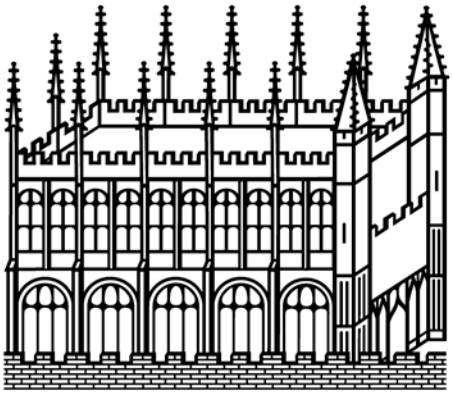

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LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH.

NOVEMBER 1786—FEBRUARY 1788.

BURNS was ready on the day fixed upon to set out for Edinburgh —a journey of about sixty miles. Dr Currie states that he travelled on foot; but it appears from a note of correction which had been sent by Gilbert Burns to the biographer,[1] but never made use of, that the poet was in reality carried by a pony which he had borrowed from a friend. This statement comports with an anecdote respecting the poet's journey which has been given to the world by Mr Archibald Prentice, lately editor of the *Manchester Times*. It appears that, through an Ayrshire friend, George Reid of Barquharry, Burns had been made acquainted with Mr Prentice's father, the farmer of Covington-Mains in Lanarkshire—a zealous admirer of his poetry, as is amply testified by his name being set down in the list of subscribers for the second edition for *twenty copies*. According to Mr Prentice[2]— 'It was arranged by Mr Reid that Burns should, on his journey to Edinburgh, make the farm-house at Covington-Mains his restingplace on the first night. All the farmers in the parish had read with delight the poet's then published works, and were anxious to see him. They were all asked to meet him at a late

[1] Life of Dr Currie, by his son, 2 vols.
[2] Letter of Mr Prentice to Professor Wilson, dated March 8, 1841, and published in the *Edinburgh Intelligencer* newspaper.

dinner, and the signal of his arrival was to be a white sheet attached to a pitchfork, and put on the top of a corn-stack in the barn-yard. The parish is a beautiful amphitheatre, with the Clyde winding through it, with Wellbrae Hill to the west, Tinto and the Culter Fells to the south, and the pretty, green, conical hill, Quothquan Law, to the east. My father's stackyard lying in the centre, was seen from every house in the parish. At length Burns arrived, mounted on a *pownie* borrowed of Mr Dalrymple, near Ayr. Instantly was the white flag hoisted, and as instantly were seen the farmers issuing from their houses, and converging to the point of meeting. A glorious evening, or rather night, which borrowed something from the morning, followed, and the conversation of the poet confirmed and increased the admiration created by his writings. On the following morning he breakfasted with a large party at the next farm-house, tenanted by James Stodart, brother to the Stodarts, the pianoforte-makers of London; took lunch also with a large party at the Bank, in the parish of Carnwath, with John Stodart, my mother's father, and rode into Edinburgh that evening on the *pownie*, which he returned to the owner in a few days afterwards by John Samson, the brother of the immortalised "TAM." Mr Samson took with him a letter to Mr Reid, in which the poet expressed the great pleasure he had experienced in meeting his friends at Covington.

'My father,' adds Mr Prentice, 'was exactly the sort of man to draw forth all the higher powers of Burns's mind. He combined physical and moral strength in an extraordinary degree; had a great deal of practical knowledge; had read and thought much; had a high relish for *manly* poetry; much benevolence; much indignation at oppression, which nobody dared to exercise within his reach; and no mean conversational powers. Such was the person to appreciate Burns—ay, and to reverence the man who penned *The Cotter's Saturday Night;* and accordingly, though a strictly moral and religious man himself, he always maintained that the virtues of the poet greatly predominated over his faults. I once heard him exclaim with hot wrath, when somebody was quoting from an *Apologist!* "What! do *they* apologise for *him!* One-half of his good, and all his bad, divided amang a score o' them, would make them a' better men!"

'When a lad of seventeen, in the year 1809, I resided for a short time in Ayrshire, in the hospitable house of my father's friend Reid, and surveyed with a strong interest such visitors as had known Burns. I soon learned how to anticipate their representations of his character. The men of strong minds and strong feelings were invariable in their expressions of admiration; but the prosy consequential *bodies* all disliked him as exceeding

dictatorial. The men whose religion was based on intellect and high moral sentiment all thought well of him; but the mere professors, with their "twa-mile prayers and half-mile graces," denounced him as "worse than an infidel."'

Burns reached Edinburgh on the 28th November, a day remarkable in the history of the city as that on which Mr Palmer's mail carriages were started, by which letters were to be conveyed between the two capitals of the island in the then surprisingly brief space of sixty hours! One can imagine that it would be with no tame feelings that the peasant bard would hail the romantic capital of his country, whose ancient history had poured a tide of enthusiasm through his heart. As the seat of her chivalrous kings, of her ancient and once independent legislature, of her long series of poets and philosophers, he would view it with a glowing mind, and, mixed with classic associations, there would doubtless be some reflections on the prospects with which it was charged for himself. He came, as he tells us, without a single letter of introduction, and, we cannot doubt, with very little money in his pocket. Besides Professor Stewart, whose rank and avocations placed him at an ideal distance, he had scarcely a single acquaintance among the ordinary inhabitants of Edinburgh. There was, however, one friend whom he could readily approach. This was John Richmond, not long ago the clerk of Gavin Hamilton, and the companion of Burns and Smith in many a merry 'splore' at Mauchline. Richmond was now in a writer's office in the city. He occupied a humble room in Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, for which he paid at the time three shillings a week. Into this lodging he willingly received the Ayrshire poet, giving him a share of his bed—of which Burns stood so much in need by reason of indisposition, that he kept possession of it all the succeeding day.

Allan Cunningham relates, apparently from some well-informed source, the first proceedings of Burns in Edinburgh:—'Though he had taken a stride from the furrowed field into the land of poetry, and abandoned the plough for the harp, he seemed for some days to feel, as in earlier life, unfitted with an aim, and wandered about looking down from Arthur's Seat, surveying the Palace, gazing at the Castle, or contemplating the windows of the booksellers' shops, where he saw all works save the poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman. He found his way to the lowly grave of Fergusson, and kneeling down, kissed the sod; he sought out the house of Allan Ramsay, and on entering it, took off his hat; and when he was afterwards introduced to Creech, the bibliopole remembered that he had before heard him inquiring if this had been the shop of the author of the "Gentle Shepherd."'

In the country, during the past summer, Burns had become acquainted with Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, near Ayr. Mr Dalrymple was a warm-hearted, high-pulsed man, enthusiastically given to masonry, and an occasional scribbler of verses. As he had been concerned with Provost Ballantyne in masonically laying the foundation-stone of the *new brig*, we may surmise that this kind patron of the bard was the channel through which Burns approached Mr Dalrymple's acquaintance. We may also reasonably believe, until contradicted, that this was the 'Mr Dalrymple near Ayr' who had furnished Burns with the pony on which he rode to Edinburgh. In the earlier half of the eighteenth century, there had flourished at Ayr a poor 'violer,' named Hugh M'Guire. A friendless lad named Macrae, to whom he had shewn some kindness, went abroad, rose in the world, and came home as the retired governor of Madras, with a large fortune. Having no family of his own, Governor Macrae, from a feeling of gratitude, adopted that of the violer M'Guire. To the son, who took his name, he gave a large estate. The eldest daughter, with a superb provision, was married by the Earl of Glencairn. The second became the wife of Lord Alva, a judge of the Court of Session. The third was wedded by Hugh Dalrymple of Orangefield. Thus it happened that the present Earl of Glencairn, Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, and a certain hot-headed Captain Macrae of Holmains, all of them distinguished members of society in Edinburgh, were cousins-german through a common descent from the Ayr violer Hugh M'Guire. The daughter of the violer, as dowager Countess of Glencairn, resided at Coates House, near Edinburgh—a lady noted for her religious zeal in an age not much distinguished that way. A connection, again, had been established between this group of eminent persons and another of equal local eminence, by the recent union of a younger brother of Lord Glencairn to Lady Isabella Erskine, sister to the Earl of Buchan and to the Hon. Henry Erskine, Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, both of whom were leading members of Edinburgh society. Having, through Mr Dalrymple, the means of introduction to this 'set,' Burns could not be said to enter Edinburgh quite friendless. Lord Glencairn too—a man in whom singular personal beauty formed the index to one of the fairest of characters—had already been prepared to patronise the Ayrshire poet, in consequence of having had his attention drawn to the Kilmarnock volume by Mr Dalziel, factor on his Ayrshire estate.

It so happened that William Creech, now the leading publisher in Edinburgh, had in early life acted as preceptor to the Earl of Glencairn. The earl was therefore well qualified to introduce Burns to his notice, and recommend to him the publication of the

proposed second edition of the poems. Creech, who was a well-educated man, and himself not without literary talents, must have instantly appreciated the genius thus brought under his notice. Apparently, however, he did not at once resolve upon undertaking any risk that might be involved in the proposed edition.

According to a curious record quoted below,[1] Burns was present on the evening of the 7th of December at a meeting of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge of free-masons, at its place of assemblage in St John's Street, and there Mr Dalrymple introduced the bard to the *Past-Master*, the Honourable Henry Erskine. Never was a man more universally beloved in his circle or place of residence than this eminent barrister and highly-gifted man—the witty, genial, kind-hearted Harry Erskine. It is unnecessary to remark that he was also a man peculiarly disposed to befriend such an example of native genius as Burns. This single lodge-night seems to have been enough to make the poet feel as if Mr Erskine were already his ancient and assured friend.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE.

EDINBURGH, *Dec. 7th*, 1786.

HONOURED SIR—I have paid every attention to your commands, but can only say, what perhaps you will have heard before this reach you, that Muirkirklands were bought by a John Gordon, W. S., but for whom I know not; Mauchlands, Haugh-Mill, &c. by a Frederick Fotheringham, supposed to be for Ballochmyle Laird; and Adam-Hill and Shawood were bought for Oswald's folks. This is so imperfect an account, and will be so late ere it reach you, that were it not to discharge my conscience, I would not trouble you with it; but after all my diligence, I could make it no sooner nor better.[2]

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birthday inserted among the wonderful events in the Poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacs, along with the Black Monday and the battle of Bothwell-Bridge.[3] My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr H. Erskine, have taken me under their

[1] A Winter with Robert Burns. Edinburgh, 1846.

[2] The lands of Mauchline Mains, East, West, and South Mossgavil, Haugh-Mill, and some others in Ayrshire, which the Loudon family was at this time forced to part with, are advertised to be sold in the Exchange Coffee-house, Edinburgh, on the 5th of December. Burns seems to have been commissioned by Mr Gavin Hamilton to send him early intelligence of the result of the sale. The Earl of Loudon had died in the most melancholy manner, the victim of pressing embarrassments, in the preceding April.

[3] What Burns said here, probably more than half, if not wholly in jest, has come to be verified.

wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man of the world. Through my lord's influence, it is inserted in the records of the Caledonian Hunt that they universally, one and all, subscribe for the second edition. My subscription bills come out to-morrow, and you shall have some of them next post. I have met in Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield what Solomon emphatically calls 'a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' The warmth with which he interests himself in my affairs is of the same enthusiastic kind which you, Mr Aiken, and the few patrons that took notice of my earlier poetic days, shewed for the poor unlucky devil of a poet.

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

May cauld ne'er catch you but a hap,[1]
Nor hunger but in plenty's lap!
Amen! R. B.

Meanwhile there was other enginery working in favour of the bard. Professor Stewart, on leaving the banks of the Ayr at the beginning of November to commence his winter session at the university, carried with him a copy of the Kilmarnock volume, which he brought under the notice of Mr Henry Mackenzie, the well-known author of *The Man of Feeling*, and who was now conducting a periodical work entitled *The Lounger*, published in Edinburgh by Mr Creech. Mr Mackenzie read the poems with the usual admiration, and lost no time in writing upon them a generous critique, which appeared in the *Lounger* for the 9th of December. By this alone the fame of Burns was at once perfected in Scotland, for, by the pronouncement of the greatest tribunal in the country, all lesser judges were set free to give their judgment in the direction which their feelings had already dictated.

To Burns the approbation must have been extremely dear, coming as it did from one whose works had been bosom books to him in his early days, when he could never have indulged the hope of being known to their author. Mackenzie, with great boldness, threw aside all claim for notice to Burns on the score of his humble condition in society. He pronounced him 'a genius of no ordinary rank.' His birth and education might excite wonder at his productions; 'but his poetry, considered abstractedly, and without the apologies arising from his situation, seems to me fully entitled to command our feelings and obtain our applause.' After quoting some stanzas from the Vision, and the whole of the Mountain Daisy, as specimens of the moral and tender, the critic goes on to say—'The power of genius is not less admirable in

[1] Upper coat.

tracing the manners, than in painting the passions, or in drawing the scenery of nature. That intuitive glance with which a writer like Shakspeare discerns the characters of men, with which he catches the many-changing hues of life, forms a sort of problem in the science of mind, of which it is easier to see the truth than to assign the cause. Though I am very far from meaning to compare our rustic bard to Shakspeare, yet whoever will read his lighter and more humorous poems, his Dialogue of the Dogs, his dedication to G—— H——, Esq., his Epistle to a Young Friend, and to W—— S——, will perceive with what uncommon penetration and sagacity this heaven-taught ploughman, from his humble and unlettered station, has looked upon men and manners.'

This, it will be admitted, is no faint praise. But Mr Mackenzie is not satisfied with praising. He sees that a great poet has arisen, and he claims for him the generous support of his country. 'Burns,' he says, 'possesses the spirit as well as the fancy of a poet. That honest pride and independence of soul, which are sometimes the Muse's only dower, break forth on every occasion in his works. It may be, then, I shall wrong his feelings while I indulge my own, in calling the attention of the public to his situation and circumstances. That condition, humble as it was, in which he found content, and wooed the Muse, might not have been deemed uncomfortable; but grief and misfortune have reached him there; and one or two of his poems hint, what I have learned from some of his countrymen, that he has been obliged to form the resolution of leaving his native land, to seek, under a West Indian clime, that shelter and support which Scotland has denied him. But I trust that means may be found to prevent this resolution from taking place, and that I do my country no more than justice when I suppose her ready to stretch out her hand to cherish and retain this native poet, whose "wood-notes wild" possess so much excellence. To repair the wrongs of suffering or neglected merit; to call forth genius from the obscurity in which it had pined indignant, and place it where it may profit or delight the world—these are exertions which give to wealth an enviable superiority, to greatness and to patronage a laudable pride.'

TO JAMES DALRYMPLE, ESQ., OF ORANGEFIELD.

[*December* 10, 1786 ?]

DEAR SIR—I suppose the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main* to complete his pur-

poses on you all at once, in making you a poet. I broke open the letter you sent me—hummed over the rhymes—and as I saw they were extempore, said to myself they were very well; but when I saw at the bottom a name that I shall ever value with grateful respect, 'I gapit wide, but naething spak.' I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction-bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

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

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

R. B.

He gives us more of his own story in a letter

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., BANKER, AYR.

EDINBURGH, 13*th December* 1786.

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

of Glencairn, with my Lord and Lady Betty[1]—the Dean of Faculty —Sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati; Professors Stewart, Blair, and Mr Mackenzie, the 'Man of Feeling.' An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire bard with Mr Sibbald, which I got. I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq., brother to the Justice Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him by invitation at his own house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two next post, when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr Aiken. I saw his son to-day, and he is very well.

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

I shall certainly, my ever-honoured patron, write you an account of my every step; and better health and more spirits may enable me to make it something better than this stupid matter-of-fact epistle. I have the honour to be, good sir, your ever-grateful humble servant, R. B.

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

The Caledonian Hunt is a society of the Scottish nobility and gentry, having the sports of the field chiefly in view. The promptitude and liberality of its patronage to Burns have scarcely been sufficiently acknowledged by his biographers. The clever and kind-hearted, but eccentric Jane Duchess of Gordon, was now reigning over fashionable life in Edinburgh. She could well appreciate the poetry of Burns, and she was eager to patronise the man. The promptly-given friendship of Henry Erskine has been already alluded to. By the literary men generally Burns was received with the greatest cordiality. We find that, within a month of his arrival, he had been more than once at the hospitable table of Lord Monboddo, who was then remarkable for his classic suppers. Dr Robertson, Dr Blair, Dr Gregory, Dr Adam Ferguson, Mr Mackenzie, and Mr Fraser Tytler, adopted him into their society, as readily as if he had been a foreigner of distinguished rank and learning. In this brilliant circle, no object made a greater impression upon his mind than the exquisite beauty and grace of Eliza Burnet, the daughter of Lord Monboddo. On returning from a first visit to his lordship's house, his friend Mr Geddes said, 'Well, and did you admire the young lady?' 'I admired God Almighty more than ever!' said the poet: 'Miss Burnet is

[1] Lady Betty Cunningham, an unmarried sister of the earl.

the most heavenly of all his works.'[1] To this paragon of female loveliness he makes special allusion in his *Address to Edinburgh*, as rating her among the wonders of the city:—

ADDRESS TO EDINBURGH.

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
Sat Legislation's sovereign powers!
From marking wildly-scattered flowers,
As on the banks of Ayr I strayed,
And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
I shelter in thy honoured shade.

Here wealth still swells the golden tide,
As busy Trade his labour plies;
There Architecture's noble pride
Bids elegance and splendour rise;
Here Justice, from her native skies,
High wields her balance and her rod;
There Learning, with his eagle eyes,
Seeks Science in her coy abode.

Thy sons, Edina! social, kind,
With open arms the stranger hail;
Their views enlarged, their liberal mind,
Above the narrow, rural vale;
Attentive still to sorrow's wail,
Or modest merit's silent claim;
And never may their sources fail!
And never envy blot their name!

Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn,
Gay as the gilded summer sky,
Sweet as the dewy milk-white thorn,
Dear as the raptured thrill of joy!
Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
And own his work indeed divine!

There, watching high the least alarms,
Thy rough, rude fortress gleams afar;
Like some bold veteran, gray in arms,
And mark'd with many a seamy scar;

[1] Cunningham's Life of Burns.

The ponderous wall and massy bar,
  Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock;
Have oft withstood assailing war,
  And oft repelled the invader's shock.

With awe-struck thought, and pitying tears,
  I view that noble, stately dome,
Where Scotia's kings of other years,
  Famed heroes! had their royal home:
Alas, how changed the times to come!
  Their royal name low in the dust!
Their hapless race wild-wandering roam,
  Though rigid law cries out, 'twas just!

Wild beats my heart to trace your steps,
  Whose ancestors, in days of yore,
Through hostile ranks and ruined gaps
  Old Scotia's bloody lion bore:
Even I who sing in rustic lore,
  Haply, my sires have left their shed,
And faced grim danger's loudest roar,
  Bold-following where your fathers led!

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
  All hail thy palaces and towers,
Where once beneath a monarch's feet
  Sat Legislation's sovereign powers!
From marking wildly-scattered flowers,
  As on the banks of Ayr I strayed,
And singing, lone, the lingering hours,
  I shelter in thy honoured shade.

Notwithstanding the strong interest awakened in Burns so soon after his arrival in Edinburgh, and the high patronage exerted in his favour, it appears that he did not just at once overleap all the difficulties with respect to his proposed second edition which had obstructed his course in the country.

The late Mr John Moir, printer, used to relate that he was then serving his apprenticeship with an eminent printer in the High Street. One day a plain-looking man, of rustic exterior, who afterwards proved to be Robert Burns, came to inquire about the printing of a volume of poems. Unluckily for the honest typographer, he looked upon his visitor as only some poor crack-brained versifier, who might give him a good deal of trouble, but was not likely to yield much solid return in the way of business. He therefore received the application with marked coldness, spoke of being a good deal engaged at present, and of his habit

of requiring effective guarantees of payment from any strangers for whom he worked. The visitor, manifestly offended, went away, but not till he had taken occasion to pull out and shew a quantity of money sufficient to convince the printer that, if more favourably received, he might have proved a good customer in all desirable senses. This was not an end of the typographer's mortifications; for, being vexed at missing so good a job as the printing of Burns's poems, he resolved to lose no second customer of that sort who might come in his way, and he accordingly took the risk, soon after, of printing the productions of a rustic bard from Aberdeenshire, which, however, proving a complete failure, he lost fully as much by the one concern as he could have expected to gain by the other.

TO MR WILLIAM CHALMERS, WRITER, AYR.

EDINBURGH, *December* 27, 1786.

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

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

One blank in the *Address to Edinburgh*—'Fair B——,' is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been anything nearly like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and good-

ness the great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

My direction is—care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge Street.

R. B.

While spending his evenings with beauty, rank, and talent, Burns continued content with the share of John Richmond's room and bed.[1] John helped him to transcribe his poems for the press, and, when he came in at night, jaded and excited, would read to him till he fell asleep. Richmond testified that he kept good hours, and observed the rules of sobriety. After a brief residence in town, his plain rustic garb gave way to a suit of blue and buff, the livery of Mr Fox, with buckskins and top-boots. He continued to wear his hair tied behind, and spread upon his forehead, but without the powder which was then nearly universal. On the whole, his appearance was modest and becoming. It was remarked that he shewed no sign of embarrassment in refined society, and that he took his part in conversation with freedom and energy, but without the least forwardness. The literati were surprised to find in what pure English and with how much eloquence he could express his ideas, and how glowing and brilliant these ideas often were. Principal Robertson declared that he had 'scarcely ever met with any man whose conversation displayed greater vigour than that of Burns.'[2] His poems had, he acknowledged, surprised him; his prose compositions appeared even more wonderful; but the conversation was a marvel beyond all. We are thus left to understand that the best of Burns has not been, and was not of a nature to be, transmitted to posterity.

Dr Currie mentions a fact as occurring at the close of 1787, which we must place a whole year earlier, for a reason which will, we trust, appear sufficient.[3] 'It appears,' he says, 'that on the 31st December he attended a meeting to celebrate the birthday

[1] 'In the first stair on the left hand, on entering the close [Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket], and on the first floor of the house, is the poet's lodging. The tradition of his residence there has passed through very few hands; the predecessor of the present tenant having learned it from Mrs Carfrae [Richmond's landlady], and the poet's room is pointed out with its window looking into Lady Stair's Close. The land is an ancient and very substantial building, with large and neatly-moulded windows, retaining the marks of having been finished with stone mullions. . . . . From this ancient dwelling Burns issued to dine or sup with the magnates of the land. . . . . The poet's lodging is a large and well-proportioned room, neatly panelled with wood, according to a fashion then by no means antiquated.'—*Wilson's Memorials of Edinburgh* (4to, 1848), vol. i. p. 166.

[2] Heron's Life of Burns.

[3] The reason is, that, on the 31st December 1787, Burns was confined to his room with a bruised limb, therefore could not have attended any convivial meeting on that day. Before any subsequent 31st of December, Prince Charles Edward, whose birthday occasioned the meeting, was no more, and Burns had ceased to live in Edinburgh.

of the lineal descendant of the Scottish race of kings, the late unfortunate Prince Charles Edward.' We have Burns's own authority for saying that Jacobitism was not a deep feeling in his mind. It was nevertheless a sentiment which he at this time took no pains to conceal. See a passage in the *Address to Edinburgh* composed during this very month, and soon after published. A romantic feeling regarding his country and its ancient independent condition, an antipathy towards the representatives of the old religious Whigs of Scotland, a sympathy springing from his own circumstances with all that was depressed by or in opposition to fortune—perhaps a shade of manly impatience with the cant of loyalty, as indulged in at that day—appear to have combined, with some notion about his own ancestral history, to throw Burns into this vain and insubstantial profession. Charles Edward was still alive, but lost in the sottishness which so sadly fell upon a mind once ardent and apparently capable of better things.[1] A few generous souls, perhaps none of them of very high standing in society, kept his memory alive by an annual symposium on his birthday. On the present occasion, they were favoured with the attendance of Burns in the capacity of their poet-laureate, and he accordingly produced an ode of which Dr Currie has preserved a few stanzas:

* * * *

False flatterer, Hope, away![2]
Nor think to lure us as in days of yore;
We solemnise this sorrowing natal-day
To prove our loyal truth; we can no more;
And owning Heaven's mysterious sway,
Submissive low adore.

Ye honoured mighty dead!
Who nobly perished in the glorious cause,
Your king, your country, and her laws!
From great Dundee who smiling victory led,
And fell a martyr in her arms
(What breast of northern ice but warms?)
To bold Balmerino's undying name,
Whose soul of fire, lighted at heaven's high flame,
Deserves the proudest wreath departed heroes claim.

Nor unavenged your fate shall be,
It only lags the fatal hour;

[1] To go no further, the magnanimity of the Prince in 1745 towards all of his enemies who fell in his power, forms a bright point in his character, and one to which full justice has never yet been done in public opinion.

[2] 'In the first part of this ode there is some beautiful imagery, which the poet afterwards interwove in the Chevalier's Lament.'—CURRIE.

Your blood shall with incessant cry
  Awake at last th' unsparing power;
As from the cliff, with thundering course,
  The snowy ruin smokes along,
With doubling speed and gathering force,
Till deep it crashing whelms the cottage in the vale!
So vengeance * * * * *

TO MISS LOGAN, WITH BEATTIE'S POEMS,

AS A NEW-YEAR'S GIFT, JANUARY 1, 1787.[1]

Again the silent wheels of time
  Their annual round have driven,
And you, though scarce in maiden prime,
  Are so much nearer Heaven.

No gifts have I from Indian coasts
  The infant year to hail;
I send you more than India boasts
  In Edwin's simple tale.

Our sex with guile and faithless love
  Is charged, perhaps, too true;
But may, dear maid, each lover prove
  An Edwin still to you!

TO THE EARL OF EGLINTOUN.

[EDINBURGH, *January 11th*, 1787.]

