the pains of spreading a veil at all, is a homage paid to public opinion, by which it is flattered into lenity. An attempt to cloak his practices is a declaration that he thinks them wrong; and, while injuring himself, he obtains some credit for trying to avoid an injury to the general principles of morality. But he who bids defiance to the world, and seems to deride its temporising virtue by indulging (in poverty) those open indecencies with which it submits to be insulted only by wealth or power, soon finds the scorn thus expressed repaid with ample interest."

That Burns was somewhat straitened for money at this time is farther evinced by the contents of a letter addressed to him by James Clarke the schoolmaster, in answer to a craving note in which the poet reminded him of a small advance he had helped him with some three years previously. Clarke's letter is as follows:—

"FORFAR, 18th Feb. 1796.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Your letter makes me very unhappy; the more so, as I had heard very flattering accounts of your situation some months ago. A note [21 sh.] is enclosed; and if such partial payments will be acceptable, this shall soon be followed by more. My appointment here has more than answered my expectations; but furnishing a large house, &c., has kept me still very poor; and the persecution I suffered from that rascal, Lord Hopetoun, brought me into expenses which, with all my economy, I have not yet rubbed off. Be so kind as write me. Your disinterested friendship has made an impression which time cannot efface.—Believe me, my dear Burns, yours in sincerity,

JAMES CLARKE."

During this month of February the correspondence with George Thomson was renewed after a pause of six months. Our

author furnished one song of excellent structure, but in subject very unusual with him; personal attractions in a woman being dispensed with for the sake of her “acres o’ charms,” in shape of well stocked pastures and a handsome tocher. One passage in his letter which relates to “Chloris” is remarkable, as indicative of some change in his sentiments towards her, thus:—“In my by-past songs I dislike one thing—the name *Chloris*. I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation in a Scottish pastoral ballad. What you once mentioned to me of ‘flaxen locks’ is just; they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty.”

We do not know what was Allan Cunningham’s authority for the following passage regarding poor Chloris—quoted by Lockhart in 1828, while she was yet alive:—“The beauty of Chloris has added many charms to Scottish song; but that which has increased the reputation of the poet, has lessened that of the man. Chloris was one of those who believe in the dispensing power of beauty, and thought that love should be under no demure restraint. Burns sometimes thought in the same way himself; and it is not wonderful, therefore, that the poet should celebrate the charms of a liberal beauty who was willing to reward his strains, and who gave him many opportunities of catching inspiration from her presence. The poet gave many a glowing picture of her youth, health, and voluptuous beauty; but let no lady envy the poetical elevation of poor Chloris; her situation in poetry is splendid; her situation in life merits our pity—perhaps our charity.”

The reader has seen in the poet’s letter to Mrs Riddell of 20th January, that he was then sitting to an artist in Dumfries for his portrait in miniature, and that he considered it a very successful likeness. We suspect that the painfully fierce-looking head, of cabinet size, in oval, of which an engraving is given in Dr Waddell’s edition of our Poet’s works, as a likeness of Burns, is the miniature there referred to. It is not to be confounded with another miniature of the poet, mentioned by him in a letter to George Thomson, dated May 1795, where it is described as “a small miniature,” then about to be sent to Edinburgh to be mounted and placed under crystal. That smaller one, which the

poet characterised as "the most remarkable likeness of what I am at this moment," has not yet made its appearance in the hands of any collector, and is probably lost. The following note to Mrs Riddell, which exists in the poet's holograph, evidently refers to a companion-picture—that of his eldest son, then in his tenth year, done at full-length by the same artist who executed the larger oval miniature of Burns above referred to.

(¹⁷) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL, HALLEATHS.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869).

Saturday, 6 p.m.

PAR accident, meeting with Mrs Scott* in the street, and having the miniature in a book in my pocket, I send you it, as I understand that a servant of yours is in town. The painter, in my opinion, has spoilt the likeness. Return me the bagatelle per first opportunity.† I am so ill as to be scarce able to hold this miserable pen to this miserable paper.

R. B.

In April, the poet's friend Mrs Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern, paid a visit to Edinburgh, and was commissioned to call on George Thomson with a letter in which he expressed his despair of ever tuning his lyre again. On her return she was

* Mrs Riddell then resided in the house of her friend, Mr Scott of Tinswald. Dr. Waddell's edition also contains an engraving of the miniature here referred to as "the bagatelle."

† Dr Waddell gives an elaborate account of the romantic way in which both of these little oil paintings on panel came into his possession in 1866. For upwards of forty years previously they had belonged to an Irish gentleman near Limerick, who called his attention to them. But Dr Waddell is wrong in surmising that Mrs Riddell had connexions in Ireland. Her second husband, Fletcher, was a Welshman; and she died, not in 1820, but in 1808, only eight months after her second marriage. She was buried at Chester.

the medium of conveying to Burns the gold-mounted pebble seal, cut with his shield, crest, and motto, which had been ordered from Cunningham two years previously. (See the letter to that correspondent of 3rd March 1794.) He had few opportunities of using it, and there is a melancholy story of his having pledged it to a publican near Brow for a bottle of wine, when hard pressed for money. It is now in the possession of the poet's great-granddaughter, Miss Martha Burns Everitt.

It would appear that during the six months preceding his decease, the Bard was not confined closely to bed till three days before his death. Mrs Burns was greatly relieved, in her heavy but cheerfully performed task of soothing her husband's distress, by the kind attentions of Jessy Lewars, a sister of the poet's brother-excise-man. Their father, John Lewars, then deceased, had been a supervisor of Excise, a post to which the son afterwards attained. The latter was about six years younger than Burns, and at that time unmarried. He retired from the service in 1825, and died in 1826. In appreciation of the benevolent services of Jessie Lewars, our poet made her the subject of several delicate compliments in the form of epigrams and versicles which are recorded at page 312, and onwards, vol. iii. To these he afterwards added two of his most admired songs, making her their special subject ; the first of these—"Here's a health to ane I loe dear," was enclosed in a letter to Thomson about the 17th of May ; the other, "O wert thou in the cauld blast," may have been of later date.*

* This interesting young woman was then eighteen years old ; and within three years after the poet's death she became the wife of Mr James Thomson, writer, Dumfries. On the occasion of the great Burns festival of 6th August 1844 on the banks of the Doon, Mr and Mrs Thomson occupied a place near the head of the table, on the chairman's right hand. Her husband died in 1849 at the age of seventy-five, and she survived till 26th May 1855, at the age of seventy-seven. According to a beautiful arrangement, Jessie Lewars was buried quite close to the mansoleum of Burns, the tombstone of the Thomsons being fixed in the wall on the south side thereof. A pilgrim who visited the resting-place of Burns on a bright but showery day when the wind blew strong from the north-west, observing the tablet of Jessie Lewars to be quite dry, where all around was wet, regarded the circumstance as an illustration of the poet's lines addressed to her—"My plaidie to the angry art—I'll shelter thee ! I'll shelter thee !"

(¹⁸) TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER,
LAWNMARKET, EDINBURGH.

[*Per favor of Mr Lewars.*]

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[DUMFRIES, 18th *May*, 1796.]

How are you, my dear Friend ? and how comes on your fifth volume ? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work ; but, alas, the hand of pain, and sorrow and care has these many months lain heavy on me ! Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural Muse of Scotia. In the meantime, let us finish what we have so well begun. The gentleman, Mr Lewars, a particular friend of mine, will bring out any proofs (if they are ready) or any message you may have.

Farewell !

R. BURNS.

Turn over.

[*June 16.*]—You should have had this when Mr Lewars called on you, but his saddle-bags miscarried. I am extremely anxious for your work, as indeed I am for every thing concerning you and your welfare. You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world, because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting this Publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas ! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the Poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of Wit, or the pathos of Sentiment. However, Hope is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it

as well as I can. Let me hear from you as soon as convenient. Your Work is a great one ; and though now that it is near finished, I see, if we were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended, yet I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your Publication will be the text-book and standard of Scottish Song and Music.*

I am ashamed to ask another favor of you, because you have been so very good already ; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers, a young lady who sings well, to whom she wishes to present "The Scots Musical Museum." If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first Fly, as I am anxious to have it soon.†

Yours ever, R. BURNS.

The Colonel of his Volunteer Regiment made some kind enquiries about his health, to which the poet replied in eight characteristic stanzas of humorous verse in his favourite epistolary form. About the same time (records Chambers), happening to meet a neighbour who made similar enquiries, he said, in course of his rejoinder, "I find that a man may live like a fool, but he will scarcely die like one," which observation was simply a quotation from *Young's Night Thoughts*, N. iv. :—

"Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die."

A day or two before the King's Birthday (June 4th) Mrs Riddell wrote to him requesting him to copy a song for her, and

* "Mr James Johnson died at Edinburgh on 26th Feb. 1811. His obituary in the Scots Magazine states the fact that he was the first who adopted the practice of striking music upon pewter plates, whereby a great saving is made on the charge of that article. He left a widow in indigent circumstances, who died in the Charity Workhouse of the city in March 1819. The above letter is given in *fac simile* in Steuhouse's "Illustrations of Johnson's Scots Musical Museum," Wm. Blackwood & Sons, 1839. Part of the address "per favor of Mr Lewars" is deleted, and the post-mark "June 17" is indicated. The sealing wax shows the poet's new heraldic bearings, engraved on the seal recently brought from Edinburgh by Mrs Hyslop.

† This was immediately attended to, as the reader will find in the note at page 317, Vol. III.

playfully suggested that he should appear at the Birthday Ball to shew his loyalty, and he thus answered :—

(¹⁸) TO MRS WALTER RIDDELL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 4th June, 1796.

I AM in such miserable health as to be incapable of shewing my loyalty in any way. Racked as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting like that of Balak to Balaam. “Come, curse me Jacob ; and come, defy me Israel !” so say I ; Come curse me that east wind ; and come, defy me the north ! Would you have me in such circumstances copy you out a love-song ?

I may perhaps see you on Saturday, but I will not be at the Ball. Why should I ? “Man delights not me, nor woman either !” Can you supply me with the song, “Let us all be unhappy together ?” Do, if you can, and oblige *le pauvre misérable.** R. B.

* The song, “Let us all be unhappy together” was very popular near the close of last century, and has been recently revived in the clever parody by Lord Neaves, “Let us all be unhappy on Sunday.” The two opening verses read thus :

“ We bipeds, made up of frail clay,
Alas ! are the children of sorrow ;
Be we ever so merry to-day,
We all may be wretched to-morrow :
As sunshine is follow'd by rain,
We've nought to expect but rough weather ;
So when pleasure can only bring pain,
Let us all be unhappy together.

I grant, the best blessing we know
Is a friend—for true friendship's a treasure ;
And yet, lest your friend prove a foc,
O taste not the dangerous pleasure !
This *friendship's* a flimsy affair,
And riches and wealth are a bubble ;
O there's nothing delightful but care,
Nor anything pleasing but trouble.”

③ TO MR JAMES CLARKE, SCHOOLMASTER,
FORFAR.

(CHAMBERS, 1839.)*

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

I duly received your last, inclosing the *note*. It came extremely in time, and I was much obliged to your punctuality. Again I must request you to do me the same kindness. Be so very good as, *by return of post*, to enclose me another note, I trust you can do it without much inconvenience, and it will seriously oblige me. If I must go, I leave a few friends behind me, whom I shall regret while consciousness remains. I know I shall live in their remembrance.

Adieu, dear Clarke ! That I shall ever see you again, is, I am afraid, highly improbable.

R. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, June 26, 1796.

On the same day that the foregoing pathetic letter was penned, the poet wrote the fine Inscription to Jessie Lewars (*see* page 317, Vol. III.) on a copy of the *Museum* which he then presented to her ; and in a week thereafter he removed to sea-bathing quarters

* This letter, executed in *facsimile* printing, has been long in circulation.

at Brow, on the Solway Firth, about ten miles south-west from Dumfries. On the day of his arrival there, he sent a short letter to Thomson enclosing a parcel of songs, with remarks and alterations inscribed on the margin. Next day he had an interview with his friend Mrs Riddell, who happened to be residing for the benefit of her own health in the immediate neighbourhood. Being informed of his arrival, she invited him to dine with her, and sent her carriage for him to the cottage where he lodged, as he was unable to walk. In a letter to one of her friends which is quoted by Currie, she thus narrated the incident :—

“ I was struck with his appearance on entering the room. The stamp of death was impressed on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was, ‘ Well, Madam, have you any commands for the other world ? ’ I replied that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph. (I was then in a weak state of health). He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his accustomed sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and serious conversation about his present situation, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation—in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth. He mentioned with seeming pride and satisfaction the promising genius of his eldest son, and the flattering marks of approbation he had received from his teachers, and dwelt particularly on his hopes of that boy’s future conduct and merit. His anxiety for his family seemed to hang heavy upon him, and the more perhaps from the reflection that he had not done them all the justice he was so well qualified to do.

“ Passing from this subject, he showed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death

would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation—that letters and verses written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle Vanity or Malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of Malice or the sarcasms of Envy from pouring forth their venom to blast his fame. He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and whose characters he would be sorry to wound ; and many indifferent poetical pieces which he feared would now, with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this account he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers in a state of arrangement, as he was now quite incapable of the exertion.

“The conversation was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed not unwilling to indulge.

“We parted about sunset on the evening of that day (5th July) ; the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more !”

(¹³) TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

37 GEORGE STREET, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)*

BROW, SEA-BATHING QUARTERS, *7th July 1796.*

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,—I received yours here this moment, and am indeed highly flattered with the approbation of the literary circle you mention ; a literary circle inferior to none in the two kingdoms. Alas ! my friend, I fear the

* Compared here with the original MS., in possession of the late James Cunningham, Esq., W.S., son of the poet's correspondent.

voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more ! For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast and sometimes not ; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me. Pale, emaciated, and so feeble, as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled ! fled !—but I can no more on the subject—only the medical folks tell me that my last and only chance is bathing and country quarters, and riding.—The deuce of the matter is this ; when an Exciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to £35 instead of £50.* What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain myself and keep a horse in country quarters—with a wife and five † children at home on £35 ? I mention this, because I had intended to beg your utmost interest, and all the friends you can muster, to move our Commissioners of the Excise to grant me the full salary—I dare say you know them all personally. If they do not grant it me, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poëte*. If I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs (Lord Gregory) ; the

* “Reduced to £35 instead of £50.” The poet’s indefiniteness here seems to be explained by supervisor Findlater in a letter to the *Glasgow Courier*, March 1834:—“A year or two before the poet’s death an addition of £15 per annum had been made to the Dumfries officers’ salaries, accompanied with the condition of being stopped to those not doing duty.” Thus, Burns’s nominal salary of £70 was raised to £85, and he seems to have calculated that, when laid aside, only one-half of his nominal salary would be the abatement, still leaving him £35. However the *bonus*, or extra £15, came to a full stop, and left him only £35, as stated in the text. When Burns here speaks of having to keep a horse in country quarters, he refers to the fact that the exercise of riding had been prescribed by his medical advisers.

† The poet at this time had only four living children by Mrs Burns ; therefore he must have included here his illegitimate daughter by Ann Park, who was brought up with his own family ; or otherwise, he may have reckoned on Mrs Burns’s forthcoming child.

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

ROB^T. BURNS.

The following anecdote, belonging to this period, is given in the words of Mr John M'Diarmid, and there is no doubt of its authenticity :—“ Rousseau, we all know, wished when dying to be carried into the open air, that he might obtain a parting look of the glorious orb of day. A night or two before Burns left Brow, he drank tea with Mrs Craig, widow of the late minister of Ruthwell. His altered appearance excited much silent sympathy ; and the evening being beautiful, and the sun shining brightly through the casement, Miss Craig (now Mrs Henry Duncan) was afraid the light might be too much for him, and rose with the view of letting down the window blinds. Burns guessed what she meant ; and, regarding the young lady with a look of great benignity, said, ‘ Thank you, my dear, for your kind attention ; but oh, let him shine ! he will not shine long for me.’ ”

(³) TO MR GILBERT BURNS, MOSSGIEL.

(GILBERT BURNS'S ED. 1820).

BROW, *Sunday, 10th July 1796.*

DEAR BROTHER,—It will be no very pleasing news to you to be told that I am dangerously ill, and not likely to get better. An inveterate rheumatism has reduced me to such a state of debility, and my appetite is so totally gone, that

I can scarcely stand on my legs. I have been a week at sea-bathing, and I will continue there, or in a friend's house in the country, all the summer. God keep my wife and children; if I am taken from their head, they will be poor indeed. I have contracted one or two serious debts, partly from my illness these many months, partly from too much thoughtlessness as to the expense when I came to town, that will cut in too much on the little I leave them in your hands. Remember me to my mother.—Yours,

R. B.

(¹) TO MR JAMES ARMOUR, MAUCHLINE.

(DR WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

BROW, *July* 10, 1796.

FOR Heaven's sake, and as you value the welfare of your daughter and my wife, do, my dearest Sir, write to Fife to Mrs Armour to come if possible. My wife thinks she can yet reckon upon a fortnight. The medical people order me, *as I value my existence*, to fly to sea-bathing* and country quarters; so it is ten thousand chances to one that I shall not be within a dozen miles of her when the hour comes. What a situation for her, poor girl, without a single friend by her on such a serious moment.

I have now been a week at salt water, and though I think I have got some good by it, yet I have some secret fears that this business will be dangerous, if not fatal. Your most affectionate son,

R. B.

* Here, under the poet's own hand, we have an express contradiction to Dr. Currie's assertion (no doubt founded on Dr. Maxwell's report), that Burns, "impatient of medical advice, as well as of every species of controul, determined for himself to try the effects of sea-bathing."

(12) TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

BROW, *Tuesday, 12th July 1796.*

MADAM,—I have written you so often, without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again, but for the circumstances in which I am.* An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond “that bourne whence no traveller returns.” Your friendship, with which for many years you honored me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell!!! R. B.

At this crisis, a letter reached Burns from a writer in Dumfries craving payment of about £7, 10s. due by him to a clothier. This had a very disturbing effect on his mind; and although it seems the agent's letter contained no threats of legal proceedings, nevertheless, in his present weak condition, he regarded it as conveying the extremest menaces of personal diligence. He therefore wrote to George Thomson imploring an advance of five pounds, and also to his cousin in Montrose for a loan of ten pounds, to meet his dreaded emergencies.

(10) TO MR JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834).

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—When you offered me money assistance, little did I think I should want it so soon. A

* Mrs Dunlop's lamented neglect to reply to the poet's letters for whole two years, has been sufficiently discussed at page 184 *supra*.

rascal of a haberdasher, to whom I owe a considerable bill, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process against me, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as to accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds ? O James ! did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me ! Alas ! I am not used to beg ! The worst of it is my health was coming about finely you know, and my physician assures me that melancholy and low spirits are half my disease ; guess then my horrors when this business began ! If I had it settled, I would be, I think, quite well in a manner. How shall I use the language to you, Oh do not disappoint me !—but strong necessity's curst command——

I have been thinking over and over my brother's affairs, and I fear I must cut him up ; but on this I will correspond at another time, particularly as I shall [need] your advice.

Forgive me for once more mention—by return of post. Save me from the horrors of a jail !

My compliments to my friend James, and to all the rest. I do not know what I have written. The subject is so horrible I dare not look it over again.—Farewell.

R. BURNS.

*July 12. [Tuesday.]**

The last verses that Burns lived to compose were forwarded to George Thomson the same day on which the above melancholy letter was written—"I tried my hand on *Rothiemurchie* this morning." A sense of unmerited desertion by some of his most cherished friends of happier days pervades his mind. He imagines himself at Harvieston, in sight of the lofty Ochills, and he sings to Peggy Chalmers a little reproachful song. The

* We have collated this letter with the poet's holograph, in his monument at Edinburgh.

words fit the undulations of the beautiful air with the utmost exactness.

“Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou wert wont to do ?
Full well thou know’st I love thee dear ;
Couldst thou to malice lend an ear ?
O did not Love exclaim—‘Forbear !
Nor use a faithful lover so ?”

The pleasure he must have experienced in his wonted lyrical exercise is soon dashed by reading the odious letter above referred to ; and distractedly he transcribes the verses just composed, and forwards them to Thomson, imploring him to remit five pounds—“ Do, for God’s sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. I do not ask all this gratuitously ; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds worth of the neatest song genius you have seen.”

In a few days the post conveyed to him money orders from Burness and Thomson;* but the bard was unconscious when these reached him, and he paid the debt of nature without their help.

(²) TO JAMES GRACIE, ESQ., BANKER, DUMFRIES.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

BROW, *Wednesday Morn, [13th July.]*

MY DEAR SIR,—It would be doing high injustice to this place not to acknowledge that my rheumatisms have derived great benefit from it already ; but alas ! my loss of appetite still continues. I shall not need your kind offer†

* Mr Findlater asserted that Commissioner Graham, regretting his inability to move his brother commissioners to grant Burns his full salary, sent him a private donation of £5, which unfortunately arrived too late to serve the purpose intended. It would be ungracious to express any doubt of so probable an act of generosity ; but while we find in the widow’s “Inventory of the personal estate of the umquhile Robert Burns,” presented to the Commissary of Dumfries, the draft for £10 sent by Mr Burness, and that for £5 sent by Mr Thomson, we look in vain for the item applicable to Mr Graham’s remittance.

† To send a coach to give him an airing.

John Clark Esquire

Locherwoods

Fac-simile of the Bard's biography note, in possession of
Capt. Alex^r W. McClark Kennedy of Knockgrag.
(Penned 16 July. The poet died 21 July)

Saturday N.M.

My Dear Sir.

my hours of bathing
have interfered so unluckily as to have
put it out of my power to wait on
you. — In the mean time, as the
tides are over I am ^{wish} anxious to return to
town, as I have ^{not} ~~heard~~ any news of
Mrs. Burns these two days. — Dare I
be so bold as to borrow your gig?
I have a horse at command, but it
threatens to rain, & getting wet is
pertition. — Any time about three in
the afternoon, will suit me exactly. —

Yours most gratefully & sincerely
R. Burns

this week, and I return to town the beginning of next week, it being not a tide-week. I am detaining a man in a burning hurry. So, God bless you ! R. B.

(²) TO MRS BURNS, DUMFRIES.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

Brow, *Thursday, [14th July.]*

MY DEAREST LOVE,—I delayed writing until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and, I think, has strengthened me ; but my appetite is still extremely bad. No flesh nor fish can I swallow ; porridge and milk is the only thing I taste. I am very happy to hear, by Miss Jessy Lewars,* that you are all well. My best and kindest compliments to her, and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband,

R. B.

(¹) TO JOHN CLARK, ESQUIRE, LOCHERWOODS.

(*Here first included in the correspondence.*)

Saturday Noon [Brow, 16 July.]

MY DEAR SIR,—My hours of bathing have interfered so unluckily as to have put it out of my power to wait on you.

* That is to say—"by a letter from Jessy Lewars." Through a misreading of the text, a modern versifier, in the delusion that Miss Lewars attended the poet at Brow, was tempted to impose on the world some fictitious stanzas as a composition of Burns during his brief sojourn there. They were first published in the *New York Scotsman* of June 17, 1876. Out of eight double stanzas, headed "To Jessie Lewars," we cull the following lines to indicate the piece :—

"Ah ! what is fame ? Its wreath of bays
 Cools not the fevered brow,
 Though proudly it may tell his name
 Who whistled at the plough,
 And wrote a simple song or two
 For happier hearts to sing,
 Among the shining sheaves of corn,
 Or round the household ring."

In the meantime, as the tides are over, I anxiously wish to return to town, as I have not heard any news of Mrs Burns these two days. Dare I be so bold as to borrow your gig? I have a horse at command, but it threatens to rain, and getting wet is perdition. Any time about three in the afternoon will suit me exactly.

Yours most gratefully and sincerely,

R. BURNS.

The original MS. of the foregoing note was obligingly sent to the editor by Capt. Alex. W. M. Clark Kennedy, of Knockgray, late of the Coldstream Guards. He found it recently among the papers of his great-grandfather, the late Mr Clark of Minland. We presume that Burns left Brow on Monday 18th July in Mr Clark's gig, as proposed in the note, for although it was the poet's wish to leave on Saturday afternoon, some casualty may have set aside that arrangement. Dr Currie's account is that the pains in the poet's limbs were relieved by the sea-bathing; but this "was *immediately* followed by a new attack of fever. When brought back to his own house in Dumfries, on the 18th of July, he was no longer able to stand upright." According to Allan Cunningham, he was brought home "in a small spring cart," which may have been the "gig" from Locherwood referred to in the poet's note. Currie says that after his arrival "a tremor pervaded his frame, his tongue was parched, and his mind sank into delirium when not roused by conversation." He nevertheless was able to pen the following note to his father-in-law, which undoubtedly is the very last written effort of Burns.*

* It is deplorable that even truthfully disposed men will deviate from facts, in their eagerness to support a pet argument. Mr James Gray of the High School, Edinburgh, and afterwards "in holy orders" at Bhooj, in Cutch, Bombay, thus asserted in his well-known vindication of Burns:—"I saw him four days before he died, and though the hand of death was obviously upon him, he repeated to me a little poem he had composed the day before, full of energy and tenderness." Four days before his death was Sunday 17th July. Was Mr Gray then at Brow? Burns's last little poem was (as we have seen) composed on Tuesday the 12th.

(2) TO MR JAMES ARMOUR, MAUCHLINE.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

DUMFRIES, *Monday, 18th July.*

MY DEAR SIR,—Do, for Heaven's sake, send Mrs Armour here immediately. My wife is hourly expecting to be put to bed. Good God! what a situation for her to be in, poor girl, without a friend! I returned from sea-bathing quarters to-day, and my medical friends would almost persuade me that I am better; but I think and feel that my strength is so gone, that the disorder will prove fatal to me. Your son in law,

R. B.

Few, but very affecting, are the particulars that have been recorded of the final death-bed scene, which really comprehended only two days and three nights, that is, from Monday evening the 18th, to Thursday morning of 21st of July. The most reliable account is that given by Mrs Burns in her communications to Mr M'Diarmid—"I was so struck with the change in his appearance when he came back, that I became quite speechless. From this period he was closely confined to his bed, and was *scarcely himself* for half an hour together. He was aware of this infirmity, and asked me to touch him, and remind him when he was going wrong. On the third night before he died I missed him from the bed, and found him sitting in the corner of the room with the bed clothes about him. I got assistance, and he suffered himself to be quietly led back to bed. But for the *fit*, his strength would have been unequal to such exertion. The day before he died, he called out very quickly, and with a hale voice 'Gilbert! Gilbert!'"—Dr Currie adds, "On the fourth day, the sufferings of this great, but ill-fated genius were terminated, and a life was closed in which Virtue and Passion were at constant variance."

Chambers explains, in regard to the very last moments of the bard, that "to secure quietness, the children had been sent to the

house of Mr Lewars. Jessy hovered by his couch with her usual assiduity, and Findlater occasionally came to soothe the last moments of his friend. Early in the morning of the 21st, Burns had sunk into deep delirium, and it became evident that nature was well-nigh exhausted. Dr Maxwell, who had watched by his bed the greater part of the night, was gone, and the only persons who remained in the room were a pair of humble but sympathising neighbours. The children were sent for to see their parent for the last time in life. They stood round the bed, while calmly and gradually he sank into his last repose. The eldest son retained a distinct recollection of the scene, and has reported the sad fact that the last words of the bard were a muttered execration against the legal agent by whose letter, wittingly or unwittingly, the parting days of Burns had been embittered."

To the above authentic information certain details have been added by Allan Cunningham as from his own observation which, however picturesque, cannot be accepted in any other light than as an effort of fancy. The narrator in fact was only eleven years and a few months old when Burns died. That he even lived in Dumfries at the time may be doubted. "Dumfries," he tells us, "was like a besieged place. It was known he was dying, and the anxiety, not of the rich and learned only, but of the mechanics and peasants, exceeds all belief. Wherever two or three people stood together, their talk was of Burns, and of him alone. They spoke of his history, of his person, of his works, of his family, of his fame, and of his untimely and approaching fate, with a warmth and an enthusiasm which will ever endear Dumfries to my remembrance. All that he said or was saying—the opinions of the physicians (and Maxwell was a kind and a skilful one) were eagerly caught up and reported from street to street and from house to house." One of the deathbed incidents he thus narrates without stating his authority:—"His good humour was unruffled, and his wit never forsook him. He looked to one of his fellow-volunteers with a smile, as he stood by the bed-side with eyes wet, and said, 'John, don't let the awkward squad fire upon me.'"

"The death of Burns," says Currie, "made a strong and general impression on all who had interested themselves in his character,

and especially on the inhabitants of the town and county in which he had spent the latter years of his life. Flagrant as his follies and errors had been, they had not deprived him of the respect and regard entertained for the extraordinary powers of his genius, and the generous qualities of his heart. The Gentlemen Volunteers of Dumfries resolved to bury their illustrious associate with military honours, and every preparation was made to render this last service solemn and impressive. The Fencible Infantry of Angus-shire,* and the regiment of cavalry of the Cinque Ports,† at that time quartered in Dumfries, offered their assistance on this occasion ; the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood determined to walk in the funeral procession ; and a vast concourse of persons assembled, some of them from a considerable distance, to witness the obsequies of the Scottish Bard."

To suit these arrangements the coffined remains of the poet were removed from his house to the Town Hall on the evening of Sunday 24th July ; and at twelve o'clock noon of the following day the funeral cortege moved in the direction of his last resting-place in St Michael's Church-yard. The streets were lined by the military, and the great bells of the churches tolled at intervals as the procession passed on, headed by a firing party of twenty members of the poet's own company of Volunteers in full uniform, and arms reversed. The bier was surrounded and supported by members of the same company, each wearing crape on the left arm ; and that was immediately followed by relatives of the deceased and chief inhabitants of town and country. After these came the remainder of the Volunteers, followed by a military guard—the whole procession moving in slow time to the solemn music of the "Dead March in Saul." Arrived at the churchyard gate, the firing party, according to the rules of that

* According to Dr Charles Rogers, one of the privates of this regiment was John Burnes, then twenty-four years old, a distant Kincardineshire relation of Burns. That genealogist, however, ventures on the unsupported statement that the poet and his "far-away cousin" became acquainted in Dumfries, and that while there the latter composed his afterwards well-known chapbook metrical tale, called "Thrummy Cap," and submitted it to the ailing bard's inspection. *Gen. Mem.* 1877, p. 10.

† Among the junior officers of this Cavalry Regiment was the Hon. Mr Jenkinson, afterwards Earl of Liverpool, and Prime Minister.—*R. Chambers.*

exercise, formed two lines, and leaned their heads on their firelocks which were pointed to the ground. Through this space the coffin was borne forward to the grave, and solemnly deposited in the earth. The party then drew up alongside of it, and fired the farewell salute of three volleys over the body of their sleeping comrade. Thus closed a ceremony which presented a solemn, grand, and affecting spectacle, according well with the general sorrow and regret for the loss of a man whose like we can scarce see again.

The foregoing account is taken nearly verbatim, from the "Dumfries Journal" of Tuesday 26th July 1796. We are thus particular in order to correct an error of date committed by Currie, Lockhart, Cunningham, and others, who represent the funeral as taking place on 26th July.* Lockhart also speaks of the poet's remains being "laid in state" in the Town Hall. This latter mistake seems to have arisen through an apocryphal statement by Allan Cunningham who tells his readers that several days after the poet's death, he was one of a long procession of sympathising neighbours who "went to see him laid out for the grave." That biographer has also been detected in a misstatement as to the weather on the day of interment: his words are, "The day was a fine one, the sky was almost without a cloud, and not a drop of rain fell from dawn to twilight." He is thus contradicted by the recent recovery of a diary written by the late Mr William Grierson of Dumfries, quoted by Dr Waddell on this question:—"Monday 25th, Showery forenoon, pleasant afternoon, wet evening and night. This day, at 12 o'clock, went to the burial of Robert Burns," &c. The value of the adage, "One jotting made on the spot is worth a cart-load of recollections" is thus established in a striking manner.

Dr Currie concludes his account of the interment of Burns by noting the affecting circumstance that "on the morning of the day of her husband's funeral, Mrs Burns was undergoing the pains of labour, and that during the solemn service above described, the posthumous son of our poet was born."

* A striking instance of how errors are perpetuated is shown in the poet's Family Register. Col. W. N. Burns closed the record by noting that the boy "Maxwell was born on 26th July, the day of his father's funeral."

The reader will have observed that Burns, in writing to Mr Alexander Cunningham, precisely a fortnight before he expired, promised to name his forthcoming child (if a boy) "Alexander Cunningham Burns." The boy, however, received the name of "Maxwell," in compliment to the amiable physician who so kindly gave his services to the family of the bard. Currie farther informs us that shortly after the death of Burns, "the inhabitants of Dumfries and its neighbourhood, opened a subscription for the support of his wife and family, and Mr Miller of Dalswinton, Mr M'Murdo of Drumlanrig, Dr Maxwell, Mr Syme, and Mr Alexander Cunningham of Edinburgh, became trustees for the application of the money to its proper objects." In the *Edinburgh Advertiser* of 26th July, appeared a notice on this subject which must have been drawn by a very injudicious friend, its tone being most disrespectful to the memory of the deceased, as the following excerpt will show:—"The public to whose amusement he has so largely contributed, will hear with regret that his extraordinary endowments were accompanied with frailties which rendered him useless to himself and family. The last moments of his short life were spent in sickness and indigence; and his widow with five infant children, and in hourly expectation of a sixth, is now left without any resource but what she may hope from the regard due to the memory of her husband."*

A question of some nicety has arisen in regard to the apparently premature death of Burns. Was this untimely eclipse inevitable? Robert Chambers was disposed to contend that "the bard's life was cut short by an accidental disease in the midst of a career attended by no essential privations, and not unhopeful." Carlyle started the same question, but he inclines to an opposite view from that of Chambers. "We are not medically informed," he writes, "whether any continuance of years was at this period probable for Burns—whether his death

* It is evident from this closing sentence, that the Advertisement had been drawn up (probably by Syme) before the poet's funeral. Here also, the child "Elizabeth," daughter of the deceased Ann Park of the Globe Tavern, must be included with the poet's children, to make up the number stated.

is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The latter seems to be the likelier opinion ; and yet it is by no means a certain one. At all events *some change* could not be far distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns: clear poetical activity ; madness ; or death. The *first*, with longer life, was still possible, though not probable ; for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it : and yet Burns had an iron resolution, could he but have seen and felt that not only his highest glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes lay there. The *second* was still less probable ; for his mind was ever among the clearest and firmest. So, the milder *third* gate was opened for him ; and he passed, not softly yet speedily, into the still country, where the hailstorms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load."

"Of Burns's character as a man," wrote William Wordsworth in 1816, "it yet remains for some mind of power to speak as it ought to be spoken of. To me it seems that he was a sublime being. While yet a boy—before his very sinews were knit, we behold in him the prop and pillar of his father's house. We do not see him walking on the mountain-tops, breathing in the inspiration of Nature, as other poets by the benign indulgence of Providence have been allowed in their youth to walk ; but we see him laden with incessant toil—I might almost say, working the work of a slave. He arose with the lark, but it was not to the life of a lark, a day of song and rapture in the happy brightness of the sky. Severe and painful duties assailed and enveloped him. The fields and the hills were first known to his soul as the scenes of bodily labour and endurance, and the very clouds of heaven agitated him with the hopes and fears connected even with the bare means of existence. But 'chill penury repressed not his noble rage.' Freedom sprang out of slavery, glory out of gloom, and light out of darkness. Like an Alpine flower he grew in beauty and in grace amid the hail, the snow,

and the tempest. Like a storm-loving bird he beat up against the fierce wind, and there was

‘Among the shepherd grooms no mate
For him, a child of strength and state.’

His father’s grey hairs blessed him, and now that human duties were nobly performed, came the hour of his triumph. The living Genius of his country who had watched over him from his cradle—who loved her mountains and valleys more dearly for his sake, appeared before him and bound the holly round his head ; and from her kindled eyes there shot into his heart the assurance of immortal fame !

“There is no need to shrink from the contemplation of his manhood and of his untimely death. In the midst of his material poverty, he did not merely write and talk of Independence ; if ever man did, he *practised* it. We hear of the munificence of some rich men, and we praise them ; but what is it to the life-giving generosity of Robert Burns ? It fell from him like the dew from heaven, making glad many a heart : he was no niggard of his purse when it was full, and the wealth of his mind he scattered freely to the worthy and the unworthy. Neglected he was by the great, whose mean existence he has immortalised : there is, to my mind, something delightful in that very neglect ; for it leaves Burns unpatronised and unpensioned —soul and body in equal freedom, standing aloof from the worldlings, none daring to impeach his integrity, or tear one leaf from the oaken branch which Independence entwined with the rustling chaplet his own Coila had crowned him with.

“No more of sorrow, wreck or blight,
Think rather of a shining light,
Think of those moments pure and bright,
And not a few,
When Wisdom prosper’d in his sight,
And Goodness too.

“Through crowded street and lonely glen
Is felt the magic of his pen ;
He rules ’mid Winter snows, and when
Bees fill the hives ;
Deep, deep within the hearts of men
His power survives.

“ What need of fields in some bright clime,
Where sages, heroes, bards sublime,
And all that fetch'd the flowing rhyme
From genuine springs
Shall dwell—sequester'd, till old Time
Folds up his wings ?

“ Thee, Minstrel, to the gates of Heaven
May Mercy lead—thy sins forgiven ;
The rueful conflict, the heart riv'n
With vain endeavour,
And memory of earth's bitter heaven
Effaced for ever ! ”



12. *Prayer* 17

CORRESPONDENCE
BETWEEN
BURNS AND GEORGE THOMSON.
SEPTEMBER 1792 TO JULY 1796.

WHEN our poet had been domiciled in the town of Dumfries about nine months, and shortly after Volume IV. of Johnson's *Musical Museum* had been issued, he received a letter from a stranger to him resident in Edinburgh, soliciting his aid in supplying verses for a select collection of Scottish Melodies proposed to be published in a superior style, with original symphonies and accompaniments by the best continental composers of music. The writer of that letter was Mr George Thomson, principal clerk in the office of the Trustees for the Encouragement of Art and Manufactures in Scotland, a man about the poet's own age, who had been in that employment, first as junior and thereafter as senior clerk, since the year 1780. He was the son of a messenger-at-arms in that city, who had been at one time a country schoolmaster. The young clerk being blest with a considerable share of leisure time, and having a taste for music, devoted most of his spare hours to its cultivation and practice as an amateur.

In 1784, Mr Thomson, at the age of twenty-five, married Miss Katherine Miller, daughter of an army Lieutenant, by whom he had a family of two sons and four daughters; and whatever was his financial condition about the period of Burns's death, when poverty was made a plea to shelter him from charges of penuriousness in his dealings with the poet and his family, he certainly soon thereafter attained a prosperous worldly position. One of his sons became a Lieutenant Colonel of Engineers, while the other was made an Assistant Commissary-general; and the Scots Magazine for July 1814 contains the following notice of one of his daughters:—"Marriage:—At Edinburgh, on June 1st,

George Hogarth, Esq., W.S., to Georgina, daughter of George Thomson, Esq., principal Clerk to the Hon. Board of Trustees for Art, Manufactures, &c., in Scotland." A daughter of that marriage became the wife of Charles Dickens the celebrated novelist, and the mother of his children. In 1839 Mr Thomson retired from his Clerkship after 59 years' service; and he survived till February 1851, dying at the patriarchal age of ninety-two—"a remarkable proof," says Chambers, "of what a moderate, cheerful mind, not unduly tasked by business, or crushed by care, will do in prolonging life, and thus forming a striking contrast to the hapless Bard of Caledonia."

In a footnote, at page 6 of this volume, we have referred to the purchase by the late Lord Dalhousie of the letters and songs of Burns which form the chief part of the correspondence we now proceed to lay before the reader. It is a curious circumstance that one of the most important letters of the series, namely that marked number xix. in Currie's editions of the correspondence, is wanting from the collection. It is the one dated 7th April 1793, which fortunately has found its way into the set of Burns's manuscripts preserved in the British Museum. It is there marked "E. G. 1656," and noted as having been purchased at Pickering's sale, 13 Dec. 1854. It is very improbable that Thomson ever sanctioned its abstraction from the series; for, in a letter now before us, addressed by him to the late Mr Nisbet, auctioneer, dated 28th November, 1844, in reply to enquiries made concerning this correspondence, Mr Thomson thus writes:—"I have to acquaint you that I am possessed of *all* the letters and songs in MS. which our immortal Bard wrote for my Work: they are all nicely laid down by the *artiste* paster of the Register House, and elegantly bound in a folio volume. Tell your friend that I hold the Bard's letters to be above any price, and will not sell them." It thus appears to be certain that Burns's letter to Thomson now in the British Museum must have been dishonestly appropriated by some person either shortly before or after Thomson's death in February 1851; for it was not in the precious volume when exposed for sale on 17th November 1852 and purchased for Lord Dalhousie. It would be interesting to learn at what time and from what source the late Mr Pickering obtained it.

The MS. of the letters originally sent by Thomson to Burns form no part of the Dalhousie volume. Like the letters of Mrs Dunlop to the poet, they were obtained from the family after his decease, and perhaps not even Dr Currie was allowed to see them thereafter. That editor informs his readers that “the whole of this correspondence (as published in 1800) was arranged for the press by Mr Thomson, and has been printed with little addition or variation.” In these circumstances, however convenient it may be to peruse the letters of Mr Thomson along with and in relation to those by Burns, we can never be certain that we read the very words and the identical letters to which Burns replied, or which called forth his observations.

Very far otherwise, however, will the reader feel when he peruses the Bard’s own letters, which are here for the first time printed exactly as they appear in the original manuscripts. To the liberal politeness of the present Lord Dalhousie we are indebted for access to the poet’s autographs preserved by him at Brechin Castle ; and a visit to the British Museum has enabled us to give entire the letter above referred to as having strayed from its brethren.

(¹) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *September 1792.*

SIR,—For some years past, I have, with a friend or two,* employed many leisure hours in collating and collecting the most favourite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Fleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved wherever it seems unworthy of the

* Thomson nowhere gives the names of his coadjutors in this adventure ; but on 1st July 1793, when his first half-volume appeared, he thus informed Burns :—“The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join in the speculation having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be.”

music; and that it is so in many instances is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence, some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggrel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" and for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen; if so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection, infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared, and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments, or characteristic verses.

We shall esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me frankly then, whether you will devote your leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five songs, suitable to the particular melodies which I am prepared to send you. A few Songs, exceptionable only in some of their verses, I will likewise submit to your consideration; leaving it to you, either to mend these, or make new Songs in their stead. It is superfluous to assure you that I have no intention to displace any of the sterling old Songs: those only will be removed which appear quite silly, or absolutely indecent. Even these shall all be examined by Mr Burns, and if *he* is of opinion that any of them are deserving of the music, in such cases no divorce shall take place.

Relying on the letter accompanying this,* to be forgiven for the liberty I have taken in addressing you, I am, with great esteem, Sir,—your most obedient humble servant,

G. THOMSON.

* A letter of introduction to Burns from Alex. Cunningham: see the postscript of the Bard's second letter.

(1) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)*

DUMFRIES, 16th Sep., 1792.

SIR,—I have just this moment got your letter. As the request you make will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: “*Deil tak the hindmost*,” is by no means the *Crie de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me—you know ‘tis in the way of my trade—still leaving you, Gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers to approve or reject, at your pleasure, in your own publication. I say the *first line* of the verses, because if they are verses that have appeared in any of our collections of songs, I know them, and can have recourse to them. Apropos, if you are for English verses, there is on my part an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the Ballad or the pathos of the Song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. “*Tweedside*,” “*Ah, the poor Shepherd's mournful fate!*” “*Ah, Chloris, could I sit*,” &c., except (excuse my vanity) you should, to Gilderoy, prefer my own song, “*From*

* It will not be necessary to repeat this in the headings of the remaining letters of the Thomson correspondence, as the whole series (excepting what we shall print for the first time) appeared in Currie's edition, 1800.

thee, Eliza, I must go,"—all these you cannot mend ; but such insipid stuff as "To Fanny fair could I impart," &c., usually set to *The Mill, Mill, O*, 'tis a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But, more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I'm to be called on for my strictures and amendments—I say, amendments ; for I will not *alter* except where I myself at least think that I *amend*.

As to remuneration, you may think my songs either *above* or *below* price ; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright *sodomy* of soul !* A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favor. In the rustic phrase of the season, "God speed the wark!"—I am, Sir, your very humble servant.

ROB^T. BURNS.

P.S.—I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible. R. B.

(²) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 13th Oct. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I received with much satisfaction your pleasant and obliging letter, and now return my warmest acknowledgments for

* "I presume Dr C. will think it right to substitute some other word for *sodomy*. G. T." Currie has "prostitution of soul." A quotation here from Carlyle may be very aptly introduced :—"Thou wilt never sell thy life, or any part of thy life, in a satisfactory manner. Give it, like a royal heart ; let the price be *Nothing*! the heroie man has to do so in all times and circumstancies. In the most heroic age, as in the most unheroic, he will have to say, as Burns said proudly and humbly, of his little Scottish songs—little dewdrops of celestial melody in an age when so much was unnielodious—'By Heaven, they shall either be invaluable or of no value ! I do not need your guineas for them.'"*—Past and Present*, 1843.

the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention, in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking English verses that have merit very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year more and more the language of Scotland;* but if you mean that no English verses, except those of Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but if we can select a few excellent ones suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air, *My Nannie, O*, which, in the collections, is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, "While some for pleasure pawn their health," answers so finely to Dr Percy's beautiful song, "O Nancy, wilt thou go with me," that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses; you will freely be allowed "a sprinkling of your native tongue," as you elegantly express it; and moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that however gay and sportive the muse may be, she will always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits; simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; although between the one and the other, as Dr Beattie well observes, there is as great difference as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting indeed in all songs than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions, and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations, I send you eleven of the songs

* Burns has been the means of greatly retarding this consummation, so satisfactorily contemplated by Mr Thomson.

for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest, and at the same time a prospectus of the whole collection; and you may believe we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give for improving the work, with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness.—I remain, dear Sir, &c.

G. T.

(²) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 26th Oct. 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—Let me tell you that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list* have, all but one, the faults you remark in them—but who shall mend the matter?—who shall rise up and say, “Go to, I will make a better?” For instance, on reading over “The Lea-Rig,” I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, Heaven knows, is poor enough:—

When o'er the hills the Eastern Star
Tells bughtin-time is nigh, my jo; &c.
(See page 85, Vol. III.)

Your observation as to the aptitude of Dr Percy’s ballad to the air, “Nannie, O,” is just. It is, besides, perhaps the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But let me remark to you, in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs, there is a pastoral simplicity—a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay, peculiarly apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honor, for this reason alone, I am of opinion—but as I told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve or

* Mr Thomson’s list and remarks have not been preserved in the correspondence.

reject as you please—that my ballad of “Nannie, O,” might perhaps do for one set of verses to the tune. Now, don’t let it enter your head that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of Authorship, and have nothing to be pleased and offended at in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Tho’ you should reject one half of what I give you I shall be pleased with your adopting t’other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of “My Nannie, O,” the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it :

“Behind yon hills where | Girvan flows.”
Lugar

“Girvan” is the river that suits the idea of the stanza best; but “Lugar” is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I intended to have given you, and will soon give you, a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl postage free—an expense that it is ill able to pay; so with my best compnts. to honest Allan,* Good b’ye to you! R. B.

Friday Night.

Remember me to the first and dearest of my friends, Alex. Cunningham, who, I understand, is a coadjutor with you in this business. R. B.

Saturday Morning.

I find that I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away: I shall give you “Nannie, O,” at length.†

* Doubtless this was David Allan the artist, whom Thomson had engaged to furnish drawings to illustrate his collection of songs. This reference proves that a letter, or part of one, from Thomson to Burns has been withheld here. The postage of a single sheet was then 8d.

† This copy is not in the Dalhousie volume.

Your remarks on “Ewe-bughts, Marion” are just; still it has obtained a place among our more classic Scots songs; and what with many beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favor, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling, and has nothing of the merits of “Ewe-bughts;” but it will fill up this page. You must know that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might have been easy in after times to have given them a polish, yet that polish, to me whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of the heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their race.

*Song—WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES.**

Tune—“Ewe-bughts, Marion.”

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across the Atlantic roar, &c.

(See page 294, Vol. I.)

“Galla Water” and “Auld Rob Morris,” I think will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on my verses, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is not to stand aloof the un-

* On the margin of the Poet's MS. Thomson has thus written: “This is a very poor song, which I do not mean to include in my Collection. I think it were a pity to publish anything of the Poet's which he did not himself consider to be worth publication.—G. T.” Burns wrote about as slightly of his early song “Mary Morison,” and even of his great song “Honest Poverty,” as he does of this; so, according to Mr Thomson's argument—“it were a pity to publish them!” Burns seldom surpassed, in pathos and ballad-simplicity, those verses to Mary which our song-editor speaks of with such contempt.

complying bigot of opiniâtreté, but cordially to join issue with you in the furtherance of the work ! Gude speed the wark ! Amen.

R. B.

(3) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, November 8, 1792.

IF you mean, my dear Sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find difficulty in the undertaking more than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the feature-notes of the tune, that cramps the poet, and lays him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air "My Wife's a wanton wee thing," if a few lines, *smooth and pretty*, can be adapted to it, it is all that you can expect. The following I made extempore to it; and though on further study I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this *random clink*.

MY WIFE'S A WINSOME WEE THING.

Chorus—She is a winsome wee thing,
 She is a handsome wee thing,
 She is a loesome wee thing,
 This dear wee wife o' mine.

I never saw a fairer,
 I never lo'ed a dearer ;
 And neist my heart I'll wear her,
 For fear my jewel tine.
 She is a winsome, &c.

The world's wrack we share o't,
 The warsle and the care o't,
 Wi' her I'll blythely bear it,
 And think my lot divine.
 She is a winsome, &c.

I have just been looking over the “Collier’s Bonie Dochter,” and if the following rhapsody which I composed the other day* on a charming Ayrshire girl, Miss Lesley Baillie of Mayfield, as she passed thro’ this place to England, will suit your taste better than the “Collier Lassie,” fall on and welcome.

O SAW YE BONIE LESLEY.

Tune—“The Collier’s Dochter.”

O saw ye bonie Lesley,
As she gaed o’er the Border ?
She’s gane like Alexander,
To spread her conquests further, &c.

(See page 83, Vol. III.)

Every seventh line ends with three syllables, in place of the two in the other lines ; but you will see in the sixth bar of the second part, the place where these three syllables will always recur, that the four semiquavers usually sung as one syllable will, with the greatest propriety, divide into two, thus



For Na - ture made her what she is, And, etc.

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into thy hands as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor. Farewell.

ROB^T. BURNS.

* See letter to Mrs Dunlop, 22nd Aug. 1792, p. 24 *supra*.

(4) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.

Tune—"Katherine Ogie."

Ye banks and braes and streams around
 The castle o' Montgomery,
 Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
 Your waters never drumlie ! &c.

See page 88, vol. III.

MY DEAR SIR,—I agree with you that the song *K. Ogie* is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it, but the awkward sound, "Ogie," recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing *sentiment* into the piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner; you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days, and I own that I would be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.*

I have partly taken your idea of "Auld Rob Morris," I have adopted the first two verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my

* It is a good thing for the reader to keep his eye on *dates* as we progress with this series, in order that some reflection from the outside life of the poet may throw light on the "moods and tenses" of his inner being while he is conceiving the various compositions that are here from time to time evolved. About the period when this pathetic dirge was produced we find him writing to Maria Riddell—"Here I sit altogether Novemberish, a d—d melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild-finch, caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thrust into a cage. Well am I persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he foretold—"And, behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!"

bonnet-lug ; and do you, *sans cérémonie*, make what use you choose of the productions. Adieu.

ROB^T. BURNS.

Nov. 14th, 1792.

(³) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR,—I was just going to write to you, that on meeting with your “Nannie” I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you therefore for sending the charming rustic to me, in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.*

I regret that your song for “The Lea Rig” is so short: the air is easy, soon sung, and very pleasing; so that if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very flowers of

* “Soon be admitted into the best company!” Why, the song, since its publication in 1787, had been sung through all Scotland, and far beyond it. Mr Thomson would here lead the world to suppose that the author had introduced some important changes into it for his peculiar advantage; but excepting the sanction given to substitute “Girvan” or “Lugar” for the name of the river, as originally published, Burns made no alteration on it whatever. It must be borne in mind also, that on two occasions after this date the author published “My Nanie, O” *verbatim* as at first composed, without even changing the name of the river. In Thomson’s own publication “Lugar” is adopted, and with exception of the last half of stanza first, which is altered in construction but by no means improved, the song is in every respect as Burns himself published it. The changed construction we refer to (evidently Thomson’s own) is as follows:—

“Tho’ westlin winds blaw loud and shill,
And it’s baith mirk and rainy, O,
I’ll get my plaid,” &c.

Burns’s own way of expressing these lines is simpler, thus

The westlin wind blows loud and shill;
The night’s baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I’ll get my plaid, &c.

English song, well adapted to those melodies which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But you will observe my plan is that every air shall in the first place have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs for the choice of the singer.

What you say of “The Ewe buglts” is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was, that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently no part of the original song; but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length although those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be, by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect all the songs to be of superlative merit; that were an unreasonable expectation, I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses, and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on “Bonie Lesley:” it is a thousand times better than *The Collier’s Lassie*. “The deil he couldna scaith thee,” &c., is an eccentric and happy thought. Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander sound rather queer unless in pompous or more burlesque verse? Instead of the line, “And never made anither,” I would humbly suggest, *And ne’er made sic anither*; and I would fain have you substitute some other line for “Return to Caledonie” in the last verse, because I think this alteration of the orthography, and of the sound of Caledonia, disfigures the word, and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song, “My wife’s a winsome wee thing,” I think the first eight lines very good, but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are a bare repetition of the first verse. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following: do you mend it, or, as Yorick did with the love-letter, “whip it up in your own way.”

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonie blythesome wee thing;
Sae lang’s I hae my wee thing,
I’ll think my lot divine.

Though warld’s care we share o’t,
And may sae meikle mair o’t,
Wi’ her I’ll blythely bear it,
And ne’er a word repine.

You perceive, my dear Sir, I avail myself of the liberty which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see: my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically and at leisure what perhaps you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the reperusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.—I remain yours faithfully, &c.

P.S.—Your verses upon “Highland Mary” are just come to hand: they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses, united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel superadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary:/* you always seem inspired when you write of her.

(5) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 1st December 1792.

YOUR alterations of my “Nanie O” are perfectly right; so are those of “My Wife’s a Wanton Wee Thing.” Your alteration of the 2nd stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear Sir, with the freedom which characterises our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter “Bonie Lesley.” You are right, the word “Alexander” makes the line a little uncouth; but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime language of scripture, that “he went forth conquering and to conquer.”

For Nature made her *what she is*,
And never made another (such person as she is).

* Thomson had heard no more of the story of Mary than is suggested in the published *Address* to “Mary in Heaven”—helped by the information imparted to him in the poet’s letters (2) and (4).

This is, in my opinion, more poetical than “ne'er made sic anither.” However, it is immaterial: make it either way. “Caledonie,” I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished, tho’ it is sanctioned, in three or four instances, by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short, that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The “Lea Rig” is as follows:—

[In letter No. 2 the poet had sent only two double stanzas, and here he transcribes the song, introducing some verbal changes, and adding a third double stanza.]

I am interrupted.—yours, &c.

R. B.

(⁶) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

Dec. 4th, 1792.

AULD ROB MORRIS.

There's auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,
He's the king o' gude fellows and wale o' auld men;
He has gowd in his coffer, he has owsen and kine,
And ae bonie lassie, his darling and mine, &c.

(See page 93, vol. III.)

DUNCAN GRAY.

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe Yule-night when we were fou,*
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd asklent and unco skiegh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abiegh,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't, &c.

(See page 95, Vol. III.)

* Mr Thomson here on the margin of the Poet's MS. inserts a note, addressed to Dr Currie, thus:—“As this line occurs in another Scots song, I would propose ‘He was a blythesome lad and true,’ or ‘On New Year’s day when we were fou.’ This I pronounce to be one of the very best songs Caledonia can boast of.—G. T.”

“G. T., in his publication of the songs, means to alter the provincial

The foregoing I submit, my dear Sir, to your better judgment; acquit them or condemn them as seemeth good in your sight. "Duncan Gray" is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.—Yours,

ROB^T. BURNS.*

spelling of such words as *erenin, loupin, &c.*, into evening, loupings, &c. The former spelling disfigures the words, not merely to the English reader, but to the Scotch reader likewise." This note shows the appreciation in which Thomson held the mother dialect of his countrymen.

* The dates of this and the preceding communication to Thomson recall the fact that they were penned at a time of perilous moment to the writer. About that period, while his musing hours were engaged in composing songs destined to delight his fellow creatures through all time, he was "surprised, confounded, and distracted by Collector Mitchell warning him that he had received an order from the Excise Board to enquire into his political conduct, and blaming him as a person disaffected to government." "At these times," wrote Gilbert Burns, "when sycophantic loyalty came to be esteemed the cardinal virtue, capable of hiding a multitude of sins, the conduct of our poet was strictly watched with the view of detecting political transgressions, or private faults, and his every imprudence or failing was magnified to a frightful degree. Unfortunately, the injurious reports of 'Loyal Natives' were received in respectable circles without suspicion of the base motives of the informer."

In October 1792, while the "Caledonian Hunt" were in the town, the theatre was well encouraged; and in the furor of loyalty which then prevailed in consequence of the public alarm about the circulation of reforming publications, alleged to be of seditious tendency, there were nightly calls for "God save the King." Burns was in the centre of the pit on one occasion when the usual call was made; and it has been said that when all stood up uncovered, Burns kept his seat with his hat on; which proceeding on his part caused a tumult that ended in his being forced to uncover, and rise to the occasion. The late Dr Carruthers of Inverness recently placed in our hands a note on this subject, as follows:—"John Mayne the poct told me many years ago—has been dead about forty years, Ochon!—that the scene in the theatre did Burns much harm, as regards the estimation of the higher classes in Dumfries, and among his friends generally. It was a period of great excitement, and Dumfries was a high Tory town."

① ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, *January 1793.*

O POORTITH CAULD AND RESTLESS LOVE.*

Tune—“Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.”

O poortith cauld and restless love,
 Ye wrack my peace between ye ;
 Yet poortith a' I could forgive
 An 'twere na for my Jeanie.

Chorus—For well I loe my Jeanie, O,
 I doat upon my Jeanie, O,
 How happy I were she my ain
 Tho' I had ne'er a guinea, O.

(See page 102, Vol. III.)

GALLA WATER.

There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
 That wander through the blooming heather ;
 But Yarrow braes, nor Ettrick shaws,
 Can match the lads o' Galla Water, &c.

(See page 104, Vol. III.)

Many returns of the season to you, my dear Sir. How comes on your publication? Will these two be of any service to you. Dispose of them as seemeth good in thy sight. If you are begun with the work, I could like to see one of your proofs, merely from curiosity, and, perhaps, to try to get you a subscriber or two. I should also like to know what other songs you print to each tune besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know it is my trade, and a man in the way of his trade may

* On the margin of this song Mr Thomson writes, “These verses I humbly think have too much of uneasy, cold reflection for the air, which is pleasing, and rather gay than otherwise.—G. T.”

Burns writes below—“The objections are just, but I cannot make it better. The *stuff* won't bear mending; yet, for private reasons, I should like to see it in print.—R. B.” The song was improved in a later letter, and the air changed to a more appropriate one, “I had a horse, and I had na mair.” The chorus, as above, was ultimately cancelled.

suggest useful hints that might escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things.

If you meet my dear and much valued Cunningham, greet him in my name with the compnts. of the season.—
Yours,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(4) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, Jan. 20th, 1793.

You make me happy, my dear Sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the season to you, and may you long continue among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them and to honour yourself.

The last four songs with which you favoured me, viz., Auld Rob Morris, Duncan Gray, Galla Water, and Cauld Kail, are admirable. Duncan is indeed “a lad of grace,” and his humour will endear him to every body. The distracted lover in Auld Rob, and the happy shepherdess in Galla Water, exhibit an excellent contrast; they speak from genuine feeling, and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view was limited; but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing,* leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omnegatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke-engravings—the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr Beattie’s promise of an essay on the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events, or by the charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

* A vast stride to accomplish in four months. Ambition and acquisitiveness grow in proportion to their feeding.

The late Mr Tytler of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than anybody, for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me, and we had several long conversations about it when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones ?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind, will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c., of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary : they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board ; and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend Mr Clarke to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on anything of the kind. But for this last class of airs I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties about writing for the airs I sent him, because of the peculiarity of the measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air, "Lord Gregory." The Scots verses printed with that air are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called "The Lass of Lochroyan," which I do not admire. I have set down the air therefore as a creditor of yours. Many of the Jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour ; might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs ?

POSTSCRIPT FROM THE HON. ANDREW ERSKINE.

Mr Thomson has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. Highland Mary is most enchantingly pathetic, and

Duncan Gray possesses native genuine humour: “Spak o’ loupin o’er a linn,” is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend Cunningham, who is a most excellent fellow, possessing above all men I know, the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, *religious* and amorous.* I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever he asks for his trouble, and I certainly shall not betray your confidence,—I am your hearty admirer,

ANDREW ERSKINE.

(⁸) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

January 26th, 1793.

I APPROVE greatly, my dear Sir, of your plans; Dr Beattie’s Essay will of itself be a treasure. On my part, I mean to draw up an appendix to the Doctor’s Essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c., of our Scots Airs and Songs. All the late Mr Tytler’s anecdotes I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him, from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast that, in the course of my several peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrimage to the individual spot from which any popular song took its rise; “Lochaber,” and “The Braes of Ballendean,” excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air or the tenor of the song could be ascertained, I have paid my devotion at the particular shrine of every Scots Muse.

I don’t doubt but you might make a very valuable

* The reference here is probably to the class of compositions contained in the collection lent for a short period to Mr M’Murdo. See letter to that gentleman, page 97, *supra*.

collection of Jacobite songs ; but would it give no offence ? In the meantime, do not you think that some of them, particularly “The Sow’s Tail to Geordie,” as an Air, with other words, might be well worth its place in your collection of lively Songs ?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it would be proper to have one set of Scots words to every air, and *that* the set of words to which the notes ought to be set. There is a naïveté, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison—at least to my taste, and I will add, to every genuine Caledonian taste—with the simple pathos or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever. For instance in my “Auld Rob Morris” you propose, instead of the word “describing,” to substitute the word “all-telling,” which would spoil the rusticity—the pastoral of the stanza.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His “Gregory” is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter—that would be presumption indeed ! My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it.

LORD GREGORY.

O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour,
And lond the tempest’s roar ;
A waefu’ wanderer seeks thy tower,
Lord Gregory, ope thy door, &c.

See page 107, Vol. III.

Your remark on the first stanza of my “Highland Mary” is just ; but I cannot alter it without injuring the poetry, in proportion as I mend the perspicuity ; so, if you please we

will let it stand as it is.* My other songs—you will see what alterations I have made in them.

If you think that my name can be of any service to your advertisement, you are welcome. My most respectful compliments to the Honble. Gentleman who favored me with a postscript in your last. He shall hear from me and receive his MSS. soon.—Yours, ROB^T. BURNS.

(⁹) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

20th March 1793.

MARY MORISON.

Tune—“Duncan Davidson.”

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour !
Those smiles and glances let me see
That make the miser's treasure poor.
(See page 26, Vol. I.)

MY DEAR SIR,—The song prefixed is one of my juvenile

* The structural defect pointed out by Mr Thomson, and here confessed by Burns, has been frequently cavilled at by critics; but when we see that the poet deliberately declined to attempt an alteration on his text, as printed at page 88, Vol. III., we may be excused for rejecting a proposed *improvement* by a practised versifier—Mr Peter Gardner, of the Grange Academy, Edinburgh. Burns opens his pathetic dirge with an apostrophe to the *locality* where he took his last farewell of Mary, and pours out a blessing on the scene, thus:—

“Green be your woods and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie,—
There Simmer first unfauld her robes,
And *there* the langest tarry;
For *there* I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary !”

Mr Gardner proposes to mend a supposed want of perspicuity in these lines by introducing another apostrophe at the opening of the second four lines, thus:—

“There, Simmer ! first unfauld thy robes,” etc.

A much more natural change on that line would be

“May Simmer there first spread her robes,” etc.

works. I leave it among your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible—at least I feel it in my stinted powers—to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What has become of the list of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by and by. I have always looked on myself as the Prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly; and I will not, cannot bear rivalry from you nor anybody else. I wish much to have the list, and to hear how you come on.—Yours,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(¹⁰) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[March 1793.]

WANDERING WILLIE.

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Now tired with your wandering, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom, my ae only dearie,
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same, &c.
(See page 109, Vol. III.)

I leave you, my dear sir, to determine whether the above or “Thro’ the Lang Muir,” be the best.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME.

(With alterations.)

Oh, open the door some pity to shew,
If love it may not be, oh!
Tho’ thou hast been false, I’ll ever prove true,
Oh, open the door to me, oh! &c.
(See page 112, Vol. III.)

I do not know whether this song be really mended.

R. B.

(5) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 2nd April 1793.

I WILL not recognise the title you give yourself, “the Prince of *indolent* correspondents;” but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of the songs; these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of the songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs which I propose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favour me with your strictures upon everything else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verses, by way of dessert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies, and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments; they are indeed beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your “Lord Gregory,” in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter’s, beautiful as his is. Your “Here awa, Willie” must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr Erskine and I have been conning it over; he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match.*

* WANDERING WILLIE.

(With alterations, as proposed by Mr Erskine.)

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
 [Here awa, there awa] haud away hame,
 Come to my bosom, my [ain] only dearie,
 Tell me thou bring’st me my Willie the same.
 [Winter winds blew loud and cauld] at our parting,
 [Fears for my Willie brought tears] in my ee,
 Welcome now Simmer, and welcome my Willie,
 [As] Simmer to Nature, [so] Willie to me.
 [Rest ye wild storms] in the cave o’ your slumbers,
 How your [dread howling] a lover alarms;
 [Blow soft] ye breezes! row gently ye billows,
 And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

The gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well pleased, both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has volunteered his assistance, and has already written four songs for it, which, by his own desire, I send for your perusal.—I am, &c.

G. THOMSON.

(11) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.*

7th April, 1793.

THANK you, my dear Sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad-making is now as completely my hobby-horse as ever fortification was Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning post !) and then cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say, or sing “Sae merry as we a' hae been,” and, raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of Coila shall be “Good night and joy be wi' you a'!” So much for my last words; now for a few present remarks, as they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first two lines of “The last time I came o'er the

[But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na] his Nannie,
Flow still between us, thou [dark-heaving] main !
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
[While dying, I think] that my Willie's my ain.

“Our poet with his usual judgment adopted some of these alterations, and rejected others.”—*Currie*. The finally approved set of the song will be found at page 111, Vol. III.

* This is the letter referred to in the introductory note to the present series, as having escaped out of Mr Thomson's hands, and found a resting-place in the British Museum, where we collated it with Currie's copy, and have restored suppressed passages.

moor," and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but, in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay! the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to *make*, or *mend*. "For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove," is a charming song, but "Logan burn and Logan braes" is sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember two ending lines of a verse in some of the old songs of "Logan Water" (for I know a good many different ones) which I think pretty.

"Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan Braes."

"My Patie is a lover gay" is unequal. "His mind is never muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

"Then I'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony," &c.

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or of your book. My song "Rigs o' Barley" to the same tune, does not altogether please me, but if I can mend it, I will submit it to your consideration. I need not here repeat that I leave you, without the smallest partiality or constraint, to reject or approve anything of mine.

"The Lass o' Patie's Mill" is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it which my much valued friend Mr Erskine, who has so well improved "Down the burn, Davie, lad," will take into his critical care and keeping. In Sir J. Sinclair's statistical volumes are two claims, one I think from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honor of this song. The following anecdote which I had from the present Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudoun, I can, on such authorities, believe:—Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudoun Castle with the then Earl,

father to Earl John ; and one forenoon, riding, or walking out together, his Lordship and Allan passed a sweet, romantic spot on Irvine water called “ Patie’s Mill ” where a bonie lass was “ tedding hay, bareheaded on the green.” My Lord observed to Allan that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint and, lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

“ The yellow-haired Laddie ” deserves the best verses that were ever composed, but I dare not venture on it. The verses you intend, though good, are not quite worthy of it.

“ I wish I were where Helen lies.” The only tolerable set of this song that I know is in Pinkerton’s collection.

“ One day I heard Mary say ” is a fine song ; but for consistency’s sake, alter the name “ Adonis.” Was there ever such banns published, as a purpose of marriage between *Adonis* and *Mary*? These Greek and Roman pastoral appellations have a flat, insipid effect in a Scots song. I agree with you that my song “ There’s nought but care on every hand ” is much superior to “ Poortith cauld.” The original song, “ The Mill, Mill, O,” though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible ; still, I like the title, and think a Scots song would suit the notes best ; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow as an English set.

Though I give Johnson one edition of my songs, that does not give away the copyright, so you may take “ Thou lingering star, with less’ning ray,” to the tune of *Hughie Graham*, or other songs of mine. “ Ye gallants bright, I rede you right,” &c., is my composition.

“ Banks of the Dee ” is, you know, literally, *Langolee* to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it, for instance :—

“ And sweetly the *nightingale* sang from the *tree*.”

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree ; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen or heard on the banks of the Dee, nor the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza equal to “The small birds rejoice,” &c., I do myself honestly avow that I think it a superior song.*

“John Anderson, my jo,”—the song to this tune in Johnson’s *Museum*, is my composition, and I think it not my worst ; if it suit you, take it and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs is, in my opinion, very complete ; but not so your comic ones. Where are *Tullochgorum*, *Lumps o’ pudding*, *Tibbie Fowler*, *Up and warn a’ Willie*, and several others, which, in my humble opinion, are well worth preservation ? There is also one sentimental song of mine (the first in the 4th Vol. of the *Museum*), which was never known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl’s singing. It is called “Craigieburn Wood,” and in the opinion of Mr Clarke, is one of our sweetest Scots songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it ; and I would take his taste in Scots music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list though they certainly are Irish. “Shepherds, I have lost my love” is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scots verses to it ? I have made one, a good while ago, which I think is the best love song I ever composed in my life, but in its original state is not quite a

* The second stanza, which gives a Jacobite turn to the song, was printed by Currie from a MS. copy inserted by the poet in his private Journal, known as the “Edinburgh Common-place Book.” It nowhere appears in the *Thomson Correspondence*. If the insertion of that stanza in the Journal was made prior to 7th April 1793, we must infer that Burns was not satisfied with it, and here proposes to make another effort to match the first stanza.

lady's song. I enclose the original, which please present with my best compliments to Mr Erskine, and I also enclose an *altered*, not *amended* copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow.*

You shall hear from me again, and have your songs. Mr Erskine's are all pretty, but his "Lone Vale" is divine. I have one criticism to make on a line in his song to "I wish my love were in a mire," but more of this when I return your parcel.—Yours, R. B.

Let me know just how you like these random hints.—R. B.

(⁶) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, April 1793.

I REJOICE to find, my dear Sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby-horse. Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise! I hope you will amble it away for many a year, and "witch the world with noble horsemanship."

I know there are a good many lively songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. "My Patie is a lover gay," though a little unequal, is a natural and pleasing song, and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza.†—I am, &c.,

G. THOMSON.

(¹²) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

April 1793.

I HAVE yours, my dear Sir, this moment, I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying what-

* This is the song "Yestreen I had a pint o' wine," printed at page 292, Vol. II. Thomson did not adopt it, even as altered; and the altered copy has not been preserved.