MY LORD—As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted ideas of a citizen of the world, but have all those national prejudices which I believe glow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotchman. There is scarcely anything to which I am so feelingly alive as the honour and welfare of my country; and as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished, though, till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy, then, to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your lordship. Your munificence, my lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgments; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the

[1] Sister of Major Logan, to whom the poet had addressed an epistle on the 30th October of the past year.

etiquette of life to know whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude, I hope, I am incapable of; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have so much honest pride as to detest. R. B.

TO MR MACKENZIE, SURGEON, MAUCHLINE.

EDINBURGH, 11*th January* 1787.

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

His son John, who calls very frequently on me, is in a fuss to-day like a coronation. This is the great day—the assembly and ball of the Caledonian Hunt; and John has had the good-luck to pre-engage the hand of the beauty-famed and wealth-celebrated Miss M'Adam, our countrywoman. Between friends, John is desperately in for it there, and I am afraid will be desperate indeed.

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

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

I met with Lord Maitland[1] and a brother of his to-day at breakfast. They are exceedingly easy, accessible, agreeable fellows, and seemingly pretty clever. I am ever, my dear sir, yours,

ROBERT BURNS.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, *January* 14*th*, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND—It gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie Gaw's Skate—'past redemption;'[2] for I have still this favourable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teazes me eternally till I do it.

I am still 'dark as was chaos' in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr Patrick Miller, has been talking with me about a lease of

[1] Afterwards eighth Earl of Lauderdale; at this time a conspicuous member of the House of Commons, on the side of opposition.

[2] This is one of a great number of old saws which Burns, when a lad, had picked up from his mother, who had a vast collection of such fragments of traditionary humour and wisdom.—CROMEK.

some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought near Dumfries. Some life-rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier anywhere than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr Miller is no judge of land; and though I daresay he means to favour me, yet he may give me, in his opinion, an advantageous bargain that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries as I return, and have promised to meet Mr Miller on his lands some time in May.

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

I have to-day corrected my 152d page. My best good wishes to Mr Aiken. I am ever, dear sir, your much indebted humble servant, R. B.

Mrs Dunlop had written to Burns at the close of the year, conveying to him some passages extracted from letters addressed to her by Dr John Moore, author of the novel of *Zeluco*. This learned person, a Scotsman, but long resident in London, had read the poems of Burns with deep interest, and he was willing to open a correspondence with the poet.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *15th January* 1787.

MADAM—Yours of the 9th current, which I am this moment honoured with, is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib. I wished to have written to Dr Moore before I wrote to you; but though, every day since I received yours of December 30th, the idea, the wish to write to him has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of 'the sons of little men.' To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have; and to write the author of *The View of Society and Manners* a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him to-

morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of Lord Eglintoun, with ten guineas, by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thomson; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the literati here, who honour me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed anything on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print, and the enclosed, which I will print in this edition.[1] You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my *Vision* long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle, of which the additional stanzas are a part as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the 'saviour of his country,' which, sooner or later, I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is, and has been, the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice which has borne me to a height where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede perhaps as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all, to disburden my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But,

When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated, with the inebriating cup in my hand,

[1] Stanzas in *The Vision*, beginning, 'By stately tower or palace fair,' and ending with the first Duan.

looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time when the blow of calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph.

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

TO DR MOORE.

EDINBURGH [*January* 16*th* or 17*th*?] 1787.

SIR—Mrs Dunlop has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honour of noticing him and his works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solicitudes of authorship, can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such a manner by judges of the first character. Your criticisms, sir, I receive with reverence; only I am sorry they mostly come too late; a peccant passage or two that I would certainly have altered, were gone to the press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greatest part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few, if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still, I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had; and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttleton and Collins described the heart—I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame. R. B.

To this letter Dr Moore sent the following answer:—

CLIFFORD STREET, *January* 23*d*, 1787.

SIR—I have just received your letter, by which I find I have reason to complain of my friend Mrs Dunlop, for transmitting to you extracts from my letters to her, by much too freely and too carelessly written for your perusal. I must forgive her, however, in consideration of her good intention, as you will forgive me, I hope, for the freedom I use with certain expressions, in consideration of

my admiration of the poems in general. If I may judge of the author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the irritable temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their own number, whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease and curious felicity of expression. Indeed the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scattered, are not all I admire in your works; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favourable impression of the poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would have been my seeing the author last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years.

I rejoice very sincerely at the encouragement you receive at Edinburgh, and I think you particularly fortunate in the patronage of Dr Blair, who, I am informed, interests himself very much for you. I beg to be remembered to him; nobody can have a warmer regard for that gentleman than I have, which, independent of the worth of his character, would be kept alive by the memory of our common friend, the late Mr George B[annatyn]e.

Before I received your letter, I sent, enclosed in a letter to ——, a sonnet by Miss Williams, a young poetical lady,[1] which she wrote on reading your *Mountain Daisy;* perhaps it may not displease you:—

> While soon 'the garden's flaunting flowers' decay,
> And scattered on the earth neglected lie,
> The 'Mountain-Daisy,' cherished by the ray
> A poet drew from heaven, shall never die.
> Ah, like that lonely flower the poet rose!
> 'Mid penury's bare soil and bitter gale;
> He felt each storm that on the mountain blows,
> Nor ever knew the shelter of the vale.
> By genius in her native vigour nurst,
> On nature with impassioned look he gazed;
> Then through the cloud of adverse fortune burst
> Indignant, and in light unborrowed blazed.
> Scotia! from rude affliction shield thy bard;
> His heaven-taught numbers Fame herself will guard.

I have been trying to add to the number of your subscribers, but find that many of my acquaintance are already among them. I have only to add, that, with every sentiment of esteem, and the most cordial good wishes, I am, your obedient humble servant,

J. Moore.

Burns, in his letter of 15th January to Mrs Dunlop, speaks of additional stanzas of the *Vision* of which he was to publish only a part in the new edition. I have seen a copy in the bard's handwriting of the entire poem as it had then stood. It is a curious

[1] Miss Helen Maria Williams was a notable contributor to popular literature at that time and for many years later.

and valuable document, but for an unexpected reason, namely, its proving, what might otherwise have been doubted, that Burns was not incapable of writing weakly. The whole of the inedited stanzas are strikingly of this character. Most of them are panegyrical of country gentlefolks who had shewn him some degree of kindness, or whose ancestral history interested him. Perhaps there is, after all, a second and a greater importance in the document, as shewing how, with the capability to write ineffectively, his taste was so unerring as to prevent him from publishing a single line that was not fitted to command respect, for every one of the poor stanzas has been thrown out on his sending the poem to the press.[1]

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

[*January*, 1787.][2]

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

[BONNIE DOON.]

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause luve was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wistna o' my fate.

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,
To see the woodbine twine,
And ilka bird sang o' its love:
And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Frae aff its thorny tree;

[1] See Appendix, No. 10.

[2] This date is given on conjecture by Allan Cunningham; it is probably very near the truth.

And my fause luver staw the rose,
But left the thorn wi' me.[1]

This song referred to the same unhappy love-tale which had been the subject of conversation at Mr Lawrie's table some months previously. Burns then took an unfavourable view of the conduct of the young lady, but he had now learned to look upon it with the tenderness and pity which alone could make it a fit subject for verse. The heroine was a member of a most respectable family, and ultimately became heiress of her father's estate in Carrick. I am afraid that a full recital of the circumstances would leave the reader little choice between the opinion of Burns as a man of the world and Burns as a poet. It may only be remarked, in behalf of the lady, that her errors commenced in the years of youth and inexperience, and under circumstances that might have been expected to protect her from such evil. Captain M., her lover, was the son of a wealthy Wigtonshire proprietor, and though only twenty-five years of age, representative of his county in parliament. Although now, at the distance of two years from the commencement of their intimacy, we find a ballad from the pen of Burns bewailing the falsehood of the lover, it does not really appear that any charge of this kind could be brought against him. Certain it also is, that the connection was not finally broken off till after the birth of an infant in 1794, when at length the unfortunate lady instituted a declarator of marriage and legitimacy in behalf of herself and child in the consistorial court, with a subsidiary conclusion for damages in case of failure. She died not long after, probably the victim of anguished feelings; but the process went on in behalf of her infant. The consistorial judges pronounced in 1798 for the marriage of the pair, and the consequent legitimacy of the child; but the Court of Session, on review, reversed this judgment, with an order for the payment of £3000 to the daughter,[2] who, it is believed, is now a married lady, residing in Edinburgh. Upon the whole, this story does not breathe the present tone of British aristocratic society, and one cannot help believing it to be characteristic of its own age—one in which, in several respects, there seems to have been a momentary retrogression towards the licentiousness of a well-known period in the preceding century.

What has been previously advanced as to Dr Blacklock's letter to Mr Lawrie having only been partially the means of bringing Burns to Edinburgh, is supported by the fact, that Burns allowed several weeks to elapse before he saw the blind poet.

[1] Another copy of this song, considerably altered, is afterwards introduced.
[2] The case is detailed in Fergusson's Consistorial Law Reports.

About the 11th or 12th of December, Blacklock wrote to Mr Lawrie to recommend that Mackenzie's criticism should be prefixed to the new edition of the poems, instead of his letter of the 4th September, which had all the disadvantages of an extempore effusion. He added, 'By the by, I hear that Mr Burns is, and has been, some time in Edinburgh. These news I am sorry to have heard at second hand; they would have come much more welcome from the bard's own mouth. I have, however, written to Mr Mackenzie, the Man of Feeling, to beg the favour that he would bring us together.'[1] On Friday the 22d December, Mr Lawrie informed Burns that he had last week had a letter from Dr Blacklock, expressing a desire to see the Ayrshire ploughman. 'I write this to you,' says Lawrie, 'that you may lose no time in waiting upon him, should you not yet have seen him.'[2] The excellent minister of Loudon adds some advice on the score of a modest diffidence and an invincible temperance, as necessary to sustain him in the new scenes into which he had been so suddenly introduced. Burns appears to have now hastened to visit Blacklock; yet he allows several weeks to elapse before answering Mr Lawrie's letter—also a fact speaking somewhat for the view we take of the immediately-prompting causes of the poet's migration from Ayrshire:—

TO THE REV. G. LAWRIE,

NEWMILLS, NEAR KILMARNOCK.

EDINBURGH, *February* 5, 1787.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—When I look at the date of your kind letter, my heart reproaches me severely with ingratitude in neglecting so long to answer it. I will not trouble you with any account, by way of apology, of my hurried life and distracted attention; do me the justice to believe that my delay by no means proceeded from want of respect. I feel, and ever shall feel for you, the mingled sentiments of esteem for a friend, and reverence for a father.

I thank you, sir, with all my soul for your friendly hints, though I do not need them so much as my friends are apt to imagine. You are dazzled with newspaper accounts and distant reports; but in reality I have no great temptation to be intoxicated with the cup of prosperity. Novelty may attract the attention of mankind a while; to it I owe my present eclat; but I see the time not far distant when the popular tide which has borne me to a height of which I am perhaps unworthy, shall recede with silent celerity, and leave me a barren waste of sand, to descend at my leisure to my former station. I do not say this in the affectation of modesty: I see the consequence is unavoidable, and am prepared for it. I had been at

[1] From the original in possession of the Rev. Mr Balfour Graham, North Berwick.
[2] Currie's Edition. General Correspondence, No. xii.

a good deal of pains to form a just, impartial estimate of my intellectual powers before I came here; I have not added, since I came to Edinburgh, anything to the account; and I trust I shall take every atom of it back to my shades, the coverts of my unnoticed early years.

In Dr Blacklock, whom I see very often, I have found what I would have expected in our friend, a clear head and an excellent heart.

By far the most agreeable hours I spend in Edinburgh must be placed to the account of Miss Lawrie and her pianoforte. I cannot help repeating to you and Mrs Lawrie a compliment that Mr Mackenzie, the celebrated Man of Feeling, paid to Miss Lawrie the other night at the concert. I had come in at the interlude, and sat down by him till I saw Miss Lawrie in a seat not very far distant, and went up to pay my respects to her. On my return to Mr Mackenzie, he asked me who she was: I told him 'twas the daughter of a reverend friend of mine in the west country. He returned, there was something very striking, to his idea, in her appearance. On my desiring to know what it was, he was pleased to say, 'She has a great deal of the elegance of a well-bred lady about her, with all the sweet simplicity of a country girl.'

My compliments to all the happy inmates of St Margaret's. I am, my dear sir, yours most gratefully, ROBERT BURNS.

The Earl of Buchan was a very different person from his brother, Henry Erskine. With weak parts, he was continually led by vanity into conspicuous situations: above all, he delighted to be a patron, though penurious habits often raised a ludicrous contrast between his pretensions and his performances. He had (apparently on the 1st of February) sent Burns some of those advices which he thought his rank entitled him to offer to a person in the situation of the Ayrshire Ploughman. Burns returned the following temperate and prudent answer:—

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

MY LORD—The honour your lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember—

> Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,
> They best can give it who deserve it most.

Your lordship touches the darling chord of my heart, when you advise me to fire my muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the

inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my lord, in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom, strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic words:—

'I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes, merely to give you pain: I wish through these wounds to imprint a lasting lesson on your heart. I will not mention how many of my salutary advices you have despised; I have given you line upon line, and precept upon precept; and while I was chalking out to you the straight way to wealth and character, with audacious effrontery you have zig-zagged across the path, contemning me to my face. You know the consequences. It is not yet three months since home was so hot for you, that you were on the wing for the western shore of the Atlantic, not to make a fortune, but to hide your misfortune.

'Now that your dear-loved Scotia puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these will-o'-wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from the veriest poverty; but still it is half a step from it. If all that I can urge be ineffectual, let her who seldom calls to you in vain, let the call of pride, prevail with you. You know how you feel at the iron gripe of ruthless oppression: you know how you bear the galling sneer of contumelious greatness. I hold you out the conveniences, the comforts of life, independence, and character, on the one hand; I tender you servility, dependence, and wretchedness on the other. I will not insult your understanding by bidding you make a choice.'

This, my lord, is unanswerable. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic muse in my wonted way, at the plough-tail. Still, my lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons who have honoured me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times, as now, draw forth the swelling tear. R. B.

During the first blaze of Burns's reputation in Edinburgh, several rhyming epistles were addressed to him publicly and privately—generally of no other value than to shew how immensely he had stepped beyond all common bounds of success in cultivating the rustic muse. One, however, from a Mrs Scott of Wauchope, in Roxburghshire, was neatly and effectively written, and to it Burns made a suitable reply.

THE GUDEWIFE OF WAUCHOPE HOUSE TO BURNS.

My cantie, witty, rhyming ploughman,
I hafflins doubt it is na true, man,
That ye between the stilts was bred,
Wi' ploughmen schooled, wi' ploughmen fed;
I doubt it sair, ye've drawn your knowledge
Either frae grammar-school or college.
Guid troth, your saul and body baith
War better fed, I'd gie my aith,
Than theirs who sup sour milk and parritch,
And bummil through the single Carritch. Catechism
Whaever heard the ploughman speak,
Could tell gif Homer was a Greek?
He'd flee as soon upon a cudgel,
As get a single line of Virgil.
And then sae slee ye crack your jokes
O' Willie Pitt and Charlie Fox:
Our great men a' sae weel descrive,
And how to gar the nation thrive,
Ane maist wad swear ye dwalt amang them,
And as ye saw them, sae ye sang them.
But be ye ploughman, be ye peer,
Ye are a funny blade, I swear;
And though the cauld I ill can bide, endure
Yet twenty miles and mair I'd ride
O'er moss and moor, and never grumble,
Though my auld yad should gie a stumble, horse
To crack a winter night wi' thee,
And hear thy sangs and sonnets slee.
Oh gif I kenn'd but whare ye baide, resided
I'd send to you a marled plaid;
'Twad haud your shouthers warm and braw,
And douce at kirk or market shaw;
Fra' south as weel as north, my lad,
A' honest Scotsmen lo'e the maud.

BURNS TO THE GUDEWIFE OF WAUCHOPE HOUSE.

I mind it weel in early date,
When I was beardless, young, and blate, bashful
And first could thrash the barn;
Or haud a yokin at the pleugh;
And though forfoughten sair eneugh, fatigued
Yet unco proud to learn:
When first among the yellow corn
A man I reckon'd was,

And wi' the lave ilk merry morn
Could rank my rig and lass,
Still shearing, and clearing,
The tither stookèd raw,
Wi' claivers, and haivers, talk
Wearing the day awa.

E'en then, a wish, I mind its power—
A wish that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast—
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some usefu' plan or beuk could make,
Or sing a sang at least.
The rough burr-thissle, spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turned the weeder-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear:
No nation, no station,
My envy e'er could raise,
A Scot still, but blot still,
I knew nae higher praise.

But still the elements o' sang
In formless jumble, right and wrang,
Wild floated in my brain;
Till on that har'st I said before,
My partner in the merry core,
She roused the forming strain;
I see her yet, the sonsie quean,
That lighted up her jingle,
Her witching smile, her pauky een
That gart my heart-strings tingle:
I firèd, inspirèd,
At every kindling keek,
But bashing and dashing,
I fearèd aye to speak.

Health to the sex, ilk guid chiel says,
Wi' merry dance in winter days,
And we to share in common:
The gust o' joy, the balm of woe,
The saul o' life, the heaven below,
Is rapture-giving woman.
Ye surly sumphs, who hate the name, fools
Be mindfu' o' your mither;
She, honest woman, may think shame
That ye're connected with her.
Ye're wae men, ye're nae men
That slight the lovely dears;

To shame ye, disclaim ye,
Ilk honest birkie swears. fellow

For you, no bred to barn and byre,
Wha sweetly tune the Scottish lyre,
Thanks to you for your line:
The marled plaid ye kindly spare,
By me should gratefully be ware; worn
'Twad please me to the nine.
I'd be mair vauntie o' my hap,
Douce hingin' owre my curple, rump
Than ony ermine ever lap,
Or proud imperial purple.
Fareweel then, lang heal then,
And plenty be your fa',
May losses and crosses
Ne'er at your hallan ca'! door

Meanwhile the preparation of the new edition was going rapidly on in the printing-office of William Smellie—a man who, like Creech, mingled literary labours with those attending one of the trades of literature. There was a vast fund of knowledge, shrewdness, and talent under the rude exterior of Smellie. In his office, at the foot of the Anchor Close, he had done typographic duty for Gilbert Stuart, Robert Fergusson, Dr Robertson, Hugo Arnot, Adam Smith, and many others of the recent and living literati of Scotland, all of whom had been his personal friends. His son Alexander, who lately died at an advanced age, perfectly remembered the visits of the Ayrshire Ploughman to the composing room, along which he would walk three or four times, cracking a whip which he carried, to the no small surprise of the men. He paid no attention to his own *copy* under their hands, but looked at any other which he saw lying on the cases. One day he asked a man how many languages he was acquainted with. 'Indeed, sir,' replied the man, 'I've enough ado wi' my *ain*.' Burns remarked that behind there was one of his companions setting up a Gaelic Bible, and another composing from a Hebrew Grammar. 'These two,' said the compositor, 'are the greatest dolts in the house.' Burns seemed amused by the remark, and said he would take a note of it.

Mr Alexander Smellie also communicated the following anecdote:—'There was a particular stool in the office which Burns uniformly occupied while correcting his proof-sheets; as he would not sit on any other, it always bore the name of Burns's Stool. It is still (1844) in the office, and in the same situation where it was when Burns sat on it. At this time Sir John Dalrymple was printing in Mr Smellie's office an *Essay on the Properties of Coal*

Tar. One day it happened that Sir John occupied the stool when Burns came into the correcting room looking for his favourite seat. It was known that what Burns wanted was the stool; but before saying anything to Sir John on the subject, Burns was requested to walk into the composing room. The opportunity was taken in his absence to request of Sir John to indulge the bard with his favourite seat, but without mentioning his name. Sir John said, "I will not give up my seat to yon impudent staring fellow." Upon which it was replied, "Do you not know that that staring fellow, as you call him, is Burns the poet?" Sir John instantly left the stool, exclaiming, "Good gracious! Give him all the seats in your house!" Burns was then called in, took possession of his stool, and commenced the reading of his proofs.'

Burns was introduced by his printer to one of those convivial clubs composed of men of good condition which then abounded in Edinburgh, each usually founded upon some whim or conceit which shone through all its proceedings. The club in question assumed the name of the Crochallan Fencibles, from a composite cause. Its landlord Douglas was noted for singing a beautiful Gaelic song called *Crochallan* (properly *Cro Chalein*—that is, Colin's Cattle). This, with the raising of fencible regiments going on at the time to protect the country while the army was chiefly engaged in fighting the American colonists, had given the convivial society an appellation. It was customary to subject a new entrant to a severe ordeal of raillery, by way of proving his temper, and Burns acknowledged that on that happening to himself, he had been 'thrashed' in a style beyond all his experience. Here Burns met several of the men whose acquaintance he had previously made at the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, particularly one William Dunbar, an uncommonly merry uproarious good fellow, who in the hours of mirthful relaxation appeared as *Colonel of the Crochallans*, but in the moments of daylight sobriety, practised as a douce writer to the signet, from which position he ultimately stepped up to the dignity of Inspector General of Stamp Duties for Scotland. On Smellie Burns composed some impromptu lines:—

> ——————— To Crochallan came,
> The old cocked hat, the gray surtout, the same;
> His bristling beard just rising in its might;
> 'Twas four long nights and days till shaving night;
> His uncombed grizzly locks, wild staring, thatched
> A head for thought profound and clear unmatched;
> Yet though his caustic wit was biting rude,
> His heart was warm, benevolent, and good.

He commemorated Willie Dunbar in verses of a different strain

There was an old rough Border ditty referring to a certain *Rattling Roaring Willie*, of great celebrity in his day as a wandering violer. To this Burns added a stanza, which we are to take as a picture of the Colonel in his place of command and moment of highest exaltation:—

As I cam by Crochallan,
  I cannilie keekit ben; looked in
Rattlin', roarin' Willie
  Was sitting at yon boord-en';
Sitting at yon boord-en',
  And amang gude companie;
Rattlin', roarin' Willie,
  Ye're welcome hame to me!

Dunbar is elsewhere certified by Burns as 'one of the worthiest fellows in the world.' He gave the poet a copy of Spenser as a present, and was thus the means of introducing him to one of the most abundant fountains of poetical imagery which exists in our national literature.

At this time a portrait of the poet was in preparation for the adornment of the forthcoming volume. Alexander Nasmyth, a young artist residing close beside him in a place called Wardrop's Court, was good enough to paint it gratuitously. An engraver named Beugo, much cleverer in his art than any man residing in Edinburgh till a comparatively recent period, transferred the likeness to copper on the same terms. He took the greatest possible pains with the face, having the poet to sit to himself several times when it was finishing, and the result was a likeness which, notwithstanding a criticism passed on it by Sir Walter Scott, as will be afterwards noted, must undoubtedly be regarded as that on which the friends of Burns have set their stamp of approbation as the most faithful in existence, not even excepting Mr Nasmyth's original.

It has been remembered that, after the sittings for that original, Mr Nasmyth and the poet would take a ramble together, not unfrequently to the King's Park, where Burns delighted to climb Arthur's Seat, and lying on the summit, gaze at its grand panorama of twelve of the principal Scottish counties. Having one night transgressed the rules of sobriety, and sat up till an early hour in the morning, they agreed not to go home at all, but commence an excursion to the Pentland Hills. Passing a cottage a few miles out of town, they heard a frightful noise within, and going up to learn what was the matter, found that the sounds proceeded from a poor man whose reason had given way. Mr Nasmyth used afterwards to describe in thrilling terms the

appalling exclamations of the lunatic, and the effect which they had upon Burns.[1] The two friends afterwards continued their walk to the hills, had a fine morning ramble, and having thus cleared off the effects of their dissipation, came down to Roslin to breakfast. Burns, who was now extremely hungry, found in Mrs David Wilson's little inn such ample solacement, that in a fit of gratitude he scrawled a couple of verses on the reverse side of a wooden platter:—

My blessings on ye, honest wife,
I ne'er was here before;
Ye've wealth o' gear for spoon and knife—
Heart could not wish for more.

Heaven keep you clear of sturt and strife,
Till far ayont four score,
And by the Lord o' death and life,
I'll ne'er gae by your door![2]

TO DR MOORE.

EDINBURGH, *15th February* 1787.

SIR—Pardon my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honour you have done me in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast anything higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment; but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see with frequent wringings of heart that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss Williams has done me, please, sir, return her in my name my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which, for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore:

[1] These particulars are obligingly communicated by James Nasmyth, Esq. of Patricroft near Manchester, son of the painter.

[2] Information derived many years ago from the late Mr Matthew Stobie, Kirkland-hill, Haddingtonshire, who lived in Roslin at the time.

there are, I think, two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, sombre tenderness of 'time-settled sorrow.'

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why. R. B.

The answer of Dr Moore to the foregoing was as follows:—

CLIFFORD STREET, *28th February* 1787.

DEAR SIR—Your letter of the 15th gave me a great deal of pleasure. It is not surprising that you improve in correctness and taste, considering where you have been for some time past. And I dare swear there is no danger of your admitting any polish which might weaken the vigour of your native powers.

I am glad to perceive that you disdain the nauseous affectation of decrying your own merit as a poet, an affectation which is displayed with most ostentation by those who have the greatest share of self-conceit, and which only adds undeceiving falsehood to disgusting vanity. For you to deny the merit of your poems, would be arraigning the fixed opinion of the public.

As the new edition of my View of Society is not yet ready, I have sent you the former edition, which I beg you will accept as a small mark of my esteem. It is sent by sea to the care of Mr Creech; and, along with these four volumes for yourself, I have also sent my Medical Sketches, in one volume, for my friend Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop; this you will be so obliging as to transmit, or, if you chance to pass soon by Dunlop, to give to her.

I am happy to hear that your subscription is so ample, and shall rejoice at every piece of good fortune that befalls you; for you are a very great favourite in my family; and this is a higher compliment than perhaps you are aware of. It includes almost all the professions, and is of course a proof that your writings are adapted to various tastes and situations. My youngest son, who is at Winchester school, writes to me that he is translating some stanzas of your Halloween into Latin verse for the benefit of his comrades. This union of taste partly proceeds no doubt from the cement of Scottish partiality with which they are all somewhat tinctured. Even your translator, who left Scotland too early in life for recollection, is not without it. I remain, with great sincerity, your obedient servant, J. MOORE.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, *Feb.* 24, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND—I will soon be with you now, in guid black prent—in a week, or ten days at farthest. I am obliged, against my own wish, to print subscribers' names; so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription-bills, they must be sent into Creech

directly. I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver, and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my book, looking, like all other *fools*, to my title-page. R. B.

Before this time Burns had gratified his own generous feelings by an act of piety towards his unfortunate precursor Fergusson. The first step he took in the matter is fully expressed in an excerpt from the session-records of the parish of Canongate :—

Session-house within the parish of Canongate, the twenty-second day of February, one thousand seven hundred eighty-seven years.

Sederunt of the Managers of the Kirk and Kirkyard Funds of Canongate;

Which day, the treasurer to the said funds produced a letter from Mr Robert Burns, of date the 6th current, which was read and appointed to be engrossed in their sederunt-book, and of which letter the tenor follows :—

'To the honourable bailies of Canongate, Edinburgh,—Gentlemen, I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your churchyard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

'Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory —a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying.

'I petition you then, gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your very humble servant (*sic subscribitur*), ROBERT BURNS.'

Therefore the said managers, in consideration of the laudable and disinterested motion of Mr Burns, and the propriety of his request, did, and hereby do, unanimously, grant power and liberty to the said Robert Burns to erect a headstone at the grave of the said Robert Fergusson, and to keep up and preserve the same to his memory in all time coming. Extracted forth of the records of the managers, by WILLIAM SPROTT, Clerk.

TO ———.

EDINBURGH [*February* 1787.]

MY DEAR SIR—You may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish, ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much

avenged. By the by, there is nothing in the whole frame of man which seems to be so unaccountable as that thing called conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun: and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts Conscience, and harrows us with the feelings of the damned.

I have enclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your truly-entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr Sprott sent it me.

The inscription on the stone is as follows:—

'HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON, POET.

Born, September 5th, 1751—Died, 16th October 1774.

No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,
"No storied urn, nor animated bust;"
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way
To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust.'

On the other side of the stone is as follows:—

'By special grant of the managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson.'[1]

Dr Currie printed this letter, without letting us know to whom it was addressed, only intimating that he was 'one of the ablest of our poet's correspondents.' From an expression in the letter, it may be presumed that he was the conductor of a periodical work. Dr Currie also publishes the reply to Burns, dated 8th March, containing a very absurd tirade against the poor Canongate magistrates, as if they had been concerned in starving the poet whose grave they now allowed Burns to adorn. This letter, however, is serviceable in informing us of the country rumour regarding Burns's position and doings in Edinburgh. 'Next week,' says the writer, 'I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Edinburgh, and, as my stay will be for eight or ten days, I wish you or ***** would take a snug well-aired bedroom for me, where I may have the pleasure of seeing you over a morning cup of tea. But by all accounts it will be a matter of some difficulty to see you at all, unless your company is bespoke a week before-

[1] If this order of the managers was designed to set aside the ground from all future use as a part of the general place of sepulture, I am sorry to remark that it has been, through inadvertence in some quarter, violated, as I was present some years ago when the remains of Mr John Inverarity, a nephew of Fergusson, were deposited in the grave of the poet.

hand. There is a great rumour here concerning your great intimacy with the Duchess of ———, and other ladies of distinction. I am really told that "cards to invite fly by thousands each night," and if you had one, I suppose there would also be "bribes to your old secretary."'

The keen sympathy felt by Burns for Fergusson was expressed on many occasions. Very soon after making the arrangements for the tomb-stone (March 19, 1787), he presented a copy of the works of the Edinburgh poet to a young lady, and wrote the following lines under the portrait which served for a frontispiece:—

[VERSES UNDER THE PORTRAIT OF FERGUSSON.]

Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleased,
And yet can starve the author of the pleasure!
Oh thou, my elder brother in misfortune,
By far my elder brother in the muses,
With tears I pity thy unhappy fate!
Why is the bard unpitied by the world,
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

[EDINBURGH, *February*, 1787.]

MY LORD—I wanted to purchase a profile of your lordship, which I was told was to be got in town; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a 'human face divine.' The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with anything of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, there is my noble patron, my generous benefactor. Allow me, my lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your lordship, by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition. I owe much to your lordship: and, what has not in some other instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your lordship's, than which I can say nothing more: and I would not be beholden to favours that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful

attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much-favoured sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me, then, my lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honour to be, your lordship's highly-indebted, and ever grateful humble servant, R. B.

VERSES INTENDED TO BE WRITTEN BELOW A NOBLE EARL'S PICTURE.

Whose is that noble, dauntless brow?
And whose that eye of fire?
And whose that generous princely mien
Even rooted foes admire?

Stranger, to justly shew that brow,
And mark that eye of fire,
Would take His hand, whose vernal tints
His other works admire.

Bright as a cloudless summer sun,
With stately port he moves;
His guardian seraph eyes with awe
The noble ward he loves.

Among the illustrious Scottish sons
That chief thou may'st discern;
Mark Scotia's fond returning eye,
It dwells upon Glencairn.

It would appear that the earl did not extend the desired permission, for the verses remained in manuscript till a recent period.[1]

In the new edition, Burns inserted a considerable number of pieces either excluded from the first, or written since. He now let *Death and Dr Hornbook* go forth, also the *Ordination*, and the *Address to the Unco Guid*, which various considerations had formerly induced him to repress. The *Brigs of Ayr*, *Tam Samson's Elegy*, and the *Address to Edinburgh*, were the principal new pieces which now appeared. He also included some juvenile pieces of less moment, as *John Barleycorn*, a translation of the *First Psalm*, and *A Prayer under the Pressure of Violent Anguish*, besides three or four songs. Perhaps we should include in this group a political ballad entitled *A Fragment*, narrating, in the quaintly-familiar language of a rustic, the events of, and connected with, the American war.

[1] The original is now shewn at Dumfries, at the house in which Burns died.

A FRAGMENT.

TUNE—*Killiecrankie.*

When Guildford good our pilot stood,
And did our helm thraw, man,
Ae night, at tea, began a plea,
Within America, man:
Then up they gat the maskin'-pat,
And in the sea did jaw, man; dash
And did nae less, in full Congress,
Than quite refuse our law, man.

Then through the lakes Montgomery takes,
I wat he was na slaw, man;
Down Lowrie's burn he took a turn,
And Carleton did ca', man;
But yet, what-reck, he, at Quebec,
Montgomery-like did fa', man,
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his en'mies a', man.

Poor Tammy Gage, within a cage,
Was kept at Boston ha', man;
Till Willie Howe took o'er the knowe
For Philadelphia, man;
Wi' sword and gun he thought a sin
Guid Christian blood to draw, man:
But at New York, wi' knife and fork,
Sir-loin he hackèd sma', man.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur and whip,
Till Fraser brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In Saratoga shaw, man. wood
Cornwallis fought as lang's he dought,
And did the buckskins claw, man;
But Clinton's glaive frae rust to save,
He hung it to the wa', man.

Then Montague, and Guildford too,
Began to fear a fa', man;
And Sackville dour, wha stood the stoure, obdurate dust
The German Chief to thraw, man: thwart
For Paddy Burke, like ony Turk,
Nae mercy had at a', man;
And Charlie Fox threw by the box,
And lows'd his tinkler jaw, man.

Then Rockingham took up the game,
Till death did on him ca', man;
When Shelburne meek held up his cheek,
Conform to gospel law, man;
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
They did his measures thraw, man,
For North and Fox united stocks,
And bore him to the wa', man.

Then clubs and hearts were Charlie's cartes,
He swept the stakes awa', man,
Till the diamond's ace, of Indian race,
Led him a sair *faux pas*, man;
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads, cheers
On Chatham's boy did ca', man;
And Scotland drew her pipe, and blew,
'Up, Willie, waur them a', man!' vanquish

Behind the throne then Grenville's gone,
A secret word or twa, man;
While slee Dundas aroused the class,
Be-north the Roman wa', man:
And Chatham's wraith, in heavenly graith,
(Inspirèd Bardies saw, man)
Wi' kindling eyes cried, 'Willie, rise!
Would I hae fear'd them a', man?'

But, word and blow, North, Fox, and Co.,
Gowff'd Willie like a ba', man, struck
Till Suthron raise, and coost their claise
Behind him in a raw, man;
And Caledon threw by the drone,
And did her whittle draw, man; knife
And swoor fu' rude, through dirt and blood,
To make it guid in law, man.

* * * * *

It would be pedantic to explain this series of allusions. It is curious as an example of that brief direct narration in which the rustic mind usually gives its version of the most complicated political and historical transactions. Burns was at this time in a raw and unenlightened state as a politician. Dr Blair remarked, with as much truth as point, that his politics 'smelt of the smithy.' He professed a sentimental attachment to Jacobitism, and was thus set down as a Tory. He at the same time sympathised with Dempster and other independent members of the House of Commons, and assumed, as we have seen, the blue and yellow vesture, which denoted in those days an attachment to the principles of Mr Fox,

though perhaps as much out of complaisance to the Earl of Glencairn and the Erskines, all of whom were Whigs, as from any other cause. In plain truth, as intimated by Professor Stewart, he had now no determinate party views, and he himself confesses as much in a hurried note which he seems to have addressed to the Dean of Faculty with reference to this very ballad:—

TO THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE.

Two o'clock.

SIR—I shewed the enclosed political ballad to my Lord Glencairn, to have his opinion whether I should publish it; as I suspect my political tenets, such as they are, may be rather heretical in the opinion of some of my best friends. I have a few first principles in religion and politics, which, I believe, I would not easily part with; but for all the etiquette of, by whom, in what manner, &c. I would not have a dissocial word about it with any one of God's creatures, particularly an honoured patron or a respected friend. His lordship seems to think the piece may appear in print, but desired me to send you a copy for your suffrage. I am, with the sincerest gratitude for the notice with which you have been pleased to honour the rustic bard, sir, your most devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.[1]

The only other piece which has not already been presented in these pages, is the set of verses

TO A HAGGIS.[2]

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm: small guts
Weel are ye wordy of a grace
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need,
While through your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic labour dight,
And cut you up wi' ready slight,

[1] Printed in the *Ayr Observer*, October 1846.

[2] The haggis is a dish peculiar to Scotland, though supposed to be of French extraction. It is composed of minced offal of mutton, mixed with oat-meal and suet, and boiled in a sheep's stomach. When made in *Elspa's* way, with 'a curn o' spice' (see the *Gentle Shepherd*), it is an agreeable, albeit a somewhat heavy dish, always providing that no horror be felt at the idea of its preparation.

Trenching your gushing entrails bright
Like ony ditch;
And then, oh what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin', rich!

Then horn for horn they stretch and strive,
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,
Till a' their weel-swall'd kytes belyve — stomachs by and by
Are bent like drums;
Then auld guid man, maist like to rive, — burst
'Bethankit' hums.

Is there that o'er his French ragout,
Or olio that wad staw a sow,
Or fricassee wad mak her spew
Wi' perfect scunner, — disgust
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view
On sic a dinner!

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash, — feeble
His spindle shank a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit; — fist
Through bloody flood or field to dash,
Oh how unfit!

But mark the rustic, haggis-fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walie nieve a blade, — lusty fist
He'll mak it whissle;
And legs, and arms, and heads will sned, — shear
Like taps o' thrissle.

Ye powers wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware — thin stuff
That jaups in luggies; — splashes in bowls
But, if ye wish her gratefu' pray'r,
Gie her a Haggis!

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, *March 8th*, 1787.

DEAR SIR—Yours came safe, and I am, as usual, much indebted to your goodness. Poor Captain Montgomery is cast. Yesterday it was tried whether the husband could proceed against the unfortunate lover without first divorcing his wife, and their gravities on the bench were unanimously of opinion that M——— may prosecute for

damages directly, and need not divorce his wife at all if he pleases. . . . . O all ye powers of love unfortunate, and friendless wo, pour the balm of sympathising pity on the grief-torn, tender heart of the hapless fair one!

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

My most respectful compliments to Mrs Hamilton and Miss Kennedy.

My poor unfortunate songs come again across my memory. D—— the pedant, frigid soul of criticism for ever and ever! R. B.

The Faculty Decisions, under the date March 7th, 1787, report the judgment of the Court of Session in a case in which a legal point arises between Mr C. M——— C——— of S———, in Ayrshire, and Captain James Montgomery, late of the 93d foot, as to whether the former could prosecute the latter for the dishonour of his wife, without previously divorcing her. It appears that the lady was heiress of S———, that she had had two children to her husband, and that she left his house in June 1783 in company with Captain Montgomery, to whom she bore a child in November of the subsequent year. From Burns's expressions, we are led to understand that there were extenuating circumstances in the conduct of the lady, and that the policy of the husband in abstaining from a process of divorce, which would separate him from a goodly estate, was not popular. Miss Peggy K——— was another Ayrshire lady of fortune, already oftener than once alluded to in these pages as having loved not wisely but too well.

Burns could scarcely but take an interest in the proceedings of the supreme civil court, always an object of respect with the rustic population of Scotland. As a result of his visits to the Parliament House, we have two well-drawn sketches of the leading barristers of that day—namely, the Dean of Faculty, Harry Erskine, and the Lord Advocate, Mr Ilay Campbell (subsequently Lord President).

EXTEMPORE IN THE COURT OF SESSION.

TUNE—*Killiecrankie.*

LORD ADVOCATE.

He clenched his pamphlets in his fist,
  He quoted and he hinted,
Till in a declamation-mist,
  His argument he tint it:
He gapèd for't, he graipèd for't,
  He fand it was awa, man;
But what his common-sense came short,
  He ekèd out wi' law, man.

lost
groped

MR ERSKINE.

Collected Harry stood a wee,
  Then opened out his arm, man:
His lordship sat wi' ruefu' e'e,
  And eyed the gathering storm, man;
Like wind-driven hail, it did assail,
  Or torrents owre a linn, man;
The Bench sae wise lift up their eyes,
  Half-wauken'd wi' the din, man.

TO MR WILLIAM DUNBAR.

Lawn-market, Monday morning.

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

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

shake of a hand, a metaphor, and a laugh, shall recognise old acquaintance:

Where wit may sparkle all its rays,
Uncurst with caution's fears;
That pleasure, basking in the blaze,
Rejoice for endless years.

I have the honour to be, with the warmest sincerity, dear sir, &c.

R. B.

TO MR JAMES CANDLISH,[1]

STUDENT IN PHYSIC, GLASGOW COLLEGE.

EDINBURGH, *March 21st*, 1787.

MY EVER DEAR OLD ACQUAINTANCE—I was equally surprised and pleased at your letter, though I daresay you will think, by my delaying so long to write to you, that I am so drowned in the intoxication of good fortune as to be indifferent to old, and once dear connections. The truth is, I was determined to write a good letter, full of argument, amplification, erudition, and, as Bayes says, *all that*. I thought of it, and thought of it, and by my soul I could not; and, lest you should mistake the cause of my silence, I just sit down to tell you so. Don't give yourself credit, though, that the strength of your logic scares me: the truth is, I never mean to meet you on that ground at all. You have shewn me one thing which was to be demonstrated; that strong pride of reasoning, with a little affectation of singularity, may mislead the best of hearts. I likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in 'the daring path Spinosa trod;' but experience of the weakness, not the strength, of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.

I am still, in the Apostle Paul's phrase, 'The old man with his deeds,' as when we were sporting about the 'Lady Thorn.' I shall be four weeks here yet at least, and so I shall expect to hear from you; welcome sense, welcome nonsense. I am, with the warmest sincerity,

R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *March 22d*, 1787.

MADAM—I read your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own

[1] Mr Candlish, like Burns the offspring of obscure parents in Ayrshire, rose through great difficulties to the laborious calling of a private teacher, first in connection with the Glasgow, and then the Edinburgh university. He married Miss Smith, one of the six belles of Mauchline, and died in 1806. A son of this pair has attained a historical position in his native country. He is the Rev. Dr Robert S. Candlish, of the St George's Free Church, Edinburgh.

bosom; now I am distinguished, patronised, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures: his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

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

> 'Dark as was chaos ere the infant sun
> Was rolled together, or had tried his beams
> Athwart the gloom profound.'

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

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

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

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

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *15th April* 1787.

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

> 'Rude am I in speech,
> And therefore little can I grace my cause
> In speaking for myself'—

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

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

Dr Smith[1] was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him. R. B.

It has already been sufficiently intimated that the Ayrshire Ploughman was the lion of the season in Edinburgh. Upon the strength of the few extracts from his poems which had been circulated by magazines and newspapers, he had been received into the highest circles of society. Here, by the general propriety of his demeanour, and the charms of his conversation, he had deepened the interest which his poetry had awakened in his behalf. It was a wonderful transition for one who, only in last autumn, had been restrained for some time at home to help in the labours of a humble farm. He had been received with courtesy by the remains of that brilliant circle of Scottish literati who adorned the latter half of the eighteenth century. He had been entertained with sincere respect for his talents by such examples of patrician dignity as made Edinburgh their winter haunt. Men of the middle rank had given Burns a society the more dangerous, in as far as it came to him in greater pressure, and set him freer from restraint. Yet it does not appear that the bard was materially affected in any respect by this singular change of circumstances.

Elegant society in Edinburgh formed in those days, as it does still, a limited circle. From the large infusion of the professions of the law and physic, and of the class connected with the university, it had a tone of enlightenment and refinement much

[1] The author of the 'Wealth of Nations.'

more remarkable than any gaiety or splendour in which it indulged. There was also, however, an infusion of bacchanalianism, producing occasionally scenes of uproar even in the public dancing assemblies. At this particular crisis, the usual simplicity was disturbed in no small degree by the Duchess of Gordon, a person who might be said to spend on mere gay life an energy, personal grace, and genius, which might have been expected, with a good direction, to produce the most brilliant results. A letter is before us, written by a member of the bar to a friend in India in the February preceding Burns's arrival in Edinburgh, and containing a striking recital of the habits of this lady, and her influence over society. 'The good town,' says Mr Drummond, 'is uncommonly crowded and splendid at present. The example of dissipation set by her Grace the Duchess of Gordon is far from shewing vice her own image. It is really astonishing to think what effect a single person will have on public manners, when supported by high rank and great address. She is never absent from a public place, and the later the hour, so much the better. It is often four o'clock in the morning before she goes to bed, and she never requires more than five hours' sleep. Dancing, cards, and company, occupy her whole time.'[1] Such was the leader of *bon-ton* in Edinburgh at the crisis when our Scottish Tityrus plunged into it. It evidently was not a happy accident for a person of his peculiar circumstances and prospects.

It must also be observed that the general tone of middle-class life at this epoch was convivial. Lawyers of good repute, merchants, topping tradesmen, teachers of the High School, all frequented taverns in the evening, very generally in clubs, or it might be in masonic capacity, for the social pleasures which they had not yet learned to enjoy under the decenter sanctions of the home circle. Men dined early in those days, and attended to business afterwards till about eight o'clock, by which time they considered themselves at liberty to see after their festive pleasures. Either a private supper-party invited them, with their wives, or they knew of some misty snuggery in John Dowie's or Daniel Douglas's taverns, in certain alleys of the High Street, where they could calculate upon meeting a little gleesome group, with which to spend three, or it might be four hours, over ale or punch. Into these coteries Burns was often drawn by his social temper and good-nature; and here also lay for him a great danger.

It really does not appear, however—although the contrary has been asserted or insinuated—that the bard was either spoilt for the common drudgeries of life by aristocratic attentions, or

[1] This letter is in the possession of Neil Fergusson Blair, Esq., Balthayock House, Perthshire.

depraved in any appreciable extent by contact with the somewhat over-festive citizens. The general bearing of his letters all through this spring is remarkable, on the contrary, for soberness in all applications of the word. He coolly surveyed his present and prospective position, estimated at their due weight the flatteries bestowed upon him, and prepared with a full share of the national foresight for the struggle which he was to encounter as soon as he should have to apply his literary gains in helping out a livelihood. There really is no broad or glaring trace in the traditions of Edinburgh society of any bacchanalianism indulged in by Burns. Every insinuation of such a nature, when carefully inquired into, vanishes into air. Professor Stewart, writing with a reference to the summer of 1787, says—'Notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter of Burns's predilection for convivial and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety, from all of him that fell under my own observation. He told me indeed himself that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him entirely of any merit in his temperance.'

The allusion to 'not very select society' looks at first somewhat startling; but let it be recollected that Professor Stewart, who lived in the purest and most exalted circle, would be apt to regard in this light men who were far from being either vicious or of mean grade. He probably alludes to such men as Smellie, Dunbar, Mr William Nicol of the High School, Mr Alexander Cunningham, W.S., and others, who, though not members of Professor Stewart's set, and though perhaps of over-indulgent habits, were yet men of honourable character and respectable position. Amongst them Burns felt himself at his proper level. With them his comic genius indulged in freer flights than in the stiff society of the New Town. He found in these men kind and genial hearts, much wit and cleverness, and a hearty appreciation of his own talents. It is not surprising that he entered into and enjoyed their society. There is, however, no reason to believe that Burns was thus exposed to any demoralising influence beyond what would have been found in middle-class society in every country-town in Scotland.

Of all the descriptions of Burns during this season, there is none which can pretend to the authority of Professor Walker's, for this gentleman saw him frequently, and was, on the whole, impartial towards him. After remarking that Burns, in good society, never struggled to put on, for a moment, a better manner than was natural to him, he goes on to say—'Though he took his full share in conversation, not only from a perception that it was expected, but from a consciousness that it would gratify expectation, yet he did

so in a manner that was dignified and manly, and altogether remote from petulant vanity, or offensive exultation in an importance so new to him. His deportment was plain without vulgarity, and though it had little softness, and shewed him ready to repel any insult with decision at least, if not with roughness, yet he soon made it evident that those who behaved to him with propriety were in no danger of any unprovoked or boorish rudeness.'

Professor Walker first met Burns at Dr Blacklock's at breakfast. 'I was not much struck with his first appearance, as I had previously heard it described. His person, though strong and well knit, and much superior to what might be expected in a ploughman, was still rather coarse in its outline. His stature, from want of setting up, appeared to be only of the middle size, but was rather above it. His motions were firm and decided, and though without any pretensions to grace, were at the same time so free from clownish constraint, as to shew that he had not always been confined to the society of his profession. His countenance was not of that elegant cast which is most frequent among the upper ranks, but it was manly and intelligent, and marked by a thoughtful gravity which shaded at times into sternness. In his large dark eye the most striking index of his genius resided. It was full of mind, and would have been singularly expressive, under the management of one who could employ it with more art, for the purpose of expression.

'He was plainly, but properly dressed, in a style midway between the holiday costume of a farmer and that of the company with which he now associated. His black hair, without powder, at a time when it was very generally worn, was tied behind, and spread upon his forehead. Upon the whole, from his person, physiognomy, and dress, had I met him near a seaport, and been required to guess his condition, I should have probably conjectured him to be the master of a merchant vessel of the most respectable class.

'In no part of his manner was there the slightest degree of affectation; nor could a stranger have suspected, from anything in his behaviour or conversation, that he had been for some months the favourite of all the fashionable circles of a metropolis.

'In conversation he was powerful. His conceptions and expression were of corresponding vigour, and on all subjects were as remote as possible from commonplaces. Though somewhat authoritative, it was in a way which gave little offence, and was readily imputed to his inexperience in those modes of smoothing dissent and softening assertion which are important characteristics of polished manners. After breakfast I requested him to communicate some of his unpublished pieces. . . . . I paid particular

attention to his recitation, which was plain, slow, articulate, and forcible, but without any eloquence or art. He did not always lay the emphasis with propriety, nor did he humour the sentiment by the variations of his voice. He was standing, during the time, with his face towards the window, to which, and not to his auditors, he directed his eye; thus depriving himself of any additional effect which the language of his composition might have borrowed from the language of his countenance. In this he resembled the generality of singers in ordinary company, who, to shun any charge of affectation, withdraw all meaning from their features, and lose the advantage by which vocal performers on the stage augment the impression and give energy to the sentiment of the song.

'The day after my first introduction to Burns, I supped in company with him at Dr Blair's. The other guests were very few, and as each had been invited chiefly to have an opportunity of meeting with the poet, the doctor endeavoured to draw him out, and to make him the central figure of the group. Though he therefore furnished the greatest proportion of the conversation, he did no more than what he saw evidently was expected. Men of genius have often been taxed with a proneness to commit blunders in company, from that ignorance or negligence of the laws of conversation which must be imputed to the absorption of their thoughts in a favourite subject, or to the want of that daily practice in attending to the petty modes of behaviour which is incompatible with a studious life. From singularities of this sort Burns was unusually free; yet on the present occasion he made a more awkward slip than any that are reported of the poets or mathematicians most noted for absence. Being asked from which of the public places he had received the greatest gratification, he named the High Church, but gave the preference as a preacher to the colleague of our worthy entertainer, whose celebrity rested on his pulpit eloquence, in a tone so pointed and decisive, as to throw the whole company into the most foolish embarrassment. The doctor, indeed, with becoming self-command, endeavoured to relieve the rest by cordially seconding the encomium so injudiciously introduced; but this did not prevent the conversation from labouring under that compulsory effort which was unavoidable, while the thoughts of all were full of the only subject on which it was improper to speak. Of this blunder Burns must instantly have been aware, but he shewed the return of good sense by making no attempt to repair it. His secret mortification was indeed so great, that he never mentioned the circumstance until many years after, when he told me that his silence had proceeded from the pain which he felt in recalling it to his memory.'