† Currie explains that this letter of Mr Thomson's has been greatly abridged from the original.

ever comes uppermost. I am decidedly against setting “The gloomy night is gathering fast” to the air, *My Nannie, O.* Musical expression is, as you said in one of your late letters, very ambiguous; but, whatever a few cognoscenti may think, you would find that eight out of ten of your Scots subscribers would prefer for that air, my own “My Nannie, O,” though an inferior composition to “The gloomy night,” &c. Besides “The Banks of Ayr” has been set by a Mr Dasti* to an original melody, and being a favorite song with Sutherland’s company of strolling comedians, it is now a well-known, popular air, over the West and South of Scotland.

That business of many of our tunes wanting, at the beginning, what Fiddlers call a starting-note, is often a rub to us poor Rhymers.

There’s braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
you may alter to,

Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
They rove amang the blooming heather.

My song, “Here awa, there awa,” as amended by Mr Erskine, I entirely approve of, and return you.† The “Yellow hair’d laddie” I would dispose of thus:—I would set the air to the oldest of the songs to that tune:—

“The yellow-hair’d laddie sat on yon burn-brae,”
and place in letter-press after it, as an English set,
“In April when primroses paint the sweet plain.”

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is, in my opinion, reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point, you are a complete judge; but there

* Signor Dasti, an Italian amateur whom Burns became acquainted with in Edinburgh, is referred to in a letter to Ainslie given at page 150, Vol. V.

† The reader has already seen *how far* his approval went, page 239 *supra*.

is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad,—I mean simplicity: now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, like every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr Walker has done with “The last time I came o’er the moor.” Let the poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever in the dark and narrow house; by Heaven, ’twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr Walker’s version is an improvement; but I know Mr Walker well, and esteem him much; let him mend the song, as a Highlander mended his gun: he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not by this object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in “The Lass o’ Patie’s Mill” must be left out; the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with “Corn rigs are bonie:” perhaps it might want the last stanza and be the better for it. I shall be extremely sorry if you set any other song to the air “She rose and loot me in,” except the song of that title. It would be cruel to spoil the allusion in poor, unfortunate M’Donald’s pretty ode.

Could you spare me for a while “My lodging is on the cold ground?”—I mean, could you defer it until the latest period of your publication, and I will try to make a new song to it.

I would be happy to be favored with a list of the twenty-five you mean to publish first. Remember that on these will, in a great measure, depend the fate of your work with the public: for that reason it will be necessary to select and

arrange them with double circumspection. “Cauld Kail in Aberdeen,” you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses “Poortith cauld, and restless love.”* At any rate, my other song “Green grow the Rashes” will never suit. The song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name, which of course would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. *Your book will be the standard of Scots songs for the future*: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send you a song on a celebrated fashionable toast in this country, to suit *Bonie Dundee*. I send you also a ballad to *The Mill, Mill, O.*

SONG.

Tune—“Bonie Dundee.”

True hearted was he, the sad swain o’ the Yarrow,
And fair are the maids on the banks o’ the Ayr;
But by the sweet side o’ the Nith’s winding river,
Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair, &c.

See page 113, Vol. III.

These verses suit the tune exactly as it is in the *Museum*. There is a syllable wanting at the beginning of the first

* The reader has seen, under the letter of Jannary preceding, that the song, “Poortith cauld,” originally intended for the air “Cauld Kail,” was afterwards fitted to the more plaintive tune, “I had a horse.” Jean Lorimer, the subject of it, was wooed by John Gillespie, a poor Excise expectant; but another suitor named Whelpdale, a fast-living young farmer from the English border, intervened and cut him out. Hence the verse,

“ Her c’en sae bonie blue betray how she repays my passion ;
But prudence is her o’erword ay, she talks o’ rank and fashion.”

Like the moth, she was caught by glare ; but was fain to return home after a few weeks experience of wedlock. Gillespie of course was now done with her ; but our poet, from this time forth, adopted her as a kind of lyric Muse, under the Arcadian name of “Chloris.”

line of the second stanza; but I suppose it will make little odds. There is so little of the Scots language in the composition that the mere English singer will find no difficulty in the song.

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN.

Air—“The Mill, Mill, O.”

When wild War's deadly blast was blawn,
 And gentle Peace returning,
 Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
 And mony a widow mourning, &c.

See page 116, Vol. III.

“The last time I came o'er the moor” I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MS. Scots airs by me, which I have picked up mostly from the singing of country lassies. They please me vastly; but your learned lugs would perhaps be displeased with that very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air called “Jackie Hume's Lament?”* I have a song of considerable merit to that air, beginning

O ken ye what Meg o' the mill has gotten?

I'll enclose you both the song and the tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's *Museum*. I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce*. On the other page I will give you a stanza or two of the ballad to it.

* Called also, “O bonie lass will you lie in a barrack.”—G. T.

SONG.—Bonie Jean.

There was a lass and she was fair,
 At Kirk and Market to be seen :
 When a' the fairest maids were met
 The fairest maid was bonie Jean.

And ay she wrought her country wark,
 And ay she sang sae merrilie ;
 The blythest bird upon the bush
 Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
 That bless the little lintwhite's nest ;
 And frost will blight the fairest flowers,
 And love will break the soundest rest.

* * * *

MEG O' THE MILL.

O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten,
 An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten ?
 She's gotten a coof wi' a clau'te o' siller,
 And broken the heart o' the barley Miller, &c.

(See page 114, Vol. III.)

I know these songs are not to have the luck to please you ; else you might be welcome to them. Preserve them carefully and return them to me, as I have no other copy.
 Adieu.

R. B.

(13) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

April, 1793.

THE LAST TIME I CAME O'ER THE MOOR.

The last time I came o'er the moor,
 And left Maria's dwelling,
 What throes, what tortures passing cure,
 Were in my bosom swelling, &c.

(See page 127, Vol. III.)

MY DEAR SIR,—I had scarcely put my last letter into the post-office, when I took up the subject of “The last time I

came o'er the moor," and ere I slept, drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded I leave, as I do every other I send, to you to decide on. I own my vanity is flattered when you give my works a place in your elegant and superb collection; but to be of service to that work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert anything of mine. If you can send me, as I said in my last hotch-potch epistle, a list of your first twenty-five songs, I will add the authors' names and return you the list. One hint only let me give you, where you have, as in *Katharine Ogie*, set another song to the air, it will be proper also to prefix the old name of the tune, thus:—“*HIGHLAND MARY*.—Tune *Katharine Ogie*.” Another hint you will forgive—whatever Mr Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scots air—I mean in the song department; our friend Clarke, than whom you know there is not a better judge of the subject, complains that in the air “*Lea-Rig*” the accent is altered. But let our national airs preserve their native features. They are, I own, frequently wild, and irreducible to the modern rule; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.—Farewell.

R. BURNS.

(7) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 24th April 1793.

I HEARTILY thank you, my dear sir, for your last two letters, and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak out your mind, is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person,

more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but at present suffice it to say that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the ground-work of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your most interesting new ballad, "When wild war's deadly blast," &c., to the *Mill, mill, O*, as well as the two other songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth lines of the verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music. Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed! with the airs which he introduces into the Sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases; but that has nothing to do with the songs.

G. T.

P.S.—I wish you would do as you proposed with your "Rigs o' Barley." If the loose sentiments are *threshed* out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

(¹⁴) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[June 1793.]

WHEN I tell you, my dear sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to those accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me from doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling; but the total ruin of a much-loved friend is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines in the *Mill, mill, O*. What you think a defect I esteem as a positive beauty; so you see how doctors differ.* I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on your commands.

* These lines were the two affecting ones with which the world is now so familiar in the opening verse of *The Soldier's Return* :—

You know Fraser, the hautboy-player in Edinburgh ;* he is here, instructing a band of music for a Fencible Corps quartered in this country. Among many of his airs that please me, there is one, well known as a reel, by the name of "The Quaker's Wife ;" and which I remember a grand-aunt of mine used to sing by the name of "Liggeram cosh, my bonie wee lass." Mr Fraser plays it slow, and with an expression that quite charms me. I got such an enthusiast in it that I made a song for it, which I here subjoin, and inclose Fraser's set of the tune. If they hit your fancy, they are at your service ; if not, return me the tune, and I will put it in Johnson's *Museum*. I think the song is not in my worst manner.

"When wild wars deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning,
Wi' mon-ya sweet babe futherless,
And mon-ya widow mourning."

No alteration was requisite there to make the syllables fit the music notes, for the substituted lines show exactly the same accents and the same number of syllables. It was Thomson's eye rather than his ear that was dissatisfied ; he did not like to see the syllables divided thus, "Wi' mon-ya sweet babe," "And mon-ya widow." His letter to Burns of 24th April intimates that "the third and fourth lines *must* undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music ;" but no indication is given as to the nature or extent of that change. Without submitting to the author either in writing or in proof-sheet, the very common-place lines which he did substitute in his publication of the song, he proceeded to engrave and print his own inferior words, and give them to the world without a note of explanation, as part of Burns's song. These were

"And eyes again with pleasure beam'd,
That had been blear'd wi' mourning."

The preface of the first part of Thomson's "Select Scottish Songs" is dated 1st May 1793 ; and thus the author's mild but firm expostulation, "I cannot alter the disputed lines," came too late.

* Fraser at that period must have been, comparatively speaking, a young man. He was engaged as hautboy player in the orchestra of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, where his solo performances on that instrument were greatly admired. The bills announcing his benefit night, about the year 1824, intimated that he would perform the air, *Fee him, father, fee him*, "in the manner in which he had played it to Burns."

SONG.

Tune—“Liggeram Cosh.”

Blythe hae I been on yon hill,
As the lambs before me ;
Careless ilka thought and free,
As the breeze flew o'er me, &c.

(See page 128, Vol. III.)

I should wish to hear how this pleases you.—Yours,

R. B.

(¹⁵) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

25th June 1793.

HAVE you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading, or seeing how these mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay Nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions ? In a mood of this kind to-day, I recollect the air of “Logan Water,” and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some Public Destroyer, and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequences of a Country’s ruin. If I have done anything at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour’s lucubrations in my elbow-chair, ought to have some merit.

SONG.

Tune—“Logan Water.”

O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide
That day I was my Willie’s bride ;
And years sin syne hae o'er us run,
Like Logan to the summer sun, &c.

(See page 129, Vol. III.)

Do you know the beautiful little fragment, in Witherspoon's collection of Scots songs?* This thought is inexpressibly beautiful, and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, except you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain.

After balancing myself for a musing five minutes on the hind-legs of my elbow chair, I produced the following. The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but, if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place, as every Poet who knows any thing of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

O were my Love yon Lilac fair,
 Wi' purple blossoms to the spring;
 And I a bird to shelter there
 When wearied on my little wing;
 How I wad mourn when it was torn
 By Autumn wild, and winter rude!
 But I wad sing on wanton wing
 When youthfu' May its bloom renewed.†

Yours ever,

ROB^T. BURNS.

* John Witherspoon, printer of David Herd's collection—2nd Edit. 1776.

“O gin my love were yon red rose
 That grows upon the castle wa';
 And I mysel' a drap of dew,
 Into her bonie breast to fa!
 O there, beyond expression blest,
 I'd feast on beauty a' the night,
 Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
 Till fley'd awa by Phœbus' light!”

† The poet in the MS. of this line offers a choice of words, thus:—for “youthfu',” *gallant*, or *merry*; and for “bloom,” *leaf*.

(8) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

Monday, 1st July 1793.

I AM extremely sorry, my good Sir, that anything should happen to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune; and when harmony will be restored Heaven knows!

My first book of songs, just published, will be dispatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the *Quaker's Wife*; it is quite enchanting. Pray, will you return the list of songs with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included. The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it as soon as it is properly known. And were the sale even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done. As I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to enclose a small mark of my gratitude,* and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it for, by Heaven! if you do, our correspondence is at an end; and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication which, under your auspices, cannot fail to be respectable and interesting.†

G. T.

Wednesday Morning.

I THANK you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song to *Logan Water*; Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your

* Five pounds.

† The last sentence of this paragraph suggests an *ex post facto* revision of the letter by its arranger for the press. Why assume that the proud poet would be disposed to return the Five pounds?

apostrophe to statesmen is admirable ; but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

G. T.

(16) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

July 2nd 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have just finished the following ballad, and as I do think it in my best style, I send it to you (you had the tune with a verse or two of the song from me a while ago). Mr Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs Burns's "woodnote wild," is very fond of it, and has given it celebrity, by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here.* If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return me the air—the song you may keep, as I remember it.*

SONG.

There was a lass and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen ;
When a' our fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonie Jean, &c.

See page 133, Vol. III.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of the songs. I do not mean the name at full ; but dashes or asterisks, so as ingenuity may find them out. Yours ever,

R. B.

* At p. 81 *supra* the reader has seen a letter addressed by the poet to Miss Jean M'Murdo, the heroine of this ballad, enclosing the finished production. Since that page was printed, a similar unpublished letter of Burns addressed to the lady's father, on the same occasion, has fallen into our hands, but too late for being inserted in chronological order. We shall endeavour to introduce the letter with other addenda at the close of this volume.

[†] *See page 247 supra.*

(17) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I ASSURE you, my dear Sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of bombast affectation ; but, as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear by that HONOR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you ! Burns's character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants which the cold unfeeling ore can supply ; at least I shall take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy. Never did my eyes behold in any musical work such elegance and correctness. Your preface too is admirably written, only your partiality to me has made you say too much ; however, it will bind me down to double every effort in the future progress of the work. Now for business—must I return you the list ? The following are a few remarks on it. I never copy what I write you, so I may be often tautological, or perhaps contradictory.

The “Flowers of the Forest” is charming as a poem, and should be, and must be, set to the notes ; but though out of rule, the three stanzas beginning :—

“I hae seen the smiling o' Fortune beguiling,”

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs Cockburn, I forget of what place, but from Roxburghshire.* What a charming apostrophe is :—

* Alison Rutherford, of Fernilee, in Selkirkshire, by marriage Mrs Patrick Cockburn, was born in 1712, and died in Edinburgh on 22nd Nov. 1794, aged 82.

“O fickle Fortune, why this cruel sporting,
Why, why torment us—poor sons of a day !”

The old ballad, “I wish I were where Helen lies,” is silly to contemptibility. My alteration in *Johnson* is not much better. Mr Pinkerton in his what he calls ancient ballads (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough forgeries), has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations, but no matter.

In the “Lea Rig” I have altered my mind as to the first line, and will, if you please, have it as at first—“When o’er the hills the eastern star.” It is much more poetical.

The verses of the “Bonie Brucket Lassie” are poor. They, I believe, are the production of that odd being “Balloon Tytler.” The air deserves fine verses.

The measure of “Hughie Graham” will answer exactly to my favorite fragment, “O, if my Love were yon red rose.” Will the expression suit?

The Jacobite verses, “There’ll never be peace till Jamie comes hame,” are mine, made on the idea suggested by the title of the air. If you object to their sentiments, there is another song of mine (*Museum*, Vol. iv. No. 331) which will suit the measure. It is a little irregular in the flow of the lines, but where two short syllables, that is to say, one syllable more than regular feet—if these two syllables fall to the space of one, crotchet time, composed of two different quavers under a slur; it has, I think, no bad effect to divide them. Thus it may flow

Yon wild mossy mountains, &c.,
That nurse, &c.,
Where the grouse thro’ the heath lead their coveys to feed,
And the shepherd, &c.

After all, perhaps the expression of this air requires something more solemn.

If you look into the *Museum*, Vol. iv. No. 311, you will see an altered set of the ballad, "O let me in this ae night." Apropos, in Oswald, under the name of "Will ye lend me your loom, lass," you will meet with a different set, and perhaps a better one than in Johnson's *Museum*.

In my next, I will suggest to your consideration a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time, allow me to congratulate you now as a brother of the quill. You have committed your character and fame, which will now be tried for ages to come by the illustrious jury of the SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF TASTE—all whom poesy can please, or music charm. Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second-sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm that your great-great-grandchild will hold up your volumes, and say with honest pride, "This so-much-admired selection was the work of my ancestor."* Yours,

R. B.

P.S.—Robt. Riddell, Esq. of Glenriddell, subscribed to me for the songs; send him a copy to my care the first opportunity. Walter Riddell, of Woodley Park, is a subscriber for the whole work; but he is at present out of the country. John M'Murdo, Esq. of Drumlanrig, is, I believe, another subscriber for the whole work; and also, I think, Patrick Miller, of Dalswinton; but Mr Clarke, our friend, who is at present teaching in both families—I will write or speak to him about it. However, all your subscribers here are determined to transmit you the full price without the intervention of those harpies, the booksellers.†

Do not forget Glenriddell's copy of the songs. R. B.

* See page 84, *supra*.

† "This will be smiled at, I trust, by gods, men, and booksellers, all alike; but it shews at least the great good-will of Burns toward Mr Thomson, and his anxiety to see his undertaking prove remunerative."—*R. Chambers*.

(17) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 1st Aug. 1793.

DEAR SIR,—I had the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

The “Bonie Brucket Lassie” certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. “Cauld Kail in Aberdeen,” “Let me in this ae night,” and several of the livelier airs wait the Muse’s pleasure ; these are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts ; besides, you’ll notice that in airs of this sort, the singer can always do greater justice to the poet than in the slower airs of “The Bush aboon Traquair,” “Lord Gregory,” and the like ; for in the manner the latter are frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound without the sense. Indeed, both the airs and the words are disguised by the very slow, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed : they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a-yawning.

Your ballad, “There was a Lass, and she was fair,” is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

G. T.

(18) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[August, 1793.]

MY DEAR THOMSON,—I hold the pen for our friend Clarke, who at present is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The *Georgium Sidus*, he thinks, is out of tune ; so, until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends six of the *Rondo* subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them.

R. B.

Damn your long stairs !

S. CLARKE.*

* The text of this curious letter is in the poet’s autograph. The signature of Clarke is by the musician himself.

(19) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

August 1793.

YOUR objection, my dear Sir, to the passages in my song of "Logan Water" is right in one instance: the phrase "cruel joys" is there improper; but it is difficult to mend it: if I can, I will.* The other passage you object to, does not appear in the same light to me.

The phrase "mammie's wark" universally among the peasantry, signifies "mother's work:" if you think this last better, you may adopt it. Your other objection to this song will vanish, when you consider that I have not painted Miss M'—— in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager; consequently the utmost simplicity of thought and expression was necessary.

Had you not better send me a list of the next parcel of songs which you intend to publish? As to the large list you sent me, it is so blurred and blotted that nobody besides myself could make any better of it.

I have looked over "There'll never be peace till Jamie," etc., but I cannot make any better of it.

I was yesternight in a composing humor, and behold the fruits of it:—

SONG—LET ME IN THIS AE NICHT.

[Here the poet transcribed a song of six stanzas, a little varied from the old song to be found in the collections of last century, but bearing no marks of his usual happy style of alteration. Neither Currie, nor Chambers have thought it worthy of putting into type; and we are of the same opinion.]

I need not hint to you that the chorus goes to the high part of the tune.

* The reader will see, at page 290 *infra*, that this awkward expression was ultimately got rid of by substituting an entire new line.

I likewise tried my hand on "Robin Adair," and you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a damned cramp, out-of-the-way measure, that I despair of doing anything better to it.

PHILLIS THE FAIR.

Tune—"Robin Adair."

While larks, with light wing, fann'd the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring, forth I did fare:
 Gay the sun's golden eye
 Peep'd o'er the mountains high;
 Such thy morn! did I cry,
 Phillis the fair, etc.

See page 139, Vol. III.

So much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try my hand on it in Scots verse. There I always find myself most at home.

I have just put the last hand to the song I meant for "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen."* If it suits you to insert it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a favourite of mine; if not, I shall also be pleased, because I wish, and will be glad, to see you act decidedly in the business. 'Tis a tribute as a man of taste, and as an editor which you owe yourself.

Among your subscribers is, for the songs, the Honorable John Gordon of Kenmore; send his to my care. For the songs and sonatas both, Walter Riddell, Esq., of Woodley Park, send to the care of Mrs Riddell, Dumfries,—Yours,

ROB^T. BURNS.

(¹⁰) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

August 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,—I consider it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured

* "O poortith cauld, and restless love." Thomson had spoken coldly of this production, and the Bard here retranscribed it with some amendments.—*See page 231 supra.*

me so many of your much valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to Saint Stephen for the tunes ; tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my staircase, conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit*, which I perused more than once without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics ; though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one you were just drowning care together ; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study to remedy !

I will be glad to see you give "Robin Adair" a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out-of-the-way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with. I wish you would invoke the Muse for a single elegant stanza, to be substituted for the concluding objectionable verses of "Down the Burn, Davie," so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your "John Anderson, my jo," which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs : you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs Anderson, in great good humour, is clapping John's shoulders while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to show that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were "first acquent." The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.*

G. T.

(²⁰) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

August 1793.

THAT crinkum-crankum tune "Robin Adair" has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt,

* The illustration by David Allan, here so extravagantly praised, is very disappointing. Whatever rank Mr Thomson held as an arbiter of taste in musical matters, he had little judgment in the sister art of painting.

that I ventured in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear Sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham's story, which happened about three years ago.* That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice, as follows :—

SONG.—*Tune, "Robin Adair."*

Had I a cave on some wild distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the waves' dashing roar ;
 There would I weep my woes,
 There seek my lost repose,
 Till Grief my eyes should close,
 Ne'er to wake more.

See page 140, Vol. III.

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother singing Gaelic songs to both "Robin Adair," and "Gramachree." They certainly have more of the Scots than the Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness, so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them ; except what I shrewdly suspect to be the case—the wandering minstrels, harpers or pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favorite airs might be common to both. A case in point—they have lately in Ireland, with great pomp published an Irish air as they say, called "Caun du delish." The fact is, in a publication of Corri's, a great while ago, you find the same air called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song set to it. Its name there, I think, is "Oran Gaoil," and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. Gaelic parson, about these matters.—Ever yours,

ROB^T. BURNS.

* Really four and a-half years ago. See page 198, Vol. V.

(2¹) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

August 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—“Let me in this ae night,” I shall overlook. I am glad that you are pleased with my song “Had I a cave,” &c., as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening with a volume of the *Museum* in my hand, when, turning up *Allan Water*, “What numbers shall the muse repeat,” &c. It appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air, and recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shade of an old thorn, till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong, but I think it not in my worst style. You must know that in Ramsay’s *Tea-Table*, where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says is “Allan Water, or My Love Annie’s very bonie.” This last has certainly been a line of the original song; so I took up the idea, and, as you see, have introduced the line in its place, which I presume it formerly occupied; though I likewise give you a choosing line, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy.

ALLAN WATER.

By Allan stream I chanc’d to rove,
While Phoebus sank beyond Benledi;
The winds were whispering thro’ the grove,
The yellow corn was waving ready, &c.

See page 142, Vol. III.

Bravo! say I; it is a good song, should you think so too (not else), you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

I cannot touch “Down the burn Davie”—“The last time I came o’er the muir” I shall have in my eye.

Autumn is my propitious season, I make more verses in it than in all the year else. God bless you! R. B.

(11) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

(Here first published from the original MS.)*

EDINBURGH, 20th August 1793.

BRAVISSIMO! I say. It is an excellent song. There is not a single line that could be altered. Of the two lines—"O my love Annie's very bonie!" and "O dearly do I love thee, Annie!" I prefer the latter decidedly. Till I received this song, I had half resolved not to include *Allan Water* in the collection, and for this reason, that it bears such a near resemblance to a much finer air—at least, a greater favourite of mine—*Galashiels*, or "Ah the poor shepherd's mournful fate;" the beginning is almost quite the same.

I have made up a correct list of my 100 airs, of which I shall send you a copy in the course of a few weeks. It is my fixed intention not to exceed that number; by going farther, I should only be induced to take a number of trifling airs, and so swell both the size and price of the book beyond bounds. And I find my list contains every fine air that is known of the serious and pastoral kind, besides two or three never before published—all diamonds of the water.

I stand pledged to furnish English verses along with every Scottish song, and I must fulfil what I have promised; but I certainly have got into a scrape if you do not stand my friend. A couple of stanzas to each air will do as well as half a dozen; and to an imagination so infinitely fruitful as yours this will not be a Herculean labour. The airs too are all so perfectly familiar to you, and the original verses so much your favourites, that no poet living is qualified to add congenial stanzas, even in English, so much as you are.

I am very glad that you are to revise "Let me in this ae night."

* The holograph is possessed by the publisher of this edition. It is the solitary specimen of Thomson's letters to our poet that is known to exist; and its preservation can be accounted for only on the ground that it had fallen aside from the rest of the series, and was not returned to Thomson with the others after the death of Burns. It formed one of a parcel of MSS. connected with the poet's matters, which at one time were in the hands of Dr Maxwell, Dumfries.

I put a much greater value upon this beautiful air than either "Allan Water," or "Logan Water." So it is also with "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen"; I have always considered it among the most pleasing of our melodies. When you first sent me "O Poortith cauld," I took the liberty to observe that I thought it too querulous and despondent for the air. I would very fain have something in your best manner for it. There is not an air existing better calculated for telling a pretty tale of love; and therefore I hope that in this propitious season you will think of it some evening under the Thorn tree that witnessed the birth of your *Allan Water*. Remember also, when the Muse and you are "in fit retreats for wooing," that fine ballad-tune, "Laddie, lie near me."

I am sorry you cannot think of furnishing a sweet concluding stanza or two for "Down the burn, Davie"; you will surely allow that however pleasing the description beginning "Till baith at length impatient grown," it is altogether improper for publication; more particularly in a collection that assumes to itself the merit of purification.

I have sent by the Dumfries carrier (carriage paid) a parcel addressed to you containing a set of the Sonatas and Songs for Mr Riddell of Woodley Park; the same for a Mr Boyd who wrote some weeks ago to Mr Hill about them; a set of the songs to Mr Gordon, and a set of both for our friend Mr Clarke. Will you give these to a porter (I mean the two first-named) and send the others at your convenience. Yours cordially,

G. THOMSON.

P.S.—I think as you do, that "Oran gaoil" is a beautiful tune. I have put it in my list, and propose attaching it to Dr Blacklock's verses, "Since robb'd of all my soul holds dear."

(²²) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[*August 1793.*]

You may readily trust, my dear sir, that any exertion in my power is heartily at your service. But one thing I

must hint to you : the very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication ; so get a verse from him now and then, though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.

Is “ Whistle and I’ll come to you, my lad,” one of your airs ? I admire it much, and yesterday, I set the following verses to it. Urbani, whom I have met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much ; but as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work I did not choose to comply. However, if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. He is, *entre nous*, a narrow, conceited creature ; but he sings so delightfully, that whatever he introduces at your concert must have immediate celebrity. The set of the air which I had in my eye is in Johnson’s *Museum*, No. 106.

SONG.

O whistle and I’ll come to you, my lad,
 O whistle, and I’ll come to you my lad ;
 Tho’ father and mither and a’ should gae mad,
 O whistle and I’ll come to you, my lad, &c.

See page 145, Vol. III.

Another favorite air of mine, is “ The muckin o’ Geordie’s Byre.” When sung slow with expression, I have wished that it had better poetry : that I have endeavoured to supply as follows :—

SONG,—*Tune, “ Geordie’s Byre.*
 Adown winding Nith I did wander,
 To mark the sweet flowers as they spring,
 Adown winding Nith I did wander,
 Of Phillis to muse and to sing, &c.

See page 145, Vol. III.

Mr Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner in your Book, as she is a particular Flame of his. She is a Miss

Phillis M'Murdo, sister to the "Bonie Jean" which I sent you some time ago. They are both pupils of his. Clarke begs compts. to you, and will send you some more airs in a few days. You shall hear from me the very first grist that I get from my rhyming-mill.—Yours,

R. B.

(²³) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[28] August 1793.

THAT tune, "Cauld Kail," is such a favorite of yours that I once more roved out yester evening for a gloamin shot at the Muses; when the Muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet simple Inspirer that was at my elbow, "smooth-gliding without step" and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a Poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her, so I more than suspect she has followed me hither, or at least makes me occasional visits; secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you, is the very words that Coila taught me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in Johnson's *Museum*.

SONG—*Tune, "Cauld Kail."*

Come let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we near shall sunder;
And I shall spurn as vilest dust
The world's wealth and grandeur, &c.

See page 147, Vol. III.

If you think the above will suit your idea of your favorite air, I shall be highly pleased. "The last time I

came o'er the moor," I cannot meddle with as to mending it ; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of choruses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

Apropos, there is a song of mine in the 3d vol. of the *Museum* which would suit "Dainty Davie." Tell me how it will suit. It begins, "O were I on Parnassus Hill."

Let me have the list of your first hundred songs as soon as possible. I am ever, my dear sir, yours sincerely.

ROB^T. BURNS.

(²⁴) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[28] *August 1793.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have written you already by to-day's post, where I hinted at a song of mine which might suit "Dainty Davie." I have been looking over another and a better song of mine in the *Museum*, which I have altered as follows, and which I am persuaded will please you. The words "Dainty Davie" glide so sweetly in the air that, to a Scots ear, any song to it, without *Davie* being the hero, would have a lame effect.

SONG.

Tune—“Dainty Davie.”

Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers ;
And now comes in my happy hours,
To wander wi' my Davie, &c.

See page 148, Vol. III.

So much for Davie. The chorus you know is to the low

part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the *Museum*.
Yours,

R. B.

N.B.—In the *Museum*, they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is d—d nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

(¹²) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 1st Sept. 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—Since writing you last, I have received half-a-dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humour and fancy of "Whistle, and I'll come to you, my Lad" will render it nearly as great a favourite as "Duncan Gray." "Come let me take thee to my breast," "Adown winding Nith," and "By Allan Stream," &c., are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended. "Had I a Cave on some wild distant shore" is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, reads it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think can never be broken; these songs of yours will descend, with the music, to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the Muse seems so propitious, I think it right to enclose a list of all the favours I have to ask of her—no fewer than twenty and three! I have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many as it is probable he will attend to; most of the remaining airs would puzzle the English poet not a little—they are of that peculiar measure and rhythm, that they must be familiar to him who writes for them.

G. T.

(²⁵) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[In the poet's letter, No. 23 of this correspondence, he concludes with the request, "Let me have the list of your first

hundred songs as soon as possible." The present ponderous letter is undated—indeed the writing of it must have required many sittings; but as Thomson acknowledges receipt of it in his letter of 12th September, while the correspondents are in the heart of their controversy about the alterations on "Bruce's Address to his Troops," we now introduce it, rather than let it interrupt that discussion.]

I have received your list, my dear Sir, and here go my observations on it:—

No. 1. "An thou wert my ain." I have not Pinkerton, but before me is Witherspoon's first vol. (entitled "Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs and Heroic Ballads"). I have three songs to this air, and with the same chorus:—

- 1st.—"Of race divine thou needs must be."
- 2nd.—"Like bees that suck the morning dew."
- 3rd.—"As round the elm th' enamour'd vine."

Of these, all of them good, the first, in my opinion, is the best. The English song, "Ah, dear Marcella," &c., is not in my copy of "The Charmer."

No. 2. "Down the Burn, Davie." I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus:—

As down the Burn they took their way,
And thro' the flowery dale,
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And love was ay the tale;
With "Mary, when shall we return
Sic pleasure to renew?"
Quoth Mary, "Love, I like the Burn,
And ay shall follow you."

No. 3. Nothing to remark.

No. 4. "Katherine Ogie." I should like to see this in your next number.

No. 5. "Low down in the Broom," in my opinion, deserves more properly a place among your lively and

humorous songs. I shall by and by point out some in this last list which rather belong to the first.

No. 6. "Lewie Gordon." Jamie Dawson is a beautiful ballad, but is of great length; cannot you, for sake of economy in the press-work, substitute a short one?

No. 7. Nothing.

No. 8. "Cowden-Knowes." Remember, in your index, that the song in pure English, beginning, "When summer comes, the swains on Tweed," is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

Nos. 9 and 10. Nothing.

No. 11. "Bonie Dundee." Your objection of the stiff line is just; but mending my colouring would spoil the likeness; so the picture must stand as it is [see page 113, vol. III., "True hearted was he"].

No. 12. "The last time I cam o'er the moor." Why encumber yourself with another English song to this tune? Ramsay's is English already to your hand.

No. 13. "Flowers of the Forest." The verses, "I've seen the smiling," &c., with a few trifling alterations, putting "no more" for "nae mair," and the word "turbid" in a note at the bottom of the page, to shew the meaning of the word "drumly," the song will serve you for an English set. A small sprinkling of Scotticisms is no objection to an English reader.

No. 14. Nothing, except that "Despairing beside a clear stream," is a very popular song to its own tune. Would it not be better to have another in the same measure (there are plenty of them) which has never been set to music?

No. 15. Nothing.

No. 16. "Thro' the Wood, Laddie." I am decidedly of opinion that both in this, and "There'll never be peace till Jamie come hame," the second, or high part of the tune

(being a repetition of the first part, an octave higher), is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

No. 17. "Lord Gregory." Please insert mine in your next number; two or three copies of the song have got into the world, and I am afraid lest they find their way to some pilferers.

No. 18. "Thou art gane awa frae me, Mary." See the best set of this song in the *Museum*.

Nos. 19, 20, 21. Nothing.

No. 22. "Peggy I must love thee." Please let me take this into consideration. It will do for your third number.

No. 24. "Logan Water," shall wait my revisal; only one passage I think faulty. "Cruel joys" is a d—d stupid expression. Nos. 25, 26, 27. Nothing.

No. 28. "My Lodging is on the cold ground." Please let it wait your third number to gain time.

Nos. 29, 30. Nothing.

No. 31. "Fair Helen" is not an air that charms me.

No. 32. "Bonie Jean," nothing.*

No. 33. "Bonie Jean," the second. Change the name to "There was a Lass, and she was fair," which, by the by, is the old name of the air. Do make a point of publishing this song to its own tune, and in your next number, you will highly oblige me by it.† Please likewise insert, No. 11. (Bonie Dundee) in your next number.

No. 34. "Gil Morrice," I am unalterably for leaving out altogether. It is a plaguy length, which will put you to great press expense, the air itself is never sung; and its place can be well supplied with one of two fine songs which

* This is a song by Ramsay set to a melody (No. 54 of Johnson) called "Bonie Jean of Aberdeen."

† As elsewhere noted, it is to be regretted that Thomson, instead of adopting this now lost melody so highly recommended by Burns, threw it aside, and set the words to the air, "Willie was a wanton wag."

are not at all in your list, "Craigieburn Wood," and "Roy's Wife." The first, besides its intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has high merit as well as great celebrity; of the last I have the original, set as well as written by the lady who composed it, and it is superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.*

No. 35. Nothing.

No. 36. Is the real tune of "Hughie Graham," as sung in some places; in others it is sung to a different and very pleasing little air, yet unknown to the world. I neglected to take down the notes when I met with it, and now it is out of my power. This air you will find in Oswald's Collection, Book 8th, under the title "Drimen Duff."

No. 37. "Laddie, lie near me," must *lie by me* for some time. I do not know the air; and until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I never can compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for subjects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my Muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind-legs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way. What damn'd egotism!

* This original MS. of the authoress, Mrs Grant of Carron, has strayed somewhere. It is said to have contained a closing verse, thus:—

"But Roy's years are three times mine, I'm sure his days'll no be mony;
An when the carle's dead an gane, she'll maybe rew an tak her Johnny."

No. 38. Nothing.

No. 39. "Highland Laddie." The old set will please a mere Scots ear best; and the new an Italianised one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls "The Old Highland Laddie," which pleases me more than either of them: it is sometimes called "Jinglin Johnie;" that being the air of an old humorous bawdy song of that name—you will find it in the *Museum*, "I hae been at Crookieden," &c. I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the Muses for inspiring direction; and, in the meantime, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

No. 40. Nothing.

No. 41. "O bonie Lass, will ye lie in a Barrack," must infallibly have Scots verses.

No. 42. Unknown.

No. 43. "Wae's my heart that we should sunder." Do you know a song in the *Museum*, "Go fetch to me a pint o' wine, and fill it in a silver tassie?" It is a song of mine, and I think not a bad one. It precisely suits the measure of this air;* you might set it to this, and for an English song, take either, "With broken words," &c., or "Speak on, speak thus," &c.: this last is the best; but remember I am no Dictator: *ad libitum* is the word.

No. 44 to 50. Nothing.

No. 51. "The bonie Brucket Lassie." I enclose you a song to it, as I think it should be set, and with a better effect than the modulation in the *Museum*, where it first appeared, and whence everybody else has borrowed it. The

* No. 131 of Johnson. The air is given in Thomson's collection to Ramsay's song, "With broken words," &c. It therefore appears that Burns was not quite satisfied with the melody [No. 231 of Johnson] to "The silver tassie." See p. 176, Vol. II. of this edition.

tune is a very early acquaintance of mine. The verses, if they deserve the name (in the *Museum*), are the work of a gentleman known by the name of "Balloon Tytler."

No. 52. Nothing.

No. 53. "Banks of the Dee." Leave it out entirely; 'tis rank Irish; every other Irish air you have adopted is in the Scots taste; but, Langolee!—why, it is no more like a Scots air than Lunardi's balloon is like Diogenes' tub. I grant you that it is pretty; but why don't you take also the "Humors of Glen," "Captain O'Kean," "Coolim," and many other Irish airs much more beautiful than it? Let me recommend to you, in place of this blackguard Irish jig, our beautiful Scots air, "Saw ye na my Peggy," a tune worth ten thousand of it; or, "Fy! let us a' to the Bridal," worth twenty thousand of it.

No. 54. Nothing.

No. 55. "White Cockade." I have forgot the Cantata you allude to, as I kept no copy, and indeed did not know that it was in existence; however, I remember that none of the songs pleased myself, except the last—something about:—

Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please their priests.*

But there is another song of mine, a composition of early life, in the *Museum*, beginning:—

Nae gentle dames, tho' e'er sae fair.

which suits the measure, and has tolerable merit.

No. 56. It suits best to make it, "Whistle, and I'll come t' ye, my lad."

* The reader will recollect that the poet gave his only MS. of the *Jolly Beggars* to the Laird of Craigengillan's factor. After being shown about in Edinburgh for some time, it was acquired by Mr Thomas Stewart, printer, Glasgow, who published it in 1799, and again, in 1823, in *facsimile*. The valuable holograph is now the property of the poet's nephew, Mr Gilbert Burns of Knockmaroon Lodge, Dublin.

No. 57. "Auld Sir Symon" I must beg you to keep out, and put in its place "The Quaker's Wife."

No. 58. Nothing.

No. 59. "Dainty Davie" I have heard sung nineteen thousand, nine hundred, and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune; and nothing (since a Highland wench in the Cowgate once bore me three bastards at a birth) has surprised me so much as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

No. 60. "Fee him, father, fee him." I enclose you Fraser's set of this tune; when he plays it slow, in fact he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas in that style, merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Fraser gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which "Patie Allan's mither de'ed—that was about the back o' midnight," and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company except the *Hautbois* and the Muse.

THOU HAST LEFT ME EVER.

Tune—"Fee him, Father."

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie,
 Thou hast left me ever ;
 Thou hast left me ever, Jamie,
 Thou hast left me ever :
 After thou hast vow'd that death
 Only should us sever ;
 Now thou'st left thy lass for ay—
 I maun see thee never, Jamie,
 I'll see thee never, &c.

(See p. 155, Vol. IV.)

No. 61. "Jocky said to Jenny" I would discard, and in its place would put "There's nae Luck about the House," which is a very pleasant air, and positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scots, or perhaps any other language. "When she cam ben, she bobbit," is a more beautiful air by much than either of them, and in the *andante* way, would make a charming sentimental ballad.

No. 62. Nothing.

No. 63. "Maggie Lauder" is a good tune; but there is—I don't know what, of vulgarity about it; at least to me it has always that effect. There is an English song to which it is set in the *Museum*. (No. 98.)

Nos. 64, 65, and 66. Nothing,

No. 67. "Saw ye my Father?" is one of my greatest favorites. The evening before last, I wandered out, and began a tender song, in what I think is its native style. I must premise, that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting-note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings, "Saw ye my Father?" &c. So also in line third, "I saw not your," &c. This last, to be sure, hurts the poetry ("I saw," instead of "I *saw*"), but I am speaking of the air.

My song is but just begun; and I should like, before I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scots dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English.

FRAGMENT.

Tune—“Saw ye my Father?”
Where are the joys I hae met in the morning,
 That danc'd to the lark's early sang?
Where is the peace that awaited my wand'ring,
 At e'enin the wild woods amang?
Nae mair a-winding the course o' yon river,
 And making sweet flowerets sae fair;
Nae mair I trace the light footsteps o' Pleasure
 But Sorrow and sad-sighing Care.

Is it that Simmer's forsaken our vallies,
 And grim, surly Winter is near?
No, no, the bees humming round the gay roses
 Proclaim it the pride o' the year.

Fain wad I hide what I fear to discover,
 Yet lang, lang too well hae I known
A' that has caus-ed the wreck in my bosom
 Is—Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

Cetera desunt.

No. 68. Nothing.

No. 69. "Todlin Hame." Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine, that this air is highly susceptible of pathos; accordingly, you will soon hear him at your concert try it to a song of mine in the *Museum*, "Ye Banks and Braes o' bonie Doon." Clarke has told me what a creature he is; but if he will bring any more of our tunes from darkness into light, I will be pleased.

No. 70. Nothing.

No. 71. "Geordie's Byre." Call the tune so, for decency's sake. I agree with you that the song will be better to want the stanza, "The primrose is o'er for the season." I'll rather write a new song altogether than make this English. The sprinkling of Scotch in it, while it is but a sprinkling, gives it an air of rustic naiveté which time will rather increase than diminish.

Nos. 72, 73. Nothing.

No. 74, and last. "Tranent Muir" I am altogether averse to. The song is fine and eke the tune; but it is not of a piece with the rest of your pieces. Instead of it, allow me to mention a particular favorite of mine which you will find in the *Museum*: "I had a horse, and I had nae mair." It is a charming song, and I know the story of the ballad. One song more, and I have done—"Auld Lang Syne." The air is but mediocre; but the following song—the old song of the olden times, and which has never

been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air :

AULD LANG SYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne?

Chorus—For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne, &c.

See page 174, Vol. II.

Now, I suppose, I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. Gil Morrice, Tranent Muir, M'Pherson's Farewell, Battle of Sheriffmuir, or "We ran and they ran" (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history), Hardiknute, Barbara Allan (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared);* and besides, do you know that I really have the old tune to which "The Cherry and the Slae" was sung, and which is mentioned as a well-known air in "Scotland's Complaint"—a book published before poor Mary's days? It was then called "The Banks of Helicon;" an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's "History of Scots Music." The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

Good bye to ye!

R. B.

* Thomson's set of this melody is the same as Johnson's, published in 1790. The English set of the air, in Ritson, is very inferior.

(26) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[31 August 1793.]

I DARESAY, my dear Sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it; a ballad is my hobby horse which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed headstrong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tinkle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor Pilgarlic, the bedlam Jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of men.

The following song I have composed for "Oran Gaoil," the Highland air that you tell me in your last you have resolved to give a place to in your Book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well! if not, 'tis also well!

SONG.

Tune—"Oran Gaoil."

Behold the hour, the boat arrive,
Thou goest, thou darling of my heart;
Sever'd from thee, can I survive,
But Fate has will'd, and we must part, &c.

See page 152, Vol. III.

(27) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[1st Sept. 1793].

MY DEAR SIR,—You know that my pretensions to musical taste are merely a few of Nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint, however they may transport and ravish the ears of

you connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies, which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air "Hey, tutti, taitie," may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Fraser's hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition which I have met with in many places in Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's March at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my yesternight's evening-walk, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scots Ode, fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the gallant royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning.

ROBERT BRUCE'S MARCH TO BANNOCKBURN.

Tune—"Hey, tutti taitie."

Scots, wha hae wi' WALLACE bled,
Scots, wham BRUCE has often led,
Welcome to your gory bed,

Or to victorie! &c.

See page 149, Vol. III.

So may God ever defend the cause of Truth and Liberty, as He did that day! Amen! R. B.

P.S.—I shewed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me make soft verses for it; but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for Freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, *not quite so ancient*, roused my rhyming mania. Clarke's set of the tune, with his bass, you will find in the *Museum*, though I am afraid that the air is not what will entitle it to a place in your elegant selection. R. B.

(¹³) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 5th Sept. 1793.

I believe it is generally allowed that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me verses that even Shakspeare might be proud to own, you speak of them as if they were ordinary productions ! Your heroic ode is to me the noblest composition of the kind in the Scottish language. I happened to dine yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it; entreated me to find out a suitable air for it; and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as "Hey, tuttie taitie." Assuredly, your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it; for I never heard any person, and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs of which I lately sent you the list; and I think "Lewie Gordon" is the most happily adapted to your ode; at least, with a very slight variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in "Lewie Gordon" more of the grand than the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with a degree of spirit, which your words would oblige the singer to give it. I would have no scruple about substituting your ode in room of the song, "Lewie Gordon," which has neither the interest, the grandeur, nor the poetry, that characterise your verses. Now, the variation that I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse (the only line too short for the air) is as follows :—

- Verse 1. Or to [*glorious*] victory.
2. Chains [*chains*] and slavery.
3. Let him [*let him*] turn and flee.
4. Let him [*bravely*] follow me.
5. But they shall [*they shall*] be free.
6. Let us [*let us*] do or die !

If you connect each line with its own verse, I do not think you

will find that either the sentiment or the expression loses any of its energy.

The only line which I dislike in the whole of the song is “Welcome to your gory bed!” Would not another word be preferable to “welcome”? In your next, I will expect to be informed whether you agree to what I have proposed. The little alterations I submit with great deference.

The beauty of the verses you have made for “Oran Gaoil” will insure celebrity to the air.

G. T.

(28) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[September, 1793.]

I AM happy, my dear Sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea “honor’s bed” is, though a beautiful, a hackney’d idea; so, if you please, we will let the line stand as it is.* I have altered the song as follows:—

BANNOCKBURN : A SONG.

ROBERT BRUCE’S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

Tune—“Lewie Gordon.”

Scots, wha hae wi Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has often led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victorie!

Now’s the day, and now’s the hour;
See the front o’ battle lour;
See approach proud Edward’s power—
Edward! Chains and Slavery!
Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward’s grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Traitor! Coward! turn and flee!

* Chambers has noted his surprise that Burns here answers an objection of Thomson’s that has not yet appeared in the correspondence, and suggests that there has been some misprinting or transplanting of Thomson’s remarks. He adds that “many such liberties appear to have been taken by the original editor of this correspondence.” Thomson must have written a letter between those numbered (13) and (14) which has been withheld, or No. (13) must have contained more than he has thought proper to publish.

Wha for Scotland's King and Law
 Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
 Free-man stand, or Free-man fa',
 Soger ! Hero ! on wi' me !

By Oppression's woes and pains !
 By your sons in servile chains !
 We will drain our dearest veins,
 But they shall be—shall be free !

Lay the proud usurpers low !
 Tyrants fall in every foe !
 Liberty's in every blow !
 Forward ! let us Do, or Die !!!

N.B.—I have borrowed the last stanza from the common
 stall edition of Wallace :—

“A false usurper sinks in every foe,
 And liberty returns with every blow.”

a couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had enough of
 my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches
 miserably. One comfort! I suffer so much just now in this
 world for last's night's debauch, that I shall escape scot-free
 for it in the world to come. Amen!

R. B.

(¹⁴) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 12th Sept. 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your observations
 on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much
 in unison with my own, respecting the generality of the airs, as
 well as the verses. About some of them we differ, but there is
 no disputing about hobbyhorses. I shall not fail to profit by the
 remarks you make, and to reconsider the whole with attention.

“Dainty Davie” must be sung two stanzas together, and then
 the chorus; ‘tis the proper way. I agree with you, that there
 may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of
 “Fee him, Father,” when performed with feeling; but a tender
 cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very

slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humorous verses, wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for "Fee him, Father," which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr James Balfour, the king of good fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with "Fee him, Father," and with "Todlin Hame" also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs. Some bacchanals I would wish to discard. "Fy, let us a' to the Bridal," for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers;* and, "Saw ye my Father" appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying anything to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. "Gory" presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them "Welcome to your gory bed," seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shewn the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice, I would suggest:—

Now prepare for honour's bed
Or for glorious victory !

G. T.

(29) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

September, 1793.

"WHO shall decide when Doctors disagree?" My ode pleases me so much, that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconstructing

* This expression of opinion, in the face of Burns's admiration of the song at page 276, is scarcely polite. See the bard's rebuke, p. 291 *infra*.

it, as I think I have much improved it. Instead of “Soger ! hero !” I will have it to be :—

Caledonian ! on wi’ me !

I have scrutinised it over and over ; and to the world, some way or other, it shall go as it is.* At the same time, it will not in the least hurt me, tho’ you leave the song out altogether, and adhere to your first idea of adopting Logan’s verses.

I have finished my song to “The Gréy Cock,” and in English, as you will see. Your objection of a syllable too much for the expression of the air is just ; but allow me to say that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and quaver, is not a great matter ; however, in that I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you.

* Dr Currie has remarked in reference to Thomson’s objections to the line, “Welcome to your gory bed,” that the “Leader who, in preparing for an engagement, attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death will probably have but an imperfect success, and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle, where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men, the conquerors of Bannockburn were not composed. Mr Thomson’s observation, therefore, seems not sufficiently considered.”

Thomson published the ode in his second volume, which appeared in July 1799. It is there set to the air “Lewie Gordon.” The public, however, on being made acquainted—through Dr Currie’s edition—with Burns’s partiality for the air “Hey, tutti taiti,” and how he had been prevailed on, against his better instincts, to alter and injure his verses, to suit Mr Thomson’s whim for the tune “Lewie Gordon,” loudly demanded the restoration of the ode to its original form, and its own thrilling melody. Accordingly, when the third volume of Thomson’s collection appeared in 1802, “Scots, wha hae wi’ Wallace bled” was produced in its primal beauty, set to the air for which it had been composed.

Thomson prefaced it with the following note :—“The Poet originally intended this noble strain for the air “Hey, tutti taiti ;” but, on a suggestion from the Editor of this work, who then thought “Lewie Gordon” a fitter tune for the words, they were united together, and published in the preceding volume. The Editor, however, having since examined the air “Hey, tutti taiti” with more particular attention, frankly owns that he has changed his opinion, and now thinks it much better adapted for giving energy to the poetry than the air of *Lewie Gordon*. It is worthy of remark, that it appears to be the oldest Scottish air, concerning which anything like evidence is to be found.”

Of the poetry I speak with confidence ; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular. My advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses. Here they are :—

FAIR JENNY.

Tune—“The Grey Cock.”

“Where are the joys I have met in the morning,
That danc’d to the lark’s early song ?
Where is the peace that awaited my wandering,
At evening the wild-woods among ?” ?

See page 156, Vol. III.

Adieu ! my dear Sir, the post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure. R. B.

(³⁰) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

September 1793.

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of English songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs for which you have allotted me to find English songs. The following I picked up in an old collection, which will suit very well for “Nancy’s to the greenwood gane.” You must not, my dear Sir, expect all your English songs to have superlative merit, ’tis enough if they are passable :

“The other night, with all her charms,
My ardent passion crowning,
My Celia sauk within my arms,
An equal transport owning,” &c.

[This is rather a witty song, and will be found in Tom D’Urfey’s collection. George Thomson seems to have regarded it as one of Burns’s own compositions; for he has written on the margin, “Unpublishable surely ! G. T.”]

As for the air—"Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad," there is a fine English song for it in Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, beginning, "Ah Chloe! thou treasure, thou joy of my breast." For "John Anderson, my jo," you have, also in Ramsay's *Miscellany*, an excellent song beginning—

"What means this niceness now of late?"

In the same *Miscellany* is not a bad song by Crawford to "Peggy I must love thee," beginning—

"Beneath a beech's grateful shade."

As for English verses to "Geordie's Byre," take the following, altered a trifle from Ramsay,

"O Mary, thy graces and glances,
Thy smiles so enchantingly gay,
And converse bewitchingly charming,
Bright wit and good humor display," &c.

Since I am in the way of amending and abridging, let me recommend the following abridgement of a beautiful poem of Hamilton's, to suit, "Tak your auld cloak about ye."

"Alas! the sunny hours are past,
The cheating scene, it will not last;
Let not the flatt'rer Hope persuade;
Ah, must I say, that it will fade!" &c.

For "Willie was a wanton wag," you have a song made on purpose, also by Hamilton, which you will find in Ramsay's *Miscellany*, beginning,

"Willy, ne'er enquire what end."

English verses for "The tither morn, as I forlorn," you have in my song.

"The last time I came o'er the moor,
And left Maria's dwelling."

For "Todlin Hame," take the following old English song, which I daresay is but little known:—

THE PRIMROSE.

Tune—“Todlin Hame.”

“Dost ask me, why I send thee here,
 This firstling of the infant year—
 This lovely native of the vale,
 That hangs so pensive, and so pale ?

“Look on its bending stalk, so weak
 That, each way yielding, doth not break,
 And see how aptly it reveals
 The doubts and fears a lover feels.

“Look on its leaves of yellow hue
 Bepearl'd thus with morning dew,
 And these will whisper in thine ears
 ‘The sweets of love are wash'd with tears.’”*

N.B.—I have altered it a little.

For “Muirland Willie” you have, in Ramsay’s *Tea-table*, an excellent song, beginning, “Ah, why those tears in Nelly’s eyes ?” Then for “The Collier’s Dochter,” take the following old bacchanal :—

“Deluded swain, the pleasure
 The fickle Fair can give thee,
 Is but a fairy treasure,
 Thy hopes will soon deceive thee ;
 The billows on the ocean,
 The breezes idly roaming,
 The cloud’s uncertain motion,
 They are but types of woman.

“Heav’ns ! art thou not ashamed
 To doat upon a feature ?
 If Man thou wouldst be named,
 Despise the silly creature ;
 Go, find an honest fellow ;
 Good claret set before thee ;
 Hold on till thou art mellow,
 And then to bed in glory.”

The faulty line in “Logan Water” I mend thus :—

“How can your flinty hearts enjoy
 The widow’s tears, the orphan’s cry ?”

* This pretty little piece has been so much altered from the original that, like the bacchanalian verses which follow, it may almost be reckoned as Burns’s own.

The song otherwise will pass. As to “M‘Gregor a Rora,” you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours, in the *Museum*, Vol. II., p. 181. The song begins “Raving winds around her blowing.”

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are rank Irish. If they were like the “Banks of Banna,” for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scotch taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them, in an additional number? We could find this quantity of charming airs; I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of “Roy’s Wife” for the music’s sake, we shall not insert it. “Deil tak the Wars” is a charming song; so is “Saw ye my Peggy?” “There’s nae luck about the House” well deserves a place. I cannot say that “O’er the hills and far awa” strikes me as equal to your selection. “This is no my ain House” is a great favorite of mine; and if you will send me your set of it, I shall task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of “I hae laid a herrin in saut?” I like it much. Your Jacobite airs are all pretty, and there are many others of the same kind pretty; but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert “Fy, let us a’ to the bridal,” to any other words than its own.

What pleases me, as simple and *naïve*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, “Fy, gie me my coggie, Sirs;” “Fy, let us a’ to the bridal,” with several others of that cast, are to me highly pleasing; while, “Saw ye my Father, or saw ye my Mother?” delights me with its descriptive, simple pathos. Thus, my song, “Ken ye what Meg o’ the Mill has gotten?” pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall

not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but
“ilka man wears his belt his ain gate.”—Yours,

R. BURNS.

(³¹) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[29th October 1793.]

YOUR last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas! poor Erskine!* The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has till now scared me from writing you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to “The Quaker’s Wife,” though, by the by, an old Highland gentleman, and a deep antiquarian, tells me that it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of “Leiger ’m choss,” which name you may, if you think fit, prefix as the name of the tune. It bears that name in the west country, where there is still half a stanza of the song preserved, which I take to have been the chorus. The Gaelic phrase they have corrupted into “Liggeram Coss:”—

“ Leiger ’m choss, my bonie wee lass,
Leiger ’m choss, my dearie ;
A’ the lee-lang winter night,
Leiger ’m choss, my dearie.”

The following verses, I hope, will please you, as an English song to the air:—

* The tall, characteristic figure and contemplative countenance of this gentleman is familiar to students of “Kay’s Edinburgh Characters,” in which work a memoir of him is included. He resided with his sister, Lady Colville, at Drumsheugh, near the present Dean Bridge, from 1790 to 1793. Becoming involved in his circumstances, through gambling propensities, he drowned himself in the Forth, opposite Caroline Park, in September 1793.

SONG.

Tune—“Leiger ‘m Choss.”

“Thine am I, my faithful Fair,
Thine my lovely Nancy,
Every pulse along my veins,
Every roving fancy,” &c.

(See page 158, Vol. III.)

Your objection to the English song I proposed for “John Anderson, my jo,” is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. You will see that each fifth line is made to suit the peculiar note you mention. The song was never in print, which, I think, is so much in your favor. The more original good poetry your Collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit :—

SONG—By Gavin Turnbull.*

Tune—“John Anderson, my Jo.”

“O condescend, dear charming maid,
My wretched state to view ;
A tender swain to love betrayed,
And sad despair, by you :
While here, all *melancholy*,
My passion I deplore,
Yet, urged by some resistless fate,
I love thee more and more,” &c.

The following address of Turnbull’s to the Nightingale will suit as an English song to the air, “There was a Lass, and she was fair.” By the by, Turnbull has a great many songs in MSS. which I can command, if you like his manner. Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may

* Gavin Turnbull, poet and comedian, was born in Roxburghshire, and settled early in Kilmarnock, where he may have formed the acquaintance of Burns in 1786. A volume of his poems was printed at Glasgow in 1788. He was one of the players in Sutherland’s company at Dumfries, which Burns warmly patronised even before he left Ellisland. Turnbull afterwards went to America, and the remainder of his history is a blank.

be prejudiced in his favor; but I like some of his pieces very much:—

THE NIGHTINGALE—By G. Turnbull.

Tune—“Bonie Jean.”

“Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
That ever tried the plaintive strain,
Awake thy tender tale of love
And soothe a poor forsaken swain;
Who, though the Muses deign to aid,
And teach him smoothly to complain;
Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
Is deaf to her forsaken swain,” &c.

I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull’s, which would go charmingly to “Lewie Gordon:”—

LAURA—By G. Turnbull.

Tune—“Lewie Gordon.”

“Let me wander where I will—
Shady wood, or winding rill;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers;
Where the linnets’ early song
Echoes sweet the woods among;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still,” &c.

The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other opportunity. Yours,

R. B.

(¹⁵) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 7th November 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,—After so long a silence, it gave me peculiar pleasure to recognise your well-known hand, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all was not well with you. I am happy to find however that your silence did not proceed from that cause, and that you have got among the ballads once more.

I have to thank you for your English song to “Leiger ‘m

choss," which I think extremely good, although the colouring is warm. Your friend Mr Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable merit; and as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you may find out some that will answer as English songs to the airs yet unprovided.

G. T.

(32) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

December 1793.

TELL me, my dear Sir, if you like the following verses to
"My Jo Janet?"

"Husband, husband, cease your strife,
Nor longer idly rave, Sir,
Tho' I am your wedded wife,
Yet I am not your slave, Sir!
One of two must still obey,
Nancy, Nancy;
Is it man or woman, say,
My spouse Nancy?" &c.

See page 160, Vol. III.

Yours,

R. B.

(16) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 17th April 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—Owing to the distress of our friend [Cunningham] for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter,* I had not an opportunity, till lately, of perusing it. How sorry I am to find Burns saying, "Canst thou minister to a mind diseased?" while he is delighting others from one end of the island to the other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case—"Go," says the doctor, "and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good humour." "Alas! Sir," replied the patient, "I am that unhappy Carlini!"

* See page 118 *supra*.

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly,* and I trust that by some means or other, it will soon take place; but your bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserably weak drinker!

Allan is much gratified by your good opinion of his talents. He has just begun a sketch from your "Cotter's Saturday Night," and, if it pleases himself in the design, he will probably etch or engrave it. In subjects of the pastoral and humorous kind he is, perhaps, unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his colouring is sombre, otherwise his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the "Sutor's Dochter," and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume. Your verses to it are pretty;† but your humorous English song to suit "Jo Janet" is inimitable. What think you of the air "Within a mile of Edinburgh?" It has always struck me as a modern English imitation; but it is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked, that I believe I must include it.‡ The verses are little better than namby-pamby. Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

G. T.

(³³) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

June 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—I return you the plates, with which I am highly pleased, your criticism on the grouping of the young lad being introduced to the mother only excepted. There I entirely agree with you. I would humbly propose that instead of the younker knitting, the artist would (in preference to your "trump"), put a stock and horn among his hands, as if he were screwing and adjusting it. I would

* See page 127 *supra*.

† See page 125 *supra*.

‡ There was an old strain to the words "Within a mile of Edinburgh town," but the popular air here referred to is a composition of Hook, father of Mr Theodore Hook.

have returned them sooner, but I waited the opinion of a friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the burin, and he is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I got him a peep of the gentle shepherd ; and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr Allan's choosing my favorite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, I shall be quite in song, as you shall see by and by. I know you value a composition, because it is made by one of the great ones, as little as I do. However, I got an air, pretty enough, composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, which she calls "The Banks of Cree." Cree is a beautiful romantic stream, and as her Ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it :—

SONG—*Tune "The Banks of Cree."*

"Here is the glen, and here the bower,
All underneath the birchen shade ;
The village-bell has told the hour,
" O what can stay my lovely maid," &c.

See page 176, Vol. III.

The air, I fear, is not worth your while ; else I would send it you. I am hurried ; so farewell until next post. My "seal" is all well, except that my holly must be a *bush*, not a *tree*, as in the present shield. I also enclose it, and will send the pebble by the first opportunity.*—Yours,

R. B.

* This refers to the commission contained in the poet's letter to Alexander Cunningham, of 3d March, 1794, to have his shield, with crest and motto, designed and cut on a seal. Cunningham had forwarded (through Thomson) a sketch of the design, and Burns here rectifies it.

(34) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[July, 1794.]

Is there no news yet, my dear Sir, of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop, until these glorious Crusaders, the Allies, set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thraldom of Democrat discords? Alas the day! and woe is me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of Millions *—that golden age, spotless with Monarchical innocence and Despotic purity—that Millenium, of which the earliest dawn will enlighten even Republican turbulence, and show the swinish multitude that they are but beasts, and, like beasts, must be led by the nose, and goaded in the backside—those days of sweet chords and concords seem by no means near.

Oh that mine eyes were fountains of waters, for thy rueful sake, poor Prussia! that as thy ire has deluged the plains of Flanders, so might my grief inundate the regions of Gallovidia. Ye children of success, ye sons of prosperity, ye who never shed the tear of sorrow, or felt a wish unsatisfied, spare your reproaches on the left-handed shifts and shuffling of unhappy Brandenburg! Once was his rectitude straight as the shafts of the Archers of Edina, and stubborn as the granite of Gallovidian hills—the Batavian witnessed his bowels of compassion, and Sarmatia rejoiced in his truth. But alas! The needy man who has known better times can only console himself with a song, thus:—

While princes and prelates, and hot-headed zealots
A' Europe had set in a low, a low, &c.

See page 99, Vol. III.

So much for nonsense! I have sent you by my much

* Here a large *hiatus* occurs in former editions. Dr. Currie has a foot-note thus:—"A part of this letter has been omitted for obvious political reasons."

valued friend, Mr Syme, of this place, the pebble for my seal. You will please remember that my holly is a bush, not a tree.

I have three or four songs on the way for you ; but I have not yet put the last hand to them. Pray are you going to insert "Bannockburn," or "Wilt thou be my dearie," in your Collection ? If you are not, let me know, as in that case I will give them to *Johnson's Museum*. I told you that our friend Clarke, is quite an enthusiast in the idea that the air "Nancy's to the greenwood gane," is capable of sentiment and pathos in a high degree. In this, if I remember right, you did not agree with him. I intend setting my verses which I wrote and sent you for "The last time I came o'er the moor," to this air. I have made an alteration in the beginning of the song, which you will find on the new page.

SONG—*Tune, "Nancy's to the greenwood gane."*

" Farewell thou stream that winding flows
 Around Eliza's dwelling !

O mem'ry ! spare the cruel throes
 Within my bosom swelling," etc.

See page 226, Vol. III.

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much honored friend of mine, Mr Graham of Fintry. I wrote on the blank side of the title-page, the following address to the young lady :—

" Here, where the Scottish Muse immortal lives
 In sacred strains and tuneful numbers joined,
Accept the gift ; though humble he that gives,
 Rich is the tribute of the grateful mind," etc.

See page 198, Vol. III.

I have also promised the young lady a copy of your Sonatas : will you have the goodness to send a copy directed to Miss Graham of Fintry.

Another friend of mine goes to town in a week or so, when you shall again have another packet of nonsense from
—Yours,

R. B.

(¹⁷) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 10th August 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—I owe you an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favour of your last. I fear it will be as you say—I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends ; but, nevertheless, I am desirous to be prepared with the poetry ; and as the season approaches in which your Muse of Coila visits you, I trust, I shall, as formerly, be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews.

G. T.

(¹⁸) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[30th August 1794.]

THE last evening as I was straying out and thinking of “O'er the Hills and far away,” I spun the following stanzas for it ; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silkworm, or brushed to the devil, like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear Sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first, but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor-songs, but, as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his love-lorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—“Sweet Annie frac the sea-beach came.” Now for the song :—

ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.

Tune—“O'er the hills,” &c.

How can my poor heart be glad,
When absent from my sailor lad,
How can I the thought forego,
He's on the seas to meet the foe? &c.

See page 198, Vol. III.

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in the spirit of Christian meekness.—Yours ever,

R. B.

(18) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 16 *Sept.* 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—You have anticipated my opinion of “On the seas and far away.” I do not think it one of your very happiest productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all acceptance.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly “Bullets, spare my only joy!” Confound the bullets! It might perhaps be objected to the third verse, “At the starless midnight hour,” that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of thought would have better suited the character of a sailor's sweetheart. The tune it must be remembered, is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the choruses.

G. T.

(36) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

Sept. 1794.

LITTLE do the Trustees for our Manufactures, when they frank my letters to you—little do they consider what kind of manufacture they are encouraging. The manufacture of Nonsense was certainly not in idea when the Act of Parlia-

ment was framed, and yet, under my hands and your *cover*, it thrives amazingly. Well, there are more pernicious manufactures, that is certain !

I shall withdraw my “O'er the seas and far away” altogether ; it is unequal, and unworthy of the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son : you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world and try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, abortions and all ; and as such, pray look over them, and forgive them and burn them. I am flattered at your adopting “Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes,” as it was owing to me that ever it saw the light. About seven years ago, I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr Clunyie, who sang it charmingly ; and, at my request, Mr Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for *you*.* In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

Chorus—Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
 Ca' them whare the heather grows,
 Ca' them whare the burnie rowes,
 My bonie Dearie.
 Hark ! the mavis' e'enin' sang,
 Sounding Clunden's woods amang ;
 Then a faulding let us gang,
 My bonie Dearie, &c.

See page 201, Vol. III.

I will give you my opinion of your other newly adopted songs, my first scribbling fit. Adieu ! R. B.

* The song referred to is given at page 248, Vol. II.

(37) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[Sept. 1794.]

Do you know, my dear Sir, a blackguard Irish song called “Oonagh’s Waterfall,” or “The lock that scattered Oonagh’s p—ss?” our friend Cunningham sings it delightfully. The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for *my* humble rustic Muse, to expect that every effort of hers must have merit; still, I think that it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air, than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the *Scots Musical Museum*; and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song to the air I mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an Editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it, that you may sing it before ladies.

SHE SAYS SHE LO’ES ME BEST OF A’.

Tyne—“Oonagh’s Waterfall.”

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
 Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
 Bewitchingly o’erarching,
 Twa laughing een o’ bonie blue, &c.

See page 202, Vol. III.

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederic of Prussia’s taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the Connoisseurs decried, and, always without any hypocrisy, confess his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in many of my favorite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that

any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be showing signs of disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses to "Rothiemurche's Rant," an air which puts me in raptures; and in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you, "Rothiemurche," he says, "is an air both original and beautiful;" and on his recommendation, I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth, or last part for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.

SONG.

Tune—"Rothiemurche's Rant."

Chorus—"Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonie Lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks,
Wilt thou be my Dearie, O.

"Now nature cleeds the flowery lea,
And a' is young and sweet like thee;
O wilt thou share its joys wi' me,
And say thou'l be my Dearie, O."

See page 219, Vol. III.

I have begun anew "Let me in this ae night."* Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song, I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself, I am just three stanzas deep in it. How do you like this, and would you

* The poet had unsuccessfully tried his hand on this subject in August 1793 (see page 260 *supra*). The present effort is not much better.

have the *denouement* to be successful or otherwise? Should she “let him in,” or not?

SONG.

Tune—“Let me in this ae night.”

“O lassie art thou sleepin yet,
Or art thou wanken, I wad wit?
For love has bound me hand an’ fit,
And I would fain be in, jo.

Chorus—O let me in this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
O let me in this ae night,
I’ll no come back again, jo.

“Tho’ never durst my tongue reveal,
Lang, lang my heart to thee’s been leal;
O lassie dear, ae last fareweel,
For pity’s cause alane, jo.
O let me in, &c.

“O wytē na me until thou prove
The fatal force o’ mighty love,
Then should on me thy fancy rove,
Count my care by thy ain, jo.
O let me in, &c.

“O pity’s ay to woman dear—
She heav’d a sigh, she drapt a tear;
’Twas love for me that brought him here;
Sae how can I complain, jo?”

“*Chorus*—O come your ways this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
O come your ways this ae night,
But ye maunna do’t again, jo!”

Did you not once propose “The sow’s tail to Geordie” as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is no mark of its *real* excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs Thomson’s Christian name; and yours, I am afraid, is rather burlesque for senti-

ment, else I had meant to have made you the hero and heroine of the little piece.

I had just written four stanzas at random, which I intend to have woven somewhere into, probably at the conclusion of, the song.

HE.

“The bee that thro’ the sunny hour
Sips nectar in the breathing flower,
Compar’d wi’ my delight is poor,
Upon the lips o’ Jeanie.

SHE.

“The woodbine in the dewy weet,
When e’enin shades in silence meet,
Is nocht sae fragrant and sae sweet
As is a kiss o’ Geordie.

HE.

“Let Fortune’s wheel at random rin,
And Fools may tyne and Knaves may win ;
My thoughts are a’ bound up in ane,
And that’s my ain dear Jeanie.”

SHE.

“What’s a’ the joys that gowd can gie ?
I dinna care a single flie ;
The lad I love’s the lad for me,
And that’s my ain dear Geordie.”

(See page 222, Vol. III.)

So much for an idle farago of a gossiping letter. You once asked my air for “Brunswick’s great Prince,” it is “Campbells are comin.”*

Do you know a droll Scots song more famous for its humor than delicacy, called “The Grey Goose and the Gled?” Mr Clarke took down the notes (such as they are) at my request, which I shall give with some decenter verses, to Johnson. Mr Clarke says that the tune is positively an old chant of the ROMISH CHURCH, which corroborates the old tradition that at the Reformation, the Reformers burlesqued

* See page 295 *supra*.

much of the old Church music with setting them to bawdy verses.

As a further proof, the common name for this song is "Cumnock Psalms." As there can be no harm in transcribing a stanza of a Psalm, I shall give you two or three; possibly the song is new to you :—

CUMNOCK PSALMS.

"As I looked o'er yon Castle wa'
I spied a grey goose and a gled," &c.

So much for the Psalmody of Cumnock !* How do you like the following epigram which I wrote the other day on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever. Dr Maxwell—the identical Maxwell whom Burke mentioned in the House of Commons—was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave; and to him I address the following :

TO DR MAXWELL,
ON MISS JESSIE STAIG'S RECOVERY.

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny;
You save fair Jessy from the grave!
An angel could not die.

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle!—Amen!

R. B.

(¹⁹) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

[Oct. 1794.]