One fault only has been attributed to the manners of Burns at this period, and it remained with him to the last. He was apt to pronounce more decisively than is consistent with politeness. The gravity of a fault which prevents others from easily expressing a contrary opinion, and thus puts an awkward restraint upon a company, may be readily admitted. But surely some allowance is called for in favour of one who, whatever his native endowments, had never been in circumstances to acquire that training which makes deference in the well-bred gentleman something like a second nature. Forming his ideas with equal promptitude and clearness, he was exactly the kind of man to utter them with little hesitation as to collateral considerations of expediency. Then Burns had an honest contempt for whatever bore the appearance of meanness and servility. To assert his own exemption from the faults most apt to beset a person in his situation, he was too ready to fall into the opposite error of a hardness of manner towards persons presumedly his superiors, and who were not of the set who won his affections by their unpretending kindness. The greatest breach of decorum which he is known to have committed in Edinburgh society is one recorded by Mr Cromek. It has been several times brought forward as characteristic of Burns at this period; in which we think there is about as much justice as there would be in describing some worthy person as of a bad temper because he once fell into a passion:—'At a private breakfast party, in a literary circle of Edinburgh, the conversation turned on the poetical merit and pathos of Gray's *Elegy*, a poem of which he was enthusiastically fond. A clergyman present, remarkable for his love of paradox and for his eccentric notions upon every subject, distinguished himself by an injudicious and ill-timed attack on this exquisite poem, which Burns, with generous warmth for the reputation of Gray, manfully defended. As the gentleman's remarks were rather general than specific, Burns urged him to bring forward the passages which he thought exceptionable. He made several attempts to quote the poem, but always in a blundering, inaccurate manner. Burns bore all this for a good while with his usual good-natured forbearance, till at length, goaded by the fastidious criticisms and wretched quibblings of his opponent, he roused himself, and, with an eye flashing contempt and indignation, and with great vehemence of gesticulation, he thus addressed the cold critic: "Sir, I now perceive a man may be an excellent judge of poetry by square and rule, and after all be a d—— blockhead!"' Such an outburst might happen to a man of warm and sensitive nature *by surprise;* but that is a totally different thing from a habit of outraging propriety in conversation.

Amongst those who have reported on the aspects of Burns's

mind and demeanour at this crisis, a prominent place is due to Professor Stewart, who had had the advantage of seeing him ere he emerged or hoped to emerge from the shades of life. The learned professor addresses Dr Currie:—'The attentions he received during his stay in town from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station, plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness.

'The variety of his engagements, while in Edinburgh, prevented me from seeing him so often as I could have wished. In the course of the spring he called on me once or twice, at my request, early in the morning, and walked with me to Braid Hills, in the neighbourhood of the town, when he charmed me still more by his private conversation than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained.

'In his political principles he was then a Jacobite; which was perhaps owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of Lord Mareschal. Indeed he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in some convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the winter of 1786–7; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversations turned chiefly on his literary projects or his private affairs.

'I do not recollect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me that you had ever seen Burns.[1] If you have, it is superfluous for me to add, that the idea which his conversation conveyed of the powers of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured

[1] Dr Currie had met with Burns.

moments. But all the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation, I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.

'Among the subjects on which he was accustomed to dwell, the characters of the individuals with whom he happened to meet was plainly a favourite one. The remarks he made on them were always shrewd and pointed, though frequently inclining too much to sarcasm. His praise of those he loved was sometimes indiscriminate and extravagant; but this, I suspect, proceeded rather from the caprice and humour of the moment, than from the effects of attachment in blinding his judgment. His wit was ready, and always impressed with the marks of a vigorous understanding; but, to my taste, not often pleasing or happy.'

Walter Scott was at this time a boy of sixteen; but, though condemned to task-work in his father's office, he already possessed the taste and feelings which would have enabled him to appreciate the society of Burns. He had read his poetry, and he ardently desired to see the poet. An opportunity was at length furnished when Burns came to the house of Dr Adam Ferguson, whose eldest son (now Sir Adam Ferguson) was Scott's intimate friend and companion. The unaffected description of the meeting which Scott afterwards communicated to Mr Lockhart is deeply interesting:—'Of course,' says he, 'we youngsters sat silent, looked, and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side—on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written underneath:—

> "Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
> Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain—
> Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
> The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
> Gave the sad presage of his future years,
> The child of misery baptised in tears."

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of the "Justice of

Peace."[1] I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word which, though in mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with great pleasure. His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one's knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr Nasmyth's picture; but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school; that is, none of your modern agriculturists, who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce guidman* who held his own plough. There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments: the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a cast which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time. His conversation ex-

[1] Langhorne wrote *The Country Justice*, a poem in three parts, at the request of Richard Burn, Esq., the well-known author of a work on the duties of a justice-of-peace. The dedication to Mr Burn is dated 1774. Amidst much commonplace, and many stupid political remarks, occurs this passage, reminding us much, in some parts, of the manner of Campbell:—

'Be this, ye rural magistrates, your plan—
Firm be your justice, but be friends to man. . . . .

Frail in his genius, in his heart too frail,
Born but to err, and erring to bewail,
Shalt thou his faults with eye severe explore,
And give to life one human weakness more?

Still mark if vice or nature prompts the deed;
Still mark the strong temptation and the need;
On pressing want, on famine's powerful call,
At least more lenient let thy justice fall.

For him who, lost to every hope of life,
Has long with fortune held unequal strife,
Known to no human love, no human care,
The friendless, homeless object of despair;
For the poor vagrant feel, while he complains,
Nor from sad freedom send to sadder chains.
Alike if folly or misfortune brought
Those last of woes his evil days have wrought;
Believe with social misery and with me,
Folly's misfortune in the first degree.

Perhaps on some inhospitable shore
The houseless wretch a widowed parent bore;
Who, then no more by golden prospects led,
Of the poor Indian begged a leafy bed.
Cold on Canadian hills,' &c.

pressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. * * * I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say I never saw a man in company with his superiors in station and information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the Duchess of Gordon remark this.'

Sir Adam Ferguson favours me with some particulars of the visit of Burns to his father's house on this occasion. It was the custom of Dr Ferguson to have a conversazione at his house in the Sheens once a week for his principal literary friends. Professor Stewart on this occasion offered to bring Burns, a proposal to which Dr Ferguson readily assented. The poet found himself amongst the most brilliant literary society which Edinburgh then afforded. Sir Adam thinks that Black, Hutton, and John Home were amongst those present. He had himself brought his young friend Walter Scott, as yet unnoted by his seniors. Burns seemed at first little inclined to mingle easily in the company; he went about the room, looking at the pictures on the walls. The print described by Scott arrested his attention; he read aloud the lines underneath, but before getting to the end of them his voice faltered, and his big black eye filled with tears. A little after, he turned with much interest to the company, pointed to the picture, and with some eagerness asked if any one could tell him who had written those affecting lines. The philosophers were silent; no one knew: but, after a decent interval, the pale lame boy near by said in a negligent manner, 'They're written by one Langhorne.' An explanation of the place where they occur followed, and Burns fixed a look of half-serious interest on the youth, while he said, 'You'll be a man yet, sir.' Scott may be said to have derived literary ordination from Burns.[1]

[1] Scott relates elsewhere, that the house of Dr Ferguson, 'while he continued to reside in Edinburgh, was a general point of reunion among his friends, particularly of a Sunday, where there generally met, at a hospitable dinner-party, the most distinguished literati of the old time who still remained, with such young persons as were thought worthy to approach their circle, and listen to their conversation. The place of his residence was an insulated house at some distance

In this memorable spring Burns commenced a second Commonplace-book, of which several entries near the beginning alone fulfil the design with which he starts. The remainder appear to be merely copies of pithy expressions which he had introduced into private letters.

'EDINBURGH, *April* 9, 1787.

'As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr Palgrave, that "half a word fixed upon, or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection." I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

'For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confidant. I will sketch every character that anyway strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law-phrase, *without feud or favour*. Where I hit on anything clever, my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

'My own private story likewise, my love-adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light—shall be occasionally in-

from the town, which its visitors (notwithstanding its internal comforts) chose to call, for that reason, Kamtschatka.'—*Quart. Review*, xxxvi., 197. This house forms part of a street called *the Sheens*, from its proximity to the remains of an ancient monastery dedicated to St Catherine of Sienna. It stands at the south end of the street, on the east side, with its gable facing along a lane. It was in this house, in a room up stairs, now used as a bedroom, that Burns met Scott.

The copy of the print which so greatly affected Burns remains in its original state in the possession of Sir Adam Ferguson. Somewhat oddly, the name 'LANGHORNE' is quoted at the bottom of the lines, but in so small a character, that the poet might well fail to read it.

serted. In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up to sale.

'To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exception—the connection between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

> "When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
> And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart."

There confidence, confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion, that endears them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedly "reigns and revels." But this is not my lot; and, in my situation, if I am wise (which, by the by, I have no great chance of being), my fate should be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow, "to watch alone on the house-tops." Oh the pity!

* * * * * * *

'There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received everywhere, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due;* he meets at a great man's table a Squire something, or a Sir somebody; he knows the *noble* landlord, at heart, gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes, beyond, perhaps, any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eightpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice, that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty!

'The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He shewed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

'With Dr Blair I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*. When he neglects me for the mere 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 ?'

He afterwards presents the following estimate of Dr Blair :—

'It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one; but, in my opinion, Dr Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintance; but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first, the very first rank in prose; even in poetry, a bard of Nature's making can only take the *pas* of him. He has a heart not of the very finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is truly a worthy and most respectable character.'

Amongst the men whom Burns had met and liked at the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge, was Joseph Woods, a respectable member of the Edinburgh *corps dramatique*, and the more likely to be endeared to the Ayrshire poet, that he had been an intimate friend of poor Fergusson. This explains a

PROLOGUE, SPOKEN BY MR WOODS ON HIS BENEFIT NIGHT,

Monday, 16th April 1787.

When by a generous Public's kind acclaim,
That dearest meed is granted—honest fame;
When here your favour is the actor's lot,
Nor even the man in private life forgot;
What breast so dead to heavenly Virtue's glow,
But heaves impassioned with the grateful throe.

Poor is the task to please a barbarous throng,
It needs no Siddons' powers in Southern's song;
But here an ancient nation famed afar,
For genius, learning high, as great in war—
Hail, CALEDONIA, name for ever dear!
Before whose sons I'm honoured to appear!
Where every science—every nobler art—
That can inform the mind, or mend the heart,
Is known; as grateful nations oft have found
Far as the rude barbarian marks the bound.
Philosophy, no idle pedant dream,
Here holds her search by heaven-taught Reason's beam;
Here history paints with elegance and force
The tide of Empire's fluctuating course;
Here Douglas forms wild Shakspeare into plan,
And Harley[1] rouses all the god in man,

[1] The 'Man of Feeling,' written by Mr Mackenzie.

When well-formed taste and sparkling wit unite
With manly lore, or female beauty bright
(Beauty, where faultless symmetry and grace,
Can only charm us in the second place),
Witness my heart, how oft with panting fear,
As on this night, I've met these judges here!
But still the hope Experience taught to live,
Equal to judge—you're candid to forgive.
No hundred-headed Riot here we meet,
With Decency and Law beneath his feet;
Nor Insolence assumes fair Freedom's name;
Like CALEDONIANS, you applaud or blame.

Oh thou dread Power! whose empire-giving hand
Has oft been stretched to shield the honoured land!
Strong may she glow with all her ancient fire!
May every son be worthy of his sire!
Firm may she rise with generous disdain
At Tyranny's or direr Pleasure's chain!
Still self-dependent in her native shore,
Bold may she brave grim Danger's loudest roar,
Till Fate the curtain drops on worlds to be no more.

The new edition of the Poems appeared on the 21st April, in a handsome octavo at five shillings. Creech's advertisement contained the following note:—'As the book is published for the sole benefit of the author, it is requested that subscribers will send for their copies, and none will be delivered without money.' The Kilmarnock Preface was now abandoned, and in its stead appeared a Dedication

TO THE NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CALEDONIAN HUNT:

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN—A Scottish bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service—where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land, those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The poetic genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha, at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue. I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honoured protection. I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning,

that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours—I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen, and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated, and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the great fountain of honour, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your forefathers, may pleasure ever be of your party, and may social joy await your return! When harassed in courts or camps with the justlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native seats—and may domestic happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find you an inexorable foe! I have the honour to be, with the sincerest gratitude and highest respect, my Lords and Gentlemen, your most devoted, humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *4th April* 1787.

The volume contained another document most remarkable—a list of subscribers extending over thirty-eight pages. Several of Burns's friends had been very active in promoting this subscription, and the high terms in which he had been spoken of in various publications, had disposed the public to extend its patronage liberally. The consequence was, the extraordinary number of fifteen hundred subscribers, engaging for two thousand eight hundred copies. The Caledonian Hunt stood at the head of the list for a hundred, for each of which, as we have already seen, a guinea was paid. Mr Creech appeared as subscribing for five hundred. Many of the nobility and gentry, and a great number of the most distinguished members of Scottish society in general, are presented in the list; in many instances, two, four, or five copies are taken; in some even a larger number. The Earl of Glencairn takes eight copies, the Countess sixteen, and Lady Betty Cunningham four. The Duchess of Gordon takes twenty-one, and the Earl of Eglintoun forty-two. Mr Robert Muir of Kilmarnock, who had taken seventy-two copies of the provincial edition, is now a subscriber for forty; and Mr Archibald Prentice, farmer at Covington Mill, is put down for twenty. Mingled with the names of individuals occur, the Scots College at Valladolid, the Scots College at Douay, the Scots College at Paris, the Scots Bene-

dictine Monastery at Ratisbon, and the Scots Benedictine Monastery at Maryburgh. I have looked over the list with considerable care, and detect only two names belonging to persons whom I know to be still (March 1851) alive; namely, 'Francis Charteris, Esq. Junior' (now Earl of Wemyss), and 'Mr Charles Hope, advocate' (lately President of the Court of Session.)

Full justice has never been done to the Scottish public of that day for its liberality to Burns. Instead of being cold towards him, or refusing to help him up from the lowly and embarrassed circumstances in which nature and fortune had placed him, there was a burst of generous enthusiasm in his favour, and he met with an amount of patronage perhaps unprecedented in Britain since the days of Pope's Iliad. The enactment of the Caledonian Hunt was equivalent to a gift of nearly a hundred pounds. We have seen that two persons, the Earl of Eglintoun, and Mr Miller of Dalswinton, sent him each ten guineas as a gift. Those individuals who subscribed for a multitude of copies of his poems, may be said to have also given him presents. The whole subscription-list can only be properly viewed as a contribution of society, for the benefit of one whom they understood to be a man of merit above his circumstances. Measured against an ardent modern estimate of the genius of Burns, the whole contribution may appear not merely small but insignificant; but, measured against the idea of a young and poor man, whom various critics had ventured to pronounce an extraordinary genius, and of whom little further was as yet known, it certainly is not small. Nor were its results to the recipient of little moment. A man who had hitherto lived as a farm-labourer, and never before, as he himself confesses, had ten pounds at once in his possession, is instantaneously received into the highest circles of society, treated respectfully and kindly, and endowed with a little fortune of five hundred pounds: it may be, and doubtless is, below the merits of Burns, as we now regard him; but to him at the time, it was a windfall of fortune fully enough perhaps for him to bear with any equanimity.

TO DR MOORE.

EDINBURGH, *23d April* 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs Dunlop. I am ill skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, sir, for the honour you have done me, and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book, is what I have in common with the

world; but to regard these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight, and after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, Cowden Knowes, Banks of Yarrow, Tweed, &c. I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here; but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind. R. B.

The answer of Dr Moore was as follows:—

CLIFFORD STREET, *May* 23, 1787.

DEAR SIR—I had the pleasure of your letter by Mr Creech, and soon after he sent me the new edition of your poems. You seem to think it incumbent on you to send to each subscriber a number of copies proportionate to his subscription money, but you may depend upon it few subscribers expect more than one copy, whatever they subscribed: I must inform you, however, that I took twelve copies for those subscribers, for whose money you were so accurate as to send me a receipt; and Lord Eglintoun told me he had sent for six copies for himself, as he wished to give five of them as presents.

Some of the poems you have added in this last edition are very beautiful, particularly the *Winter Night*, the *Address to Edinburgh*, *Green Grow the Rashes*, and the two songs immediately following, the latter of which is exquisite.[1] By the way, I imagine you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge. No kind of poetry demands more delicacy or higher polishing. Horace is more admired on account of his Odes than all his other writings. But nothing now added is equal to your *Vision* and *Cotter's Saturday Night*. In these are united fine imagery, natural and pathetic description, with sublimity of language and thought. It is evident that you already possess a great variety of expression and command of the English language; you ought, therefore, to deal more sparingly for the future in the provincial dialect: why should you, by using that, limit the number of your admirers to those who understand the Scottish, when you can extend it to all persons of taste who understand the English language? In my opinion, you should plan some larger work than any you have as yet attempted. I mean, reflect upon some proper subject, and arrange

[1] 'The Gloomy Night is gathering fast.'

the plan in your mind, without beginning to execute any part of it till you have studied most of the best English poets, and read a little more of history. The Greek and Roman stories you can read in some abridgment, and soon become master of the most brilliant facts, which must highly delight a poetical mind. You should also, and very soon may, become master of the heathen mythology, to which there are everlasting allusions in all the poets, and which in itself is charmingly fanciful. What will require to be studied with more attention is modern history; that is, the history of France and Great Britain, from the beginning of Henry VII.'s reign. I know very well you have a mind capable of attaining knowledge by a shorter process than is commonly used, and I am certain you are capable of making a better use of it when attained than is generally done.

I beg you will not give yourself the trouble of writing to me when it is inconvenient, and make no apology when you do write for having postponed it: be assured of this, however, that I shall always be happy to hear from you. I think my friend Mr —— told me that you had some poems in manuscript by you of a satirical and humorous nature (in which, by the way, I think you very strong), which your prudent friends prevailed on you to omit, particularly one called *Somebody's Confession*;[1] if you will intrust me with a sight of any of these, I will pawn my word to give no copies, and will be obliged to you for a perusal of them.

I understand you intend to take a farm, and make the useful and respectable business of husbandry your chief occupation: this I hope will not prevent your making occasional addresses to the nine ladies who have shewn you such favour, one of whom visited you in the 'auld clay biggin'.' Virgil, before you, proved to the world that there is nothing in the business of husbandry inimical to poetry; and I sincerely hope that you may afford an example of a good poet being a successful farmer. I fear it will not be in my power to visit Scotland this season; when I do, I'll endeavour to find you out, for I heartily wish to see and converse with you. If ever your occasions call you to this place, I make no doubt of your paying me a visit, and you may depend on a very cordial welcome from this family. I am, dear sir, your friend and obedient servant,

J. Moore.

The following letter develops a strong feature in Burns's character. Mrs Dunlop had sent him a letter of comments on his volume, particularly dwelling with regret on his reprinting *The Dream*, which she of course conceived to be likely to damage the poet at court, if his fame should ever extend so far. We here see that, while good-natured and conceding up to a certain point with

[1] Probably *Holy Willie's Prayer* is meant.

friendly critics, he could also hold fast by any ground which he had once determinedly taken up:—

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *30th April* 1787.

——— YOUR criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being, either in prose or verse.

I set as little by princes, lords, clergy, critics, &c. as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by and by—illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

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

Already a kind of bitterness had taken possession of Burns's mind, as if the reception of his volume had in some degree disappointed him. This strongly appears in a letter

TO THE REV. DR HUGH BLAIR.

LAWNMARKET, EDINBURGH, *3d May* 1787.

REV. AND MUCH-RESPECTED SIR—I leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship you have shewn me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation: drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark, and honoured by the notice of those illustrious names of my country whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honour me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man, I knew very well that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character when once the novelty was over: I have made up my mind that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof-impression of Beugo's work for me, done on Indian paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c. R. B.

The answer of Dr Blair is interesting. It exhibits the calm-

ness of ordinary talent in contrast to the irritability of genius. The noted self-complacency of the writer comes also strongly out. Everybody must be struck by the naturalness and simplicity of Burns's style, in comparison with the studied and stilted manner of the learned professor of rhetoric:—

ARGYLE SQUARE, EDINBURGH, *4th May* 1787.

DEAR SIR—I was favoured this forenoon with your very obliging letter, together with an impression of your portrait, for which I return you my best thanks. The success you have met with I do not think was beyond your merits; and if I have had any small hand in contributing to it, it gives me great pleasure. I know no way in which literary persons who are advanced in years can do more service to the world, than in forwarding the efforts of rising genius, or bringing forth unknown merit from obscurity. I was the first person who brought out to the notice of the world the poems of Ossian: first, by the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, which I published; and afterwards by my setting on foot the undertaking for collecting and publishing the *Works of Ossian;* and I have always considered this as a meritorious action of my life.

Your situation, as you say, was indeed very singular; and in being brought out, all at once, from the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well; and as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour.

You are now, I presume, to retire to a more private walk of life; and I trust will conduct yourself there with industry, prudence, and honour. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments which your situation will render proper, you will not, I hope, neglect to promote that esteem, by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it as may raise your character still higher. At the same time, be not in too great a haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents; for on any second production you give the world, your fate as a poet will very much depend. There is no doubt a gloss of novelty, which time wears off. As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprised if, in your rural retreat, you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet without being somewhat of a philosopher. He must lay his account that any one, who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise. He will be inclined sometimes to court retreat, and to disappear from public view. He will not affect to shine always, that he may at proper seasons come forth with more advantage and energy. He will not think himself neglected if he be not always praised. I have taken the liberty,

you see, of an old man, to give advice and make reflections, which your own good sense will, I daresay, render unnecessary.

As you mention your being just about to leave town, you are going, I should suppose, to Dumfriesshire, to look at some of Mr Miller's farms. I heartily wish the offers to be made you there may answer, as I am persuaded you will not easily find a more generous and better-hearted proprietor to live under than Mr Miller. When you return, if you come this way, I will be happy to see you, and to know concerning your future plans of life. You will find me by the 22d of this month, not in my house in Argyle Square, but at a country house at Restalrig, about a mile east from Edinburgh, near the Musselburgh road. Wishing you all success and prosperity, I am, with real regard and esteem, dear sir, yours sincerely,

HUGH BLAIR.

Burns had become acquainted during this spring with a young man of amiable character and literary tendencies, who was destined to figure largely in his correspondence. This was Mr Robert Ainslie, afterwards well known as a respectable writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, and as an amateur in the literary walk. Ainslie was serving his apprenticeship in the office of Mr Samuel Mitchelson in Carrubber's Close—a person, by the way, who is connected otherwise with Scottish literature; for the *haggis scene* in 'Humphry Clinker' is understood to be depicted from an actual occurrence in his house, when Smollett was one of his guests. Ainslie was as thoughtless and light-hearted as a writer's apprentice could well be, and as yet scarcely twenty; though clever and intelligent, it is most likely that his perfect *bonhomie* and *insouciance* were what chiefly recommended him to Burns. I have often conversed with him about the bard when age, business cares, and the gravity befitting his duty as an elder in the kirk, had given something of a different cast to his character; and never did he once admit, or seem capable of admitting, that the Ayrshire poet was anything but 'the finest fellow' that ever breathed. His love for Burns as a friend and companion remained ardent to the last. Doubtless he knew of many follies amongst the acts of the bard—no matter, his warm feelings and eloquent genius sanctified and excused all.

Burns was now preparing for a tour of the south of Scotland, to be performed partly in the company of Mr Ainslie, who had obtained a fortnight's leave of absence to visit his friends in Berwickshire. Before starting, the poet sent a letter to Mr James Johnson, an engraver, who had commenced the preparation of a large collection of the Scottish songs, with their tunes harmonised for the pianoforte. On being made acquainted with Johnson's design, the bard had entered into it with the

greatest cordiality, became a contributor of songs of his own composition, and endeavoured to obtain for the work old songs and airs hitherto inedited. When the first volume appeared, at the end of May, it was found to contain two acknowledged songs by 'Mr Burns'—*Green Grow the Rashes*, and *Young Peggy Blooms our Bonniest Lass*—besides two of inferior temper which have been since placed to his account, and which are preserved in a subordinate part of the present work.

TO JAMES JOHNSON, EDITOR OF THE SCOTS MUSICAL MUSEUM.

LAWNMARKET, *Friday noon, 4th May* 1787.

DEAR SIR—I have sent you a song never before known, for your collection; the air by M'Gibbon, but I know not the author of the words, as I got it from Dr Blacklock.

Farewell, my dear sir! I wished to have seen you, but I have been dreadfully throng [busy], as I march to-morrow. Had my acquaintance with you been a little older, I would have asked the favour of your correspondence, as I have met with few people whose company and conversation gave me so much pleasure, because I have met with few whose sentiments are so congenial to my own.

When Dunbar and you meet, tell him that I left Edinburgh with the idea of him hanging somewhere about my heart.

Keep the original of this song till we meet again, whenever that may be. R. B.

Burns and his young friend Ainslie set out on their tour on Saturday the 5th of May. They travelled on horseback, and arrived on the first evening at Berrywell, near Dunse, the residence of Mr Ainslie's father, who acted as land-steward on the Berwickshire estates of Lord Douglas. We may imagine with what elation of spirit Burns would advance, for the first time, into the valley of the Tweed, associated as it was with so many of those old native strains so dear to his heart. He kept a journal of this tour, entering not merely the events of the road, but observations on the persons with whom he met. This we shall present, interspersed with explanatory memoranda and such additional particulars as have been preserved:—

'Left Edinburgh (May 5, 1787)—Lammermuir-hills miserably dreary, but at times very picturesque. Langtonedge, a glorious view of the Merse—Reach Berrywell. Old Mr Ainslie an uncommon character—his hobbies, agriculture, natural philosophy, and politics. In the first he is unexceptionably the clearest-headed, best-informed man I ever met with; in the other two very intelligent: as a man of business, he has uncommon merit, and by fairly deserving it, has made a very decent independence. Mrs Ainslie,

an excellent, sensible, cheerful, amiable old woman. Miss Ainslie —her person a little *embonpoint*, but handsome; her face, particularly her eyes, full of sweetness and good-humour; she unites three qualities rarely to be found together—keen, solid penetration; sly witty observation and remark; and the gentlest, most unaffected female modesty. Douglas, a clever, fine, promising young fellow.[1] The family-meeting with their brother, my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister. The whole family remarkably attached to their menials—Mrs A. full of stories of the sagacity and sense of the little girl in the kitchen. Mr A. high in the praises of an African, his house-servant—all his people old in his service —Douglas's old nurse came to Berrywell yesterday to remind them of its being his birthday.