I PERCEIVE the sprightly Muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet whose "woodnotes wild" are becoming as enchanting as ever. "She says she loes me best of a" is one of the pleasantest table songs I have ever seen, and henceforth shall be

* This is one of the grossest of the songs contained in the collection called "The Merry Muses of Caledonia." The frigid fiddler's hair would stand on end in perusing it! The tune is in the *Museum*, No. 405.

mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the Strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the Strathspeys when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs, in the way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman; without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having "The Sow's Tail," particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. "Geordie," as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs Thomson's name (Katherine) is not at all poetical. Retain *Jeanie* therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your "Ca' the ewes," is a precious little morceau. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let me ask you whether you never seriously turned your thoughts to dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas; few or none of those which have appeared since "The Duenna" possess much poetical merit: there is little in the conduct of the fable or in the dialogue to interest the audience. They are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs of course would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—*Storage*, for Drury Lane, or *Shield*, for Covent Garden: both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manuevring are often necessary to have a drama brought on; so it may be with the namby-pamby tribe of flowery scribblers; but were you to address Mr Sheridan himself by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honour of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration.

G. T.

(2^o) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.*Edinburgh, 14th Oct. 1794.*

THE last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered, till I am half blind, and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added are enclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are in general elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published by Mr Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shows clearly that Mr Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish; and that his classification of the airs, according to the *eras* when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, Esq., he has no mercy; but consigns him to damnation! He snarls at my publication on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it; uncandidly and unjustly leaving it to be inferred, that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a packing to make room for Peter's! Of you he speaks with some respect, and gives you a passing hit or two, for daring to dress up a little, some foolish songs for the *Museum*. His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities; many of them, however, have a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognise the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed; and as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so, even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste, and discernment to choose the best they could hear (which is far from certain), still it must

evidently be a chance, whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved; and without meaning any compliment to my own capability of choosing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally freed from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

G. T.

(³⁸) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—By this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. In the meantime, let me offer at a new improvement, or rather a restoring of old simplicity, in one of your newly adopted songs:—

“ When she cam ben she bobbit (a crotchet stop)
When she cam ben, she bobbit ; (do.)
And when she cam ben, she kiss'd Cockpen,
And syne denied that she did it.” (a crotchet stop).

This is the old rhythm, and by far the most original and beautiful. Let the harmony of the bass at the stops be full, and thin and dropping through the rest of the air, and you will give the tune a noble and striking effect. Perhaps I am betraying my ignorance; but Mr Clarke is decidedly of my opinion. He goes to your town by to-day's Fly, and I wish you would call on him, and take his opinion in general; you know his taste is a standard. He will return here in a week or two, so please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do, which would give me high satisfaction—persuade you to adopt my favorite, “ Craigie-

burn Wood," in your selection ; it is as great a favorite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland ; and, in fact (*entre nous*) is, in a manner, to me, what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a Mistress, or Friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now, don't put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any elishmaclavers about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely Friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober gin-horse routine of existence could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos equal to the genius of your Book ? No, no ! Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation ? *Tout au contraire !* I have a glorious recipe ; the very one that for his own use was invented by the Divinity of Healing and Poesy, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in the regimen of admiring a fine woman ; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon !

To descend to the business with which I began : if you like my idea of "When she cam ben she bobbit," the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly when set to another air, [Eppie Maenab, p. 19, Vol. III.] may perhaps do instead of worse stanzas :—

SONG. (QUASI DICAT, PHILLIS.)

Tune—"When she cam ben, she bobbit."

O saw ye my dear, my Phely ?

O saw ye my dear, my Phely ?

She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new Love,

She winna come hame to her Willy.

What says she, my dear, my Phely ?
What says she, my dear, my Phely ?
She lets thee to wit she has thee forgot,
And for ever disowns thee, her Willy."

O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely !
O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely !
As light as the air, as fause as thou'se fair,
Thou's broken the heart o' thy Willy.

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. "The Posie" is my composition ; the air was taken down from Mrs Burns's voice. It is well known in the west country, but the old words are trash. By the by, take a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which "Roslin Castle" is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. "Strathallan's Lament" is mine; the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved Allan Masterton. The "Young Hd. Rover" (Morag) is also mine, but is not worthy of the fine air. "Donocht-head" is not mine ; I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the *Edinburgh Herald*, and came to the editor of that paper with the Newcastle post-mark on it. "Whistle o'er the lave o't" is mine ; the music said to be by a John Bruce, a celebrated violin-player in Dumfries, about the beginning of this century. This I know, Bruce, who was an honest man though a red-wud Highlandman, constantly claimed it ; and by the old musical people here is believed to be the author of it.

"O how can I be blythe and glad" is mine ; but as it is already appropriated to an air by itself, both in the *Museum*, and from thence to Ritson (I have got that book), I think it would be as well to leave it out. However, do as you please.

"M'Pherson's Farewell" is mine, excepting the chorus, and one stanza.

“Andrew and his cutty gun.” The song to which it is set in the *Museum* is mine, and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called “The Flower of Strathmore.”

“The Quaker’s Wife.” Do not give the tune that name, but the old Highland one, “Leiger ’m chose.” The only fragment remaining of the old words is the chorus, still a favorite lullaby of my old mother, from whom I learned it—

“Leiger ’m chose, my bonie wee lass,
And Leiger ’m chose, my dearie ;
A’ the lee-lang winter night,
Leiger ’m chose, my dearie.”

The current name for the reel to this day at country weddings is *Leggeram Cosh*, a Lowland corruption of the original Gaelic. I have altered the first stanza, which I would have to stand thus—

“Thine am I, my faithful Fair,
Well thou mayst discover ;*
Every pulse along my vains
Tells the ardent lover.”

“Saw ye my father.” I am decidedly of opinion that you should set the tune to the old song, and let mine follow for English verses; but as you please.

“In simmer when the hay was mawn,” and “O for ane-and-twenty, Tam,” are both mine. The set of the last in the *Museum* does not please me; but if you will get any of our ancienter Scots fiddlers to play you, in strathspey time “The Moudiewart”—that is the name of the air, I think it will delight you.

* The alteration here made is no improvement; but the poet had now lost conceit of “Clarinda,” the proper heroine of the song; and therefore he erases the once loved name of “Nancy,” leaving the heroineship indefinite. By and by we shall see that the name “Chloris” is installed in its place—page 347 *infra*.

“ How long and dreary is the night ; ” I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged ; and to please you, and to suit your favorite air of “ Cauld Kail,” I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page.

SONG.

Tune—“ Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.”

“ How lang and dreary is the night
When I am frae my dearie ;
I restless lie frae e'en to morn,
Tho’ I were ne’er sae wearie.

Chorus—For O her lanely nights are lang,
And O her dreams are eerie ;
And O her widow’d heart is sair
That’s absent frae her dearie,” &c.

See page 211, Vol. III.

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your idea of the expression of the tune. There is, to me, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot, in my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays “ Nae luck about the house,” and sings it at the same time so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of my songs sent into the world as naked as Mr What-d’ye-call-im* has done in his London collection.

These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think my ideas are more barren in English than in Scottish. I have been at “ Duncan Gray,” to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid†—for instance,

* Mr Ritson, in his publication, “ Scottish Songs.”

† “ I cannot agree with the Poet in thinking this a stupid song ; and therefore I will publish it.—G. T.”

SONG.

Tune—“Duncan Gray.”

“Let not Woman e'er complain
Of inconstancy in love;
Let not woman e'er complain
Fickle Man is apt to rove,” &c.

See page 212, Vol. III.

If you insert both Peter's song and mine, to the tune of “The Bonnie Brucket Lassie,” it will cost you engraving the first verse of both songs, as the rhythm of the two is considerably different. As “Fair Eliza” is already published, I am totally indifferent whether you give it a place or not; but to my taste, the rhythm of my song to that air would have a much more original effect.

“Love never more shall give me pain,” has long been appropriated to a popular air of the same title, for which reason, in my opinion, it would be improper to set it to “My Lodging is on the cold ground.” There is a song in the *Museum* by a *ci-devant* goddess of mine,* which I think not unworthy of the air, and suits the rhythm equally with “Love never more,” &c. It begins—

“Talk not of love, it gives me pain.”

Since the above, I have been out in the country taking a dinner with a friend, where I met the lady whom I mentioned in the second page of this odds-and-ends of a letter. As usual, I got into song, and returning home I composed the following—

* Chambers here paused to remark thus:—“It was right, even in these poetico-Platonic affairs, to be off with the old love before he was on with the new. Yet it was only four months before—only in June, that she was ‘my ever-dear Clarinda!’ And a letter of mere *friendship* was then too cold to be attempted! (See page 131, *supra*). O womankind, think of that when you are addressed otherwise than in the language of sober common sense!”

THE LOVER'S MORNING SALUTE TO HIS MISTRESS.

Tune—“ Deil tak the Wars.”

“ Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature ?
 Rosy morn now lifts his eye,
 Numbering ilka bud which Nature
 Waters wi' the tears o' joy, &c.”

See page 213, Vol. III.

I allow the first four lines of each stanza to be repeated ; but if you inspect the air, in that part, you will find that it also, without a quaver of difference, is the same passages repeated ; which will exactly put it on the footing of other slow Scots airs, as they, you know, are twice sung over. If you honor my serenade by setting the air to it, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood. I have sent you my song noted down to the air, in the way I think that it should go ; I believe you will find my set of the air to be one of the best.

I enclose you a musical curiosity—an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scots one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the *Musical Museum*. Here follow the verses I intend for it :—

THE AULD MAN.

“ But lately seen in gladsome green,
 The woods rejoiced the day ;
 Thro' gentle showers the laughing flowers
 In double pride were gay,” &c.

See page 214, Vol. III.

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs which you mention in your letter. I can return them three times a-week by the Fly. The Scottish collection, as I told you, I have got. I will thank you for another information, and that

as speedily as you please—whether this miserable, drawling, hotch-potch epistle has not completely tired you of the correspondence of yours,

R. BURNS.

19th Oct. 1794.

(²¹) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 27th October 1794.

I AM sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable she whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often enraptured the Scottish bard, that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. “Craigieburn Wood” must certainly be adopted into my family, since she is the subject of the song; but in the name of decency, I must beg a new chorus-verse from you. “O to be lying beyond thee, dearie” is perhaps a consummation to be wished, but will not do for singing in the company of ladies. The songs in your last will do you lasting credit, and suit the respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly of your opinion with respect to the additional airs. The idea of sending them into the world naked as they were born was ungenerous. They must all be clothed and made decent by our friend Clarke.

I find I am anticipated by the friendly Cunningham in sending you Ritson’s Scottish collection. Permit me, therefore, to present you with his English collection, which you will receive by the coach. I do not find his historical essay on Scottish song interesting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous remarks will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan has just sketched a charming design from “Maggie Lauder.” She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson’s prints.

P.S.—What do your anecdotes say concerning “Maggie Lauder?” was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely speer for her, if you ca’d at Anster town. G. T.

(39) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[Nov. 1794.]

MANY thanks, my dear Sir, for your present ; it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c., for your work. I intend drawing them up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious, dull business of systematic arrangement.* Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c., it will be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work. As soon as I have a few pages in order, I will send you them as a specimen. I only fear that the matter will grow so large among my hands as to be more expense than you can allot for it. Now for my desultory way of writing you.

I am happy that I have at last pleased you with verses to your right-hand tune “Cauld Kail.” I see a little unlikeness in the line you object to, but cannot alter it for a better. It is one thing to know one’s error, and another and much more difficult affair to amend that error. In my last, I told you my objections to the song you had selected for “My lodging is on the cold ground.” On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration), she suggested an idea, which I, on my return from the visit, wrought into the following song. It is exactly in the measure of “My dearie, an thou die,” which you say is the precise rhythm of the air :—

SONG.

Tune—“My Lodging is on the cold ground.”

My Chloris, mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair ;
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair, &c.

See page 216, Vol. III.

* The paper here referred to seems not to have been completed ; and the portion forwarded to Thomson by way of specimen has not been found.

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral ? I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of "ma chère amie." I assure you I was never more in earnest in my life, than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last. Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel and highly venerate ; but somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy as that other species of the passion,

" Where love is liberty, and nature law."

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet, while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulation of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the *first* and *inviolate* sentiment that pervades my soul ; and what pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere and clash with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price ; and Justice forbids, and Generosity despairs the purchase ! As to the herd of the sex who are good for little or nothing else, I have made no such agreement with myself ; but where the Parties are capable of, and the Passion is, the true Divinity of Love—the man who can act otherwise is a Villain !

It was impossible, you know, to take up the subject of your songs in the last sheet : that would have been a falling off indeed !

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs of which the measure is something similar to what I want ; and with a little alteration, so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your

work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song which, under the same first verse of the first stanza, you will find in Ramsay's *Tea-table Miscellany*, and elsewhere, I have cut down for an English dress to your "Dainty Davy," as follows :

SONG, ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH ONE.

Tune.—“Dainty Davy.”

It was the charming month of May,
When all the flowers were fresh and gay,
One morning, by the break of day

The youthful, charming Cloe, &c.

See page 218, Vol. III.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it.

I have finished my song to “Rothiemuche's Rant,” and you have Clarke to consult as to the set of the air for singing.*

Chorus—Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks,
Wilt thou be my Dearie, O.
The primrose bank, the wimpling burn,
The cuckoo on the milk-white thorn,
The wanton lambs at early morn,
Shall welcome thee, my Dearie, O.
Lassie wi' the, &c.

See page 219, Vol. III.

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral; the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well; if not, I will insert it in the *Museum*.

I am out of temper that you should set so sweet, so

* *See page 304 supra.*

tender an air, as “Deil tak the Wars,” to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of “Saw ye my Father?” By heavens! the odds is gold to brass. Besides, the old song, though pretty well modernized into the Scottish language, is originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scots manner, by that genius, Tom D’Urfey, so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan in “The Duenna” to this air, which is out of sight superior to D’Urfey’s. It begins—

“When sable night each drooping plant restoring.”

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of Simplicity, Tenderness, and Love. I have again gone over my song to the tune, as follows—

SONG.

Tune—“Deil tak the wars.”

“Sleep’st thou, or wak’st thou, fairest creature?”

See page 213, Vol. III.

I could easily throw this into an English mould; but to my taste, in the simple and tender of the Pastoral song, a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect. You know I never encroach on your privileges as an editor. You may reject my song altogether, and keep by the old one; or you may give mine as a second Scots one; or lastly, you may set the air to my verses, still giving the old song as a second one, and as being well known; in which last case, I would find you, in English verses of my own, a song, the exact rhythm of my Scottish one. If you keep by the old words, Sheridan’s song will do for an English one. I once more conjure you to have no manner of false delicacy in accepting or refusing my compositions, either in this or any other of your songs.

Now for my English song to "Nansie's to the Greenwood gane."

SONG.

"Farewell thou stream that winding flows
Around Eliza's dwelling," &c.

See page 226, Vol. III.

"Young Jockey was the blythest lad." My English song, "Here is the glen, and here the bower," cannot go to this air. However, the measure is so common, that you may have your choice of five hundred English songs. Do you know the air "Lumps o' Pudding?" It is a favourite of mine, and I think would be worth a place among your additional songs, as soon as several in your list. It is in a measure in which you will find songs now to choose on; but if you were to adopt it, I would take it in my own hand.

There is an air—"The Caledonian Hunt's Delight," to which I wrote a song that you will find in *Johnson*, "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon;" this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights. To make room for it you may take out (to my taste) either "Young Jockey was the blythest lad," or "There's nae luck about the house," or "The Collier's bonie lassie," or "The Tither Morn," or "The Sow's Tail;" and put it into your additional list. Not but that these songs have great merit; but still they have not the pathos of "The Banks o' Doon." Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr James Miller, writer in your good town, a gentleman whom you possibly know, was in company with our friend Clarke, and talking of Scots music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr Clarke, partly by

way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm, and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is that in a few days, Mr Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr Clarke, with a few touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know, has the same story of the black keys; but this account which I have just given you, Mr Clarke informed me of several years ago. Now to show you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that it was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a lady of fashion, no less than a countess, informed me that the first person who introduced the air into this country was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult, then, to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I myself have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time ever I had seen them.

I thank you for admitting "Craigieburn Wood," and I shall take care to furnish it with a new chorus. In fact the chorus *was* not my work, but part of some old verses to the air. If I can catch myself in a more than ordinary propitious moment, I shall write a new "Craigieburn" altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request—'tis dunning your generosity; but in a moment when I had forgot whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this; but an ungracious request is doubly so by a tedious apology. To make amends, as soon as I have

extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. On second thoughts, I send you Clarke's singing set of *Rothenmurge*, which please return me in your first letter : I know it will not suit you.

I have no more post-paper, and it is too late to go to the shop, so you must e'en take an envelope of Excise-paper. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humor, I know not when to give over. Adieu !

R. BURNS.

(²²) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 15th Nov. 1794.

MY GOOD SIR,—Since receiving your last, I have had another interview with Mr Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the “Caledonian Hunt” is more bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray, did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited to a man's voice; and the second part, in many instances, cannot be sung at concert-pitch but by a female voice. A song thus performed makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you would think of it in some of those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent is admirable, and will be a universal favourite.

Your verses for “Rothenmurge” are so sweetly pastoral, and your serenade to Chloris, for “Deil tak the wars,” so passionately tender, that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for “My Lodging is on the cold ground,” is likewise a diamond of the first water; I am quite dazzled and delighted by

it. Some of your Chlorises, I suppose, have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour—else we differ about it; for I could scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks.

“Farewell, thou Stream that winding flows,” I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after “Nancy”—at least, it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for “Dainty Davie” will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes: I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs; the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

G. T.

(⁴⁰) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[19th November 1794.]

You see, my dear Sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the tedium of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favorite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely off his back. For instance, this morning though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast I finished my Duet, which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is to you, though it is not an hour old—

SONG.

Tune—“The sow’s tail to Geordie.”

III.

“O Philly, happy be the day
When, roving through the gathered hay,
My youthfu’ heart was stown away,
And by thy charms, my Philly.

SHE.

O Willy, ay I bless the grove
 Where first I own'd my maiden love,
 Whilst thou did pledge the Powers above
 To be my ain dear Willy," &c.

See page 222, Vol. III.

Tell me honestly how you like it, and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain, I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name Philly, but it is the common abbreviation of Phillis. Sally, the only other name that suits, has, to my ear, a vulgarity about it which unfits it for any thing except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother-editor, Mr Ritson, ranks with me as my coevals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity; whereas simplicity is as much *éloignée* from vulgarity on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit on the other.

I agree with you as to the air "Craigieburnwood," that a chorus would in some degree spoil the effect, and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not, however, a case in point with "Rothemurche;" there, as in "Roy's Wife of Aldivaloch," a chorus, to my taste, goes well enough. As to the chorus going first, you know it is so with "Roy's Wife," as also with "Rothemurche." In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humor the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting-note in both tunes has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of—

"O Roy's wife of Aldivaloch," &c.
 "O lassie wi the lint-white locks," &c.

(Compare with)

“Roy’s wife of Aldivaloch,” &c.
“Lassie wi the lint-white locks,” &c.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true fervor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas, in the first insipid business, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought in tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong, I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti*.

I am also of your mind as to the “Caledonian Hunt;” but to fit it with verses to suit these dotted crotchetts will be a task indeed. I differ from you as to the expression of the air. It is so charming, that it would make any subject in a song go down; but pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scots bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few that we have are excellent. For instance “Todlin Hame” is, for wit and humor, an unparalleled composition; and “Andrew and his cutty gun” is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics should be unknown? It has given me many a heartache. Apropos to bacchanalian songs in Scottish, I composed one yesterday, for an air I liked much—“Lumps o’ Pudding.”

SONG.

Tune—“Lumps o’ Pudding.”

“Contented wi’ little, and cantie wi’ mair,
Whene’er I forgather wi’ sorrow and care,
I gie them a skelp as they’re creeping alang,
Wi’ a cog o’ gude swats, and an auld Scottish sang,” &c.
See page 225, Vol. III.

If you do not relish the air, I will send it to Johnson.

The two songs you saw in Clarke’s are neither of them worth your attention. The words of “Auld Lang Syne” are good, but the music is an old air, the rudiments of the

modern tune of that name. The other tune you may hear as a common Scots country dance.

20th Nov.—Since yesterday's penmanship I have framed a couple of English stanzas, by way of an English song to "Roy's Wife." You will allow me that in this instance my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish,

SONG.

Tune—“Roy's Wife.”

Can'st thou leave me thus, my Katie?

Can'st thou leave me thus, my Katie?

Well thou know'st my aching heart,

And can'st thou leave me thus for pity?

See page 227, vol. III.

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish blackguard, is not far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Now for “When she cam ben she bobbit.”

SONG.

Tune—“When she cam ben she bobbit.”

Oh saw ye my dear, my Mary?

Oh saw ye my dear, my Mary?

She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new Love,

She winna come hame to her Harry, &c.

See page 311 supra.

I think these names will answer better than the former, and the rhythm of the song is as you desired.

I dislike your proposed alterations in two instances. “Logie o' Buchan,” and “There's my thumb, I'll ne'er beguile thee,” are certainly fittest for your additional songs; and in their place, as two of the hundred, I would put the most beautiful airs—“Whistle and I'll come t'ye, my lad,” at all rates, as one. It is surely highly capable of feeling and sentiment, and the song is one of my best. For the other, keep your favourite “Muirland Willie,” and with it

close your hundred. As for the first being Irish, all that you can say is, that it has a twang of the Irish manner ; but to infer from that, that it must of course be an Irish production, is unfair. In the neighbourhood and intercourse of the Scots and Irish—and both musical nations too—it is highly probable that composers of one nation would sometimes imitate and emulate the manner of the other. I never met with an Irishman who claimed this air, a pretty strong proof that it is Scottish. Just the same is the case with “Gramachree :” if it be really Irish, it is decidedly in the Scottish taste. The other one in your collection, “Oran Goail,” which you think is Irish, they claim as theirs by the name of “Cain du delish ;” but look into your publications of Scottish songs, and you will find it as a Gaelic song, with the words in that language, a wretched translation of which original words is set to the tune in the *Museum*. Your worthy Gaelic priest gave me that translation, and at his table I heard both the original and the translation sung by a large party of Highland gentlemen, all of whom had no other idea of the air than that it was a native of their own country.

I am obliged to you for your goodness in your three copies, but will certainly return you two of them. Why should I take money out of your pocket ?

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another to be the best friends on earth) that I much suspect he has in his plates mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have at last gotten one, but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts : the stock, which is the hinder thigh bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton ham ; the horn, which is a common Highland cow’s horn, cut off at the smaller end until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn until it

be held by the thicker end of the thigh bone ; and lastly, an oaten reed, exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd boy have when the corn stems are green and full grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock, while the stock and horn hanging on its larger end is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventiges on the upper side, and one back ventige, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly, for we can make little of it. If Mr Allan chooses I will send him a sight of mine, as I look on myself to be a kind of brother brush with him. "Pride in poets is nae sin ;" and I will say it that I look on Mr Allan and Mr Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world. Farewell !

R. BURNS.

(²²) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh 28th Nov. 1794.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear Sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you never entered into my head ; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my imprudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have all along condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise : all the songs are charming, but the Duet is a *chef-d'œuvre*. "Lumps o' pudding" shall certainly make one of my family-dishes ; you

have cooked it so capitally that it will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast when you find yourself in good spirits; these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind; of which we have great choice, besides one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to every body. I participate in your regret that the authors of some of our best songs are unknown: it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad, "The Soldier's Return," to be engraved for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me when she first recognises her "ain dear Willy,"

"She gazed, she redd'n'd like a rose:"

the three lines immediately following are no doubt more impressive on the reader's feelings; but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliments you pay him, in considering him worthy of standing in a niche by the side of Burns in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used as a musical pipe by the Scottish Shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it was capable of anything but routing and roaring. A friend of mine says he remembers to have heard one in his younger days, made of wood instead of your bone, and that the sound was abominable.

Do not, I beseech you, return the books.

G. T.

(⁴¹) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

December 9th, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—It is, I assure you, the pride of my heart to do any thing to forward, or add to the value of your

books; and as I agree with you that the Jacobite song in the *Museum* to "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:*

MY NANIE'S AWA'.

Tune—"There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame."

"Now in her green mantle blythe nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er her braes;
While birds warble welcomes in ilka green shaw;
But to me it's delightless—my Nanie's awa'!" &c.

See page 299, vol. III.

How does this please you? I have thought that a song in Ramsay's collection beginning "Come fill me a bumper, my jolly brave boys," might do as an English song for "Todlin' hame." It might do thus:—

"Come fill me a bumper, my jolly brave boys,
Let's have no more of female impert'nce and noise;
I've tried the endearments and witchcraft of love,
And found them but nonsense and whimsies, by Jove!
Chorus—Truce with your love! no more of your love!
The bottle henceforth is my mistress, by Jove!"

As to the point of time for the expression, in your proposed print from my "Soger's Return," it must certainly be at "She gazed." The interesting dubiety and suspense taking possession of her countenance, and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of playfulness in her, strike me as a subject of which a master will make a great deal. In great haste, but in great truth,—Yours,

R. B.

(⁴²) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

January 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,—I fear for my songs, however a few may please; yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and,

* It is thus very certain that the poet's "*ci-devant* goddess," Mrs M'Lehose, did not inspire this song, as has been taken for granted.

in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. For these three thousand years, we poetic folks have been describing the Spring, for instance, and as the Spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c., of these said rhyming folks. To wander a little from my first design, which was to give you a new song, just hot from the mint, give me leave to squeeze in a clever anecdote of my *Spring* originality:—

Some years ago, when I was young, and by no means the saint I am now, I was looking over, in company with a *belle-lettre* friend, a magazine “Ode to Spring,” when my friend fell foul of the recurrence of the same thoughts, and offered me a bet that it was impossible to produce an ode to Spring on an original plan. I accepted it, and pledged myself to bring in the verdant fields, the budding flowers, the crystal streams, the melody of the groves, and a love story into the bargain, and yet be original. Here follows the piece, and wrote to music too!

ODE TO SPRING.

Tune—“The tither morn,” &c.

“ When mauken bucks,” &c.

See page 17, vol. III.

A great critic (Aikin) on songs says, that Love and Wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme:—

SONG.

“ For a’ that and a’ that.”

“ Is there for honest poverty
That hings his head, and a’ that;
The coward-slave we pass him by;
We daur be poor for a’ that!

For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toils obscure, and a' that ;
 The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
 The man's the goud for a' that."—&c.

See page 234, vol. III.

Jan. 15th.—The foregoing has lain by me this fortnight, for want of a spare moment. The Supervisor of Exercise here being ill, I have been acting for him, and I assure you I have hardly five minutes to myself to thank you for your elegant present of Pindar. The typography is admirable, and worthy of the truly original bard.

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*; for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for "Craigieburn Wood?"—

Sweet fa's the eve on Craigieburn,
 And blythe awakes the morrow ;
 But a' the pride o' Spring's return,
 Can yield me nocht but sorrow," &c.

(See page 236, Vol. III.)

Farewell ! God bless ye !

R. B.

(²⁴) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 30th Jan. 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you heartily for "Nannie's Awa," as well as for "Craigieburn," which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts in the same style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has again and again excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la bagatelle* song, "For a' that," shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

G. T.

(43) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[DUMFRIES, 6th February 1795.] *

I AM afraid, my dear Sir, that printing your songs in the manner of Ritson's would counteract the sale of your greater work ; but secluded as I am from the world, its humors and caprices, I cannot pretend to judge in the matter. If you are ultimately frustrated of Pleyel's assistance, what think you of applying to Clarke? This, you will say, would be breaking faith with your subscribers ; but, bating that circumstance, I am confident that Clarke is equal, in Scottish song, to take up the pen even after Pleyel.

I shall, at a future period, write you my sentiments as to sending my bagatelles to a newspaper.

Here is another trial at your favorite air :—

SONG.

Tune—“Let me in this ae night.”

O Lassie are ye sleepin yet,
Or are ye waukin I would wit?
For Love has bound me hand and fit,
And I would fain be in, jo.

Chorus—O let me in this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night ;
O let me in this ae night,
I'll no come back again, Jo !

See page 247, Vol. III.†

I do not know whether it will do. Yours ever,

R. B.

* Through some delay in posting, this letter did not reach Edinburgh till 9th Feb.

† The MS. contains the following, as verse third of the lover's part of the song ; but the poet writes on the margin thus :—“I do not know but this stanza may as well be omitted.—R. B.”

“Thy kith and kin look down on me,
A simple lad o' low degree ;
Sae I maun try frae love to flee,
Across the raging main, jo.”

These lines seem like the reflection of his own experience in 1796.

(44) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

ECCLEFECHAN, 7th February 1795.

MY DEAR THOMSON,—You cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write you. In the course of my duty as supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late) I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked little village.* I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress ; I have tried to “ gae back the gate I cam again,” but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing catgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, *on that very account*, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries ; or to hang myself, to get rid of them ; like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed), I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am very drunk at your service !†

I wrote you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time *then* to tell you all I wanted to say ; and, heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it—“ We'll gang na mair to yon town ?” I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it ; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye to whom I would consecrate it ; try it with this doggrel, until I give you a better. You will find a good set of it in Bowie's collection.

* Dr Currie has a note here :—“ The poet must have been tipsy indeed to abuse sweet Ecclefechan so.”

† Thomson also has appended a note thus :—“ The handwriting shows it, and I can swear to the truth.—G. T.”

“ *Chorus*—O wat ye wha’s in yon town,
 Ye see the e’enin sun upon ;
 The dearest maid’s in yon town
 That e’enin sun is shinin on.

“ O sweet to me yon spreading tree,
 Where Jeanie wanders aft her lane ;
 The hawthorn flower that shades her bower,
 O when shall I behold again ?
 “ O wat ye wha’s,” &c.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

R. B.

P.S.—As I am likely to be storm-stead here to-morrow, if I am in the humor, you shall have a long letter from me.

R. B.

(²⁵) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 25th February 1795.

I HAVE to thank you, my dear sir, for two epistles—one containing “ Let me in this ae night,” and the other from Ecclefechan, proving that, drunk or sober, your “ mind is never muddy.” You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song, as it stands, very much.

I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Ecclefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song-making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for “ O wat ye wha’s in yon town ? ”

G. T.

(⁴⁵) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[April 1795.]

SONG.

Tune—“ We’ll gang nae mair to yon town.”

“ O wat ye wha’s in yon town,
 Ye see the e’enin sun upon ?
 The fairest Dame’s in yon town
 That e’enin sun is shinin on,” &c.

See page 251, Vol. III.

Your objection to the last two stanzas of my song, "Let me in this ae night," does not strike me as just. You will take notice that my heroine is replying quite at her ease, and when she talks of "faithless man," she gives not the least reason to believe that she speaks from her own experience, but merely from observation, of what she has seen around her. But of all boring matters in this boring world, criticising my own works is the greatest bore.

SONG.

Tune—"Where'll bonie Ann lie?"*

O stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray,
A hapless lover courts thy lay,
Thy soothing fond complaining, &c.

See page 274, Vol. III.

SONG ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.

Tune—"Ay wauken, O."

Chorus—Long, long the night, heavy comes the morrow,
While my soul's delight is on her bed of sorrow,
Can I cease to care—can I cease to languish,
While my darling Fair is on her couch of anguish ?
Long, long the night, &c.

See page 276, Vol. III.

[Considerable uncertainty exists as to where the best set of this air is to be found—no two collections shewing it in the same form. We therefore annex what we believe to be the pure melody, avoiding the absurdity of adding two or three unmeaning words and notes (Ay waukin O !) to make each verse end on the key-note.

* A still better tune would be "Loch Erroch Side," the rhythm of which it suits better than the drawing stuff in the *Museum*.—R. B.

CHORUS.

Ancient Air—“Ay Waukin, O.”

How do you like the foregoing? As to my address to the woodlark, “Johnie Cope” is an air would do it very well; still, whether it be the association of ideas, I cannot say, but there is a squalidity, an absence of elegance in the sentiment and expression of that air that does not altogether suit the spirit and delicacy I have endeavoured to transfuse into the song.

As to English verses for “Craigieburn,” you have them in Ritson’s English selection, vol. 1st, song 22nd, by Sir Walter Raleigh, beginning

“Wrong not, sweet mistress of my heart.”

The “Lammy” is an air that I do not much like. “Laddie, lie near me,” I am busy with, and in general, have them all in my eye. The Irish air “Humours of Glen” is a great favorite of mine, and as, except the silly verses in the “Poor Soldier,” there are not any decent words for it, I have written for it as follows:

SONG.

Tune—“Humors of Glen.”

Their groves o’ sweet myrtle let Foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming sunmers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o’ green breckan,
Wi’ the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom, &c.

See page 281, Vol. III.

Yours,

R. B.

[Stop! turn over.]

SONG.

Tune—“Laddie lie near me.”

‘Twas na her bonie blue e'e was my ruin ;
 Fair tho' she be, that was ne'er my undoing ;
 ‘Twas the clear smile when nae body did mind us,
 ‘Twas the bewitching, sweet, stown glance o' kindness, &c.

See page 279, Vol. III.

Let me hear from you.

R. B.

(²⁶) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, May 1795.

You must not think, my good Sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of “The Cotter’s Saturday Night” is, in my opinion, one of the happiest productions of Allan’s pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember the phiz.* This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic “Address to the Woodlark,” your elegant panegyric on Caledonia, and your affecting verses on Chloris’s illness. Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song to “Laddie, lie near me,” though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

G. T.

* That is to say—“As I remember the phiz in Beugo’s engraving from Nasmyth’s picture;” for he never saw Burns in the flesh.

(46) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

May 9, 1795.

SONG, ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH ONE.

Tune.—“John Anderson my jo.”

How cruel are the parents
 Who riches only prize,
 And to the wealthy booby,
 Poor woman sacrifice, &c.

See page 277, Vol. III.

SONG.

Tune.—“Deil tak the Wars.”

Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion,
 Round the wealthy, titled bride :
 But when compared with real passion,
 Poor is all that princely pride, &c.

See page 278, Vol. III.

Well ! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders—your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit of poetising, provided that the strait-jacket of Criticism don’t cure me. If you can, in a post or two, administer a little of the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will raise your humble servant’s frenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment “holding high converse” with the Muses, and have not a word to throw away on such a Prosaic dog as you are.

R. B.

(47) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[May 1795.]

TEN thousand thanks for your elegant present,* though I am ashamed of the value of it being bestowed on a man

* A water-colour drawing by David Allan, the subject taken from the “Cottar’s Saturday Night.”

who has not by any means merited such an instance of kindness. I have shown it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it a first-rate production. My phiz is sae kenspeckle, that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day), knew it at once. You may depend on my care that no persons shall have it in their power to take the least sketch from it. My most grateful compl'nts to Allan, that he has honored my rustic Muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of an ill-deedie, damned wee, rumble-gairie hurchin of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness and manfu' mischief, which, even at twa days auld, I foresaw would form the striking features of his disposition, I named "Willie Nicol," after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a Grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless. Several people think that Allan's likeness of me is more striking than Nasmyth's, for which I sat to him half-a-dozen times. However, there is an artist of very considerable merit just now in this town, who has hit the most remarkable likeness of what I am at this moment, that I think ever was taken of anybody.* It is a small miniature, and as it will be in your town getting itself be-crystalized, &c., I have some thoughts of suggesting to you to prepare a vignette taken from it, to my song "Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair," in order the portrait of my face and the picture of my mind may go down the stream of Time together.

Now to business. I enclose you a song of merit, to a

* The question regarding the several miniature likenesses of Burns that were executed during his latter days, is discussed at pages 181 and 188 *supra.*

well known air, which is to be one of yours. It was written by a lady, and has never yet seen the press. If you like it better than the ordinary "Woo'd and married," or if you choose to insert this also you are welcome ; only, return me the copy. "The Lothian Lassie" I also enclose ; the song is well known, but was never in notes before. The first part is the old tune. It is a great favorite of mine, and here I have the honor of being of the same opinion with STANDARD CLARKE. I think it would make a fine andante ballad.

Give the enclosed epigram to my much-valued friend, Mr Cunningham, and tell him, that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of the Bard, in a manner, introduced me. I mean a well known Military and Literary character, Colonel Dirom. As to what you hint of my coming to Edinburgh, I know of no such arrangement.*

You do not tell me how you liked my last two songs ?
Are they condemned ? Yours,

R. B.

(²⁷) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 13th May 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your

* The reference here is to a plan which some of the poet's friends had proposed to the Commissioners of Excise, "to appoint him to a respectable office at Leith, with an easy duty, and with emoluments rising nearly to 200*l.* per annum." Professor Walker, in his biography of Burns, mentions such a proposal as having been on the *tapis* for the benefit of the bard. "But," he adds, "all the friendly designs of his patron (Mr Graham of Fintry) were frustrated by the imprudence of the poet, and by that ill luck which, in his case, made every act of imprudence create more than its adequate measure of punishment. Burns stood on a lofty eminence, surrounded by enemies as well as by friends, and no indiscretion which he committed was suffered to escape."—*Perth Edition*, 1811, page xevii., Vol. I.

little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so very early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem or respect you, for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you will not make a fool of me again by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetising. Long may it last! Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of "William and Margaret," and is to give it to me, to be enrolled among the elect.

G. T.

(⁴⁸) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[*June 1795.*]

SONG.

Tune—“Let me in this ae night.”

Forlorn, my Love, no comfort near,
Far, far from thee, I wander here ;
Far, far from thee, the fate severe
At which I most repine, Love.

Chorus—O wert thou, Love, but near me,
But near, near, near me ;
How kindly thou wouldest cheer me,

And mingle sighs with mine, Love, &c.

See page 282, Vol. III.

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the *speed* of my Pegasus; but what say you to his bottom?

R. B.

(49) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[July 3rd, 1795.]

SCOTS BALLAD.

Tune—“The Lothian Lassie.”

Last May, a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
 And sair wi' his love he did deave me ;
I said, there was naething I hated like men—
 The deuce gae wi' 'm, to believe me, believe me,
 The deuce gae wi' 'm, to believe me, &c.

See page 284, Vol. III.

FRAGMENT.

Tune—“The Caledonian Hunt's Delight.”

Why, why tell the lover,
 Bliss he never must enjoy ?
 Why, why undeceive him,
 And give all his hopes the lie ?
 O why, while Fancy, raptur'd, slumbers—
 Chloris, Chloris, all the theme—
 Why, why wouldest thou, cruel
 Wake thy lover from his dream ?*

Such is the damned peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

“This is no my ain house” puzzles me a good deal; in fact I think to change the old rhythm of the first, or chorus part of the tune, will have a good effect. I would have it something like the gallop of the following :

SONG.

Tune—“This is no my ain house.”

Chorus,—O this is nae my ain Body,
 Fair tho' the Body be ;
 O weel ken I my ain Body,
 Kind love is in her e'e

* Thomson has a marginal note here, thus :—“Instead of this poor song I will take the one, ‘Ye Banks and Braes o’ bonie Doon’ for the Air here mentioned. But I propose attaching this to some other Air, if I find one to suit it.—G. T.”

I see a form, I see a face,
 Ye weel may wi' the fairest place ;
 It wants to me the witching grace,
 The kind love that's in her e'e,
 O this is nae my ain, &c.

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the toothache, so have not a word to spare.* I know your letters come post-free to you, so I trouble you with the enclosed, which, as it is a business letter, please cause to be delivered at first convenience. Yours,

R. BURNS.

(²⁸) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh, 3rd July, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,—Your English verses to “Let me in this ae night” are tender and beautiful; and your ballad to the “Lothian Lassie” is a master-piece for its humour and naïveté. The fragment for the “Caledonian Hunt” is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the poet; nevertheless, for what we have received, Lord, make us thankful!

G. T.

(⁵⁰) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

August 2d, 1795.

YOUR objection is just as to the verse of my song [Forlorn, my Love]. I hope the following alteration will please you:—

Cold, alter'd friends, with cruel art,
 Poisoning fell Misfortune's dart—
 Let me not break thy faithful heart,
 And say that fate is mine, love.

* The poet's letter of 30th May 1795 to Mr Creech makes a similar allusion to being troubled with the toothache, a disease which he so well describes in one of his poems so early as 1786. See page 273, Vol. II.

Did I mention to you that I wish to alter the first line of the English song “Leiger ‘m choss,” alias “The Quaker’s Wife,” from

Thine am I, my faithful Fair.
to

Thine am I, my Chloris fair ?

If you neglect the alteration, I call on all the NINE, conjunctly and severally, to anathematise you.*

In “Whistle and I’ll come to ye, my Lad,” the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear—here goes the old first four lines of every stanza, and then follows what I think is an improvement :—

O whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad,
O whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad,
Tho’ father and mother and a’ should gae mad,
O whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad.

alter to

O whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad,
O whistle and I’ll come to ye, my lad,
Tho’ father and mother and a’ should gae mad,
Thy Jeanie will venture wi’ ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair Dame, at whose shrine I, the Priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus—a Dame whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning—a Fair One, *herself the heroine of the song*, insists on the amendment, and dispute her commands if you dare ! †

“Gatesslack,” the word you object to in my last ballad, is positively the name of a particular place, a kind of passage up among the Lawther hills, on the confines of this

* Here Burns confirms his former order (page 313 *supra*) to cut out the name of the first inspirer of the song—“Nancy,” the *Clarinda* of his former devotion—and coolly substitutes that of his presently reigning divinity.

† Dr. Currie’s note on this subject is given in connexion with Thomson’s reply to the present letter.

county. “Dalgarnock” is also the name of a romantic spot, near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial place. However, let the line run, “He up the lang loan,” &c.

“This is nae my ain Body,” alter into “This is no my ain lassie.”

SONG.

Tune—“This is no my ain house.”

Chorus—This is no my ain lassie,
Fair tho’ the lassie be ;
Weel ken I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her e’e.

I see a form, I see a face,
Ye weel may wi’ the fairest place ;
It wants to me the witching grace,
The kind love, love that’s in her e’e.

This is no my ain lassie, &c.

See page 287, Vol. III.

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The enclosed sheet contains two songs for him: the sheet please to present to my very much valued friend whose name is at the bottom of the sheet. I will write him a long letter one of these days. I enclose the sheet, both for your inspection, and that you may copy off the song, “O bonie was yon rosy brier.” I do not know whether I am right, but that song pleases me; and as it is extremely probable that Clarke’s newly-roused celestial spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of Indolence, if you like the song, it will go as Scottish verses to the air, “I wish my Love was in a mire;” and poor Mr Erskine’s English lines may follow.

I enclose you a “For a’ that, and a’ that,”* which was

* The lady’s “For a’ that,” here so much praised, has not been preserved by Thomson in the correspondence. In his reply he speaks slightly of it.

never in print: it is a much superior song to mine. I have been told that it was composed by a lady :—

SCOTCH SONG.

Now Spring has clad the grove in green,
And strewed the lea wi' flowers ;
The furrow'd, waving corn is seen
Rejoice in fostering showers ;
While ilka thing in Nature joins
Their sorrows to forego—
Oh why, thus all alone are mine
The weary steps o' woe ? &c.

See page 289, Vol. III.

SONG.

Tune—“ I wish my Love were in a mire.”

O bonie was yon rosy brier
That blooms sae far frae haunts o' man ;
And bonie she, and ah, how dear !
It shaded frae the e'enin sun.
Yon rosebuds in the morning dew,
How pure, amang the leaves sae green ;
But purer was the lover's vow
They witness'd in their shade yestreen, &c.

See page 288, Vol. III.

INSCRIPTION TO CHLORIS,

On a Blank Leaf of the last Edition of my Poems.

'Tis Friendship's pledge, my young, fair Friend,
Nor thou the gift refuse,
Nor with unwilling ear attend
The moralising Muse, &c.

See page 293, Vol. III.

TO MR CUNNINGHAM.

Une bagatelle de l'amitié.

—COILA.

—

(2^o) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 3rd August 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,—This will be delivered to you by a Dr Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman; but his friend, who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptance.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! it is superfluous to tell you that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter “O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad,” to the prosaic line, “Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad.” I must be permitted to say that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeanie, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.*

I should be happy to see Mr Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Everybody regrets his writing so very little, as everybody acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray, was the resolution formed coolly, before dinner, or was it a midnight vow, made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr Cunningham what you have sent him.

P.S.—The lady's “For a' that, and a' that,” is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours, than I to Hercules.

G. T.

* Dr. Currie has the following note here:—“The editor, who has heard the heroine of this song sing it herself in the very spirit of arch simplicity that it requires, thinks Mr Thomson's petition unreasonable.” This is of a piece with the doctor's theory of the heroineship of “Sweet Afton.” He means here that he had heard Mrs Maria Riddell sing the song, and hint that she herself was its heroine—rather an odd confession to proceed from a married lady! Burns's demand made to Thomson to alter the closing line of the chorus, removes all indefiniteness as to the “fair Dame” who forms the subject of the song. He insists on the introduction of the name “Jeanie,” to shew that no one but Jean Lorimer can lay claim to be its inspirer.

[The hiatus of seven months which here occurs in the *Thomson Correspondence*, is somehow mysteriously connected with the poet's passion for Jean Lorimer. The reader, by reverting to page 166, and tracing the narrative downwards to page 188 of this volume, will see all that is known of the poet's history during that interval.]

(³⁰) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 5th Feb. 1796.

“ O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet ?
Or are ye wauken, I would wit ? ”

THE pause you have made, my dear Sir, is awful ! Am I never to hear from you again ? I know, and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late ; but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish “ married to immortal verse.” We have several true-born Irishmen on the Scottish list ; but they are naturalised, and reckoned our own good subjects. Indeed, we have none better. I believe I before told you, that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favourite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings by our ingenious friend Allan ; what is your opinion of this ?

G. T.

(³¹) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

February 1796.

MANY thanks, my dear Sir, for your handsome, elegant present to Mrs B.* and for my remaining volume of P. Pindar. Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favourite of mine. Now to business. How are you paid by your subscribers here ? I gave you in the names of Robert Riddell of

* This was a worsted shawl.

Glenriddell, and his brother, Walter Riddell of Woodley Park. Glenriddell subscribed only for the Songs: Walter Riddell for both the Songs and Sonatas. Glenriddell's widow, to whom he left all his fortune, lives now in your town, and Walter is also at present in it: call on them for their cash. I mention these matters because probably you have a delicacy on my account, as if I had presented them with their copies—a kindness neither of them deserves at my hands. They are bona fide subscribers, and as such treat them. I also supplied another subscriber, Mr Sharpe of Hoddam, with the second set of Sonatas (my own copy); so charge him accordingly. Mr Gordon of Kenmure, who subscribed for the Songs only, unknown to me at the time, in a money transaction where I was concerned, paid the 10s. 6d. to my account. So there I am your debtor.

I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipt three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody which I admire much.

HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.

Tune—“Balinamona Ora.”

Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms !
O, gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,
O, gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.

Chorus—Then hey, for a lass wi' a tocher,

Then hey, for a lass wi' a tocher,

Then hey, for a lass wi' a tocher,

The nice yellow guineas for me ! &c.

See page 308, Vol. III.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engage-

ment — *Humors of Glen*, Captain O'Kean, Oonagh's Waterfall, and Balinamona. In my by-past songs I dislike one thing—the name Chloris. I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady ; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad. Of this and some things else in my next : I have more amendments to propose. What you mentioned, of “flaxen locks,” is just : they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty.* Of this again—God bless you !

R. B.

(³¹) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

[*Feb. 1796.*]

YOUR “*Hey for a Lass wi' a Tocher*” is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of self-desire into an amateur of acres and guineas.

I am happy to hear you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect, he himself says, they will far exceed the aquatinta plates he did for the “*Gentle Shepherd*,” because in the etching he sees clearly what he is doing, but not so with the aquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind. The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural than the Scottish figures in these etchings.

G. T.

* The reader will remember that in August 1795—exactly six months prior to this period—Burns was in the full height of his adoration of this “certain lady.” She was then “the peerless Queen of Womankind.” There seems to be fair room for conjecture that, in the obscure interval some blighting influence or damning circumstance must have swayed the poet's estimate of her qualities.

(52) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[April 1796.]

ALAS ! my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again ! "By Babel streams," &c. Almost ever since I wrote you last, I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of Sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain ! Rheumatism, cold, and fever, have formed, to me, a terrible Trinity in Unity, which makes me close my eyes in misery and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say with poor Fergusson—

"Say wherefore has an all-indulgent Heaven
Light to the comfortless and wretched given?"

"This will be delivered to you by a Mrs Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years has been my Howff, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I mention this, because she will be a very proper hand to bring that seal you talk of. I am highly delighted with Mr Allan's etchings ; "Woo'd and Married an' a'" is admirable ! The grouping is beyond all praise. The *expression* of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire "Turnimspyke." What I like least is "Jenny said to Jocky." Besides the female being in her appearance quite a virago, if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches taller than her lover.

I will thank you much for a number or two of that magazine you mention. Poor Cleghorn ! I sincerely sympathise with him. Happy I am to think he yet has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but this is a damning subject ! Farewell !

R. B.

(32) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

4th May 1796.

I NEED not tell you, my good Sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathise in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and then it is to be hoped you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence, and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours,

G. T.

P.S.—Mrs Hyslop, I doubt not, delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.

(33) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

(Here first published.)

[Date, about 18th May 1796.]

MY DEAR SIR,—Inclosed is a certificate, which (though a little different from Mr M'Knight's model) I suppose will amply answer the purpose, and I beg you will prosecute the miscreants without mercy. When your Publication is finished, I intend publishing a collection, on a cheap plan, of all the songs I have written for you, the *Museum*, &c., —at least, of all the songs of which I wish to be called the author. I do not propose this so much in the way of emolument, as to do justice to my Muse, lest I should be blamed for trash I never saw, or be defrauded by other claimants of what is justly my own. The post is going, I will write you again to-morrow. Many, many thanks for the beautiful seal.

R. B.

The *seal* alluded to in the close of the above letter is the one designed by the poet himself, and commissioned from Edinburgh more than two years previously.* It reached him at a period, alas! when few opportunities remained for him to use it. The certificate or mandate of Burns in favour of George Thomson regarding the copyright of the songs, has not been preserved along with the foregoing letter. Its mysterious disappearance as well as the suppression of the letter give a "hole and corner" appearance to this portion of the correspondence, which is far from satisfactory. There was nothing improper in Mr Thomson honestly applying to Burns, even on his deathbed, to be secured against the songs being used in any rival publication; but it is to be suspected that his design, in this emergency, was to extract something more. What he did ask from the dying poet can only be inferred from the reply; it is clear that he sought to alarm Burns with some news of piracy. The five songs of Burns which Thomson had hitherto published, were "Gala Water," "Auld Rob Morris," "Open the door to me, oh," "Wandering Willie," and "The Sodger's Return." Some of these may have been reprinted in the magazines; and it is probable that "The Sodger's Return" had been set up in broadsheet, and sung through the streets. "I beg you will prosecute the miscreants without mercy," was the poet's excited reply; but he declined to adopt the formal document drafted by Thomson's agent, and preferred to indite his own certificate. Moreover, as if to guard against the idea that the copyright of the songs was absolutely transferred to Thomson, he proceeds to explain, that when that gentleman's musical work shall be completed he intends to publish his songs on his own account.

Nothing however is clearer than the fact, that in dealing with the poet's literary executors, Mr Thomson obtained credit for allowing the songs and the correspondence to be printed for the benefit of the bard's family. The reader however will observe, from the subjoined list of those songs which Thomson published on his own account before the date of Currie's first edition, that any advantage arising from the first appearance of Burns's songs in print had been almost monopolised by Thomson himself before

* See letter to Cunningham (page 123, *supra*), dated March 3, 1794.

the surrender referred to. When he published his second half volume in August 1798, he prefaced it with an “Address to the Public,” in which he announces his absolute right of property in “about fifty songs by Burns never before published,” and appends a copy of the poet’s certificate to that effect, in the following terms:—

“I Do hereby certify and declare, That ALL the
“ Songs of my writing, published and to be published
“ by Mr George Thomson of Edinburgh, are so published
“ by my authority. And moreover, That I never em-
“ powered any other person whatever to publish any
“ of the Songs written by me for his Work. And I
“ authorise him to prosecute, in his own name, any
“ person or persons who shall publish any of those
“ Songs, without his consent. In testimony whereof,
“ &c.,

ROBERT BURNS.”

It does not seem a very extraordinary thing that, under the circumstances, our poet should have written and signed the above; and if Mr Thomson had only seen fit to produce the writer’s manuscript, along with the rest of the correspondence, the authenticity of the document could never have been challenged. That Burns did send Mr Thomson some kind of certificate, or written authority to prosecute offenders against the right of property in the songs, is manifest; but there is unfortunately too much room to doubt the foregoing to be a genuine copy of the poet’s document. People who addict themselves to petty manœuvre and stratagem in transacting business with honest and unsuspecting neighbours, are apt to outwit themselves occasionally. Mr Thomson afterwards, in course of vending his “select melodies and songs,” published another version of the poet’s mandate in his favour; and the latter one exhibits a few unexpected verbal differences when compared with its predecessor. We shall append them here in parallel columns, so that the reader at a glance may distinguish the alterations. The question will arise:—“Which of these is the genuine one? Are either of them genuine? or, Are they both genuine?”—

First Version.

I Do hereby certify and declare, That ALL the Songs of my writing, published and to be published by Mr George Thomson of Edinburgh, are so published by my authority. And moreover, That I never empowered any other person whatever to publish any of the Songs written by me for his Work. And I authorise him to prosecute, in his own name, any person or persons who shall publish any of those Songs, without his consent. In testimony whereof, &c.,

ROBERT BURNS.

Second Version.

I do hereby certify that all the songs of my writing, published and to be published by Mr GEORGE THOMSON of Edinburgh, are so published by my Authority. And moreover, that I never empowered any other person to publish any of the songs written by me for his work. And I authorise him to prosecute any person or persons who shall publish or vend ANY of those songs without his consent. In testimony whereof, &c.,

ROBERT BURNS.

(⁵⁴) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[May 1796.]

MY DEAR SIR,—I once mentioned to you an air which I have long admired—“Here’s a health to them that’s awa, hiney ;” but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun with it :—

SONG.

Tune—“Here’s a health to them that’s awa.”

Chorus—Here’s a health to ane I loe dear !

Here’s a health to ane I loe dear !

Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,

And soft as their parting tear, Jessy.

Altho’ thou maun never be mine,

Altho’ even hope is denied ;

’Tis sweeter for thee despairing,

Than ought in the world beside, Jessy !

Here’s a health, &c.

See page 314, Vol. III.

This will be delivered by a Mr Lewars, a young fellow of uncommon merit ; indeed, by far the cleverest fellow I

have met with in this part of the world. His only fault is D-m-cratic heresy. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you choose, to write me by him; and if you have a spare half-hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account.

I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the Originals or copies. I had rather be the author of five well-written songs than of ten otherwise. My verses to "Cauld Kail" I will suppress; and also those to "Laddie, lie near me." They are neither worthy of my name nor of your book.* I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout—a d—nable business!

Do, let me know how Cleghorn† is, and remember me to him.—Yours ever,

R. BURNS.

[*Turn over.*]

This should have been delivered to you a month ago, but my friend's trunk miscarried, and was not recovered until he came home again. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

R. B.

The above letter (like that addressed to James Johnson,—*see* page 191 *supra*) was finally despatched by post on 16th June. Mr John Lewars, the brother of Jessy, the heroine of the song, was

* See Vol. III., pp. 211 and 279. Chloris is the subject of them both.

† We have searched the printed obituaries in vain for the date of Robert Cleghorn's death; but apparently he did not long survive Burns. In August 1796 he subscribed two guineas towards the relief of the poet's family, Mrs Cleghorn at same time subscribing one guinea. The death of his daughter is noted in the *Scots Magazine* as having occurred in July 1804, and she is there designated as "daughter of the deceased Mr Robert Cleghorn of Saughton Mills." His widow resided at Kinleith Mills, near Currie, when the daughter died.

then a bachelor, and five years younger than Burns. He was subsequently appointed a supervisor of excise in Dumfries (a post formerly filled by his late father), and he retired from the service in 1825, and died in 1826.

On 26th June, the poet penned his beautiful inscription to Jessy Lewars in the copy of Johnson's *Museum* then presented to her, and on the morning of Monday 4th July, he removed to sea-bathing quarters at Brow.

(⁵⁵) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

(CHAMBERS' EDITION, 1852.)

BROW, 4th July 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,—I received your songs; but my health is so precarious, nay dangerously situated, that, as a last effort, I am here at sea-bathing quarters. Besides my inveterate rheumatism, my appetite is quite gone, and I am so emaciated as to be scarce able to support myself on my own legs. Alas! is this a time for me to woo the Muses? However, I am still anxiously willing to serve your work, and, if possible, shall try. I would not like to see another employed, unless you could lay your hand upon a poet whose productions would be equal to the rest. You will see my remarks and alterations on the margin of each song. My address is still Dumfries. Farewell, and God bless you!

R. BURNS.

(⁵⁶) ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON.

[Brow, on the Solway Frith, 12th July 1796.]

AFTER all my boasted independence, curst Necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a Haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into

his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness ; but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously ; for upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on "Rothiemurchie" this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines : they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me ! Yours,

R. BURNS.

[*Turn.*]
SONG.

Tune—“ Rothiemurchie.”

Chorus—Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile, as thou wert won't to do ?

Full well thou know'st I love thee dear,
Could'st thou to Malice lend an ear !
O, did not Love exclaim : “ Forbear,
Nor use a faithful lover so.”

Fairest maid, &c.

See page 318, Vol. III.

(³³) GEORGE THOMSON TO ROBERT BURNS.

[14th July 1796.]

MY DEAR SIR,—Ever since I received your melancholy letters by Mrs Hyslop [in April], I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily, therefore,

for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and with great pleasure enclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake !

Pray, my good Sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry ? If too much trouble to you in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of editor. In the meantime, it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour ; remember Pope published the *Iliad* by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute anything I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully,

G. T.

The verses to “ Rothiemurchie ” will answer finely. I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

Here ends, with the life of Burns, this interesting and valuable correspondence. We have no inclination to join the ranks of those who are very hard in their censures of Mr Thomson, in respect of his pecuniary dealings with the Bard ; for after the proud and determined style of independence in which Mr Thomson’s little donation of 1st July 1793 was received, he had a difficult part to perform. It is a pity he limited his last remittance to “ the very sum I proposed sending,” in response to the imploring request so affectingly made by his distracted correspondent ; but we must defer to the opinion of Lord Cockburn in this matter. On 3rd March 1847, within four years from the day when Thomson expired at the age of 94, a superb silver vase with inscription—the contribution of one hundred gentlemen of Edinburgh—was presented to him in testimony of their respect and esteem. On that occasion his lordship said :—“ As to the imputations on Mr Thomson in connexion with the history of Burns I have long ago studied the matter with as much candour as any man could apply to a subject in which he had no personal interest, and my clear conviction is, not only that all

those imputations are groundless, but that, if Mr Thomson were now placed in the same situation in which he was then, nothing different or better could be done."

Mr Thomson, during the period of his connection with the bard, made him two remittances of five pounds each ; and sent Burns a copy of Ritson's English Songs, and of Peter Pindar's works. He also bestowed three or four copies of part first of his own publication, and presented to Mrs Burns a Paisley shawl, and a drawing by David Allan, representing the family worship scene in "The Cottar's Saturday Night." After the poet's death, he gave two guineas to the Edinburgh subscription for the family, and allowed Dr Currie to publish the songs Burns had written for him, with the relative correspondence, which latter he took the trouble to arrange. We also find that in 1800 he presented volume second of his collection of songs to Gilbert Burns, who acknowledged the gift in these terms : "If ever I come to Edinburgh, I will certainly avail myself of your invitation to call on a person whose handsome conduct to my brother's family has secured my esteem, and confirmed to me the opinion that musical taste and talents have a close connexion with the harmony of the moral feelings."

We shall now conclude this department of our work by giving a few particulars regarding the publication in which Burns took so much interest, and so liberally helped with the effusions of his genius.

The editor's preface to his first half-volume, folio-size, consisting of 25 songs harmonised by Pleyel, is dated "Blair Street, Edinburgh, 1st May 1793. It contains only five songs written by our poet for that publication. These we have already enumerated, and another song "My Nannie, O," previously published, was added to the number.

The second half-volume of Thomson's songs appeared in August 1798, (two years after the poet's death). Besides embracing ten songs borrowed from Johnson's *Museum*, it contained eleven songs written expressly for Thomson, namely,

1. Duncan Gray cam here to woo.
2. Deluded swain, the pleasure.
3. Here is the glen and here the bower.

4. How lang and dreary is the night.
5. Let not woman e'er complain.
6. O mirk, mirk is the midnight hour.
7. O poortith cauld and restless love.
8. O stay, sweet warbling woodlark, stay.
9. O saw ye bonie Lesley.
10. Sweet fa's the eve on Craigieburn.
11. True-hearted was he, the sad swain of the Yarrow.

Volume second of Thomson's work, containing fifty songs with accompaniments by Pleyel and Kozeluch, appeared in July 1799. Besides twelve songs by Burns, borrowed from Johnson's *Museum*, it includes 28 lyrics expressly written for Thomson's publication. Those marked with an asterisk in the following list, had been communicated by the author to Johnson also, in whose publication they appeared in December 1796.

1. Adown winding Nith I did wander.
2. Awa' wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms.
3. Blythe hae I been on yon hill.
4. By Allan stream I chanced to rove.
5. Come let me take thee to my breast.
6. Contented wi' little and canty wi' mair.
7. Farewell thou stream that winding flows.
8. Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore.
9. Here's a health to ane I loe dear.
10. How cruel are the parents.
11. Husband, husband, cease your strife.
12. It was the charming month of May.
13. Last May a braw wooer cam doun the lang glen.*
14. Now in her green mantle blythe Nature arrays.
15. Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers.

* In Johnson's sixth vol. (1803) appeared a version of this popular song, beginning, "Ae day a braw wooer cam doun the lang glen," and shewing several verbal changes (among these the happy one, "my auld shoon," instead of "her new shoon"). Stenhouse, in his annotations, 1820, averred that Burns had composed the song in 1787 for Johnson who, from religious scruples, forebore to publish it till Dr Currie printed the *very inferior version* supplied to Thomson in July 1795! Piratical fraud, backed by literary impudence, scarcely ever went beyond this.

16. Now Spring has clad the groves in green.
17. O this is no my ain lassie.
18. O wat ye wha that loes me ?
19. O wat ye wha's in yon town ? *
20. O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad.
21. Scots wha hae (Tune "Lewie Gordon".)
22. Should auld acquaintanee be forgot ? *
23. Their groves o' sweet myrtle.
24. The small birds rejoice.
25. Thine am I, my faithful Fair.
26. Thou hast left me ever, Jamie.
27. Wilt thou be my dearie !*
28. Ye banks and braes and streams around.

The reader will observe from the foregoing lists that before the appearance of Currie's first edition for behoof of the widow and family of the poet, Thomson had given to the public, on his own account, forty-four of the songs written for him by Burns.

The preface to Thomson's third volume of his "Select Collection of Scottish songs" is dated December 1801. It contains fourteen of Burns's lyrics taken from Johnson's *Museum*, while it includes only seven † of those expressly composed for his own publication, namely :—

1. Behold, my love, how green the groves.
2. Fairest maid on Devon banks.
3. Lassie wi' the lint-white locks.
4. Long, long the night.
5. O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide.
6. O bonie was yon rosy brier.
7. Where are the joys I hae met in the morning.

Volume IV. of Thomson's publication appeared in 1805, containing, besides eleven of Burns's songs from other sources, thirteen that had been composed for his own work. One of these

† In this volume the famous ode, "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled," is again introduced, but restored to its first and best form, and set to its own proper tune. Thomson's apologetic note will be found at page 287 *supra*.

however—"Sae flaxen were her ringlets"—had been published in 1796 by Johnson, to whom also the bard had given it.

1. Behold the hour, the boat arrive.
2. Forlorn my love, no comfort near.
3. Hark, the mavis e'enig sang.
4. How can my poor heart be glad?
5. Is there for honest poverty.
6. Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion.
7. O lassie art thou sleepin yet?
8. O Philly, happy be the day.
9. O were my love yon lilae fair.
10. Sae flaxen were her ringlets.
11. Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature?
12. There was a lass and she was fair.
13. When o'er the hills the eastern star.

Volume V. and last of Thomson's collection appeared in 1818. The only song it contains expressly written for that work by Burns, is headed thus,

"My wife's a winsome wee thing,—by Burns and Thomson."

It contains also "Mary Morison" which was presented to Thomson, although not composed for him.

In 1822, Mr Thomson published the long-promised octavo edition of his collection of Scottish songs, with the airs and accompaniments; these extended to six volumes, the last of which appeared in May 1825, the price of each volume being 10s. 6d. At that date he advertised that he was re-engraving the music plates of his folio collection, which would be sold at these prices:—

Scottish Songs in five vols. folio, at 21s. each.
 Irish Songs, in three vols. folio, at 15s. each.
 Welsh Songs, in two vols. folio, at 15s. each.

Some of these bear the date 1831; and during twenty years thereafter, the venerable song-editor continued to vend his books and draw in "the bawbees."

SHORTLY after the death of our Author, Mrs Maria Riddell, a lady of superior position and accomplishments who, as the reader has seen, was at one period treated with savage severity by the bard, came generously forward in defence of his reputation. From her place of retirement in Annandale, she had noticed in the public prints several paragraphs concerning the illustrious deceased which seemed to her to be dictated by private animosity or deplorable envy. Impelled by consciousness of their injustice, she published in the *Dumfries Journal* a warmly-generous article on Burns, presenting at same time a judicious estimate of his character and endowments. That kindly tribute of admiration was reprinted by Dr Currie and is here reproduced as a fitting sequel to the essays of the same kind by Dugald Stewart and Josiah Walker, referring to an earlier time in the poet's career.*

Chambers was correct in regarding the whole conduct of Mrs Riddell respecting Burns as one of the most satisfactory testimonies in his favour. Forgiving and forgetting the ungallant squibs and satires which, under the irritation of wounded pride, he had thrown off against herself, she generously sympathised with him when he was laid low by personal suffering, and soothed his latter days by resuming her wonted friendly intercourse and correspondence with him. Some of his fair-weather friends and patrons had now abandoned, or stood aloof from him; but Mrs Riddell, whose long intimacy with him afforded her the

* Our readers must however be informed that Dr Currie's version of Mrs Riddell's Article on Burns, is by no means given verbatim from the original, as printed in the Journals and Magazines in 1796. Dr Currie had his own peculiar notions of propriety of diction, and used liberties of the press with some of the manuscripts he professed to edit which would not now be tolerated. For instance, where Mrs R. speaks of the poet's penchant for "the joy-inspiring bowl," Dr C. alters the phrase to "flowing bowl" in deference to his own prejudices, for he would not allow joy to spring from such a source. Mrs R. generously follows up this by asking "Who would wish to reprove the failings Burns consecrated with such lively touches of nature?" This was too much for the moral philosophy of Dr Currie, and he emasculated the kindly query by changing the word "failings" into *feelings*! The version we present of Mrs Riddell's "sketch" is mainly that of the newspapers, but we have not hesitated to bow to Currie occasionally, in breaking up a long sentence into shorter periods, or dividing a tedious paragraph in twain.

fullest knowledge of his transactions, "found in him no offences which a pure mind might not regard with leniency." Somewhat capricious the poet had experienced her to be, but "even with all her little caprices," he hailed her as the "first of friends, and most accomplished of women." In the end, he might have applied to her similar language to that of a kindred minstrel's familiar apostrophe—

"O woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please ;
But when Misfortune smites the brow,
A ministering angel thou !"

How beautiful is the little anecdote of her at this juncture, as told by Chambers ! "Several months prior to the death of Burns, Mr Alexander Smellie, son of the rough old typographer and natural historian, had visited Mrs Riddell, and found her talking of the poet in terms of indignation and opprobrium, only perhaps too well justified by his conduct towards herself. He revisited her shortly after Burns's funeral day, and found that all offence had been lost in admiration and regret. Attended by her young friend, the enthusiastic lady after nightfall clambered the Kirk-yard stile and made her way to the poet's grave, which she planted with laurels and emblematic flowers." *

* The succeeding history of this interesting lady has been most clumsily and inaccurately noted by the poet's editors. Her husband Mr Walter Riddell inherited after his brother's death in 1794 the distinctive title "of Glenriddell;" but his necessities compelled him to part with Woodley Park and Friar's Carse. He seems to have died about the close of last century, when Mrs Riddell, and two children, a son and daughter, removed to London, where she resided in apartments at Hampton Court. She was the principal contributor to a volume entitled "The Metrical Miscellany, consisting of Poems hitherto unpublished" (Cadell & Davies, London, 1803). In 1804, her son "Alexander Riddell, of Glenriddell" died at Hampton Court, and in 1807, she was married to a Welsh gentleman of property, named Philipps Lloyd Fletcher; but she survived that union only eight months, and was buried in the family vault at Chester. Her daughter Anna Maria Riddell was married to a Mr Walker, whose son Mr Arthur de Noe Walker now resides at Ovington Gardens, London.

In the authorised re-issue of Currie's edition of Burns's Works, 1808, a footnote to one of the letters addressed by the poet to Mrs Riddell announced the fact that this correspondent, "the graces of whose person

SKETCH OF THE LEADING FEATURES OF
BURNS'S CHARACTER.

BY MARIA RIDDELL, *7th August 1796.*

“THE attention of the public is much occupied at present with the irreparable loss it has recently sustained in the death of the Caledonian poet, Robert Burns. It is not probable that this mournful event, which is likely to be felt severely in the literary world, as well as in the circle of private friendship which surrounded him, shall fail to be attended with the usual profusion of posthumous anecdotes and memoirs that commonly spring up at the death of every rare and celebrated personage. I shall not attempt to enlist with the numerous corps of biographers who may, without possessing a kindred genius, arrogate to themselves the privilege of criticising the character and writings of Burns. An ‘inspiring mantle’ like that thrown over him by the tutelary Muse who first found him ‘at the plough’ has been vouchsafed to few, and may be the portion of fewer still; and if it be true that men of genius have a claim, in their literary capacities, to the legal right of a British citizen in a court of justice—that of ‘being tried only by his peers’ (I borrow here an expression I have frequently heard Burns himself make use of), God forbid I should assume the flattering and peculiar privilege of sitting upon his jury! But the intimacy of our acquaintance for several years past, may perhaps justify my presenting to the public a few of those ideas and observations I have had the opportunity of forming, and which, to the day that closed for ever the scene of his happy qualities and of his errors, I have never had the smallest cause to deviate in, or to recall.