'A Mr Dudgeon, a poet at times, a worthy, remarkable character—natural penetration, a great deal of information, some genius, and extreme modesty.

[Mr Dudgeon was the author of a Scottish song of merit, entitled, *The Maid that tends the Goats*.]

'*Sunday* [*May* 6.]—Went to church at Dunse—Dr Bowmaker a man of strong lungs and pretty judicious remark; but ill-skilled in propriety, and altogether unconscious of his want of it.'

['During the discourse Burns produced a neat impromptu, conveying an elegant compliment to Miss Ainslie. Dr Bowmaker had selected a text of Scripture that contained a heavy denunciation against obstinate sinners. In the course of the sermon Burns observed the young lady turning over the leaves of her Bible with much earnestness in search of the text. He took out a slip of paper, and with a pencil wrote the following lines on it, which he immediately presented to her:—

Fair maid, you need not take the hint,
  Nor idle texts pursue:
'Twas *guilty sinners* that he meant—
  Not *angels* such as you!'[2]]

'*Monday* (*May* 7.)—Coldstream—went over to England—Cornhill—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge.'

[An anecdote *apropos* to this point was communicated by Mr Ainslie to a popular publication many years afterwards. 'The weather was charming, the travellers youthful and in good spirits, and the poet delighted with the fine scenery and the poetical associations connected with it. When they arrived at Coldstream,

[1] 'At Eden, near Banff, Aberdeenshire, 19th September 1850, Douglas Ainslie, Esq. of Cairnbank, Berwickshire, in the eightieth year of his age.'—*Newspaper Obituary*.

[2] Cromek.

where the dividing-line between England and Scotland is the Tweed, Mr Ainslie suggested going across to the other side of the river by the Coldstream bridge, that Burns might be enabled to say he had been in England. They did so, and were pacing slowly along on English ground, enjoying their walk, when Mr Ainslie was surprised to see the poet throw away his hat, and thus uncovered, kneel down with uplifted hands, and apparently rapt in a fit of enthusiasm. Mr Ainslie kept silence, uncertain what was next to be done, when Burns, with extreme emotion, and an expression of countenance which his companion could never forget, prayed for and blessed Scotland most solemnly, by pronouncing aloud, in tones of the deepest devotion, the two concluding stanzas of the *Cotter's Saturday Night*:—

"Oh, Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And oh may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

Oh Thou! who poured the patriotic tide
That streamed through Wallace's undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
Oh never, never Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!"] [1]

'Dine at Coldstream with Mr Ainslie and Mr Foreman—beat Mr F. in a dispute about Voltaire. Tea at Lennel House with Mr Brydone [author of *A Tour in Sicily and Malta.*]—Mr Brydone a most excellent heart, kind, joyous, and benevolent, but a good deal of the French indiscriminate complaisance—from his situation past and present, an admirer of everything that bears a splendid title, or that possesses a large estate [Mr B. had travelled as preceptor to several men of rank.]—Mrs Brydone [a daughter of Dr Robertson the historian] a most elegant woman in her person and manners; the tones of her voice remarkably sweet—my reception extremely flattering—sleep at Coldstream.

[1] Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, April 28, 1832.

[Many years after, Scott came in like manner as a visitor to Mr Brydone, and his record of the venerable traveller is worth quoting in connection with Burns's :—

'Stung with these thoughts, he urged to speed
His troop, and reached at eve the Tweed,
Where Lennel's convent closed their march
(There now is left but one frail arch,
Yet mourn thou not its cells;
Our time a fair exchange has made;
Hard by, in hospitable shade,
A reverend pilgrim dwells,
Well worth the whole Bernardine brood,
That e'er wore sandal, frock, or hood.')—*Marmion.*]

'*Tuesday* [*May* 8.]—Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of Kelso—fine bridge over the Tweed—enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, particularly the Scotch side; introduced to Mr Scott of the Royal Bank, an excellent, modest fellow—fine situation of it—ruins of Roxburgh Castle—a holly-bush growing where James II. of Scotland was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by an English Hottentot—a *maître d'hotel* of the duke's, a Mr Cole. Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads. Turnip and sheep husbandry, their great improvements. Mr M'Dowal at Caverton Mill, a friend of Mr Ainslie's, with whom I dined to-day, sold his sheep, ewe and lamb together, at two guineas a piece. Wash their sheep before shearing—7 or 8 lbs. of washing wool in a fleece—low markets, consequently low rents—fine lands not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre—magnificence of farmers and farm-houses.' [Farms in Roxburgh and Berwickshire were then, as now, on a large scale, in comparison with the bard's native county.] 'Come up Teviot and up Jed to Jedburgh to lie [that is, to sleep, or lodge], and so wish myself a good-night.

'*Wednesday* [*May* 9.]—Breakfast with Mr —— in Jedburgh—a squabble between Mrs ——, a crazed, talkative slattern, and a sister of hers, an old maid, respecting a Relief minister. Miss gives Madam the lie; and Madam, by way of revenge, upbraids her that she laid snares to entangle the said minister, then a widower, in the net of matrimony. Go about two miles out of Jedburgh to a roup of parks—meet a polite soldier-like gentleman, Captain Rutherford, who had been many years through the wilds of America, a prisoner among the Indians. Charming, romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens, orchards, &c. intermingled

among the houses—fine old ruins—a once magnificent cathedral [abbey church], and strong castle. All the towns here have the appearance of old, rude grandeur, but the people extremely idle—Jed a fine romantic little river.

'Dine with Captain Rutherford—the captain a polite fellow, fond of money in his farming way; shewed a particular respect to my bardship—his lady exactly a proper matrimonial second part for him. Miss Rutherford a beautiful girl.

'Return to Jedburgh—walk up Jed with some ladies, to be shewn Love-lane and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr Potts, writer, a very clever fellow; and Mr Somerville, the clergyman of the place, a man and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning.' [Dr Somerville was author of a History of England during the reigns of William and Anne, and the father-in-law of a lady eminent in modern science. After the appearance of this passage in Dr Currie's memoir of the poet, he suddenly and entirely abandoned punning.] 'The walking party of ladies, Mrs —— and Miss —— her sister, before mentioned. *N.B.*—These two appear still more comfortably ugly and stupid, and bore me most shockingly. Two Miss —— tolerably agreeable. Miss Hope, a tolerably pretty girl, fond of laughing and fun. Miss Lindsay, a good-humoured, amiable girl; rather short *et embonpoint*, but handsome, and extremely graceful—beautiful hazel eyes, full of spirit, and sparkling with delicious moisture—an engaging face—*un tout ensemble* that speaks her of the first order of female minds—her sister, a bonnie, strappin', rosy, sonsie lass. Shake myself loose, after several unsuccessful efforts, of Mrs —— and Miss ——, and, somehow or other, get hold of Miss Lindsay's arm. My heart is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. Miss seems very well pleased with my bardship's distinguishing her; and after some slight qualms, which I could easily mark, she sets the titter round at defiance, and kindly allows me to keep my hold; and when parted by the ceremony of my introduction to Mr Somerville, she met me half, to resume my situation. *Nota Bene.*—The poet within a point and a half of being ——— in love—I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as much tinder as ever.

'The old, cross-grained, Whiggish, ugly, slanderous Miss ——, with all the poisonous spleen of a disappointed, ancient maid, stops me very unseasonably to ease her bursting breast, by falling abusively foul on the Miss Lindsays, particularly on my Dulcinea—I hardly refrain from cursing her to her face for daring to mouth her calumnious slander on one of the finest pieces of the workmanship of Almighty Excellence! Sup at Mr ——'s; vexed that the

Miss Lindsays are not of the supper party, as they only are wanting. Mrs —— and Miss —— still improve infernally on my hands.

'Set out next morning for Wauchope, the seat of my correspondent, Mrs Scott [1]—breakfast by the way with Dr Elliot, an agreeable, good-hearted, climate-beaten old veteran, in the medical line, now retired to a romantic, but rather moorish place, on the banks of the Rule—he accompanies us almost to Wauchope—we traverse the country to the top of Bochester, the scene of an old encampment, and Woolee Hill.

'Wauchope.—Mr Scott exactly the figure and face commonly given to Sancho Panza—very shrewd in his farming matters, and not unfrequently stumbles on what may be called a strong thing rather than a good thing. Mrs Scott all the sense, taste, intrepidity of face, and bold, critical decision, which usually distinguish female authors. Sup with Mr Potts—agreeable party. Breakfast next morning with Mr Somerville—the *bruit* of Miss Lindsay and my bardship, by means of the invention and malice of Miss ——. Mr Somerville sends to Dr Lindsay, begging him and family to breakfast if convenient, but at all events to send Miss Lindsay; accordingly, Miss Lindsay only comes. I find Miss Lindsay would soon play the devil with me—I met with some little flattering attentions from her. Mrs Somerville an excellent, motherly, agreeable woman, and a fine family. Mr Ainslie and Mrs S ——, junr., with Mr ——, Miss Lindsay, and myself, go to see *Esther* [Easton], a very remarkable woman for reciting poetry of all kinds, and sometimes making Scotch doggerel herself—she can repeat by heart almost everything she has ever read, particularly Pope's *Homer* from end to end—has studied Euclid by herself; and, in short, is a woman of very extraordinary abilities. On conversing with her, I find her fully equal to the character given of her. She is very much flattered that I send for her, and that she sees a poet who has *put out a book*, as she says. She is, among other things, a great florist, and is rather past the meridian of once celebrated beauty.

'I walk in *Esther's* garden with Miss Lindsay, and after some little chit-chat of the tender kind, I presented her with a proof print of my *nob*, which she accepted with something more tender than gratitude. She told me many little stories which Miss —— had retailed concerning her and me, with prolonging pleasure—God bless her! Was waited on by the magistrates, and presented with the freedom of the burgh.' [On this occasion the usual treat of a *riddle of claret* was bestowed upon the bard in the inn.

[1] See her poetical epistle and Burns's reply, at pp. 37, 38 of this volume.

Always jealous of his independence, he left the room before the feast was over, and endeavoured to induce the landlord to accept of payment of the bill from *him*. It is scarcely necessary to say that mine host knew too well what was befitting the dignity of the burgh to take Burns's money.]

'Took farewell of Jedburgh, with some melancholy, disagreeable sensations. Jed, pure be thy crystal streams, and hallowed thy sylvan banks! Sweet Isabella Lindsay, may peace dwell in thy bosom, uninterrupted, except by the tumultuous throbbings of rapturous love! That love-kindling eye must beam on another, not on me—that graceful form must bless another's arms, not mine![1]

'Kelso.—Dine with the Farmers' Club—all gentlemen, talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from £30 to £50 value, and attends the fox-huntings in the county. Go out with Mr Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr Ainslie's, to lie. Mr Ker, a most gentlemanly, clever, handsome fellow, a widower with some fine children—his mind and manner astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir in Kilmarnock—everything in Mr Ker's most elegant—he offers to accompany me in my English tour. Dine with Sir Alexander Don—a pretty clever fellow, but far from being a match for his divine lady' [Lady Harriet Don, sister of the Earl of Glencairn.] 'A very wet day. . . . . Sleep at Stodrig again, and set out for Melrose—visit Dryburgh, a fine old ruined abbey—still bad weather—cross Leader, and come up Tweed to Melrose—dine there, and visit that far-famed, glorious ruin—come to Selkirk, up Ettrick—the whole country hereabout, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony.'[2]

[It is evident that Burns was disappointed of his intended visit

[1] Isabella Lindsay and her sister lived with their brother, a young surgeon in Jedburgh. Isabella, who was truly worthy in all respects of the bard's panegyric, married Mr Adam Armstrong, who held a situation under the Russian government. She died young, leaving four children; the youngest son is General Robert Armstrong, now director of the Imperial Mint at St Petersburg. Peggy, the younger sister, died not long after the poet's visit, at the age of twenty-two.

[2] 'I have often heard Dr Clarkson tell, with a heavy heart and a loss of all patience with himself, that when Mr Ainslie and Burns arrived at Selkirk that evening, "they were just like twa droukit craws." The doctor and other two gentlemen were sitting in Veitch's Inn, near the West Port, taking their glass (for Selkirk has a West Port as well as Edinburgh.) When the travellers arrived, the two within viewed them out at the window as they alighted, and certainly conceived no very high opinion of them. In a short time, however, they sent Mr Veitch to the doctor and his friends, requesting permission for two strangers to take a glass with them. The doctor objected, and asked Mr Veitch what the men were like? Mr Veitch said he could not well say; the one spoke *rather* like a gentleman, but the other was a drover-looking chap; so they refused to admit them, sending them word that they were sorry they were engaged elsewhere, and obliged to go away. The doctor saw them ride off next morning, and it was not till the third day that he knew it had been the celebrated Scottish poet whom they had refused to admit. That refusal hangs about the doctor's heart like a dead weight to this day, and will do till the day of his death, for the bard had not a more enthusiastic admirer.'—JAMES HOGG *in his edition of Burns, Fullarton & Co. Glasgow.*

to the Vale of Yarrow, whose 'dowie dens' were of course endeared to him by the ancient popular ballad, as well as by William Hamilton's beautiful modern ditty. Whether he would have pronounced upon it as another great poet, led by the same fancies, afterwards did—

'But thou that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation:
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy'—

can only be matter of conjecture. The rain seems to have forced him—we may be sure reluctantly—to take refuge in the inn at Selkirk.

'Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.'

The Ettrick, however, which was also to him classical, by virtue of a fine pastoral song, was now in his ken, for it travels by Selkirk town.

The poet seems to have spent the remainder of the day in penning a letter to his publisher, Mr Creech, who had lately left Edinburgh on a visit to London.

TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ.

SELKIRK, 13*th May* 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND—The enclosed I have just wrote, nearly extempore, in a solitary inn in Selkirk, after a miserably wet day's riding. I have been over most of East Lothian, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirk shires, and next week I begin a tour through the north of England. Yesterday I dined with Lady Harriet, sister to my noble patron, *Quem Deus conservet!* I would write till I would tire you as much with dull prose, as I daresay by this time you are with wretched verse; but I am jaded to death; so, with a grateful farewell, I have the honour to be, good sir, yours sincerely, R. B.

The enclosed was the following set of verses:—

WILLIE'S AWA.

Auld chuckie[1] Reekie's[2] sair distrest,
Down droops her ance weel-burnished crest,

[1] Literally, a hen; secondarily, a familiar term of address.
Gin ony sour-mou'd girning bucky
Ca' me conceited keckling chucky.—RAMSAY.

[2] Literally, smoky; a familiar *sobriquet* for Edinburgh, not at all unsuitable.

Nae joy her bonny buskit nest — decorated
Can yield ava, — at all
Her darling bird that she lo'es best—
Willie's awa!

Oh Willie was a witty wight,
And had o' things an unco slight; — collection
Auld Reekie aye he keepit tight,
And trig and braw:
But now they'll busk her like a fright—
Willie's awa!

The stiffest o' them a' he bowed;
The bauldest o' them a' he cowed;
They durst nae mair than he allowed,
That was a law:
We've lost a birkie weel worth gowd— — fellow
Willie's awa!

Now gawkies, tawpies, gowks,[1] and fools,
Frae colleges and boarding-schools,
May sprout like simmer puddock-stools
In glen or shaw; — wood
He wha could brush them down to mools, — the dust
Willie's awa!

The brethren o' the Commerce-Chaumer[2]
May mourn their loss wi' doolfu' clamour;
He was a dictionar and grammar
Amang them a';
I fear they'll now mak mony a stammer—
Willie's awa!

Nae mair we see his levee door[3]
Philosophers and poets pour,
And toothy critics by the score,
In bloody raw!
The adjutant o' a' the core,
Willie's awa!

[1] Gawky, a simpleton; tawpy, usually applied to a foolish sluttish woman; gowk, literally, the cuckoo; secondarily, a fool.

[2] The Chamber of Commerce at Edinburgh, of which Creech was secretary.

[3] Creech, who, besides being a clever and well-educated man, enjoyed high reputation as a teller of quaint stories, lived on familiar terms with many of the literary men of his day. His house, in one of the elevated floors of a tenement in the High Street, accessible from a wretched alley called Craig's Close, was frequented in the mornings by company of that kind, to such an extent that the meeting used to be called *Creech's Levee*. Burns here enumerates as attending it, Dr James Gregory, author of the *Conspectus Medicinæ;* Alexander Fraser Tytler, afterwards Lord Woodhouselee; Dr William Greenfield, professor of rhetoric in the Edinburgh University; Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling;* and Dugald Stewart, professor of moral philosophy.

Now worthy Gregory's Latin face,
Tytler's and Greenfield's modest grace;
Mackenzie, Stewart, sic a brace
As Rome ne'er saw;
They a' maun meet some ither place,
Willie's awa!

Poor Burns—e'en Scotch drink canna quicken,
He cheeps like some bewilder'd chicken, chirps
Scar'd frae its minnie and the cleckin' mother brood
By hoodie-craw;
Grief's gien his heart an unco kickin'—
Willie's awa!

Now every sour-mou'd girnin' blellum, talking fellow
And Calvin's folk, are fit to fell him;
And self-conceited critic skellum[1]
His quill may draw;
He wha could brawlie ward their bellum,
Willie's awa!

Up wimpling stately Tweed I've sped, winding
And Eden scenes on crystal Jed,
And Ettrick banks now roaring red,
While tempests blaw;
But every joy and pleasure's fled—
Willie's awa!

May I be slander's common speech;
A text for infamy to preach;
And lastly, streekit out to bleach
In winter snaw;
When I forget thee, Willie Creech,
Though far awa!

May never wicked fortune touzle him! teaze
May never wicked men bamboozle him!
Until a pow as auld's Methusalem
He canty claw! cheerful
Then to the blessed New Jerusalem,
Fleet wing awa!]

'*Monday* [*May* 14.]—Come to Inverleithen, a famous spa, and in the vicinity of the palace of Traquair, where, having dined, and drunk some Galloway-whey, I here remain till to-morrow—saw Elibanks and Elibraes, on the other side of the Tweed.

[1] A term of contempt.
'She tauld thee weel, thou was a skellum.'—*Tam o' Shanter.*

[Burns, we may well believe, had no motive for making this digression up the Tweed, except to see certain places referred to in Scottish songs. At Inverleithen, where he spent the afternoon and night of Monday, he saw the *Bush aboon Traquair;* a pretty grove on the hill-face, which has been embalmed in verse by his predecessor Crawford:

Hear me, ye nymphs and every swain,
I'll tell how Peggy grieves me:
Though thus I languish and complain,
Alas! she ne'er believes me:
My vows and sighs like silent air,
Unheeded never move her;
The bonny bush aboon Traquair,
'Twas there I first did love her.

Burns was similarly interested in Elibank, an old castle situated amongst hanging woods, because of an old free-spoken song, the burden of which is 'Elibank and Elibraes.' Such were the fancies which led him into twenty-mile digressions on this tour.]

'*Tuesday.*—Drank tea yesternight at Pirn with Mr Horsburgh. Breakfasted to-day with Mr Ballantyne of Hollylee. Proposal for a four-horse team, to consist of Mr Scott of Wauchope, Fittieland; Logan of Logan, Fittiefur; Ballantyne of Hollylee, Forewynd; Horsburgh of Horsburgh. Dine at a country inn, kept by a miller, in Earlston, the birthplace and residence of the celebrated Thomas à Rhymer—saw the ruins of his castle—come to Berrywell.' [Though he takes no notice of the circumstance, his reason for this detour by Earlston was his desire to see the Cowdenknowes, famous in old song.

A person living at Dunse, who wrote silly rhyme, had sent some of his productions to Burns a few days before, when he was first at this town. The bard now returned him an answer, beginning as follows:—

Dear Symon Gray,
The other day,
When you sent me some rhyme,
I could not then just ascertain
Its worth, for want of time.
But now to-day, good Mr Gray,
I've read it o'er and o'er,
Tried all my skill, but find I'm still
Just where I was before.
We auld wives' minions, gi'e our opinions,
Solicited or no;
Then of its faults my honest thoughts
I'll give—and here they go.

* * * *

We can scarcely present before good company the opinion of the bard in its entire form; but the reader will have an idea of its general bearing from one passage—

Such damned bombast no age that's past
Will shew, or time to come.]

'*Wednesday.*—Dine at Dunse with the Farmers' Club—company, impossible to do them justice—Rev. Mr Smith, a famous punster, and Mr Meikle, a celebrated mechanic, and inventor of the thrashing-mill. *Thursday*, breakfast at Berrywell, and walk into Dunse to see a famous knife made by a cutler there, and to be presented to an Italian prince. A pleasant ride with my friend Mr Robert Ainslie, and his sister, to Mr Thomson's, a man who has newly commenced farmer, and has married a Miss Patty Grieve, formerly a flame of Mr Robert Ainslie's. Company, Miss Jacky Grieve, an amiable sister of Mrs Thomson's, and Mr Hood, an honest, worthy, facetious farmer in the neighbourhood.'

[A letter written at Berrywell gives some curious particulars regarding his volume: it is addressed to a Paisley manufacturer, whom the bard playfully styles 'bookseller,' with reference to his success in disposing of a considerable number of copies of the recently-published volume:

TO MR PATTISON, BOOKSELLER, PAISLEY.

BERRYWELL, *near Dunse, May* 17, 1787.

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

'*Friday*.—Ride to Berwick—an idle town, rudely picturesque. Meet Lord Errol in walking round the walls—his lordship's flattering notice of me. Dine with Mr Clunzie, merchant—nothing particular in company or conversation. Come up a bold shore, and over a wild country, to Eyemouth—sup and sleep at Mr Grieve's.

'*Saturday*.—Spend the day at Mr Grieve's—made a royal-arch mason of St Abb's Lodge. Mr William Grieve, the eldest brother, a joyous, warm-hearted, jolly, clever fellow—takes a hearty glass, and sings a good song. Mr Robert, his brother, and partner in trade, a good fellow, but says little. Take a sail after dinner. Fishing of all kinds pays tithes at Eyemouth.'

[The entry made on this occasion in the lodge books is as follows:—

'EYEMOUTH, 19*th May* 1787.

'At a general encampment held this day, the following brethren were made Royal-Arch Masons—namely, Robert Burns, from the Lodge of St James's, Tarbolton, Ayrshire, and Robert Ainslie, from the Lodge of St Luke's, Edinburgh, by James Carmichael, Wm. Grieve, Daniel Dow, John Clay, Robert Grieve, &c. &c. Robert Ainslie paid one guinea admission dues; but on account of R. Burns's remarkable poetical genius, the encampment unanimously agreed to admit him gratis, and considered themselves honoured by having a man of such shining abilities for one of their companions.'

It is somewhat surprising that Burns makes no allusion in his journal to a hearty country gentleman of this neighbourhood, with whom, undoubtedly, he was at some period of his life acquainted; namely, Mr Renton of Lamerton. At Mordington House, the seat of this gentleman, near Berwick, he would have been sure of a cordial welcome. There is some reason to think that Mr Renton attempted, on this very occasion, to form an appointment with Burns for a meeting and a ride together, for a note in the bard's handwriting has been found among Mr Renton's papers:—

Your billet, sir, I grant receipt;
Wi' you I'll canter ony gate, any way
Though 'twere a trip to yon blue warl',
Whare birkies march on burning marl:
Then sir, God willing, I'll attend ye,
And to his goodness I commend ye.
R. BURNS.]

'*Sunday* [*May* 20.]—A Mr Robinson, brewer at Ednam, sets out with us to Dunbar.

'The Miss Grieves very good girls. My bardship's heart got a brush from Miss Betsy.

'Mr William Grieve's attachment to the family-circle; so fond, that when he is out, which, by the by, is often the case, he cannot go to bed till he see if all his sisters are sleeping well. Pass the famous Abbey of Coldingham, and Pease-bridge. Call at Mr Sheriff's, where Mr A. and I dine. Mr S. talkative and conceited. I talk of love to Nancy the whole evening, while her brother escorts home some companions like himself. Sir James Hall of Dunglass, having heard of my being in the neighbourhood, comes to Mr Sheriff's to breakfast—takes me to see his fine scenery on the stream of Dunglass—Dunglass the most romantic sweet place I ever saw—Sir James and his lady a pleasant happy couple. He points out a walk for which he has an uncommon respect, as it was made by an aunt of his, to whom he owes much.[1]

'Miss —— will accompany me to Dunbar, by way of making a parade of me as a sweetheart of hers among her relations. She mounts an old cart-horse, as huge and as lean as a house; a rusty old side-saddle without girth or stirrup, but fastened on with an old pillion-girth—herself as fine as hands could make her, in cream-coloured riding-clothes, hat and feather, &c. I, ashamed of my situation, ride like the devil, and almost shake her to pieces on old Jolly—get rid of her by refusing to call at her uncle's with her.

'Passed through the most glorious corn country I ever saw, till I reach Dunbar, a neat little town. Dine with Provost Fall, an eminent merchant, and most respectable character, but undescribable, as he exhibits no marked traits. Mrs Fall a genius in painting; fully more clever in the fine arts and sciences than my friend Lady Wauchope, without her consummate assurance of her own abilities. Call with Mr Robinson (whom, by the by, I find to be a worthy, much respected man, very modest; warm, social heart, which with less good sense than his would be, perhaps, with the children of prim precision and pride, rather inimical to that respect which is man's due from man)—with him I call on Miss Clarke, a maiden, in the Scotch phrase, *guid enough, but no brent new:* a clever woman, with tolerable pretensions to remark and wit; while time had blown the blushing bud of bashful modesty into the flower of easy confidence. She wanted to see what sort of *raree show* an author was; and to let him know, that though Dunbar was but a little town, yet it was not destitute of people of parts.