“It will be an injustice done to Burns's reputation in the records of literature, not only as respects future generations and foreign

were only equalled by the singular endowments of her mind, paid the debt of nature a few months ago.” That footnote continued to be inserted in the reprints of Currie's edition down to that superintended by Gilbert Burns in 1820; and hence the blundering information that Mrs Riddell died in 1820, taken up by Cunningham, and echoed by Motherwell, Chambers, Waddell, and all others who chronicled the event!

countries, but even with his native Scotland and some of his contemporaries, that he is generally talked of and considered with reference to his poetical talents *only*. In regarding Burns as something more than a Poet, it must not be supposed that I consider that title as a trivial one; no person can be more penetrated with the respect due to the wreath bestowed by the Muses than myself; and much certainly is due to the merit of a self-taught bard, deprived of the advantages of classical tuition and the intercourse of congenial minds till that period of life when his native fire had already blazed forth in all its wild graces of genuine simplicity and energetic eloquence of sentiment. But the fact is, that even when all his honours are yielded to him, Burns will perhaps be found to move in a poetical sphere less splendid, less dignified, and less attractive, even in his own pastoral style, than some other writers have done. Nevertheless, I hesitate not to affirm—and in vindication of my opinion I appeal to all who had the advantage of personal acquaintance with him—that Poetry was actually not his *forte*. If others have climbed more successfully the heights of Parnassus, none certainly ever out-shone Burns in the charms—the sorcery I would almost call it—of fascinating conversation; the spontaneous eloquence of social argument, or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee. His personal endowments were perfectly correspondent with the qualifications of his mind. His form was manly, his action energy itself, devoid in a great measure, however, of those graces, of that polish acquired only in the refinement of societies, where in early life he had not the opportunity to mix; but where—such was the irresistible power of attraction that encircled him—though his appearance and manner were always peculiar, he never failed to delight and to *excel*. His figure certainly bore the authentic impress of his birth and original station in life; it seemed moulded by Nature for the rough exercises of agriculture, rather than the gentler cultivation of *belles lettres*. His features were stamped with the hardy character of independence, and the firmness of conscious though not arrogant pre-eminence. I believe no man was ever gifted with a larger portion of the *vivida vis animi*: the animated expressions of his countenance were almost peculiar to himself. The rapid lightnings of his eye were

always the harbingers of some flash of genius, whether they darted the fiery glances of insulted and indignant superiority, or beamed with the impassioned sentiment of fervent and impetuous affections. His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye; sonorous, replete with the finest modulations, it alternately captivated the ear with the melody of poetic numbers, the perspicuity of nervous reasoning, or the ardent sallies of enthusiastic patriotism.*

“I am almost at a loss to say whether the keenness of satire was the *forte* or the foible of Burns; for though Nature had endowed him with a portion of the most pointed excellence in that ‘perilous gift,’ he suffered it too often to be the vehicle of personal, and sometimes unfounded animosities. It was not always that sportiveness of humour—that ‘unwary pleasantry,’ which Sterne has described to us with touches so conciliatory; but the darts of ridicule were frequently directed as the caprice of the instant suggested, or the altercations of parties or of persons happened to kindle the restlessness of his spirit into interest or aversion. This was not, however, invariably the case; his wit (which is no unusual matter indeed) had always the start of his judgment, and would lead him to the indulgence of railly uniformly acute, but often unaccompanied with the least desire to wound. The suppression of an arch and full pointed *bon mot*, from dread of injuring its object, the sage of Zurich very properly classes as ‘a virtue only to be sought for in the Calendar of Saints;’ if so, Burns must not be dealt with unconscientiously for being rather deficient in it. He paid the forfeit of his talents as dearly as any one could do. ‘Twas no extravagant arithmetic to say of him (as of Yorick), ‘that for every ten jokes he got a hundred enemies;’ but much allowance shold be made by a candid mind for the splenetic warmth of a spirit ‘which distress had often spited with the world,’ and which, unbounded in its intellectual sallies and pursuits, continually experienced the

* No wonder that *Clarinda*, in writing to Mr Syme, a few months after this article was published, thus expressed herself: “Mrs Riddell is, in my estimation, the first female writer I ever knew; and, I am convinced, a good soul as ever was, from her uncommon attention to our friend Burns and his family. I am delighted with her letters, and reckon her correspondence a great acquisition.”

curbs imposed by the waywardness of his fortune. His soul was never languid or inactive, and his genius was extinguished only with the last sparks of retreating life; but the vivacity of his wishes and temper was checked by constant disappointments which sat heavy on a heart that acknowledged the ruling passion of independence, without having ever been placed beyond the grasp of penury.

Burns possessed none of that negative insipidity of character, whose love might be regarded with indifference, or whose resentment could be considered with contempt; so his passions rendered him—according as they disclosed themselves in affection or antipathy—the object of enthusiastic attachment, or of decided enmity. In this respect, the temper of his companions seemed to take the tincture from his own; for *he* acknowledged in the universe but two classes of objects—those of adoration the most fervent, or of aversion the most uncontrollable. It has indeed been frequently asserted of him, that, unsusceptible of indifference, and often hating where he ought to have despised, he alternately opened his heart and poured forth the treasures of his understanding to some who were incapable of appreciating the homage; and elevated to the privilege of adversaries those who were unqualified in all respects for the honour of a contest so distinguished.

“It is said that the celebrated Dr Johnson professed to ‘love a good hater’: a temperament that had singularly adapted him to cherish a prepossession in favour of our bard, who perhaps fell but little short even of the surly Doctor in this qualification, so long as his ill-will continued; but the fervor of his passions was fortunately corrected by their versatility. He was seldom—never indeed—implacable in his resentments, and sometimes (it has been alleged) not inviolably steady in his engagements of friendship. Much indeed has been said of his inconstancy and caprice; but I am inclined to believe they originated less in a levity of sentiment, than from an extreme impetuosity of feeling which rendered him prompt to take umbrage; and his sensations of pique, where he fancied he had discovered the traces of unkindness, scorn, or neglect, took their measure of asperity from the overflowings of the opposite sentiment which preceded them, and which seldom

failed to regain its ascendancy in his bosom, on the return of calmer reflection. He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and *his avowal* was a *reparation*. His native *fierté* never forsaking him for a moment, the value of a frank acknowledgment was enhanced tenfold towards a generous mind, from its never being attended with servility. His mind, organised only for the stronger and more acute operation of the passions, was impracticable to the efforts of superciliousness that would have depressed it into humility, and equally superior to the encroachments of venal suggestions that might have led him into the mazes of hypocrisy.*

“It has been observed that he was far from averse to the intense of flattery, and could receive it tempered with less delicacy than might have been expected, as he seldom transgressed extravagantly in that way himself ; where he paid a compliment it might indeed claim the power of intoxication, as approbation from him was always an honest tribute from the warmth and sincerity of his heart. It has been sometimes represented by those who, it would seem had a view to depreciate, though they could not hope wholly to obscure, that native brilliancy which this extraordinary man had invariably bestowed on every thing that came from his lips or pen, that the history of the Ayrshire ploughboy was an ingenious fiction, fabricated for the purposes of obtaining the interests of the great, and enhancing the merits of what in reality required no foil. But had his compositions fallen from a hand more dignified in the ranks of society than that of a peasant, they had perhaps bestowed as unusual a grace there, as even in the humbler shade of rustic inspiration from whence they really sprung.

“That Burns had received no classical education, and was acquainted with the Greek and Roman authors only through the medium of translations, is a fact that can be indisputably proven. I have seldom seen him at a loss in conversation, unless where the dead languages and their writers were the subjects of discussion. When I have pressed him to tell me why he never took

* The reader will perceive that, throughout this paragraph, Mrs Riddell speaks from her own experience in the unhappy rupture that occurred between them, which lasted from January 1794 till the spring of the year following.

pains to acquire the Latin in particular (a language which his happy memory had so soon enabled him to be master of), he used only to reply with a smile, that he already knew all the Latin he desired to learn, and that was *omnia vincit amor*; a phrase that from his writings and most favourite pursuits, it should undoubtedly seem he was most thoroughly versed in ; but I really believe his classical erudition extended little, if any, further.

“The penchant uniformly acknowledged by Burns for the festive pleasures of the table, and towards the fairer and softer objects of Nature’s creation, has been the rallying point where the attacks of his censors, both religious and moral, have been directed ; and to these, it must be confessed, he showed himself no stoic. His poetical pieces blend, with alternate happiness of description, the frolic spirit of the joy-inspiring bowl, or melt the heart to the tender and impassioned sentiments in which beauty always taught him to pour forth his own. But who would wish to reprove the failings he has consecrated with such lively touches of nature ? And where is the rugged moralist who will persuade us so far to ‘chill the genial current of the soul,’ as to regret that Ovid ever celebrated his Corinna, or that Anacreon sung beneath his vine ?

“I will not, however, undertake to be the apologist of the irregularities even of a man of genius, though I believe it is as certainly understood that genius never *was* free of irregularities, as that their absolution may in great measure be justly claimed, since it is evident that the world must have continued very stationary in its intellectual acquirements, had it never given birth to any but men of plain sense. Evenness of conduct, and a due regard to the decorums of the world, have been so rarely seen to move hand in hand with genius, that some have gone so far as to say (though there I cannot wholly acquiesce), that they are even incompatible ; but, be it remembered, the frailties that cast their shade over the splendour of superior merit are more conspicuously glaring than where they are the attendants of mere mediocrity. It is only on the gem we are disturbed to see the dust ; the pebble may be soiled, and we do not regard it. The eccentric intuitions of genius too often yield the soul to the wild effervescence of desires, always unbounded, and sometimes equally

dangerous to the repose of others as fatal to its own. No wonder then if Virtue herself be sometimes lost in the blaze of kindling animation, or that the calm admonitions of reason are not found sufficient to fetter an imagination which scorns the narrow limits and restrictions that would chain it to the level of ordinary minds. Burns, the child of nature and sensibility, unbroke to the refrigerative precepts of philosophy, makes his own artless apology in terms more forcible than all the argumentative vindications in the world could do. This appears in one of his poems, where he delineates, with his usual simplicity, the progress of his mind, and its gradual expansion to the lessons of the tutelary Muse :—

“I saw thy pulse's madd'ning play
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven ;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from heaven!”

“I have already transgressed far beyond the bounds I had proposed to myself on first committing to paper this sketch, which comprehends what I at least have been led to deem the leading features of Burns's mind and character. A critique, either literary or moral, I cannot aim at ; mine is wholly fulfilled if in these paragraphs I have been able to delineate any of those strong traits that distinguished him, of those talents which raised him from the plough—where he passed the bleak morning of his life, weaving his rude wreaths of poesy with the wild field-flowers that sprung around his cottage—to that enviable eminence of literary fame, where Scotland shall long cherish his memory with delight and gratitude. Proudly she will remember that beneath her cold sky, a genius was ripened without care or culture, that would have done honour to climes more favourable to the development of those luxuriances of fancy and colouring in which he so eminently excelled.

“From several paragraphs I have noticed in the public prints, even since the idea was formed of sending this humble effort in the same direction, I find private animosities have not yet subsided, and that envy has not yet exhausted all her shafts. I still trust, however, that honest fame will be permanently affixed to Burns's character—a fame which the candid and impartial of his

own countrymen, and his readers everywhere, will find he *has* merited. And wherever a kindred bosom is found that has been taught to glow with the fires that animated Burns, should a recollection of the imprudences that sullied his brighter qualifications interpose, let such an one remember the imperfection of all human excellence,—let him leave those inconsistencies which alternately exalted his nature into the seraph, and sunk it again into the man, to the Tribunal which *alone* can investigate the labyrinths of the human heart.

‘In vain we seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode ;
There they alike in trembling hope repose—
The bosom of his Father and his God.’”

M. R.

“Burns has been duly appreciated,” remarks Lockhart, near the close of his valuable memoir of the bard, “and has had the fortune to be praised eloquently by almost every poet who has come after him. To accumulate all that has been said of him, emanating even from minds of the first order, would fill a volume—and a noble monument, no question, that volume would be; the noblest, except what he has left us in his own immortal writings, which—were some dross removed, and the rest arranged in a chronological order—would, I believe, form, to the intelligent, a more perfect and vivid history of his life than will ever be composed out of all the materials in the world besides.”

ADDENDA No. I.

AT pp. 51-98, Vol. IV., we have given an entire copy of our bard's earliest Common-place Book, begun in April 1783 and closed in October 1785. Near the end of the latter year the poet procured a similar blank-paper version book, containing twenty sheets or eighty folio pages in all; into which he transcribed, in fair hand, fifteen of his principal poetical compositions, namely:—

The Holy Fair,	pages	1 to 6
Hallowe'en,	7 „	15
Address to the Diel,	16 „	19
The Auld Farmer's Address to his Mare, .	20 „	22
John Barleycorn, a Ballad,	23 „	25
Scotch Drink,	26 „	29
Man was made to Mourn,	29 „	32
The Twa Dogs: a Tale,	32 „	39
The Cotter's Saturday at E'en,	40 „	46
The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer, .	46 „	51
Address to James Smith,	52 „	56
Winter, a Dirge,	56 „	57
Epistle to Davy, a Brother Poet,	57 „	61
The Death of poor Mailie,	62 „	63
Poor Mailie's Elegy,	64 „	65

The remaining fifteen pages are blank, except that on page 80 are two amended stanzas of the Address to James Smith. There are indications which suggest that the last entries in the book were made shortly after the rupture between the author and the Armour family, about the month of March 1786. The numerous deletings and alterations in the Address to James Smith and in poor Mailie's Elegy lead to the inference that these pieces were then freshly composed; while the others, from their cleaner penmanship, must have been transcribed from pre-existing

manuscripts. The re-modelling of one of the stanzas in the Address to the Deil shews that, in view of sending his poems to the press, he desired to extinguish a fine compliment to Jean Armour contained in the original version.

The interesting Collection of autograph poems we are now referring to has just been acquired by George Wilson, Esq., Murrayfield House, Edinburgh, to whom we are indebted for access to it. The document had been placed in Dr Currie's hands along with the other materials from which he compiled his edition of the Life and Works of Burns, and it remained a family inheritance, during a long series of years, in possession of the biographer's descendants. Eventually, along with the early Common-place Book, which was purchased by the late John Adam, of Greenock, it was sold by auction in London ; and after passing through various hands, it is our good fortune now to have the opportunity of describing it before closing the present Work.

The bringing of this manuscript to light settles the date of composition of "The Holy Fair." Following Chambers, Lockhart and others who have expressed their views regarding the chronology of the more important poems that were published in 1786, we had supposed it to be among the latest of the pieces produced in that volume ; but it must now be definitely fixed as a composition of August or September 1785. The only other poem in the list to which the author has attached a date is the "Epistle to Davie," which is recorded as a production of "January 1785." Let it be noted that this piece is placed near the close of the collection, and we would fain persuade ourselves that the poet really meant "January 1786," for we cannot conceive that at the earlier date he had much or any acquaintanceship with Jean Armour. When we find him on 11th November 1784 writing to Thomas Orr that he is very glad to have Peggy of Kirkoswald off his hands, "as I am at present so curiously taken in with an affair of gallantry, and embarrassed enough without her," we cannot suppose that within two months thereafter he could be singing so rapturously of his immortal passion for Jean as he does in this Epistle. Lockhart distrusts Gilbert's account of the early date of the Epistle to Davy on the ground of its celebration of Jean ; but he says, "after all,

she is celebrated in the concluding stanzas, which may have been added after the first draught." In the first seven stanzas there is no allusion to Jean, and had the poem closed there, it would nevertheless have commanded the world's admiration. The references to Jean in the four concluding stanzas are so inwoven with the fabric of the composition, that when the poet extracted from *The Vision* and the *Address to the Deil* the beautiful allusions to Jean, he must have found it a hopeless matter to attempt as much with the *Epistle to Davy*.

The MS. in question opens thus:—

"SCOTCH POEMS, BY ROBT. BURNESS.

H O L Y F A I R.

Composed in Autumn 1785."

The motto of eight lines pretended to be quoted from a poem called "Hypocrisy a la mode" is wanting; and it is remarkable that the peculiar mode of spelling the termination of verbs which prevails so much in the author's first edition is rarely countenanced in this MS. Instead of "glintan," "chantan," etc., we have *glentin* and *chantin*. When he came to print a second edition he entirely abandoned that approximation to the old Saxon method of terminating the participle present, so common in Dunbar and old Scotch poets, who used "gangand" for *gangin*; "springand" for *springin*, etc. The Edinburgh *literateurs* of 1787 have been blamed by some of our philological critics for poisoning the taste of Burns in such matters; but this manuscript proves that if he was misled at all, it must have been by his Kilmarnock printer who was old fashioned enough to print thus:—

"A Cotter *howkan* in a sheugh
Wi' dirty stanes *biggan* a dyke."

In verse ix. of "The Holy Fair," instead of the printed lines,

"There, racer Jess an' twa-three wh-res
Are blinkin at the entry,"

we have in the manuscript,

"Bet Barb-r there, an' twa-three wh-res
Sit blinkin at the entry."

In verse xii., the blanks left for *Moodie's* name are filled up with "Sawnie," and in verse xiv. the blank in the line referring to Smith of Galston is filled up thus:—"Geordie begins his cauld harangues." In like manner, instead of—"For Peebles frae the water-fit" in verse xvi., we have—"For fairy Willie Water-fit." At the end of verse xviii., the author inserts a note thus:—"The next verse after the following ought to be in here;" that is to say, he transposes the 19th and 20th stanzas, and the improvement is obvious.

But alas! in describing our MS., we have now to announce that it breaks off in the middle of verse xxix in the *Holy Fair*; because three leaves of the book (from pp. 5 to 10 inclusive) have been torn out; and by consulting the earliest of the sale catalogues we find the breach is an old one. Thus we want the closing eight and a half verses of "The Holy Fair," and the opening sixteen verses and two lines of verse seventeen of "Halloween." In other respects, the book is quite complete.

So far as we can compare this MS. of "Halloween" with the printed copy, it differs only in one line of the closing verse. Instead of "And unco tales an' funny jokes," we read "And mony funny tales and jokes." The author's notes occupy two closely written pages at the end of the poem; and these correspond in matter, although not in verbal structure, with the printed version.

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL, *page 16.*

The motto from Milton is wanting. In verse *third*, instead of the line "An tho' yon lowan heugh's thy hame," we have "An' tho' yon howe het hole's thy hame." In verse *tenth* for "witching skill" we have "wicked (or cantraip) skill." Instead of the present verse *eleventh* we have in the original:—

"Thence knots are coosten, spells contriv'd,
An' the brisk bridegroom newly wived,
Just at the kittle point arriv'd,
Fond, keen, and crouse,
Is by some spitefu' jad depriv'd
O's warklume's use."

This is deleted in the MS., and at the end of the poem the published verse is given with some inconsiderable variation. In verse 12th, for “nighted travellers” we have “nightly travellers.” The 15th verse in the original MS. reads thus:—

“Lang syne in Eden’s happy scene,
When strappin Edie’s days were green,
And Eve was like my bonie Jean,
 My dearest part,
A dancin, sweet, young, handsome quean,
 Wi’ guileless heart.”

That verse is deleted in the MS., and the fresh verse extended at the end of the poem. In verse 20th, instead of “A certain Bardie’s rantin, drinkin,” we read “That Robin rantin, swearin, drinkin.”

THE AULD FARMER’S NEW-YEAR MORNING
SALUTATION TO HIS OLD MEERE,
ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE
NEW-YEAR, *page 20.*

There is only a very trifling verbal difference observable on comparing the MS. with the printed copies, till we come to the very close of the poem, where we find,

“Wi’ tentie care I’ll flit thy tether,
 An’ clap thy back,
An’ mind the days we’ve haen thegither,
 An’ ca’ the crack.”

JOHN BARLEYCORN, a Ballad, *page 23.*

“THERE is an old Scotch song known by that name whose first two verses begin the following; and the general idea of it runs through the whole.” Verse 2nd “They’ve taen a plough,” &c.; verse 3rd “The Spring time cam wi’ kindly warmth;” verse 4th “The Summer cam wi’ sultry heat,” &c.; verse 5th “The Autumn cam wi’ fresh’ning breeze,” &c.

SCOTCH DRINK, *page 26.*

THE MS. corresponds precisely with the printed copy in the author's first edition, the words in *italics* excepted ; and in verse 15, instead of “burnan trash,” we have *burnin trash*.

A BALLAD, *page 29.*

“When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,
One ev'ning as I wander'd forth,
Along the banks of Aire,” &c.

This version of “Man was made to mourn,” is an improvement on the one we have printed from the Common-place Book, at page 88, vol. iv., and excepting in the title it nearly corresponds with the copy in the author's first edition. Verse 3, however, stands as in the earlier MS.

“Yon sun that hangs o'er Carrick moors,
That spread so far and wide,
Where hundreds labor to support
The lordly Cassilis' pride,” &c.

In verse 5, instead of “cares and sorrows,” we read *cares and labours* ; and in verse 9, for “Nature's law” we have *Nature's hand* ; also “will or power,” instead of *will and power*.

THE TWA DOGS: A TALE, *page 32.*

THIS corresponds so closely with the copy in the Kilmarnock edition that one might suppose that “wee Johnie” must have printed from it, did we not know that the *printer's copy* thereof is now possessed by the Irvine Burns' Club. Our MS. however wants an important couplet which the printed copy puts into the mouth of Luath, near the middle of the poem, where he says of the Cotters that, when under the influence of “twalpenny-worth o' nappy,”

“They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs ;
They talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts ;
Or tell what new taxation's comin,
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.”

The wanting couplet is the centre one of this quotation, which must have been interpolated by the author in preparing the poem for the press. In our MS. the reading is as follows:—

“An’ whyles twalpennie worth o’ nappy
 Can mak the bodies unco happy ;
 They lay aside their private cares
 An’ mind the Kirk and State affairs,
 Foretell what new taxation’s comin,
 An’ wonder at the folk in Lon’on.”

We may add that in the MS. the poem is not broken up into so many paragraphs as in the printed copy; and instead of such Kilmarnock terminations as “howkan, biggan, rantan, ramblan, luntan,” &c., these verbs are spelled as in the Edinburgh edition. We note also that instead of “thrum guittars,” the MS. has “play guittars;” and in the closing line, “Resolv’d to meet some ither day,” the MS. reads “meet another day.”

THE COTTER’S SATURDAY ’T E’EN, *page 40.*

INSCRIBED TO MR ROBERT AITKEN, AYR.

On a separate page, apart from the poem, in the manner of a “bastard title,” the author has inscribed the motto from Gray’s Elegy, headed by the finally adopted title,

“THE COTTER’S SATURDAY NIGHT.”

The MS. is very perfect, and shows not a single deletion, which is more than can be said of the printer’s copy possessed by the Irvine Burns’ Club. The following are the only variations from the published version that we have observed:—verse 2, for “trains o’ crows” we have *flocks o’ crows*; verse 3, for “toddlen,” we have *toilten*, a very expressive word; verse 5, we have *and* instead of “or” in the line, “Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears;” and in the same verse we have *Maks* instead of “Gars.” In verse 8, for “strappan youth,” we have *strappin youth*; and for “artless heart” we have *witless heart*. In verse 9, the opening line is “O happy love! where suchen love is found,” instead of “where love like this is found;” and in same verse we have “I’ve pacèd long this weary mortal round,” for

"I've pacèd much." In verse 10 we read "Virtue, Conscience, Honor, all exil'd," instead of "Honor, Virtue, Conscience."

THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER TO
THE RT. HON^{BLE}. AND HON^{BLE}. THE SCOTCH
REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF COM-
MONS, *page 46.*

THE variations from the Kilmarnock text are very trifling. In verse 2, for "roupet," and "sciechan," we have *roopet*, and *sciechin*. In verse 7, for "greetan, seizan, and crushan't," we have *greetin*, *seizin*, and *crushin't*. The 15th verse is as follows, but deleted by the author, who has written on the margin, "This verse expunge."

"Thee, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented,
If Bardies e'er are represented ;
I ken if that your sword were wanted,
Ye'd lend your hand ;
But when there's ought to *say* anent it,
Ye're at a stand."

In the 16th verse, instead of the printed words,

"Arouse my boys ! exert your mettle
To get auld Scotland back her Kettle."

we have in the MS.

"Rouse up, my boys ! exert your mettle
To get your Mither back her Kittle."

The words "your Mither" are deleted, and "auld Scotland" placed above. The second line of the "Postscript" has "See vines, an' wines, an' olives rise," instead of as in the printed copy.

ADDRESS TO J. SMITH, *page 52.*

"Friendship ! mysterious cement of," &c.

Verse *second* is wanting, but by way of afterthought it is inserted in the last page of the volume, and in the MS. its position is indicated by a marginal note, thus:—"A verse wanting, vide last page of the book."

Verse *third* is absent from the MS. altogether, and a variation occurs at the close of verse *fourth*, where instead of

“ Hae ye a leisure moment’s time,
To hear what’s comin?”

the author had written

“ Will ye lay bye a wee whyle’s time,
An’ hear what’s comin?”

Instead of verse *fifth*, as in the printed copy, we have

“ Some rhyme because they like to clash,
An’ gie a neebor’s name a lash,
An’ some (vain thought!) for needfu’ cash,
An’ some for fame ;
For me, I string my dogg’rel trash,
For fun at hame.”

Not satisfied with this, he inserted the amended stanza in the last page of the book, beside verse second. No variation occurs till in verse *eleventh* we have, instead of the printed version :—

“ Then top and main-top, hoist the sail,
All hands aloft,
And large, before Enjoyment’s gale,
Let’s scud adrift.”

Deletions and interpolations are introduced in the author’s hand, correcting the stanza.

In verse *fourteenth*, instead of “ Dear deluding woman,” we read “ Dear bewitching woman.” In verse *seventeenth* instead of “ And haply eye the barren hut,” the MS. has “ And eye the barren, hungry hut.” In the following verse “ canie” and “ cozie” are transposed. Verse 23rd reads thus in the MS.—

“ Honor gie to Willie Pit,
If he goes on to merit it :
Gie wealth,” &c.

The proper alteration is made in the author’s hand by deletion and interpolation. Instead of “ the ramblin squad” in verse 28th, we have “ rантин squad.”

WINTER, A DIRGE. *Tune—M'Pherson, p. 56.*

THIS is one of the author's juvenile pieces inserted here with a view to publication. A happy amendment in the second half of stanza first is introduced by deletion and interpolation. Instead of, as in the printed copies, "While, tumbling," &c., this MS. has

"Wild, tumbling, brown, the burn runs down,
And roars frae bank to brae ;
While bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day."

AN EPISTLE TO DAVY, A BROTHER POET,

Jan. 1785, *p. 57.*

GENERALLY speaking this is a beautiful manuscript; and not until we come to stanza vii., is there any deletion. We read

"And even should Misfortunes come,
Yet here I sit that's met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet :"

Not satisfied with this, the author has corrected it thus :—

"I here wha sit has met wi' some."

In stanza ix., the principal variation occurs, thus :

"Fondly dear !
In a' my share of care an' grief,
Which Fate has largely given,
My hope, my comfort an' relief
Are thoughts o' her an' Heaven,
Thou Being, Allseeing," &c.

The above is altered by deletion and interpolation into the text as printed in all editions.

THE DEATH AN' DYING WORDS O' POOR MAILIE,
MY AIN PET YOWE. AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE, *p. 62.*

THE MS. corresponds in all particulars with the printed text of the Kilmarnock edition.

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY, *page* 64.

IN verse first, the third line reads, "Poor Robin's fate is at a close," so also is it in line third of the second verse.—"Or gars poor Robin," &c. The third stanza opens thus:—

"Ay where he gaed she trotted by him."

The fourth stanza, line first, has "yowe" instead of *sheep*; and instead of ending with "Our Bardie," we read "Now Robin, lanely," &c.

Verse fifth is wanting in the body of the poem, but is inserted after the close, with indication where to place it.

Verse sixth, which is as follows, is deleted, and a fresh stanza (as published) is supplied at the end.

"She was nae get o' runted rams
 Wi' woo like gait's, an legs like trams ;
 She was the flow'r o' Fairlie lambs—
 A famous breed !
 Now Robin, greetin, chows the hams,
 O' Mailie dead.

ADDENDA No. II.

THE AUTHOR'S PRIVATE JOURNAL, BEGUN IN
EDINBURGH, 9TH APRIL, 1787.

In proper chronological order appears in our fourth volume as much of this interesting document as we knew to be in existence. At page 213 are quoted Lockhart's words of regret (in 1828) that the poet's journal could "not yet be printed entire, although doubtless another generation will see the whole confession." We there lament "the disappearance of the manuscript, for although fifty years have elapsed since Lockhart penned his remark, the world has seen no more of that Journal than Dr Currie was pleased to present to his readers." Our publisher had advertised for the missing manuscript, and we had made fruitless enquiries about it in the London "Notes and Queries." Consequently we concluded the document to be hopelessly lost.

Not till February of the present year (1879) was the fact announced to us that the missing manuscript has, for upwards of twenty years, been possessed by Mr Alexander Macmillan, publisher, London. That gentleman himself made the announcement to us in a letter in which he explains that until he read our observations about it at page 213, Vol. IV., he had not realized how much of that MS. of Burns was still unused." He intimated his purpose to give the unpublished portions to the public in the pages of Macmillan's Magazine for March, from which we would be welcome to reprint them.

In course of our notes in these volumes we have repeatedly had occasion to refer to a supposed early MS. Common-place Book of Burns spoken of and quoted from by the late Alexander Smith, in the "Golden Treasury" edition of Burns's poems edited by him for Macmillan and Co. in 1865. So little did the author of "A Life Drama" appreciate the manuscript of Burns placed in his hands, that instead of recognising it as the partly unpublished Journal referred to by Lockhart in the terms above cited, he described it as a tattered volume of early scraps, understood to have been presented by the poet to Mrs Dunlop. The MS., he informed his readers, "after being in the hands of several persons, and at each remove denuded of certain pages, came, through Mr Stillie, bookseller, Edinburgh, into the possession of Mr Macmillan." Had Mr Smith's purpose been to blindfold manuscript-hunters, and mislead his readers concerning the identity of the document he professed to give an account of, he could not have penned a more effectual misrepresentation of that interesting autograph volume.

After waiting five tedious months for the fulfilment of Mr Macmillan's promise to print the unpublished portion of Burns's text from his original MS., we are at length enabled, before closing our labours, to lay the full contents of the poet's Edinburgh Journal before our readers.

"EDINR., April ninth, 1787.

"As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down

my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter of his to Mr Palgrave, that 'half a word fixed upon or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection.' I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me; some one to be grave with me; some one to please me and help my discrimination with his or her own remark; and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The World are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them; except where that observation is a sucker or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel writers and the sage philosophy of moralists, if we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship as that one of us may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect man demands from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

"For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my *Confidant*. I will sketch every character that anyway strikes me, to the best of my observation, with unshrinking justice; I will insert anecdotes and take down remarks, in the old law phrase, without feud or favour: where I hit on anything clever, my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and (begging Patroclus' and Achates's pardon) I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

"My own private story likewise, my amours, my rambles, the smiles and frowns of Fortune on my bardship, my poems and fragments that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted,—in short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since Confidence went first to market, or Honesty was set to sale.

"To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship I shall cheerfully and truly make one exception—the connection between two persons of different sex, when their interests are united or absorbed by the sacred tie of Love—

‘When thought meets thought ere from the lips it part,
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.’

There confidence—confidence that exalts them the more in one another’s opinion—confidence that endears them the more to one another’s heart, unreservedly and luxuriantly ‘reigns and revels.’ But this is not my lot; and in my situation, if I am wise (which, by the by I have no great chance of being) my fate should be with the Psalmist’s sparrow ‘to watch alone on the house tops.’ Oh, the pity !!!”

“A FRAGMENT—*Tune ‘Daintie Davie.’*

There was a birkie born in Kyle,
But what na day o’ what na style,
I doubt it’s hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi’ Davie.”*

&c., &c., (See page 131, Vol. I.)

“THERE are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius—nay, avowed worth, is everywhere received with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of Fortune, meets. Imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving that ‘honor to whom honor is due;’ he meets at a great man’s table a Squire Something or a Sir Somebody; he knows the noble landlord at heart gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes beyond any at table perhaps; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow whose abilities would scarcely have made an eight-penny tailor, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice that are forgot to the son of Genius and Poverty?

“The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention—engrossing attention one day to the only blockhead, as there was not but his lordship, the dunderpate and myself, that

* The true date of this composition we hold to be May 1786. He substitutes the name “Davie” for *Robin*, when he inserts it here, as a modest kind of coverture; but his footnote to verse second sufficiently indicates that “Robin” is the name he intends to be sung.

I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand and looked so benevolently good at parting—God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.”

“With Dr Blair I am more at ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*. When he neglects me for the mere carcass of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself with scarcely any emotion—What do I care for him or his pomp either?

“It is not easy forming an exact-judging judgment of any one: but, in my opinion, Dr Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with—his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintances—but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first—the very first rank in prose; even in poesy, a good bard of Nature’s making can only take the *pas* of him. He has a heart, not of the finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is a truly worthy and most respectable character.”*

“MR GREENFIELD is of a superior order. The bleedings of humanity, the generous resolve, a manly disregard of the paltry subjects of vanity, virgin modesty, the truest taste, and a very sound judgment, characterise him. His being the first† speaker I ever

* Dr Blair died 27th December 1800, shortly after Dr. Currie had published the first paragraph of the bard’s character of him. Subsequent editions contained the second paragraph, when the remarks could no longer give offence to the living subject of them.

† We have before noted that the use of the word “first” for *best* or *most excellent*, was a favourite mode of expression with Burns. See page 15 vol. iv.

heard is perhaps half owing to industry. He certainly possesses no small share of poetic abilities; he is a steady, most disinterested friend, without the least affectation of seeming so; and as a companion, his good sense, his joyous hilarity, his sweetness of manners and modesty, are most engagingly charming."

"THE most perfect character I ever saw is Mr Stewart. An exalted judge of the human heart, and of composition. One of the very first public speakers; and equally capable of generosity as humanity. His principal discriminating feature is—from a mixture of benevolence, strength of mind and manly dignity, he not only at heart values, but in his deportment and address bears himself to all the actors, high and low, in the drama of life, simply as they merit in playing their parts.* Wealth, honors, all that is extraneous of the man, have no more influence with him than they will have at the Last Day. His wit, in the hour of social hilarity, proceeds almost to good-natured waggishness; and in telling a story he particularly excels."

"THE next character I shall mention—my worthy bookseller, Mr Creech—is a strange, multiform character. His ruling passions of the left hand kind are—extreme vanity, and something of the more harmless modifications of selfishness. The one, mixed as it often is with great goodness of heart, makes him rush into all public matters, and take every instance of unprotected merit by the hand, provided it is in his power to hand it into public notice; the other quality makes him, amid all the embarrass in which his vanity entangles him, now and then to cast half a squint at his own interest. His parts as a man, his deportment as a gentleman, and his abilities as a scholar, are much above mediocrity. Of all the Edinburgh literati and wits he writes the most like a gentleman. He does not awe you with the profoundness of the philosopher, or strike your eye with the soarings of

* This same high compliment, applied to the same gentleman, and also to Bishop Geddes, occurs at page 302, vol. iv., and is repeated at page 333, vol. v.

genius; but he pleases you with the handsome turn of his expression, and the polite ease of his paragraph. His social demeanour and powers, particularly at his own table, are the most engaging I have ever met with. On the whole he is, as I said before, a multiform, but an exceedingly respectable, worthy character."

Of the five preceding sketches of character, those of Dr Greenfield, Professor Stewart, and Bailie Creech, are here for the first time published in a full edition of the Poet's writings. The very favourable picture here given of the last named gentleman forms a pleasing contrast to the versified sketch of him composed at Ellisland as a portion of "The Poet's Progress." But our variable author's opinion of Creech latterly veered round in his favour again. In January 1789 he wrote of him to Dr Moore in severe terms; but to the same gentleman he thus expressed himself in two months thereafter:—"I must own that at last Creech has been amicable and fair with me."

The foregoing eulogium on Dugald Stewart corresponds with all that Burns has elsewhere uttered in reference to him. His earliest expressed opinion of him occurs in a letter to Dr Mackenzie of Mauchline, thus:—"I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus—four parts Socrates; four parts Nathaniel; and four parts Shakespeare's Brutus."

The first instance of the poet's reference to the Rev. Wm. Greenfield is in a letter addressed to Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, shortly after the bard's first introduction to Edinburgh Society:—"I am got under the patronage of the Duchess of Gordon, Countess Dowager of Glencairn, Sir John Whitefoord, the Dean of Faculty, Professors Blair, Stewart, Greenfield; and several others of the noblesse and literati." He again refers to him while on his Border tour, classing him with Gregory, Tytler, M'Kenzie, and Stewart, in his humorous epistle to Creech:—

"Now worthy Gregory's latin face,
Tytler's and Greenfield's modest grace,
M'Kenzie, Stewart—such a brace
As Rome ne'er saw!"

Again he occurs (but under the fictitious name of “Gould”) in the printed Clarinda correspondence. That lady strove hard to prevail on Burns to attend the Tolbooth Church and listen to the evangelical prelections of her favourite Mr Kemp; as she had, at his request, gone to the High Church to hear his favourite preacher, Mr Greenfield. On 6th Feb. 1788, she thus wrote:—“I wish you vastly to hear my valued friend Mr Kemp. Come to hear him on Sunday, ‘tis the first favour I have asked you: I expect you’ll not refuse me. Your favourite Mr G——, 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.” Clarinda, also writing to Burns in 1791, asked him if he had seen Greenfield’s poems.