'Breakfast next morning at Skateraw, at Mr Lee's, a farmer of great note. Mr Lee an excellent, hospitable, social fellow, rather

[1] Sir James Hall was a distinguished cultivator of Huttonian geology in its earlier days, and wrote several ingenious scientific papers. He was the father of Captain Basil Hall, so well known by his many popular books.

oldish—warm-hearted and chatty—a most judicious, sensible farmer. Mr Lee detains me till next morning. Company at dinner—My rev. acquaintance Dr Bowmaker, a rattling old fellow. Two sea lieutenants; a cousin of the landlord's, a fellow whose looks are of that kind which deceived me in a gentleman at Kelso, and have often deceived me: a goodly handsome figure and face, which incline one to give them credit for parts which they have not. Mr Clarke a much cleverer fellow, but whose looks a little cloudy, and his appearance rather ungainly, with an everyday observer may prejudice the opinion against him. Dr Brown, a medical young gentleman from Dunbar, a fellow whose face and manners are open and engaging. Leave Skateraw for Dunse next day, along with Collector ——, a lad of slender abilities, and bashfully diffident to an extreme.

'Found Miss Ainslie—the amiable, the sensible, the good-humoured, the sweet Miss Ainslie—all alone at Berrywell. Heavenly powers, who know the weakness of human hearts, support mine! What happiness must I see, only to remind me that I cannot enjoy it!

'Lammermuir Hills, from East Lothian to Dunse, very wild. Dine with the Farmers' Club at Kelso. Sir John Hume and Mr Lumsden there, but nothing worth remembrance when the following circumstance is considered—I walk into Dunse before dinner, and out to Berrywell in the evening with Miss Ainslie—how well-bred, how frank, how good she is! Charming Rachel! may thy bosom never be wrung by the evils of this life of sorrows, or by the villany of this world's sons!'[1] [From this point Burns loses the company of Mr Robert Ainslie, who returned to Edinburgh.]

'*Thursday* [*May* 24.]—Mr Ker and I set out to dinner at Mr Hood's, on our way to England.

'I am taken extremely ill with strong feverish symptoms, and take a servant of Mr Hood's to watch me all night—embittering remorse scares my fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death. I am determined to live for the future in such a manner as not to be scared at the approach of death—I am sure I could meet him with indifference, but for "the something beyond the grave." Mr Hood agrees to accompany us to England if we will wait till Sunday.

'*Friday.*—I go with Mr Hood to see a roup of an unfortunate farmer's stock—rigid economy, and decent industry, do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis persona* in such a scene of horror!

'Meet my good old friend Mr Ainslie, who calls on Mr Hood

[1] Miss Ainslie died unmarried. I remember meeting her about forty years after her acquaintance with Burns—a good-looking elderly lady, of very agreeable manners.

in the evening to take farewell of my bardship. This day I feel myself warm with sentiments of gratitude to the Great Preserver of men, who has kindly restored me to health and strength once more.

'A pleasant walk with my young friend Douglas Ainslie—a sweet, modest, clever young fellow.

'*Sunday* [*May* 27.]—Cross Tweed, and traverse the moors, through a wild country, till I reach Alnwick—Alnwick Castle, a seat of the Duke of Northumberland, furnished in a most princely manner. A Mr Wilkin, agent of his Grace's, shews us the house and policies. Mr Wilkin a discreet, sensible, ingenious man.

'*Monday.*—Come, still through by-ways, to Warkworth, where we dine. Hermitage an old castle. Warkworth situated very picturesquely, with Coquet Island, a small rocky spot, the seat of an old monastery, facing it a little in the sea, and the small but romantic river Coquet running through it. Sleep at Morpeth, a pleasant enough little town, and on next day to Newcastle. Meet with a very agreeable, sensible fellow, a Mr Chattox, who shews us a great many civilities, and who dines and sups with us.

'*Wednesday.*—Left Newcastle early in the morning, and rode over a fine country to Hexham to breakfast—from Hexham to Wardrew, the celebrated Spa, where we slept. *Thursday* [*May* 31.]—Reach Longtown to dine, and part there with my good friends, Messrs Hood and Ker. A hiring day in Longtown. I am uncommonly happy to see so many young folks enjoying life. I come to Carlisle. (Meet a strange enough romantic adventure by the way, in falling in with a girl and her married sister. The girl, after some overtures of gallantry on my side, sees me a little cut with the bottle, and offers to take me in for a Gretna-green affair. I, not being quite such a gull as she imagines, make an appointment with her, by way of *vive la bagatelle*, to hold a conference on it when we reach town. I meet her in town, and give her a brush of caressing and a bottle of cider; but finding herself *un peu trompée* in her man, she sheers off.) Next day [*June* 1] I meet my good friend Mr Mitchell, and walk with him round the town and its environs, and through his printing-works, &c.—four or five hundred people employed, many of them women and children. Dine with Mr Mitchell, and leave Carlisle. Come by the coast to Annan. Overtaken on the way by a curious old fish of a shoemaker, and miner, from Cumberland mines.'

[*Here the manuscript abruptly terminates.*]

In the following letter, we for the first time encounter the name of Mr William Nicol of the High School, though Burns must have

been for some time acquainted with him. The friendship and admiration which the poet entertained for Nicol has been usually regarded as one of the least intelligible circumstances of this portion of his life, for all contemporary report describes the pedagogue as a man of extraordinary rudeness, albeit gifted with some ability. Burns's letter is written in a broad vernacular, which he must have expected to be pleasing to Nicol:—

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL,

MASTER OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

CARLISLE, *June* 1, 1787.

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE—I'm sitten' doun here, after seven-and-forty miles' ridin', e'en as forjeskit and forniaw'd as a forfochten cock, to gie you some notion o' my land-lowper-like stravaigin sin' the sorrowfu' hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' Auld Reekie.

My auld, ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchyall'd up hill and down brae, in Scotland and England, as teugh and birnie as a very devil wi' me. It's true she's as poor's a sangmaker and as hard's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate, just like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle; but she's a yauld, poutherie girran for a' that, and has a stomach like Willie Stalker's meere, that wad hae disgeested tumbler-wheels, for she'll whip me aff her five stimparts o' the best aits at a down-sittin, and ne'er fash her thumb. When ance her ringbanes and spavies, her crucks and cramps, are fairly soupl'd, she beets to, beets to, and aye the hindmost hour the tightest. I could wager her price to a threttie pennies, that for twa or three ooks' ridin' at fifty mile a day, the deil-sticket a five gallopers acqueesh Clyde and Whithorn could cast saut on her tail.[1]

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dunbar to Selcraig, and hae forgather'd wi' mony a guid fallow, and mony a weel-far'd hizzie. I met wi' twa dink queynes in particular, ane o' them a sonsie, fine, fodgel lass, baith braw and bonnie; the tither was a clean-shankit, straught, tight, weel-far'd wench, as blythe's a lintwhite on a flowerie thorn, and as sweet and modest's a new-blawn plum-rose in a hazle shaw. They were baith bred to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane o' them had as muckle smeddum and rumblegumption as the half o' some presbyteries that you and I baith ken. They played me sick a deevil o' a shavie, that I daur say, if my harrigals were turned out, ye wad see twa nicks i' the heart o' me like the mark o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

[1] This wonderful beast had been named Jenny Geddes by the poet, with some reference to the old woman so named, to whom tradition assigns the credit of having cast the first stool at the dean's head in St Giles's church, July 23, 1637, when the liturgy imposed on Scotland by Charles I. was first read. I suspect that some jocular circumstance was referred to in the beast's christening.

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

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

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

[Anglice, thus :—

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE—I have sat down here, after forty-seven miles' hard riding, even as jaded and fatigued as an over-fought cock, to give you some notion of my vagabond-like wandering since the sorrowful hour that I shook hands and parted with Auld Reekie [Edinburgh.]

My old galled mare has hobbled up hill and down slope in Scotland and England, as tough and lively as a very devil with me. It is true she is as poor as a song-maker, and as hard as a church, and totters when she takes the road, just like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuet, or a hen on a hot oven; but she is an alert, spirited beast notwithstanding, and has a stomach like Willie Stalker's mare, that would have digested cart-wheels, for she'll whip me off five-eighths of a Winchester bushel of the best oats at a time, with no sort of difficulty. When once her ill-assorted joints and spavins, her lameness and cramps, are fairly suppled, she improves by little and little, and always the last hour is her best. I could wager her price against twopence-halfpenny, that for two-three weeks' riding at fifty miles a day, the devil a gallopper between Clyde and Whithorn could cast salt on her tail.

I have sauntered over the whole country from Dunbar to Selkirk, and have met with many a good fellow and many a well-favoured maiden. I met with two neat girls, in particular, one of them a fine, plump, comfortable-looking lass, well dressed and pretty; the other a well-limbed, straight, tight, well-favoured wench, as blithe as a linnet on a flowering thorn, and as sweet and modest as a new-blown primrose in a hazel wood. They had both acquired manners from the book, and any one of them had as much smartness and sense as the half of some presbyteries that you and I know of. They played me such a devil of a prank, that if my viscera were turned out, you would see two nicks in the heart of me, like the mark of a knife in a cabbage-stalk.

I was going to write a long epistle; but, God forgive me, I got myself so dreadfully besotted to-day after dinner, that I can hardly crawl from one room to another.

My best respects to your lady and all our common friends, especially Mr and Mrs Cruikshanks, and the honest goodman of Jock's Lodge.

I shall be in Dumfries to-morrow if the beast survive, and the bridle keep whole. God be with you, Willie. Amen !]

After a brief sojourn in Dumfries, he proceeded to Dalswinton, the estate of Mr Patrick Miller, who, it will be remembered, had expressed a wish to see the poet settled on one of his farms. Burns must have admired the general scenery—a noble stream, as pure as crystal, flowing through fine haughs and slopes, backed by lofty hills; but the state of the estate could scarcely afford much pasture to his professional hopes, for it was at this time, even by the confession of its owner, exceedingly bad. Burns would see how much the grounds were out of heart, and ask if it was to be his fate to sow the profits of his muse upon these stony fields. He seems to have lingered about a week in the district. Proceeding at length by Sanquhar to Mauchline, he arrived there on the 9th of June. 'It will easily be conceived,' says Dr Currie, 'with what pleasure and pride he was received by his mother, his brothers, and sisters. He had left them poor, and comparatively friendless; he returned to them high in public estimation, and easy in his circumstances. He returned to them unchanged in his ardent affections, and ready to share with them to the uttermost farthing the pittance that fortune had bestowed.' Mrs Begg remembers the arrival of her brother. He came in unheralded, and was in the midst of them before they knew. It was a quiet meeting—for, as formerly remarked, the Mossgiel family had the true Scottish reticence or reserve; but though their words were not 'mony feck,' their feelings were strong. I could not, however, pretend to speak with any precision of the emotions of even a rustic and unlettered mother, on the first embrace of a son whose country had just invested his brows with the imperishable laurel.

Burns seems to have taken an early opportunity of calling at Mr Armour's, professedly to see his little daughter there. His reception was more cordial than he desired. This appears from a letter to Smith, who had now left Mauchline:—

TO MR JAMES SMITH, LINLITHGOW.

MAUCHLINE, 11*th June* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—I date this from Mauchline, where I arrived on Friday evening last. I slept at John Dow's, and called for my daughter; Mr Hamilton and family; your mother, sister, and brother; my quondam Eliza, &c.—all, all well. If anything had been wanting to disgust me completely at Armour's family, their mean, servile compliance would have done it. Give me a spirit like my favourite hero, Milton's Satan—

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

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

There is a sudden access of bitterness here. We have presently more of it:—

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL.

MAUCHLINE, *June* 18, 1787.

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

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

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks—Mr Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, guid forgie me! I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account! Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good-humour, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart: in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the civility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, Satan. 'Tis true I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith; that noxious planet, so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hairbrained whims, like so many *ignes fatui* eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop, 'he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again.' God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to

me! But should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have in life, I have felt along the lines, and, damn them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me 'through good report and bad report'—the love which Solomon emphatically says 'is strong as death.' My compliments to Mrs Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

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

'There are few of his letters,' says Mr Lockhart with regard to this, 'in which more of the dark places of his spirit come to light.' The idea strongly occurs to me—If such be all the gratitude, patience, or resignation which a man of extraordinary talent and sense can shew after being raised from almost the lowest poverty and the gloomiest prospects to a position comparatively brilliant, what are we to expect of the multitude of the miserable poor who go on from day to day without a 'blue bore' in their sky,[1] or a single comfort to cheer their cold firesides? But perhaps it would be wrong to discuss the letter as anything but an effusion of transient vexation of spirit, arising from accidental and passing circumstances.

Though he had been effectually separated, or, it might be said, divorced from Jean Armour, and was much incensed by her conduct and that of her relatives, he had never been able to detach her from his heart. Gusts of passion for different individuals had passed through his bosom, even while resting in what he called 'the Greenland bay of indifference' in Edinburgh; but still the image of the simple Mauchline girl resided at the core, and would not quit its place. On now returning to his rustic retreat, and accidentally meeting her, his ancient flames were revived, and he was welcomed to her father's house. In a very short time the pair became as intimate as ever. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the poet was received with open arms by Mr Hamilton and other friends.

The latter part of the month appears to have been devoted to a short Highland tour, of which we have only an imperfect and obscure account. Dr Currie says that, having remained with his friends at Mauchline a few days, 'he proceeded again to Edinburgh, and immediately set out on a journey to the

[1] 'At once a proclamation comes out in farre other strain from the former..... It was *the first blew bore* that did appear in our cloudie sky: we took it for a beginning of a reall change in the king's councills.'—*Baillie's Letters*, 1639.

Highlands;' but 'no particulars of the tour have been found among his manuscripts.' It is nearly certain that Burns did not visit Edinburgh on this occasion. Mrs Begg thinks he went first to Glasgow, from which he sent home a present to his mother and three sisters; namely, a quantity of *mode silk*, sufficient to make a bonnet and cloak to each, and a gown besides to his mother and youngest sister, the whole being a recognition of their title to a share of his good fortune. Mrs Begg remembers going for rather more than a week to Ayr to assist in the making up of these dresses, and when she came back on a Saturday, he had returned, and she recollects being requested by him to put on her dress, that he might see how smart she looked in it. Almost the only other certain trace we have of Burns in this trip is in the West Highlands. To this district he might be drawn by his feelings regarding Mary Campbell. It is not unlikely that he visited her relations at Greenock. Imagination fondly pauses to behold him stretched on her grave in the *West Kirk Yard*, bewailing her untimely severance from his arms. On these points, however, we have only conjecture, and the somewhat remarkable circumstance, that this tour commences with a sort of mystery much like that with which he has contrived to invest the whole story of Highland Mary.

We light upon him first with certainty at Inverary, where he was unlucky, for the Duke of Argyle had an overabundance of guests in the castle, and the innkeeper was too much occupied with the surplus to have any attention to spare for passing travellers. Hereupon he penned an epigram, which it is to be supposed he left inscribed on one of the windows:—

ON INCIVILITY SHEWN HIM AT INVERARY.

Whoe'er he be that sojourns here,
I pity much his case,
Unless he come to wait upon
The Lord their God—his Grace.

There's naething here but Highland pride,
And Highland scab and hunger;
If Providence has sent me here,
'Twas surely in an anger.

We must regret this as a discourtesy towards a most respectable nobleman—the more so as the names of the Duke and Duchess of Argyle stand at the head of the subscription for his poems; but when did genius ever learn to measure or control its feelings? We next have authentic accounts of the bard on the route southwards.

It is by no means inconsistent with our conjecture as to Highland Mary, that we find the poet indulging at the end of his tour in conviviality and frolic carried to the borders of extravagance.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ARROCHAR, BY LOCHLONG, *June* 28, 1787.

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

Burns appears to have returned home by Paisley. In a letter, dated May 29, 1847, and inserted in the *Liverpool Mercury*, the writer, who signs himself J. T.,[1] gives an account of some circumstances connected with the poet's brief stay at that place. It must have been, he says, on Friday the 29th of June, about noon, that Dr John Taylor of Paisley, who had been charmed with the poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman, readily recognised him from his portrait, as he stood in the street with his friend Mr Alexander Pattison. Having induced both Burns and Pattison to go to his house, notwithstanding some hesitation on the poet's part, who expressed himself as eager to proceed on his journey, Dr Taylor entered into conversation on what was with himself a favourite subject—poetry. 'Burns made the observation, that "perhaps people were ready to attach more merit to poetry than was its due, for, that after all it was only natural ideas expressed in melodious words;" to which his host assented, and in illustration remarked, that "nothing was more common than for children in a winter's night to say: 'What will become of the puir birdies the nicht?' But what says the poet?

Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing!
That in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?"

The compliment pleased: Burns started on his feet, and bowing, expressed his thanks "for the obliging quotation." After this,

[1] Mr John Taylor, cotton-broker, Liverpool.

Burns seemed to forget the haste which he had before alleged; the conversation became animated, and, as it appeared, to each interesting. Burns spoke of his reception at Edinburgh, and dwelt much on the kindness which he had experienced from the Earl of Glencairn, shewing a ring that he wore, a gift from that nobleman. However fond Burns was of the produce of his muse, the other was probably no less so of his young family, who were all summoned to give their attendance. One of the children, a fat chubby boy, the poet took on his knee, and said "he would make an excellent subject for a poem;" an idea which the father assured him he should be highly gratified to see carried into effect. An elder one was sent for, and desired to go in; but from the great talk he had heard about poets, and particularly about Poet Burns, this one did not feel well assured that it was safe for him to trust his person within the poet's clutches. He therefore watched his opportunity, and ventured merely to pass from one door to another through the room, taking the best look he could of the poet, as he stood up with a small black profile of Mrs Taylor's in his hand, which he was then examining. The small black profiles, since called Silhouettes, were then coming into fashion. From that time, although the observer was then hardly more than a child, the remembrance of the poet's figure, face, and general appearance has never been lost; the recollection of him is distinct, and is that of a big, stout, athletic man, of a brown, ruddy complexion, broad-chested, erect, and standing firmly on his legs, which perhaps were rather clumsy, though hid in yellow topped boots. His dress was a blue coat and buckskin breeches, and his *caste* seemed, what we should now style, that of a gentleman farmer. The impression made by the poet on his host was highly favourable, but the lady was struck with a certain gloominess that seemed to have possession of his countenance and general bearing.'

TO MR JAMES SMITH.

June 30, 1787.

On our return, at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid formal movements; the ladies sang Scotch songs like angels, at intervals; then we flew at 'Bab at the Bowster,' 'Tullochgorum,' 'Loch Erroch side,'[1] &c. like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or craws prognosticating a storm in a hairst day. When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of

[1] Names of Scotch dancing tunes.

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

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

I am afraid I have almost ruined one source, the principal one, indeed, of my former happiness—that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. My heart no more glows with feverish rapture. I have no paradisical evening interviews stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only * * * *. This last is one of your distant acquaintances, has a fine figure, and elegant manners, and, in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal; but what piques me is her conduct at the commencement of our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in ——; and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp round the waist, I ventured, in my careless way, to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms; and after her return to ——, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words farther, I suppose, than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve, like a mounting lark in an April morning; and wrote me an answer which

measured me out very completely what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climate of her favour. But I am an old hawk at the sport; and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aërial towerings pop down at my foot like Corporal Trim's hat.

As for the rest of my acts, and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes, they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence, at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by ROBERT BURNS.

Could it be at the hospitable mansion here indicated, and by way of a ruing *amende* for the Inverary epigram, that Burns penned his well-known quatrain?—

COMPOSED ON LEAVING A PLACE IN THE HIGHLANDS WHERE HE HAD BEEN KINDLY ENTERTAINED.

When Death's dark stream I ferry o'er—
A time that surely shall come—
In Heaven itself I'll ask no more
Than just a Highland welcome!

Respecting the love affair alluded to, there is no further light, unless we are to consider a stray letter which has found its way into print without a superscription, as connected with it. No safe conjecture can be formed as to the person meant, beyond that of her being an Ayrshire lady, which the phrase 'countrywoman' implies:—

TO MISS ——.

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

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

on this, and that will completely cure me; but I wish you would not; just let us meet, if you please, in the old beaten way of friendship.

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

Dr Currie states that, returning from this tour to Mossgiel, he there spent the month of July, 'renewing his friendships, and extending his acquaintance throughout the country, where he was now very generally known and admired.'

TO MR JOHN RICHMOND.

MOSSGIEL, *7th July* 1787.

MY DEAR RICHMOND—I am all impatience to hear of your fate since the old confounder of right and wrong has turned you out of place by his journey to answer his indictment at the bar of the other world.[1] He will find the practice of the court so different from the practice in which he has for so many years been thoroughly hackneyed, that his friends, if he had any connections truly of that kind, which I rather doubt, may well tremble for his sake. His chicane, his left-handed wisdom, which stood so firmly by him, to such good purpose, here, like other accomplices in robbery and plunder, will, now the piratical business is blown, in all probability turn king's evidence, and then the devil's bagpiper will touch him off '*Bundle and Go!*'

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

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

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

[1] Alluding to the recent decease of Richmond's master.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, 23*d July* 1787.

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

Though in the morn comes sturt and strife,
Yet joy may come at noon;
And I hope to live a merry merry life
When a' thir days are done.

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

Burns had in spring formed an acquaintance with the M'Leods of Raasay, doubtless through the medium of his Ayrshire friends, the Campbells of Loudoun, the young Countess of Loudoun's mother being a member of that Hebridean family. A lady of rank living in Perthshire tells me that she remembers meeting Burns at an evening party in the house of an aunt of M'Leod of Raasay in St John Street, where he seemed to be on easy terms. He had been on the previous night at a ball in Dunn's Rooms (now the National Bank, St Andrew Square), and he spoke in high terms of the beauty of the ladies, as well as of the witchery of the music. His manner, however, was not prepossessing—scarcely, she thinks, manly or natural. It seemed as if he affected a rusticity or *landertness*, so that when he said the music was 'bonnie, bonnie,' it was like the expression of a child. This gives a curious idea of the nature of that ultra-deference of tone which Sir Walter Scott reports Burns as having used among ladies during his residence in Edinburgh.

On the 20th of July, died John M'Leod, youngest son of the

Laird of Raasay, and on this melancholy subject the muse of Burns became eloquent :—

ON READING IN A NEWSPAPER

THE DEATH OF JOHN M'LEOD, ESQ.,

BROTHER TO A YOUNG LADY, A PARTICULAR FRIEND OF THE AUTHOR'S.

Sad thy tale, thou idle page,
And rueful thy alarms—
Death tears the brother of her love
From Isabella's arms.

Sweetly decked with pearly dew
The morning rose may blow,
But cold successive noontide blasts
May lay its beauties low.

Fair on Isabella's morn
The sun propitious smiled,
But, long ere noon, succeeding clouds
Succeeding hopes beguiled.

Fate oft tears the bosom cords
That nature finest strung ;
So Isabella's heart was formed,
And so that heart was wrung.

Were it in the poet's power,
Strong as he shares the grief
That pierces Isabella's heart,
To give that heart relief !

Dread Omnipotence, alone,
Can heal the wound he gave—
Can point the brimful grief-worn eyes
To scenes beyond the grave.

Virtue's blossoms there shall blow,
And fear no withering blast ;
There Isabella's spotless worth
Shall happy be at last.

It was during this brief stay at Mossgiel that Burns penned his autobiographical letter to Dr Moore, of which the introduction and termination were as follows :—

MAUCHLINE, 2*d August* 1787.

SIR—For some months past I have been rambling over the country, but I am now confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country—you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be often at my own expense; for I assure you, sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of *wisdom*, I sometimes think I resemble—I have, I say, like him, *turned my eyes to behold madness and folly*, and, like him, too frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. * * * After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you that the poor author wrote them under some twitching qualms of conscience, arising from suspicion that he was doing what he ought not to do—a predicament he has more than once been in before.

* * * * *

My most respectful compliments to Miss W.[1] Her very elegant and friendly letter I cannot answer at present, as my presence is requisite in Edinburgh, and I set out to-morrow.

It was necessary that Burns should return to Edinburgh. He had to settle with his bookseller, Creech; and for some other excursions which he contemplated through the classic scenes of his native country, Edinburgh was the proper starting-point. He arrived in the city on the 7th of August.[2]

The only literary incident that can be attached to the little interval between Burns's arrival in Edinburgh and his departure on his Highland tour, is the composition of an elegy on the death of Sir James Hunter Blair. Sir James was an Ayrshire squire, and a member of the banking-house of Sir William Forbes and Company; a public-spirited citizen and magistrate of Edinburgh, and an amiable man. He was cut off on the 1st of July, in the prime of life, and it was with no venal feeling that Burns penned verses on the occasion. It cannot be said that they form a happy example of his powers; but they are interesting from their local allusions, and comprise one or two lines not unworthy to have proceeded from the bowers of Twickenham :—

[1] Miss Helen Maria Williams.

[2] This date is assumed on the strength of a passage in a letter to Dr Moore, Jan. 4, 1789: 'He [Creech] kept me hanging on about Edinburgh from the 7th of August until the 13th of April 1788.'

ON THE DEATH OF SIR JAMES HUNTER BLAIR.

The lamp of day, with ill-presaging glare,
Dim, cloudy, sank beneath the western wave;
The inconstant blast howled through the darkening air,
And hollow whistled in the rocky cave.

Lone as I wandered by each cliff and dell,
Once the loved haunts of Scotia's royal train;[1]
Or mused where limpid streams once hallowed well,[2]
Or mouldering ruins mark the sacred fane.[3]

The increasing blast roared round the beetling rocks,
The clouds, swift-winged, flew o'er the starry sky,
The groaning trees untimely shed their locks,
And shooting meteors caught the startled eye.

The paly moon rose in the livid east,
And 'mong the cliffs disclosed a stately form,
In weeds of wo that frantic beat her breast,
And mixed her wailings with the raving storm.