The Rev. Wm. Greenfield, A.M., was Professor of Rhetoric in the University of Edinburgh, and also one of the ministers of St Andrew’s Church there, when Burns first arrived in Edinburgh. In February thereafter he was presented to the High Church as colleague of Dr Hugh Blair; and thus it was of Greenfield that Burns unpolitely expressed his decided preference as a preacher when, in the house of Dr Blair the question was asked, at which of the public places in Edinburgh he had received the greatest gratification. We find an incidental mention of the wife of this rhetorician in the poet’s Highland tour on 14th September 1787. He is at Dundee, where he breakfasts with the Misses Scott, and dines with Mr Anderson their brother-in-law. Burns makes this entry:—“Miss Bess Scott like Mrs Greenfield—my Bardship almost in love with her.” Mr Greenfield was appointed Almoner to the King, in connection with the Chapel-royal, in March 1789; the degree of D.D. was conferred on him by the University of Edinburgh on 31st March 1796, and on 19th May thereafter he was unanimously chosen Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. At the opening of that Assembly in May 1797 he preached a sermon which was ordered to be printed. Burns did not live to

see the hour of that bright star's obscuration when, in December 1798, like Lucifer, he fell from the peak of heaven. Suddenly he demitted his charge on the 20th of that month, and fled from Scotland. The presbytery of Edinburgh met on the 26th, and after formally deposing him from the ministry, laid him under the sentence of excommunication. On the 31st of same month, he was degraded from his University degrees of A.M. and D.D., and thereafter the name of Greenfield was never uttered in Edinburgh except in a whisper. It is known that he resided in privacy in the North of England under a fictitious name, and died there on 28th April 1827 : his wife survived him only two months, and one of his sons having been bred to the Bar in Edinburgh under the *assumed* family name, ultimately became a distinguished Lord of Session. The *quondam* Professor of Rhetoric, from his place of exile, issued an anonymous volume entitled, "Essays on the Sources of the Pleasures received from Literary Compositions"—Lond. 1809. We cannot inform the reader of the causes which led to his downfall: our facts are derived from Scott's *Fasti*, where we are told that the ecclesiastical authority which deposed and excommunicated him did so because of "certain flagrant reports concerning his conduct which his desertion seemed to preclude the Presbytery from considering as groundless."*

All the preceding entries in the poet's Journal seem to have been made prior to his leaving Edinburgh on his Border tour on 5th May 1787. What immediately follows may have been suggested to him about the end of June of the same year, in a visit he is supposed to have made to Greenock, in course of his brief tour in the West Highlands.

"The following poem is the work of some hapless unknown son of the Muses who deserved a better fate. There is a great

* It may be interesting here to note that the Rev. Wm. Greenfield's name is in the subscribers' list for two copies of the author's edition of 1787; and in 1796 he subscribed one guinea for behoof of the deceased poet's widow and family. Professor Stewart in 1787, subscribed for four copies of the poems, and in 1796 for three guineas to the charitable fund. Dr Hugh Blair in 1787, subscribed for one copy of the poems, and gave nothing for the bard's widow and family in 1796. Creech subscribed for 500 copies of the poems in 1787, and in 1796 gave five guineas to the relief fund referred to.

deal of ‘The Voice of Cona’ in his solitary, mournful notes; and had the sentiments been clothed in Shenstone’s language they would have been no discredit even to that elegant poet.

E L E G Y.

Straight is the spot and green the sod
From whence my sorrows flow;
And soundly rests the ever dear
Inhabitant below,” etc.

See page 77, Vol. II..

“ ELLISLAND, 14th June 1788—*Sunday.**

“ This is now the third day 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! If legendary stories be true, 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 learn’d 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;’

but a wife and children—in poetics, ‘the fair partner of my soul, and the little dear pledges of our mutual love’—these bind me to struggle with the stream, till some chopping squall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness drive it a wreck. Farewell now to those gilded follies, those garnished vices which, though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of Wit and Humour, 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

* Error in date, Sunday was the 15th.

is naught, and the ground barren ;' and nothing short of a supernaturally gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

"Wedlock, the circumstance that buckles me hardest to Care—if virtue and religion were to be anything with me but mere names—was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on; in the present case it was unavoidably necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest vanity 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. I can fancy, *how*, but have never seen *where*, I could have made it better. Come then, let me return to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young—

‘ on Reason build Resolve,
That column of true majesty in man.’ ”

"June 16th, 1788. Copy of a letter to Lord Buchan in answer to a bombast epistle he sent me when I went first to Edinburgh." (See page 197, Vol. IV.)

"To the Earl of Eglinton on receiving Ten Guineas as his Lordship's subscription money." (See page 188, Vol. IV.)

"WRITTEN IN CARSE HERMITAGE."

(See page 157, Vol. II.)

"ALTERATION OF THE LINES WROTE IN CARSE HERMITAGE.

December 23d, 1788." (See page 178, Vol. II.)

In our remarks on this poem at page 180, Vol. II., we have made the statement that the author engraved the opening eight, and the closing two lines on a pane of glass in the Hermitage.

Our authority for that statement is the description contained in Storer and Greig's *Views illustrative of the Works of Burns*, 1805. The identical pane inscribed in the bard's holograph, is now the property of Archibald Fullarton, Esq., publisher, Edinburgh; through whose kindness we are enabled here to annex an accurate copy of the inscription, which in fact embraces the complete poem, except these four lines—the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th from the end:—

“Follies past give thou to air;
Make their consequence thy care:
Keep the name of Man in mind,
And dishonor not thy kind.”

The above lines are included in the copy inscribed in the author's Journal.

“Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these maxims on thy soul:—
“Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from Night, in darkness lost :
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will always lour.
Happiness is but a name,
Make content and ease thy aim.
Ambition is a meteor gleam,
Fame an idle, airy dream :
Pleasures—insects on the wing
Round Peace, the tenderest flower in spring;
Those that sip the dew alone—
Make the butterflies thy own;
Those that would the bloom devour—
Crush the locusts, save the flower.
For the Future be prepared.
Guard wherever thou canst guard ;
But, thy utmost duly done,
Welcome what thou canst not shun.
Reverence, with lowly heart,
Him whose wondrous work thou art :
Keep His goodness still in view,
Thy trust and thy example too.
“Stranger, go ! Heaven be thy guide !
Quod the Bedesman of Nidside.”

The interesting relic of Burns referred to was purchased at a sale of the effects of a married daughter of Dr Smith, R.N., who acquired the mansion-house and grounds of Friar's Carse from the Riddell family in 1794. Dr Smith's death must have occurred a year or two before Cromek's visit to the locality in 1807. That editor was "shocked to find the Hermitage almost gone to decay, the inscribed pane of glass removed, the floor covered with straw, the door thrown open, and the trees broken and trampled down by cattle." The daughter of Dr Smith, who possessed the relic, resided and died in Lasswade, near Edinburgh.

VERSICLES ON SIGN-POSTS.

(See page 187, Vol. II.)

"TO ROBT. GRAHAM, OF FINTRY, ESQ.,

With a request for an Excise Division.—Ellisland, Sep. 8, 1788."

(See page 164, Vol. II.)

"O bitter mockery of the pompous bier,

While down the wretched VITAL-PART is driven !

The cave-lodged beggar, with a conscience clear,

Expires in rags, unknown, and goes to Heaven."

(See page 190, Vol. II.)

"CASTLE GORDON.

Intended to be sung to the tune 'Morag,'

Streams that glide in orient plains," &c.

(See page 100, Vol. II.)

"SCOTS BALLAD.

Tune—' Mary weep no more for me.'

My heart is wae and unco wae

To think upon the raging sea," &c.

(See page 104, Vol. II.)

“SONG.

Tune—‘Captain O’Kean.’

The small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,” &c.
(See page 150, Vol. II.)

“EXTEMPORE—TO MR GAVIN HAMILTON.

To you, sir, this summons I’ve sent,
Pray whip till the pownie is fraething,
But if you demand what I want,
I honestly answer you—naething.”
(See page 335, Vol. I.)

“TO THE NIGHTINGALE—ON LEAVING E. C., 1784.

BY MRS DR HUNTER, LONDON.

‘Why from these shades, sweet bird of eve,
Art thou to other regions wildly fled?’ &c.”

“A SONNET IN THE MANNER OF PETRARCH.

BY THE SAME.

‘Come tender thoughts with twilight’s pensive gloom,
Softten remembrance, mitigate despair.’”

“ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE—SPRING.

Inhuman man ! curse on thy barb’rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye ;” &c.

See page 214, Vol. II.

“TO MR GRAHAM OF FINTRY,
On being appointed to my Excise Division.

I call no goddess to inspire my strains,” etc.
(See page 244, Vol. II.)

“SONG.

Tune—‘Ewe bughts, Marion.’
 Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
 And leave old Scotia’s shore ?” etc.

(See page 294, Vol. I.)

“ELEGY ON CAPT. MATTHEW HENDERSON,

A Gentleman who held the patent for his honors immediately
 from Almighty God.

O Death, thou tyrant fell and bloody !” etc.

(See page 305, Vol. II.)

“EPITAPH ON ROBERT FERGUSSON.

No pageant bearings here, nor pompous lay,
 No storied urn nor animated bust,” etc.

(See page 50, Vol. II.)

“TO THE HONORABLE THE BAILIES OF THE
 CANONGATE, EDINBURGH.

GENTLEMEN,—I am sorry to be told that the remains,” etc.

(See page 202, Vol. IV.)

ADDENDA, No. III.

LETTER FROM BURNS TO ROBERT CLEGHORN,
 FARMER, SAUGHTON MILLS, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.**)

ELLISLAND, near DUMFRIES, 23rd Jan. 1789.

I MUST take shame and confusion of face to myself, my Dear Friend and Brother Farmer, that I have not written you much sooner. The truth is, I have been so tossed about between Ayr-

* From the poet’s autograph in possession of A. C. Lamb, Esq., Dundee.

shire and Nithsdale that, till now I have got my family here, I have had time to think of nothing except now and then a distich or stanza as I rode along. Were it not for our gracious Monarch's cursed tax of postage, I had sent you one or two pieces of some length that I have lately done. I have no idea of the *Press*. I am more able to support myself and family, though in a humble, yet an independent way ; and I mean, just at my leisure, to pay my court to the tuneful Sisters, in hopes that they may one day enable me to carry on a Work of some importance. The following are a few verses I wrote in a neighbouring Gentleman's *Hermitage*, to which he is so good as let me have a key.

WRITTEN IN FRIARS' CARSE HERMITAGE, 1788.

(See p. 197, Vol. V., also p. 178, Vol. II.)

I SHALL be in Edinburgh for a few days, sometime about latter end of February or beginning of March, when I will shew you my other pieces. My farming scheme too—particularly the management of one, inclusive of Holming land—is to be decided by your superior judgment. I find, if my farm does well with me, I shall certainly be an enthusiast in the business. R. B.

LETTER FROM BURNS TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM,
ESQ., WRITER, EDINBURGH.

(*Here first published.*)*

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM—To-morrow, or some day soon, I will write you as entertaining a letter as I can ; in the meantime take a scrawl of very serious business. You remember Mr Clarke, Master of the Grammar School at Moffat, whom I formerly recommended to your good offices : the crisis of his fate is just at hand.† Mr M'Murdo of Drumlanrig, Ferguson of Craigdarroch, and Riddel of Glen-

* From the poet's holograph in the possession of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq., Edinburgh.

† See the poet's letters to Clarke at pp. 9 and 14 of present volume.

riddel, gentlemen who know Clarke personally and intimately, have strained and are straining every nerve to serve him, but alas ! poor Clarke's foes are mighty ! Lord Hopetoun, spurred on by those infernal creatures that always go between a great Man and his inferiors, has sworn his destruction ; irritated as he justly is that any Plebeian, and the son of a Plebeian, should dare to oppose *existence*—a trifling affair, against his Lordship's high and mighty will. What I know, and *you* know that I would do for a friend of yours, I ask of you for a friend—a much esteemed friend of mine. Get the Principal's interest in his favour.* Be not denied ! To interpose between lordly cruelty and helpless merit is a task worthy of you to ask, and him to execute. In the meantime, if you meet with Craigdarroch, or chance to wait on him (by the bye, I wish you would mention this very business), he will inform you of the great merits of one party, and the demerits of the other.

You shall hear from me soon. God bless you !

ROB^T. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, 5th Feb. 1792.

LETTER FROM BURNS TO JOHN M'MURDO,
ESQ., DRUMLANRIG.

(*Here first published.*)

DUMFRIES, [July 1793.]

SIR—There is a beautiful, simple little Scots air, which Mr Clarke tells me has the good fortune to meet your approbation, and which he says he has taught to your young ladies, together with the rudiments of a Song which I intended to suit the tune.[†]

* Principal Robertson, the historian, was Cunningham's uncle.

† Page 255, *supra*.

That Ballad I enclose finished and, in my own opinion, in my best style; and I now beg leave to present to Miss M'Murdo the composition, as I think I have made it worthy, in some degree, of the subject. She I, from the beginning, meant for the Heroine of it.

Sincere respect, Sir, even from those who can bestow nothing else, or who are themselves of no consequence as folk of the world—such respect and tribute of the heart is an offering grateful to every mind. You know that it is a tribute I never pay but in the willing ardour of my soul. Kings give Coronets—alas! I can only bestow a Ballad. Still, however, I proudly claim one superiority even over Monarchs; my presents, so far as I am a Poet, are the presents of Genius; and as the gifts of R. Burns, they are the gifts of respectful gratitude to the Worthy. I assure you I am not a little flattered with the idea when I anticipate children pointing out in future publications the tributes of respect I have bestowed on their Mothers. The merits of the Scots airs to which many of my Songs are—and more will be—set, give me this pleasing hope.

You I believe are a subscriber to that splendid edition of Scots Musie in which Pleyel presides over the musical department. In a future number of that Work (the first number is already published) this Ballad will probably appear. I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged, humble serv^t. ROB^T. BURNS.

ADDENDA, No. IV.

MEMORANDA CONCERNING THE CHILDREN OF BURNS, AND THEIR DESCENDANTS; WITH LIKE INFORMATION OF HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS, AND THEIR DESCENDANTS.

At page 2 of Vol. IV. is given a genealogical table of the poet's immediate ancestry, and at page 33 of same volume will be found the names and birth-record of each member of his father's house-

hold. These we now supplement with similar information, lineal and collateral, reaching down to the present time.*

The poet's father, as we have seen, died at Lochlie in Tarbolton parish, Ayrshire, on 13th February 1784. His mother, Agnes Brown, or Burnes, continued to reside with her son Gilbert during her widowhood of thirty-six years, and died at Grant's Braes, East Lothian, on 14th January 1820, in her 88th year.

JEAN ARMOUR or BURNS, widow of the poet, continued for thirty-eight years to live at Dumfries, in the same house in which her husband died. Her death happened on 26th March 1834, when she was sixty-nine years old, and her remains were interred in the poet's mausoleum. The children of the marriage, who survived mere infancy, were as follows:—

1. Robert, born 3 Sept. 1786, died 14 May 1857.
2. Francis Wallace, 18 Aug. 1789, 9 July 1803.
3. William Nicol, 9 April 1791, 21 Feb. 1872.
4. Elizabeth Riddell, 21 Nov. 1792, Sept. 1795.
5. James Glencairn, 12 Aug. 1794, 18 Nov. 1865.
6. Maxwell, 25 July 1796, 25 April 1799.

(1.) ROBERT BURNS, junior.—He left the Grammar School of Dumfries in 1800, and attended the University of Edinburgh during two sessions. His third session was passed in the University of Glasgow; after which he proceeded to London, and entered on employment in the Stamp Office, Somerset House. At the age of 22 he married Anne Sherwood, and the only surviving issue of the marriage was ELIZA BURNS, born in 1812, who married, in 1834, Bartholomew Jones Everitt, an assistant surgeon in the East India Company's service, who survived only till 1840. The only surviving issue of that marriage was MARTHA BURNS EVERITT, who continued to reside with her mother in Belfast, in Ayr, and in Bath, until the death of the latter, which event happened so recently as on 11 December 1878. Miss Everitt, who bears considerable resemblance to her great-grandfather the poet, is unmarried. By direct descent, she is the nearest lineal representative of Burns.

Her grandfather, Robert Burns, junior, retired in 1833 from

* For some of the information conveyed in these notes, we cheerfully acknowledge our indebtedness to Dr Charles Roger's "Genealogical Memoirs of the Family of Robert Burns," 1877.

his post in the Stamp Office on a small annuity, and removed to Dumfries (where he resided for the remainder of his life), just one year before the death of his mother.* Both while in London and during his retirement he added to his finances by giving instruction in mathematics and in the classics. Possessing warm passions like his father, he did not, by “prudent, cautious, self-control,” do much to resist the temptations of the metropolis and elsewhere.

* A series of letters from Robert Burns, junior, while in London, and prior to his marriage, addressed to his uncle Gilbert and other Trustees of the family, is possessed by the publisher of these volumes. They exhibit the “Laird” as in constant hot-water in consequence of his expenditure being on a larger scale than his income. The following is worth recording here as a characteristic effusion, and quite in keeping with what one would expect from a son of his father :—

ROBERT BURNS, JUN., TO DR. MAXWELL, DUMFRIES.

LONDON, *Sep. 2, 1805.*

SIR,—My thoughts have been long employed in the channel you mentioned in your very obliging letter. I have constantly, since I came to London, been thinking of turning the liberal education I have received to some honourable and profitable employment, convinced that upon my own exertions alone I must ultimately rely. The patronage of Mr Shaw, and indeed of any great man, is but a slippery dependance at best. His notice of our family in particular is merely the offspring of ostentation ; he was anxious to exhibit himself to the world as the generous and disinterested protector of Robert Burns’s children, well knowing that whatever he did in their behalf would be marked with the applause of the public for the sake of their unfortunate father.

At any rate, as the present administration is evidently tottering, his influence and the influence of his friends will soon be at an end ; and then I shall only advance in the Office by the slow progress of seniority. Indeed I cannot help feeling indignant at being set at his table to be gazed at by a set of worshipping sycophants as his protégé—as the humble dependant upon his bounty ; and having my ears eternally tortured with oblique insinuations of the great obligations I owe him.

I have not yet seen Mr Mayne ; I shall very willingly embrace whatever may seem most eligible to him and to you. Reviewing is an employment I should like much better than any other I know of ; but I greatly distrust my own abilities. As for a room and fire and candle, they are not necessary. Make me an annual subscriber to the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street. There I have the privilege of elegant rooms, an excellent library, and every accommodation for reading and transcribing from nine in the morning till eleven in the evening. Also, in winter and summer, there are courses of lectures on the different branches of Physics and Belleslettres and Morals, all of which my ticket entitles me to. The annual subscription is £6, 6s.—I am, with respect and gratitude, yours

ROBERT BURNS.

As the eldest son of the Burns family, he was in the home-circle usually styled "The Laird;" and being very near-sighted, and at same time rather absent-minded, his peculiarities occasionally gave rise to excusable jokes at his expense. His wife died about two years after his return to Dumfries, and was buried in the mausoleum, although no tablet is there recording that fact. Strange to say, while separate marble entablatures are erected for Colonel William Nicol Burns, and Lieut.-Colonel James G. Burns and their families, there exists no similar memorial of "The Laird" and his own connexions. Down in the vault, however, over the coffin of each principal sleeper, the names are thus inscribed on the wall:—

ROBERT BURNS.

R. BURNS, JUN. JEAN ARMOUR.

SKULL.

J. G. BURNS. W. N. BURNS.

(3.) WILLIAM NICOL BURNS:—He seems to have received all his education at the Dumfries Grammar School. At the age of fifteen he sailed to the East Indies as a midshipman, and in 1811 was appointed to a cadetship. After thirty-three years service as an officer of the 7th Madras Infantry, of which regiment he ultimately was Lieut. Colonel, he retired and returned to Britain in 1843. He took up his abode with his brother James at Cheltenham, and in 1855 became Colonel by brevet. He had in 1822 married Catherine A. Crone, in India; but she died there in 1841, without issue; Colonel Burns survived till 21 Feb. 1872, and was buried in the Dumfries Mausoleum.

On 6 Aug. 1844, Lieut. Colonel William Burns was entertained, along with his brother Major James Glencairn Burns, and other relations of the poet, at a great festival near the Monument in the neighbourhood of Alloway Kirk. On the occasion of the Burns centenary, 1859, he dined with the Dumfries Burns Club in the Assembly Rooms, while his brother was similarly engaged in the City Hall, Glasgow.

(5.) JAMES GLENCAIRN BURNS.—His early education was obtained at the Dumfries Grammar School, whence he was removed to London to fill a presentation which had been obtained for him as a foundationer of Christ's Hospital there. In June 1811 he was appointed to a cadetship in the East India Company's service. In Calcutta he joined the 15th Regiment of Bengal Native

Infantry. As Captain Burns, he visited Britain in 1831, and was entertained by Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford. Returning to India in 1833, he was appointed Judge and Collector of Cachar. He finally returned to Britain in 1839 with the rank of Major, and resided in London till 1843 when he arranged to live at Cheltenham with his brother, then just retired from service. He obtained the brevet rank of Lieut.-Colonel in 1855, which date he survived ten years, and his remains were consigned to the vault of the Mausoleum in Dumfries. By his first marriage to Sarah Robinson in 1818, who died in 1821, he had only one child who reached maturity, SARAH BURNS, born 2 Nov. 1821. By a second marriage to Mary Beckett in 1828, who died in 1844, he had one daughter, ANNE BECKET BURNS, born 7th Sep. 1830, who still survives unmarried, in Cheltenham.

SARAH BURNS or HUTCHINSON, who still survives, was married in 1847 to Dr Berkeley W. Hutchinson, a native of Galway in Ireland. Their family consist of ROBERT BURNS HUTCHINSON, and three daughters, ANNIE, VIOLET, and MARGARET. Robert Burns Hutchinson is thus the only legitimate male descendant of the poet. He also was reared in Christ's Hospital, London. So recently as in December 1877 he sailed for Assam to engage in trade as a Tea Planter.

THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF ROBERT BURNS.

2. Gilbert, .	born 28th Sep. 1760.	.	Died 8th April 1827.
3. Agnes, .	„ 30th Sep. 1762.	.	„ „ 1834.
4. Annabella, .	„ 14th Nov. 1764.	.	„ 2nd March 1832.
5. William, .	„ 30th July 1767.	.	„ 24th July 1790.
6. John, .	„ 10th July 1769.	.	„ „ 1783.
7. Isabella, .	„ 27th June 1771.	.	„ 4th Dec. 1858.

GILBERT BURNS.—The reader of the poet's biography is familiar with the history of his surviving brother during the days of his youth and early manhood. On 21st June 1791, while the poet was still at Ellisland, Gilbert married Miss Jean Breckenridge, born in Kilmarnock 6th Feb. 1764: by her he had six sons and five daughters. The father of Gilbert's wife was connected through marriage to Sir James Shaw, Lord Mayor and Chamber-

lain of the city of London, which connection afterwards became of essential service to the poet's family. He continued to be farmer of Mossiel till Whitsunday 1798, when he obtained a lease of the farm of Dinning in Nithsdale from Mr Menteith of Closeburn. That farm he continued to possess till 1810; but having in 1804 accepted from Lord Blantyre the factorship of his East Lothian estates, he established his residence at Grant's Braes, near Lethlington, and left the farm of Dinning under the charge of John Begg, husband of his sister Isabella. Gilbert devoted much of his time as one of the trustees for his brother's family, in arranging the Poet's manuscripts and communicating with Dr Currie concerning his biography and edition of the works of Burns. Mrs Dunlop was so much pleased with his services in these matters that in 1800, she entrusted him with the charge of her farm of Morham Mains, in East Lothian, besides recommending him to Lord Blantyre to be his factor in the same county. He thus obtained a free house from Lord Blantyre with a salary of £100, afterwards raised to £140 per annum. In 1820 he was paid by Messrs Cadell & Davies, publishers, London, £500 for superintending an edition of Dr Currie's life and works of his brother, and thereby was enabled to pay off any balance of the £180 pounds lent to him by the poet in 1788. Gilbert Burns died at Grant's Braes, 8th April 1827, and was buried in the churchyard of Bolton, where his family tombstone also records the death and burial of his mother, and five of his children who predeceased him. There also his unmarried sister Annabella was interred in 1832. Gilbert's wife died in the house of her son James, at Erskine in Renfrewshire, on 30th Sept. 1841, and was buried in the churchyard there.

(3.) AGNES BURNS.—In 1804, when she was 42 years old, married William Galt, a farm employé at Gilbert's farm of Dinning. Ultimately Mr Galt was appointed Land Steward to M. Fortesene, Esq., on his estate in the north of Ireland. Mrs Galt died without issue at Stephenstown, county Louth, in 1834, and her husband survived till March 1847.

(4.) ANNABELLA BURNS.—She was fated to live and die a spinster, residing always with her mother in the house of her brother Gilbert, the latter of whom she survived only five

years. She died 2nd March 1832, and was buried in Bolton churchyard.

(5.) WILLIAM BURNS.—The quiet career and affecting death of this amiable youth has been sufficiently traced in Volume V. of the present work. He was cut off by a malignant fever in London on 24th July 1790, and was buried in St Paul's churchyard.

(6.) JOHN BURNES.—There is only one incidental notice of this youngest brother of the poet. It occurs in Gilbert's account of the composition of "The death and dying words of poor Maillie," when he classes it as an early composition prior to 1784, and tells us that the circumstance of the poor sheep being found nearly strangled in its tether, occurred on the farm of Lochlie about mid-day, when "Robert and I were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us." He appears to have died in 1783, about a year before the death of his father. Mrs Begg believed his remains were carried to Kirk Alloway for interment; and when her own remains were laid there in 1858, the gravedigger is said to have unearthed the bones of the boy John along with those of the father.

(7.) ISABELLA BURNS.—She was, on 9th December 1793 (at the age of 22) married to John Begg, who afterwards was employed by Gilbert to superintend his farm of Dinning in Closeburn parish, Nithsdale, from 1804 to 1810. Thereafter Mr Begg was Land Steward on Mr Hope Vere's estate of Blackwood, Lanarkshire, where he was accidentally killed, his horse rearing and falling upon him on 24th April 1813.

Mrs Begg thereafter during many years of her long widowhood managed to support herself and the younger branches of her family by teaching. She resided successively at Ormiston and Tranent in East Lothian till June 1843, when she removed with her two daughters Agnes and Isabella to Bridge House near Ayr. Her death occurred there on 4th December 1858, in the midst of the preparations for celebrating the centenary of her brother's birth, and her remains were interred in her father's grave at Kirk Alloway.

CHILDREN OF BURNS'S BROTHER GILBERT.

1. William, . . .	born 15 May 1792.	. . .	Still alive at Portarlington.
2. James, . . .	14 April 1794.	. . .	Died 22nd June 1847.
3. Thomas, . . .	10 April 1796.	. . .	23rd Jan. 1871.
4. Robert, . . .	22 Nov. 1797.	. . .	in 1839 in S. America.
5. Janet, . . .	23 May 1799.	. . .	30th Oct. 1816.
6. Agnes, . . .	16 Nov. 1800.	. . .	14th Sep. 1815.
7. John, . . .	6 July 1802.	. . .	26th Feb. 1827.*
8. Gilbert, . . .	24 Dec. 1803.	. . .	Still alive in Dublin.
9. Anne, . . .	12 Sep. 1805.	. . .	Still alive . . .
10. Jean, . . .	8 June 1807.	. . .	Died 4th Jan. 1827.
11. Isabella, . . .	17 May 1809.	. . .	3rd July 1815.

CHILDREN OF BURNS'S SISTER, MRS BEGG.

1. William . . .	born 29 July 1794.	Died 15 May 1864, in Canada.
2. John . . .	, 27 April 1796.	, 11 Oct. 1867, in Kilmarnock.
3. Robert Burns ,	, 1798.	, 25 July 1876, in Kinross.
4. Agnes Brown ,	17 April 1800.	Survives at Bridgehouse, Ayr.
5. Gilbert ,	16 Feb. 1802.	Survives—a retired seaman.
6. Jane Breckenridge ,	16 April 1804.	Died 7 July 1822, unmarried.
7. Isabella Burns ,	27 April 1806.	Survives at Bridgehouse, Ayr.
8. James Hope . . .	2 Feb. 1809.	Died 2 Nov. 1840, at Chusan.
9. Edward Hamilton ,	12 Aug. 1811.	, 2 May 1824.

Of the above named, the second son, JOHN BEGG, who married Agnes Wilson in 1817, had five sons and two daughters, some of their descendants are now in New South Wales.

The third son, ROBERT BURNS BEGG, after being educated at Wallace Hall Academy, Dumfriesshire, became a teacher, first at Bent, then at Dalmeny, and thereafter as parish teacher of Kinross, which latter office he held for more than half a century. In 1825, he married Grace Beveridge, by whom he had seven sons and three daughters.

Much interest has been taken in the two unmarried daughters

* Lockhart in 1828 thus wrote in his *Life of Burns*:—"The interest excited in behalf of Gilbert Burns by the account of his personal character contained in Currie's Memoir proved of the highest advantage to him. He trained up a large family, and bestowed on all his boys what is called a classical education. The untimely death of one of these [John], a young man of very promising talents, when on the eve of being admitted to holy orders, is supposed to have hastened the departure of the venerable parent."

of Mrs Begg, who have continued to reside at Bridgehouse since their mother's death in 1858. Mainly through the kind exertions of Thomas Carlyle, Richard Monckton Milnes, now Lord Houghton, and Robert Chambers, Mrs Begg obtained in 1842 a pension from Government of £20 per annum with reversion of £10 to each of the daughters. Mr Carlyle in announcing that to Mrs Begg in a letter dated 7 June 1842, thus concluded:—"Properly, however, you do not owe this to anybody but to your own illustrious Brother, whose noble life—wasted tragically away—pleads now aloud to men of every rank and place for some humanity to his last surviving sister. May God give you all good of this gift, and make it really useful to you! You need not answer this letter; it is a mere luxury that I give myself in writing it.

T. CARLYLE."

It is right to record here that Messrs William & Robert Chambers bestowed on Mrs Begg the profits which flowed from the publication of their important edition, 1851-52, of the Life and Works of Burns. Between the interest consequent on the death of Mrs Begg and the excitement caused by the preparations for the approaching centenary celebration of 25 January 1859, a project was set afoot to raise about £1000, with the view of purchasing small annuities for the Misses Begg. Thomas Carlyle again lent his services by addressing the following letter to the editor of the *Ayr Advertiser* :—

"CHELSEA, 2 Jan. 1859.

DEAR SIR,—I very much approve your and Mr Milnes's notion about the Misses Begg, and I hope you will not fail to get your plan executed with all the energy and skill that are possible, and with corresponding success. Could all the eloquence that will be uttered over the world on the 25th inst., or even all the tavern bills that will be incurred but convert themselves into solid cash for these two interesting persons, what a sum were there of benefit received, and of loss avoided to all parties concerned!—serving indigent merit on the one hand, and saving, on the other hand, what is too truly a frightful (though eloquent) expenditure of *pavement* to a certain *locality* we have all heard of! In much haste, I remain yours truly,

T. CARLYLE."

The subscription on this occasion realized . . . £1072 15 8
 which was distributed as follows:—

Two annuities of £20 each, for the

Misses Begg, cost . . . £540 0 0

A sum of £50 was voted to Mrs
 Elizabeth Thomson of Crossmaloof,
 Pollokshaws, a natural daughter
 of Burns,

50 0 0

The balance in form of a Bank De-
 positor Receipt in the joint names of
 Agnes and Isabella Begg was
 handed to them

482 15 8

£1072 15 8

The two annuity bonds and the deposit receipt were transmitted
 to the beneficiaries by the Rev. William Buchanan, Secretary of
 the Subscription Committee, on 20th Jan. 1860.

GRANDCHILDREN OF MRS BEGG.

JOHN BEGG, the eldest son of Robert Burns Begg and Grace
 Beveridge, died on 28 Sept. 1878. He was manager and one
 of the owners of Kinneil Ironworks, Linlithgow. He was twice
 married, and has left a numerous family.

ROBERT BURNS BEGG, fourth son of Robert Burns Begg and
 Grace Beveridge, was born 1 May 1833, and is now in good
 practice as a Solicitor in Kinross. He has been twice married
 and has a numerous family. *X*

We have not space to follow the remaining eight children of
 this branch.

THE POET'S ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND THEIR DESCENDANTS.*

(1.) ELIZABETH, commonly called "Betty Burns," the daughter
 of Elizabeth Paton, in Largieside, was born in November 1784.

* In order to prevent a mistake under this heading, it seems proper to
 note here that a person familiarly known as "a grandson of Burns the
 poet," died in Moorhead's Hospital, Dumfries, in July 1879. He was a

She was tenderly reared and educated at Mossgiel, under the charge of Gilbert and his mother, and on arriving at her majority she received £200 as a marriage-portion out of a fund which had been subscribed in London, under the fostering efforts of Mr Alderman Shaw. She became the wife of John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, and after bearing several children, died at the early age of thirty-two, and was buried in the old churchyard of Whitburn. A monument there in the shape of an ornamental cast-iron slab records that it was erected "In affectionate regard to the memory of Elizabeth Burns, spouse of John Bishop, of Polkemmet, who died January 8, 1817, aged 32 years; and of his daughter Mary Lyon, who died 26th April 1817, aged 1 year and 11 months."

On the occasion of the poet's centenary celebration on 25th January 1859, "Thomas Bishop, Esq., (great-grandson of the poet)" was one of six hundred gentlemen who dined in the Merchant's Hall, Glasgow. *See Centenary Chronicle* p. 59.

(2.) ELIZABETH BURNS, daughter of Ann Park, a niece of Mrs Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern, Dumfries, was born 31st March 1791. In consequence of the early death of the mother, she was nursed and brought up by Mrs Burns, in family with her own children. On reaching the years of majority she also received the sum of £200 as a marriage-portion, provided as above explained. She married with the approval of Mrs Burns, John Thomson, a retired soldier, who worked at the trade of weaving, and who resided in Pollockshaws near Glasgow.

She bore him a family as follows :

1. Jean Armour Thomson.	4. James Thomson.
2. Robert Burns Thomson.	5. Eliza Thomson.
3. Agnes Thomson.	6. Sarah Thomson.
7. Maggie Thomson.	

At the Poet's Centenary celebration in 1859, Robert Burns Thomson and his brother James Thomson, sat on each side of

natural son of Robert Burns, jun., referred to as "The Laird" at page 407 *supra*. His father named him Robert Burns, and sent him to a trade, which he abandoned and became a schoolmaster. He married a teacher's daughter named Mary Campbell, who predeceased him, and has left a son, also a namesake of the bard.

the Chairman, Mr Hugh Macdonald, in the King's Arms Hall, Glasgow. In course of the evening Robert Burns Thomson, by request, sang his grandfather's "Bruce's Address at Bannockburn." *See Centenary Chronicle*, p. 81. We have seen excellent verses by Robert Burns Thomson, arranged and set to music by himself. Agnes became Mrs Watson, Eliza became Mrs M'Lellan ; and so recently as the beginning of the month on which we pen these notes, we observed the following paragraph in the *Scotsman*, 4th June 1879.

"POLLOCKSHAWS—An interesting local event took place yesterday at Crossmalloof, Pollockshaws, where Miss M. Thomson [*Maggie*, we presume] daughter of Betty Burns, and granddaughter of the poet, was married to Mr David Wingate, the well-known Scotch poet."

In 1859, a subscription was raised for Mrs Thomson's behoof in Glasgow and neighbourhood, which together with £50 voted by the Begg fund, as above noted, amounted to £263, 13s. 9d. This was invested with the City Corporation Water Company at 4 per cent. interest, and her Trustees were enabled to pay her therefrom £30 per annum till her death on 13th June 1873.

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Mrs Dunlop,	42	John Ballantine,	7
Mrs Riddell,	18	Richard Brown,	7
Peter Hill,	16	Gavin Hamilton,	7
Robert Ainslie,	15	John M'Murdo,	7
Alex. Cunningham,	14	Robert Muir,	7
James Johnson,	13	William Nicol,	6
R. Graham of Fintry,	11	4 persons, 5 letters to each,	20
Miss Chalmers,	11	4 " 4 "	16
James Burness,	10	12 " 3 "	36
Robt. Cleghorn,	9	27 " 2 "	54
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