Wild to my heart the filial pulses glow,
'Twas Caledonia's trophied shield I viewed:
Her form majestic dropped in pensive wo,
The lightning of her eye in tears imbued.

Reversed that spear, redoubtable in war,
Reclined that banner, erst in fields unfurled,
That like a deathful meteor gleamed afar,
And braved the mighty monarchs of the world.

'My patriot son fills an untimely grave!'
With accents wild and lifted arms—she cried;
'Low lies the hand that oft was stretched to save,
Low lies the heart that swelled with honest pride.

'A weeping country joins a widow's tear;
The helpless poor mix with the orphan's cry;
The drooping arts surround their patron's bier;
And grateful science heaves the heartfelt sigh!

'I saw my sons resume their ancient fire;
I saw fair freedom's blossoms richly blow:
But ah! how hope is born but to expire!
Relentless fate has laid their guardian low.

[1] The King's Park, at Holyrood House.
[2] St Anthony's Well. [3] St Anthony's Chapel.

'My patriot falls, but shall he lie unsung,
While empty greatness saves a worthless name?
No: every muse shall join her tuneful tongue,
And future ages hear his growing fame.

'And I will join a mother's tender cares,
Through future times to make his virtue last;
That distant years may boast of other Blairs!'—
She said, and vanished with the sweeping blast.

One can imagine that, with all his interest in the death of the Ayrshire patriot, Burns did not find his muse very active of invention on this occasion. Such actually appears to have been the case. Amongst the poet's Edinburgh patrons was Mr John Ferrier, writer to the Signet, father of a lady who in a later age has distinguished herself in the walk of prose fiction.[1] This gentleman had in 1784 built for himself a house in George Street, a few doors west of St Andrew's Church. It was the most westerly house in that part of the New Town in its day, and considered as so remote from the great centre of business, that Mr Ferrier's brother agents were generally impressed with the idea that his removing so far out of the way would be seriously injurious to his prospects in the profession.[2] These local particulars lead us to the idea of Burns rambling one day along the rudimentary streets of the New Town, and finding the inspiration of which he was in search for the Blair elegy in a rencontre with Mr Ferrier's eldest daughter.[3]

TO MISS FERRIER,

ENCLOSING THE ELEGY ON SIR J. H. BLAIR.

Nae heathen name shall I prefix
Frae Pindus or Parnassus;
Auld Reekie dings them a' to sticks, beats
For rhyme-inspiring lasses.

Jove's tunefu' dochters three times three
Made Homer deep their debtor;
But, gi'en the body half an ee,
Nine Ferriers wad done better!

Last day my mind was in a bog,
Down George's Street I stoited; tottered
A creeping cauld prosaic fog
My very senses doited. stupified

[1] Authoress of *Marriage*, *The Inheritance*, and *Destiny*.
[2] The house is now occupied by Messrs Paterson and Roy, musicsellers.
[3] Afterwards Mrs General Graham; now for some years deceased.

Do what I dought to set her free, could
My saul lay in the mire;
Ye turned a neuk—I saw your e'e—
She took the wing like fire!

The mournfu' sang I here enclose,
In gratitude I send you;
And [wish and] pray in rhyme sincere,
A' gude things may attend you![1]

The reader cannot fail to have been struck by the poet's self-accusations in some of his recently-written letters—as where he tells Ainslie that he now sees he never shall be wise, and admits to Nicol that 'thoughtless follies and hairbrained whims' are continually leading him aside from 'the right line of sober discretion.' When taken ill at Mr Hood's, 'embittering remorse scares his fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death.' For *follies* read *sins*, and we have the unfortunate bard's case truly before us. A perverse passion, which was the half of his wonderful inspiration—how sad to have to acknowledge that it had still been betraying him into derogatory conduct during this year of brilliant reputation. To him the past had no effectual warning; the future was ever undreamt of till too late. Even that consideration of wrong and suffering to others, which one would have expected to be the strongest guard to a genially humane and unselfish mind like his, failed to keep him in the right path. Yet let not the reader indulge in any exaggerated suppositions; let him rather know the simple downright fact, that one young woman was now—to use a phrase of his own—under a cloud on his account in Edinburgh. In considering the situation of the great poet, enjoying the first fame, and bethinking him of the new career before him, we cannot have a full sense of what he was and felt himself to be, unless we keep in view that he must have had his private reflections on great, though secret transgressions; his remorse for their effects on others; and his terrors for their retributory evils to himself. During this very month, while preparing for a tour amongst the nobles of the land, he was assailed with a repetition of the legal proceedings which had sent him into hiding a twelvemonth before, though regarding a different person—a fact substantiated beyond doubt by a document dated the 15th of August, liberating him from the restraints of a writ of *in meditatione fugæ*.[2] This document he had himself preserved, and probably carried about with him for some time, so that it had been liable to be used as a piece

[1] The original manuscript of this piece is in the possession of Miss Grace Aiken, Ayr.
[2] The terms of this writ must have been merely used formally, in order to force him to a granting of the required security.

of spare paper for memoranda of his own. Most characteristically, it contains, scribbled with a pencil in his own hand, a couple of verses of an old indecorously comical song, which he must have heard somewhere and wished to preserve. Such was Burns: with genius transcendent, and feelings alive to all the impulses of the noblest humanity, fatally, recklessly—yes, it must be admitted, recklessly—liable to a passion remarkable for the humiliations to which it exposes its victims. Was it an incongruous character? Where is the man that could maintain such a theory? Then, is Burns beyond forgiveness, admiration, and love? Let him who has shewn the same measure of greatness answer the question in the affirmative. 'Twere superfluous to say what the verdict of his countrymen in general will be.

On returning to Edinburgh, Burns did not resume his former lodging. His friend Richmond having, in the interval, taken in another fellow-lodger, he was obliged to go elsewhere. He is supposed to have accepted a temporary accommodation in the house of his friend Nicol, who was to be his companion in the contemplated Highland tour. Dr Currie's sketch of this person is substantially just:—'Mr Nicol was of Dumfriesshire, of a descent equally humble with our poet. Like him, he rose by the strength of his talents, and fell by the strength of his passions. He died in the summer of 1797 [at the age of fifty-three.] Having received the elements of a classical instruction at his parish school, Mr Nicol made a very rapid and singular proficiency; and by early undertaking the office of an instructor himself, he acquired the means of entering himself at the University of Edinburgh. There he was first a student of theology, then a student of medicine, and was afterwards employed in the assistance and instruction of graduates in medicine, in those parts of their exercises in which the Latin language is employed. In this situation he was the contemporary and rival of the celebrated Dr Brown,[1] whom he resembled in the particulars of his history, as well as in the leading features of his character. The [place of an under-teacher] in the High School being vacant, it was, as usual, filled up by competition; and in the face of some prejudices, and perhaps of some well-founded objections, Mr Nicol, by superior learning, carried it from all the other candidates. This office he filled at the period of which we speak.

[1] Author of the Brownonian system of Medicine; an extraordinary genius, now beginning to be forgotten. His therapeutics were a kind of epicurism, too apt to acquire the favour of fashion in that age; and he was scrupulous to practise himself what he dictated to others, being never without a whisky bottle on his lecture-table, from which he occasionally helped himself in the presence of his pupils. In the present sober times, it seems scarcely possible that such an eccentricity could have been even attempted.

'It is to be lamented that an acquaintance with the writers of Greece and Rome does not always supply an original want of taste and correctness in manners and conduct; and where it fails of this effect, it sometimes inflames the native pride of temper, which treats with disdain those delicacies in which it has not learnt to excel. It was thus with the fellow-traveller of Burns. Formed by nature in a model of great strength, neither his person nor his manners had any tincture of taste or elegance; and his coarseness was not compensated by that romantic sensibility, and those towering flights of imagination, which distinguished the conversation of Burns, in the blaze of whose genius all the deficiencies of his manners were absorbed and disappeared.'

To this sketch of Nicol something must be added, in order to explain why Burns gave him his friendship. With all his faults, he was a warm-hearted man. 'He cherished with enthusiasm the recollection of his early years, and rejoiced to meet the companions of his youth. He would go any length to serve and promote the views and wishes of a friend.'[1] Such is the report of one who knew him intimately. A not less characteristic addition of the same writer is—'Whenever low jealousy, trick, or selfish cunning appeared, his mind kindled to something like fury or madness.' One can see that this was, on the whole, a character to attract the sympathies of Burns. The poet probably knew little of the cruelties exercised by Nicol in his class, which by all accounts were terrific. Neither could he probably have entered with impartiality into the merits of a quarrel between Nicol and the Rector Adam, which had come to a strong point in the preceding month. Dr Adam—an amiable man, as well as excellent scholar and teacher—having offended Mr Nicol in the course of his duty as superintendent of the younger classes of the school, the latter had made a personal assault upon him in the courtyard before the boys; nor could any of Adam's mild remonstrances draw forth an apology for the act.[2] Burns, however, fully knew and understood the rash, irascible character of Nicol, and very happily compared himself with such a *compagnon de voyage* to a man travelling with a loaded blunderbuss at full cock!

A jocular letter of the 23d August represents Burns as sitting in the same room with Nicol and some of his pupils:—

[1] Dr Steven's History of the High School of Edinburgh, 1849; second series of pages, p. 95.

[2] Two letters addressed by Dr Adam to Nicol on this outrage, in the gentlest terms of expostulation, are before us through the favour of Dr Steven, author of the work above cited.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, JUNIOR,

BERRYWELL, DUNSE.

EDINBURGH, 23*d August* 1787.

As I gaed up to Dunse,
To warp a pickle yarn, &c.

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

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

Now for a modest verse of classical authority—

The cats like kitchen,[1]
The dogs like broe;
The lasses like the lads weel,
And th' auld wives too.

And we 're a' noddin,
Nid, nid, noddin,
We 're a' noddin fou at e'en.

If this does not please you, let me hear from you; if you write any time before the first of September, direct to Inverness, to be left at the post-office till called for; the next week at Aberdeen; the next at Edinburgh. The sheet is done, and I shall just conclude with assuring you that I am, and ever with pride shall be, my dear sir, yours, &c. R. B.

Of his Highland excursion Burns has left a diary similar to that which he kept during his southern tour. We propose to make him by this means tell the main features of his story, but to insert at intervals such additional details as have been obtained, and such explanations as may be necessary:—

'[*Saturday*] 25*th August* 1787.—I leave Edinburgh for a northern tour, in company with my good friend Mr Nicol, whose

[1] Any kind of better food taken as a relish is called *kitchen* in Scotland.

originality of humour promises me much entertainment. Linlithgow —a fertile improved country—West Lothian. The more elegance and luxury among the farmers, I always observe, in equal proportion, the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. This remark I have made all over the Lothians, Merse, Roxburgh, &c. For this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste, a "Man of Feeling," will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds of the peasantry in Ayrshire (peasantry they are all below the Justice of Peace), than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when at the same time he considers the Vandalism of their plough-folks, &c. I carry this idea so far, that an unenclosed, half-improven country is to me actually more agreeable, and gives me more pleasure as a prospect, than a country cultivated like a garden.[1] Soil about Linlithgow light and thin. The town carries the appearance of rude, decayed grandeur—charmingly rural, retired situation. The old royal palace a tolerably fine, but melancholy ruin, sweetly situated on a small elevation, by the brink of a loch. Shewn the room where the beautiful injured Mary Queen of Scots was born—a pretty good old Gothic church. The infamous stool of repentance standing, in the old Romish way, on a lofty situation.

'What a poor, pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship; dirty, narrow, and squalid; stuck in a corner of old popish grandeur such as Linlithgow, and much more Melrose! Ceremony and show, if judiciously thrown in, absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in religious and civil matters. Dine. Go to my friend Smith's at Avon printfield:[2] find nobody but Mrs Miller, an agreeable, sensible, modest, good body, as useful, but not so ornamental, as Fielding's Miss Western—not rigidly polite *à la Français*, but easy, hospitable, and housewifely.

'An old lady from Paisley, a Mrs Lawson, whom I promise to call for in Paisley—like old Lady W[auchope], and still more like Mrs C——, her conversation is pregnant with strong sense and just remark, but, like them, a certain air of self-importance and a *duresse* in the eye, seem to indicate, as the Ayrshire wife observed of her cow, that "she had a mind o' her ain."

'Pleasant view of Dunfermline, and the rest of the fertile coast of Fife, as we go down to that dirty, ugly place, Borrowstounness: see a horse-race, and call on a friend of Mr Nicol's, a Bailie Cowan, of whom I know too little to attempt his portrait. Come through the rich carse of Falkirk to pass the night. Falkirk nothing remarkable, except the tomb of Sir John the Graham,

[1] These remarks are not unworthy of the attention of modern political economists.

[2] Smith had of late removed from Mauchline to this place.

over which, in the succession of time, four [three] stones have been placed.'

[The travellers appear to have spent the night in the Cross Keys Inn at Falkirk. Burns had lately provided himself with a diamond, wherewith to scribble on glass; and it is said that a verse written with this instrument was afterwards found on a window in the inn:—

Sound be his sleep and blithe his morn,
That never did a lassie wrang;
Who poverty ne'er held in scorn,
For misery ever tholed a pang.[1]]

'[*Sunday, August* 26.]—Camelon, the ancient metropolis of the Picts, now a small village in the neighbourhood of Falkirk. Cross the Grand Canal to Carron.'

[It would appear that the travellers zig-zagged a little on their route between Falkirk and Stirling. They went to Carron, in the hope of seeing the celebrated iron-works there, although, the day being Sunday, it is difficult to understand how they should have expected admission. The following epigram comes in here:—

WRITTEN ON A WINDOW OF THE INN AT CARRON.

We cam na here to view your warks
In hopes to be mair wise,
But only, lest we gang to hell,
It may be nae surprise:

But whan we tirled at your door,
Your porter dought na hear us;
Sae may, should we to hell's yetts come,
Your billy Satan sair us!

Mr Lockhart relates an anecdote, which may be applicable to the preceding evening, excepting only that Jenny Geddes is a figure *de trop*:—'I have heard that, riding one dark night near Carron, his companion teased him with noisy exclamations of delight and wonder whenever an opening in the wood permitted them to see the magnificent glare of the furnaces: "Look, Burns! Good Heaven! Look, look! What a glorious sight!" "Sir," said Burns, "I would not *look look* at your bidding, if it were the mouth of hell!"']

[1] This is given on the authority of Mr G. Boyack, St Andrews. It is introduced, with some other circumstances regarding Burns's visit to Falkirk, which I regard as doubtful, in the *Fifeshire Journal*, Nov. 4, 1847. The last line is there given thus: 'For misery *never* tholed a pang,' which, being inconsistent with the sense evidently intended, I have here taken leave to alter.

'Pass Dunipace, a place laid out with fine taste; a charming amphitheatre bounded by Denny village, and pleasant seats down the way to Dunipace. The Carron running down the bosom of the whole, makes it one of the most charming little prospects I have seen.

'Dine at Auchinbowie: Mr Monro an excellent worthy old man, Miss Monro an amiable, sensible, sweet young woman, much resembling Mrs Grierson. Come to Bannockburn. Shewn the old house where James III. finished so tragically his unfortunate life. The field of Bannockburn: the hole where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested. I fancy to myself that I see my gallant, heroic countrymen, coming o'er the hill and down upon the plunderers of their country, the murderers of their fathers; noble revenge and just hate glowing in every vein, striding more and more eagerly as they approach the oppressive, insulting, bloodthirsty foe! I see them meet in gloriously-triumphant congratulation on the victorious field, exulting in their heroic royal leader, and rescued liberty and independence! Come to Stirling.'

[TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

STIRLING, 26*th August* 1787.

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

I left Andrew Bruce[1] and family all well. I will be at least three weeks in making my tour, as I shall return by the coast, and have many people to call for.

[1] Andrew Bruce, a shopkeeper on the North Bridge, Edinburgh, to whom Burns, on his arrival in the city, requested his letters to be addressed, appears to have become known to him through a Kilmarnock line of acquaintance.

My best compliments to Charles, our dear kinsman and fellow-saint, and Messrs W. and H. Parkers. I hope Hughoc[1] is going on and prospering with God and Miss M'Causlin.

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

Among other matters-of-fact, I shall add this—that I am, and ever shall be, my dear sir, your obliged, R. B.

At Stirling, Burns left his companion for a day, in order to pay a visit at Harvieston, in the valley of the Devon. It might have been mentioned before, if there had been any proper occasion for it, that amongst the persons whose acquaintance the poet had formed at Dr Blacklock's, was a young lady named Margaret Chalmers, a connection of his friend Gavin Hamilton. Miss Chalmers, without being a beauty, had a pleasant, intelligent face; without any pretensions to literary talent or studious habits, she was a woman eminently capable of appreciating the society of literary men. Blacklock adored her for her delightful voice, being, in his blind state, more alive to that 'excellent thing in woman' than to any other female charm of a physical nature. To Burns she was a deeply-interesting person, being one of a small knot of elegant and accomplished women whom he acknowledges to have been pleasing novelties to him on his arrival in Edinburgh, while men of whatever rank appeared to him not greatly different from the better sort of country men he was already accustomed to meet. As yet, however, Burns had not advanced far in acquaintance with Miss Chalmers.

Mrs Hamilton, the stepmother of Gavin—Mrs Chalmers, the mother of this young lady—and the deceased Mrs Tait of Harvieston, were sisters—the children of Murdoch of Cumlodden in Galloway, the representative of a gallant peasant who had got lands for the help he gave to Bruce on a perilous occasion.[2]

On selling his property, the late Mr Chalmers of Fingland had retired to a beautifully-situated farm on the Ayr, in the neighbourhood of Mauchline. There the families of Mrs Chalmers and Mrs Hamilton had grown up in the greatest intimacy and

[1] Mr Hugh Parker.

[2] Through their mother, the three ladies were grandnieces of Grizel Cochrane of Ochiltree, the heroine of a remarkable anecdote of the difficult times of James II. Her father, the Hon. John Cochrane, being condemned to die in Edinburgh for his share in Argyle's rebellion, the young lady disguised herself, attacked the post-messenger as he crossed the Border, and robbed him of the warrant for the execution. Thus she is said to have saved her father's life several times. Grizel Cochrane, who became Mrs Kerr of Morriston in Berwickshire, is represented in her picture as a gentle girl of seventeen, with handsome features of sweet expression, leaning on a table, on which are pistols, and the disguise she wore.—*Letter from a relation of Mrs Chalmers.*

friendship. At length, however, Mrs Chalmers, becoming a widow, removed to Edinburgh. About the same time Mr Tait, being left a widower with a son and daughter, invited his sister-in-law, Mrs Hamilton, to take up her residence at Harvieston, that she might preside over his household until his daughter grew up. Mrs Hamilton accordingly lived there with her children, one of whom, named Charlotte, was bursting into womanhood, with the promise of uncommon beauty. Mrs Chalmers also occasionally lived there in summer with her daughters—namely, the aforesaid Margaret, and one about twenty years older, the wife of Sir Hector Mackenzie. On the present occasion, Mrs Chalmers and Lady Mackenzie were present; but Miss Chalmers had been left in Edinburgh. It will now be tolerably plain how Burns made his approach to the beautiful valley of the Devon.

His entry on the subject in his journal is brief, consisting only of these words: '*Monday.* — Go to Harvieston. Go to see Caudron Linn, and Rumbling Brig, and Deil's Mill. Return in the evening.' But he has left us a more satisfactory account of the day in a letter

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

STIRLING, *28th August* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—Here am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich, fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly-waving crops of wheat, barley, &c. but no harvest at all yet, except in one or two places an old wife's ridge. Yesterday morning I rode from this town up the meandering Devon's banks, to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast, we made a party to go and see the famous Caudron Linn, a remarkable cascade in the Devon, about five miles above Harvieston; and after spending one of the most pleasant days I ever had in my life, I returned to Stirling in the evening. They are a family, sir, though I had not had any prior tie—though they had not been the brothers and sisters of a certain generous friend of mine—I would never forget them. I am told you have not seen them these several years, so you can have very little idea of what these young folks are now. Your brother is as tall as you are, but slender rather than otherwise; and I have the satisfaction to inform you, that he is getting the better of those consumptive symptoms which I suppose you know were threatening him. His make, and particularly his manner, resemble you, but he will have a still finer face. (I put in the word *still*, to please Mrs Hamilton.) Good sense, modesty, and at the same time a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact, are striking features in his character; and, what with me is the Alpha and Omega, he has a heart that might adorn the breast of a poet! Grace has a good figure, and the look of health

and cheerfulness, but nothing else remarkable in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking a likeness as is between her and your little Beenie; the mouth and chin particularly. She is reserved at first; but as we grew better acquainted, I was delighted with the native frankness of her manner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Of Charlotte I cannot speak in common terms of admiration: she is not only beautiful, but lovely. Her form is elegant; her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness and the settled complacency of good-nature, in the highest degree; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr Donne's mistress:—

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

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

I do not give you all this account, my good sir, to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. Such relations the first peer in the realm might own with pride; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks? I had a thousand questions to answer about you. I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them that John[1] was so good a boy, and so fine a scholar, and that Willie was going on still very pretty: but I have it in commission to tell her from them that beauty is a poor silly bauble without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh, but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs Chalmers; only Lady Mackenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat, somewhat marred our enjoyment.

I shall not be in Ayrshire for four weeks. My most respectful compliments to Mrs Hamilton, Miss Kennedy,[2] and Dr Mackenzie. I shall probably write him from some stage or other. I am ever, sir, yours most gratefully, R. B.

In the evening, the travellers supped in a company which the poet sketches off in brief terms:—'Supper—Messrs Doig, the schoolmaster; Bell; and Captain Forrester of the castle. Doig, a queerish figure, and something of a pedant; Bell, a joyous fellow, who sings a good song: Forrester, a merry, swearing kind of man,

> [1] 'May health and peace, with mutual rays,
> Shine on the evening of his days,
> Till his *wee curlie John's* ieroe,
> When ebbing life nae mair shall flow,
> The last sad mournful rites bestow!'
>
> *Dedication to G. H.*

John Hamilton, Esq., the eldest son of his father, is now a wine-merchant in London.

[2] The sister of Mrs Gavin Hamilton.

with a dash of the sodger.' This Mr Doig was a man of some note as a scholar and author. He is chiefly remembered for a controversy with Lord Kames on the question of the origin of civilisation.

On Saturday night the travellers had not been more charmed with the magnificent panorama of the Grampians presented on the battlements of the castle, than their national and Jacobitical feelings had been outraged by the ruinous state of the ancient hall in which parliaments had occasionally been held under the Scottish kings. An inscription was afterwards found on the window of their room:—

> Here Stuarts once in triumph reigned,
> And laws for Scotland's weal ordained;
> But now unroofed their palace stands,
> Their sceptre's fallen to other hands.
> The injured Stuarts' line are gone,
> A race outlandish fill their throne—
> An idiot race, to honour lost:
> Who know them best, despise them most.—BURNS.[1]

Allan Cunningham has given some particulars regarding this affair, which I repeat, without vouching for their accuracy. 'The poet seems not to have been very sensible at that time of his imprudence; for some one said, "Burns, this will do you no good." "I shall reprove myself," he said, and wrote these aggravating words—

> "Rash mortal, and slanderous poet, thy name
> Shall no longer appear in the records of fame;
> Dost not know that old Mansfield, who writes like the Bible,
> Says the more 'tis a truth, sir, the more 'tis a libel?"'

The lines were speedily copied into note-books, became generally known, and of course excited no small amount of remark. It is

[1] In the *Paisley Magazine*, Dec. 1828, there is a narration meant to shew that Nicol, and not Burns, was the author of these lines. It is stated that Burns, finding them attributed to himself, although sensible that they injured him with society, allowed the imputation to rest, rather than expose Nicol to the same evil fame, which to him would have been more injurious. Although this story is brought forward in a circumstantial and confident manner, it has little evidence in its favour, and a good deal against it. Mr B. Nightingale, Priory Road, London, possesses a few leaves of a manuscript book in Burns's handwriting. Amongst several pieces published and unpublished, appears this unfortunate epigram, with the head-line, *Wrote by Somebody in an Inn at Stirling.*

'These miserable lines were printed, with three answers to them severely rebuking the author, in a pamphlet entitled, "Animadversions on some Poets and Poetasters of the Present Age, especially R——t B——s and J——n L——k" [Burns and Lapraik], "with a Contrast with some of a Former Age. By James Maxwell, Poet, Paisley, in 1788." This tract, which consisted of wretched verses attempting to depreciate Burns's abilities, and to injure his character, has long been forgotten.' —PICKERING.

stated that the Rev. Mr Hamilton of Gladsmuir, soon after coming to Stirling, and seeing the verses, added the following :—

'Thus wretches rail whom sordid gain
Drags in Faction's gilded chain;
But can a mind which Fame inspires,
Where genius lights her brightest fires—
Can BURNS, disdaining truth and law,
Faction's venomed dagger draw;
And, skulking with a villain's aim,
Basely stab his monarch's fame?
Yes, Burns, 'tis o'er, thy race is run,
And shades receive thy setting sun:
With pain thy wayward fate I see,
And mourn the lot that's doomed for thee:
These few rash lines will damn thy name,
And blast thy hopes of future fame.'[1]]

'*Tuesday morning.*—Breakfast with Captain Forrester—Ochil Hills—Devon River—Forth and Teith—Allan River—Strathallan, a fine country, but little improved—Cross Earn to Crieff—Dine and go to Aberuchil—cold reception at Aberuchil—a most romantically pleasant ride up Earn, by Auchtertyre and Comrie, to Aberuchil—Sup at Crieff.

'*Wednesday morning.*—Leave Crieff—Glen Almond—Almond River—Ossian's grave—Loch Fruoch—Glenquaich—Landlord and landlady remarkable characters—Taymouth—described in rhyme—Meet the Hon. Charles Townshend.'

[VERSES

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL OVER THE CHIMNEY-PIECE, IN THE PARLOUR OF THE INN AT KENMORE, TAYMOUTH.

Admiring Nature in her wildest grace,
These northern scenes with weary feet I trace;
O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
The abodes of covied grouse and timid sheep,
My savage journey, curious, I pursue,
Till famed Breadalbane opens to my view.
The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,
The woods, wild scattered, clothe their ample sides;
The outstretching lake, embosomed 'mong the hills,
The eye with wonder and amazement fills;

[1] Mr Cunningham states the fact as to Hamilton; but his stupid rejoinder is here given from a manuscript source.

The Tay, meandering sweet in infant pride,
The palace, rising on its verdant side;
The lawns, wood-fringed in Nature's native taste;
The hillocks, dropt in Nature's careless haste;
The arches, striding o'er the new-born stream;
The village, glittering in the noontide beam—
* * * *

Poetic ardours in my bosom swell,
Lone wandering by the hermit's mossy cell:
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods;
Th' incessant roar of headlong tumbling floods—
* * * *

Here Poesy might wake her heaven-taught lyre,
And look through nature with creative fire;
Here to the wrongs of fate half reconciled,
Misfortune's lightened steps might wander wild;
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter, rankling wounds:
Here heartstruck Grief might heavenward stretch her scan,
And injured Worth forget and pardon man.]
* * * *

'*Thursday.*—Come down Tay to Dunkeld—Glenlyon House—Lyon River—Druid's Temple—three circles of stones—the outermost sunk—the second has thirteen stones remaining—the innermost has eight—two large detached ones like a gate, to the south-east—say prayers in it—pass Taybridge—Aberfeldy—described in rhyme—Castle-Menzies—Inver—Dr Stewart—Sup.'

[The beautiful falls of Moness at Aberfeldy excited the poet to verse; but on this occasion it came in a lyric form, for he remembered a simple old ditty, called the *Birks of Abergeldy*, referring to a place in Aberdeenshire, and, struck by the nearly-identical name of this spot, his thoughts fell into harmony with the tune possessing his mind:—

THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDY.

TUNE—*The Birks of Abergeldy.*

CHORUS.

Bonnie lassie, will ye go,
Will ye go, will ye go;
Bonnie lassie, will ye go,
To the birks of Aberfeldy?

Now simmer blinks on flowery braes, glances
And o'er the crystal streamlet plays;
Come, let us spend the lightsome days
In the birks of Aberfeldy.

The little birdies blithely sing,
While o'er their heads the hazels hing,
Or lightly flit on wanton wing
In the birks of Aberfeldy.

The braes ascend, like lofty wa's,
The foamy stream deep-roaring fa's,
O'erhung wi' fragrant spreading shaws, woods
The birks of Aberfeldy.

The hoary cliffs are crown'd wi' flowers,
White o'er the linns the burnie pours, cascades
And rising, weets wi' misty showers
The birks of Aberfeldy.

Let Fortune's gifts at random flee,
They ne'er shall draw a wish frae me,
Supremely blest wi' love and thee,
In the birks of Aberfeldy.]

'*Friday.*—Walk with Mrs Stewart and Beard to Birnam top—fine prospect down Tay—Craigiebarns Hills—hermitage on the Bran Water, with a picture of Ossian—breakfast with Dr Stewart—Neil Gow plays—a short, stout-built, honest Highland figure, with his grayish hair shed on his honest social brow—an interesting face, marking strong sense, kind open-heartedness, mixed with unmistrusting simplicity—visit his house—Marget Gow.

'Ride up Tummel River to Blair [the seat of the Duke of Athole]—Fascally, a beautiful romantic nest—wild grandeur of the Pass of Killiecrankie—visit the gallant Lord Dundee's stone.

'Blair—Sup with the duchess—easy and happy from the manners of the family—confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker.

'*Saturday* [*Sept.* 1].—Visit the scenes round Blair—fine, but spoiled with bad taste—Tilt and Garry rivers—Falls on the Tilt—heather seat—ride in company with Sir William Murray and Mr Walker to Loch Tummel—meanderings of the Rannoch, which runs through quondam Struan Robertson's estate from Loch Rannoch to Loch Tummel—dine at Blair. Company—General Murray; Captain Murray, an honest tar; Sir William Murray, an honest, worthy man, but tormented with the hypochondria; Mrs Graham, *belle et aimable;* Miss Cathcart; Mrs Murray, a painter; Mrs King; duchess and fine family, the Marquis, Lords James, Edward, and Robert; Ladies Charlotte, Emilia, and children dance; sup; Mr Graham of Fintry.'

[Burns had, at Edinburgh, formed the acquaintance of Mr Josiah (afterwards professor) Walker, a young man of his own county, and hence peculiarly apt to gain upon his affections. They had often met at Dr Blacklock's, Professor Stewart's, and other houses. On now coming with a letter of introduction to Blair, it was a fortunate circumstance for the poet and Nicol to find Mr Walker residing there in the capacity of preceptor. Of the visit, which Burns exceedingly enjoyed, Dr Currie received an account from Mr Walker:—

'On reaching Blair, he sent me notice of his arrival (as I had been previously acquainted with him), and I hastened to meet him at the inn. The duke, to whom he brought a letter of introduction, was from home: but the duchess, being informed of his arrival, gave him an invitation to sup and sleep at Athole House [Blair.] He accepted the invitation; but as the hour of supper was at some distance, begged I would, in the interval, be his guide through the grounds. It was already growing dark; yet the softened though faint and uncertain view of their beauties, which the moonlight afforded us, seemed exactly suited to the state of his feelings at the time. I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. I cannot help thinking it might have been here that he conceived the idea of the following lines, which he afterwards introduced into his poem on Bruar Water, when only fancying such a combination of objects as were now present to his eye:—

"Or by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild, chequering through the trees,
Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze."

It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time to supper.

'My curiosity was great to see how he would conduct himself in company so different from what he had been accustomed to. His manner was unembarrassed, plain, and firm. He appeared to have complete reliance on his own native good sense for directing his behaviour. He seemed at once to perceive and to appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but, when led into it, he

spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The duke's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as *honest men and bonnie lasses*, an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed his poem.

'Next day I took a ride with him through some of the most romantic parts of that neighbourhood, and was highly gratified by his conversation. As a specimen of his happiness of conception and strength of expression, I will mention a remark which he made on his fellow-traveller, who was walking at the time a few paces before us. He was a man of a robust but clumsy person; and while Burns was expressing to me the value he entertained for him, on account of his vigorous talents, although they were clouded at times by coarseness of manners; "in short," he added, "his mind is like his body—he has a confounded strong in-kneed sort of a soul."[1]

'Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted. After leaving Blair, he, by the duke's advice, visited the Falls of Bruar, and in a few days I received a letter from Inverness, with the verses enclosed.'

The Saturday and Sunday which Burns spent at Blair (September 1 and 2) he afterwards declared to be among the happiest days of his life. The uneasy spirit which so often chafed at the thought of the pride of rank, seems to have been completely soothed by the genial manners of the family and their guests. The family were as much pleased with the poet as he with them; they entreated him to prolong his stay; and he would have complied, but for the eagerness of Nicol to hurry on. Mr Walker tells us that the ladies, in their anxiety to have a little more of the bard's company, sent a servant to the inn, to bribe his driver to loosen or pull a shoe off one of the horses. 'But the ambush failed. *Proh mirum!* The driver was *incorruptible.*'[2] It was the more to be regretted that Burns did not linger a little longer, as Mr Dundas was daily expected as a guest; and to have met that great dispenser of patronage might have had a favourable influence on his

[1] A correspondent makes a whimsical comment on this passage. He is at a loss to understand how Burns should have thought *in-knees* a mark of strength, for to him they have always conveyed a sense of weakness, and he would rather have associated the *opposite curve* with strength. Does not the truth lie *between?*

[2] Letter of Walker to Dr Currie, Burns's works, second edition, ii. 100.

future fortunes. As it was, he was fortunate in meeting Mr Graham of Fintry, for that gentleman afterwards proved a useful friend.

The verses and letter to which Mr Walker alludes at the close of his communication to Currie, were as follow:—

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATER[1] TO THE NOBLE DUKE OF ATHOLE.

My lord, I know your noble ear
  Wo ne'er assails in vain;
Emboldened thus, I beg you 'll hear
  Your humble slave complain,
How saucy Phœbus' scorching beams,
  In flaming summer-pride,
Dry-withering, waste my foamy streams,
  And drink my crystal tide.

The lightly-jumpin' glowrin' trouts, staring
  That through my waters play,
If, in their random, wanton spouts,
  They near the margin stray;
If, hapless chance! they linger lang,
  I 'm scorching up so shallow,
They 're left the whitening stanes amang,
  In gasping death to wallow.

Last day I grat wi' spite and teen, wept vexation
  As Poet Burns came by,
That to a bard I should be seen
  Wi' half my channel dry:
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,
  Even as I was he shored me; promised
But had I in my glory been,
  He, kneeling, wad adored me.

Here, foaming down the shelvy rocks,
  In twisting strength I rin;
There, high my boiling torrent smokes,
  Wild roaring o'er a linn: cascade

[1] 'The first object of interest that occurs upon the public road after leaving Blair, is a chasm in the hill on the right hand, through which the little River Bruar falls over a series of beautiful cascades. Formerly, the falls of the Bruar were unadorned by wood; but the poet Burns, being conducted to see them (September 1787), after visiting the Duke of Athole, recommended that they should be invested with that necessary decoration. Accordingly, trees have been thickly planted along the chasm, and are now far advanced to maturity. Throughout this young forest, a walk has been cut, and a number of fantastic little grottos erected for the conveniency of those who visit the spot. The river not only makes several distinct falls, but rushes on through a channel, whose roughness and haggard sublimity adds greatly to the merits of the scene, as an object of interest among tourists.'—*Picture of Scotland.*

Enjoying large each spring and well,
As Nature gave them me,
I am, although I say't mysel,
Worth gaun a mile to see.

Would, then, my noble master please
To grant my highest wishes,
He'll shade my banks wi' towering trees,
And bonnie spreading bushes.
Delighted doubly then, my lord,
You'll wander on my banks,
And listen mony a grateful bird
Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober laverock, warbling wild, lark
Shall to the skies aspire;
The gowdspink, music's gayest child, goldfinch
Shall sweetly join the choir:
The blackbird strong, the lintwhite clear, linnet
The mavis mild and mellow; thrush
The robin pensive autumn cheer,
In all her locks of yellow.

This, too, a covert shall insure
To shield them from the storm;
And coward maukin sleep secure, hare
Low in her grassy form:
Here shall the shepherd make his seat,
To weave his crown of flowers;
Or find a sheltering safe retreat
From prone descending showers.

And here, by sweet endearing stealth,
Shall meet the loving pair,
Despising worlds with all their wealth
As empty idle care.
The flowers shall vie in all their charms
The hour of heaven to grace,
And birks extend their fragrant arms
To screen the dear embrace.

Here haply too, at vernal dawn,
Some musing bard may stray,
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn,
And misty mountain gray;
Or, by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild-chequering through the trees,
Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,
Hoarse swelling on the breeze.

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,
  My lowly banks o'erspread,
And view, deep-bending in the pool,
  Their shadows' watery bed!
Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest
  My craggy cliffs adorn;
And, for the little songster's nest,
  The close embowering thorn.

So may old Scotia's darling hope,
  Your little angel band,
Spring, like their fathers, up to prop
  Their honoured native land!
So may, through Albion's farthest ken,
  To social-flowing glasses,
The grace be—'Athole's honest men,
  And Athole's bonnie lasses!'

TO MR WALKER, BLAIR OF ATHOLE.[1]

INVERNESS, *5th September* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—I have just time to write the foregoing, and to tell you that it was (at least most part of it) the effusion of a half-hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it was extempore, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well as Mr Nicol's chat and the jogging of the chaise would allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honour or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast—what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need! I shall never forget.

The 'little angel-band!' I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the Fall of Fyers. I shall never forget the fine family-piece I saw at Blair: the amiable, the truly noble duchess,[2] with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table—the lovely 'olive plants,' as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother—the beautiful Mrs Graham; the lovely, sweet Miss Cathcart, &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice! My Lord Duke's kind hospitality—markedly kind indeed: Mr Graham of Fintry's charms of conversation: Sir W. Murray's friendship: in short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company, raises an honest glow in my bosom.

[1] Mr Walker became professor of humanity (Roman literature) in the University of Glasgow. He wrote a poem entitled *The Defence of Order*, and a life of Burns. He died in 1831.

[2] Jane, daughter of Charles, ninth Lord Cathcart. Her Grace did not survive this visit above three years. The 'little angel-band' consisted of Lady Charlotte Murray, aged twelve, afterwards the wife of Sir John Menzies of Castle-Menzies; Lady Amelia, aged seven, afterwards Viscountess Strathallan; and Lady Elizabeth, an infant of five months, afterwards Lady Macgregor Murray of Lanrick.

The Mrs Graham and Miss Cathcart whom Burns eulogises in the last letter were daughters of Lord Cathcart, and sisters of the Duchess of Athole. The husband of the first lady was at this time a quiet country gentleman, bearing the appellation of Thomas Graham of Balgowan. Five years after, his lovely wife was snatched from him by death in the very noon of life and beauty. The French war soon after broke out, and Thomas Graham, though in middle life, became a soldier in order to beguile his mind of its sorrows. He commanded the British troops at the battle of Barossa, and was raised to a peerage by the style of Lord Lynedoch. His aged figure on horseback at reviews in Hyde Park in days not yet long gone by, must be fresh in the recollections of many. He died in 1843, at the advanced age of ninety-four.

Mr Robert Graham of Balgowan, cousin and heir at law of Lord Lynedoch, possesses a beautiful portrait by Gainsborough, of the lovely woman whom Burns so much admired at Blair. A touching history belongs to it. At the death of his wife, the husband, unable to endure the sight of her counterfeit presentment, caused it to be sent to a picture-frame maker's establishment in London, there to lie till further orders. During the ensuing moiety of a century, he never could make up his mind to behold the image of one so dearly loved and so untimely blighted. He passed his life cheerfully, was fond of society, and had nothing of the monk about him; but he never could look again on this memorial of unutterable wo. It was reserved to his friend and heir Mr Graham to rescue the picture, and bring it once more to the light of day.

The younger lady, who had been born in Russia while her father was ambassador there, was now just seventeen years of age, and

> ——— a very shower
> Of beauty was her earthly dower.

Professor Walker, in a letter to Burns, relates an anecdote of her bountifulness to a poor cottage female, which places her character in the most amiable light. Sad to tell, this fine young creature was cut off by consumption at four-and-twenty. The whole of these three fair sisters predeceased even our too short-lived poet.]

'Come up the Garry—Falls of Bruar—Dalnacardoch—Dalwhinnie—dine—snow on the hills seventeen feet deep—no corn from Loch-garry to Dalwhinnie—cross the Spey, and come down the stream to Pitnain—straths rich—*les environs* picturesque—Craigow Hill—Ruthven of Badenoch—barracks—wild and magnificent—Rothemurchie on the other side, and Glenmore—Grant of Rothemurchie's poetry—told me by the Duke of Gordon—Strathspey, rich and romantic—breakfast at Aviemore, a wild spot—dine

at Sir James Grant's—Lady Grant, a sweet, pleasant body—come through mist and darkness to Dulsie, to lie [sleep.]

'*Tuesday.*—Findhorn River—rocky banks—come on to Castle-Cawdor, where Macbeth murdered King Duncan—saw the bed in which King Duncan was stabbed—dine at Kilravock—Mrs Rose, sen., a true chieftain's wife—Fort-George—Inverness.

'*Wednesday.*—Loch Ness—Braes of Ness—General's Hut—Fall of Fyers—Urquhart Castle and Strath.'

[VERSES

WRITTEN WHILE STANDING BY THE FALL OF FYERS, NEAR LOCH NESS.

Among the heathy hills and ragged woods,
The foaming Fyers pours his mossy floods;
Till full he dashes on the rocky mounds,
Where, through a shapeless breach, his stream resounds.
As high in air the bursting torrents flow,
As deep recoiling surges foam below;
Prone down the rock the whitening sheet descends,
And viewless Echo's ear, astonished, rends.
Dim seen, through rising mists and ceaseless showers,
The hoary cavern, wide surrounding, lowers;
Still through the gap the struggling river toils,
And still below, the horrid caldron boils—

* * * *

In the evening, after returning from his drive to the Fall of Fyers, Burns (accompanied, we presume, by Nicol) dined by appointment with Mr Inglis, the provost, who had a party to meet him. He was enraptured with the Highland scenery, but rather thoughtful and silent than otherwise during the evening.]

'*Thursday.*—Come over Culloden Muir—reflections on the field of battle—breakfast at Kilravock'—[He probably was introduced here by Mr Mackenzie, author of the 'Man of Feeling,' who was a near relation of the family by his mother]—'old Mrs Rose, sterling sense, warm heart, strong passions, and honest pride, all in an uncommon degree—Mrs Rose, jun., a little milder than the mother; this, perhaps, owing to her being younger—Mr Grant, minister at Calder, resembles Mr Scott at Inverleithen. Mrs Rose and Mrs Grant accompany us to Kildrummie—two young ladies—Miss Rose, who sang two Gaelic songs, beautiful and lovely—Miss Sophia Brodie, most agreeable and amiable—both of them gentle, mild; the sweetest creatures on earth, and happiness be with them!'

[In a letter written in the subsequent February to Mrs Rose,

junior, the poet shews a lively and grateful recollection of this happy day. It appears that here also he would have prolonged his stay but for the impatience of Nicol.]

'Dine at Nairn—fall in with a pleasant enough gentleman, Dr Stewart, who had been long abroad with his father in the forty-five; and Mr Falconer, a spare, irascible, warm-hearted Norland, and a nonjuror—Brodie House to lie.

'*Friday* [*Sep.* 7].—Forres—famous stone at Forres—Mr Brodie tells me that the muir where Shakspeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still haunted—that the country folks wont pass it by night.

* * * *

'Venerable ruins of Elgin Abbey [Cathedral]—a grander effect at first glance than Melrose, but not near so beautiful. Cross Spey to Fochabers—fine palace [Gordon Castle, the seat of the Duke of Gordon]—worthy of the generous proprietor—dine. Company—Duke and Duchess, Ladies Charlotte and Magdeline,[1] Colonel Abercrombie and Lady, Mr Gordon, and Mr ——, a clergyman, a venerable aged figure—the duke makes me happier than ever great man did—noble, princely, yet mild, condescending, and affable; gay and kind—the duchess witty and sensible—God bless them!'

[Dr Currie obtained some particulars of Burns's too brief visit to Gordon Castle from Dr Couper of Fochabers. 'In the course of the preceding winter,' he says, 'Burns had been introduced to the Duchess of Gordon at Edinburgh; and, presuming on this acquaintance, he proceeded to Gordon Castle, leaving Mr Nicol at the inn in the village. At the castle, our poet was received with the utmost hospitality and kindness; and the family being about to sit down to dinner, he was invited to take his place at table as a matter of course. This invitation he accepted, and after drinking a few glasses of wine, he rose up, and proposed to withdraw. On being pressed to stay, he mentioned, for the first time, his engagement with his fellow-traveller; and, his noble host offering to send a servant to conduct Mr Nicol to the castle, Burns insisted on undertaking that office himself. He was, however, accompanied by a gentleman, a particular acquaintance of the duke, by whom the invitation was delivered in all the forms of politeness. The invitation came too late; the pride of Nicol was inflamed into a high degree of passion by the neglect which he had already suffered. He had ordered the horses to be put to the carriage, being determined to proceed on his journey alone; and they found

[1] Lady Charlotte, who was now nineteen years of age, afterwards became Duchess of Richmond, and was the mother of the present duke. Lady Madelina married Sir Robert Sinclair of Murkle.

him parading the streets of Fochabers, before the door of the inn, venting his anger on the postilion for the slowness with which he obeyed his commands. As no explanation nor entreaty could change the purpose of his fellow-traveller, our poet was reduced to the necessity of separating from him entirely, or of instantly proceeding with him on their journey. He chose the last of these alternatives; and seating himself beside Nicol in the post-chaise, with mortification and regret, he turned his back on Gordon Castle, where he had promised himself some happy days. Sensible, however, of the great kindness of the noble family, he made the best return in his power, by the following poem:—

CASTLE-GORDON.

'"Streams that glide in orient plains,
Never bound by winter's chains;
Glowing here on golden sands,
There commixed with foulest stains
From tyranny's empurpled bands;
These, their richly-gleaming waves,
I leave to tyrants and their slaves;
Give me the stream that sweetly laves
The banks by Castle-Gordon.

Spicy forests, ever gay,
Shading from the burning ray
Helpless wretches sold to toil,
Or the ruthless native's way,
Bent on slaughter, blood, and spoil:
Woods that ever verdant wave,
I leave the tyrant and the slave;
Give me the groves that lofty brave
The storms by Castle-Gordon.

Wildly here, without control,
Nature reigns and rules the whole;
In that sober, pensive mood,
Dearest to the feeling soul,
She plants the forest, pours the flood;
Life's poor day I'll musing rave,
And find at night a sheltering cave,
Where waters flow and wild woods wave,
By bonnie Castle-Gordon."'[1]

Allan Cunningham states that the Duchess of Gordon was good enough to plan a visit of Mr Henry Addington (afterwards Lord

[1] Designed to be sung to 'Morag,' a Highland tune, of which Burns was extremely fond.—CURRIE.

Sidmouth) to Gordon Castle, when Burns and Dr Beattie should meet him, knowing that the English statesman was a warm admirer of the poetry of the former, and might readily be of use to him. 'The future premier,' says Allan, 'was unable to accept the invitation; but wrote and forwarded, it is said, these memorable lines—memorable as the first indication of that deep love which England now entertains for the genius of Burns:—

'"Yes! pride of Scotia's favoured plains, 'tis thine
The warmest feelings of the heart to move;
To bid it throb with sympathy divine,
To glow with friendship or to melt with love.

What though each morning sees thee rise to toil,
Though Plenty on thy cot no blessing showers,
Yet Independence cheers thee with her smile,
And Fancy strews thy moorland with her flowers!

And dost thou blame the impartial will of Heaven,
Untaught of life the good and ill to scan?
To thee the Muse's choicest wreath is given—
To thee the genuine dignity of man!

Then, to the want of worldly gear resigned,
Be grateful for the wealth of thy exhaustless mind."'

Dr Walker, in his Life of Burns, expresses in pretty strong terms his sense of Burns's misfortune in being accompanied on this occasion by a man whom he could scarcely introduce to scenes where delicacy and self-denial are so much required. At Blair, Dr Walker informs us, the impatience of the rude pedagogue had been suspended by engaging him in his favourite amusement of angling.]

'Come to Cullen to lie—hitherto the country is sadly poor and unimproven.'

[The travellers breakfasted next morning, Saturday, 8th September, at Banff, with the master of the grammar-school there, Dr Chapman, who had been Nicol's superior in the same situation at Dumfries, in years long gone by. A boy of thirteen, who was then a pet pupil of the morning Greek class, and was asked by Chapman to join the party, related many years afterwards his recollections of what passed:[1]

'During breakfast, Burns played off some sportive jests at his touchy *compagnon de voyage*, about some misunderstanding which took place between them at Fochabers, in consequence of Burns having visited the castle without him; and the good old doctor

[1] The narration appeared in *Chambers's Journal*, vol. viii. p. 405.

seemed much amused with the way the poet chose to smoothe down the yet lurking ire of the dominie. After breakfast, Dr Chapman sent me to the bookseller's shop for a new copy of the *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland*, by the Reverend Charles Cordiner, minister of the English Chapel in Banff, which he presented as a mark of his regard to Mr Nicol, and for a useful guide-book to the travellers in their progress. As they were to visit Duff House, the splendid mansion of the Earl of Fife, and drive through the park on their way south, after delivering the book to Mr Nicol I accompanied the two gentlemen from the town to the house, carrying a note to the steward there from my father, that they might see the interior of the house, the paintings, and valuable library. In driving through the park, Mr Nicol, while engaged in looking at the plates of the book, asked me whether I was aware that the gentleman who was speaking to me about the park was the author of the poems I had no doubt heard of. "Yes," I replied; "Dr Chapman told me so when he asked me to breakfast." "Then have you read the poems?" "Oh yes! I was glad to do that," was my reply. "Then which of them did you like best?" Nicol asked. I said, "I was much entertained with the *Twa Dogs*, and *Death and Dr Hornbook;* but I like best by far the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, although it made me *greet* when my father had me to read it to my mother."

'Burns, with a sort of sudden start, looked in my face intently, and, patting my shoulder, said: "Well, my callant, I don't wonder at your *greeting* at reading the poem; it made me *greet* more than once when I was writing it at *my* father's fireside."

'I recollect very well that while Mr Nicol loitered in the library, looking at the fine collection of old classics there, Burns, taking me with him for a guide, went a second time through some of the rooms to look at the old paintings, with the catalogue in his hand, and remarked particularly those of the Stuart family in the great drawing-room, on which he seemed to look with intense interest, making some remarks on them to his *boy*-guide, which the *man* fails to recollect. But the face and look of Robert Burns were such as, either boy or man, he never could forget.']

'Come to Aberdeen—meet with Mr Chalmers, printer, a facetious fellow—Mr Ross, a fine fellow, like Professor Tytler—Mr Marshall, one of the *poetæ minores*—Mr Sheriffs, author of *Jamie and Bess*, a little decrepit body, with some abilities[1]—Bishop Skinner, a nonjuror, son of the author of *Tullochgorum;* a man whose mild, venerable manner, is the most marked of any in so young a

[1] Mr Sheriffs published, in 1790, a volume of *Poems in the Scottish Dialect*, one of many such brought forth by the *éclat* of the Ayrshire bard, but brought forth in vain.

man—Professor Gordon, a good-natured, jolly-looking professor—Aberdeen a lazy town.'

[It was at the printing-office of Mr Chalmers that Burns met the mild, composed-looking man who bore the title of Bishop Skinner. To the Ayrshire poet this was an interesting person, not so much on account of the office he bore in the cavalier Episcopal Church of Scotland, as because he was the son of one who had written popular songs in the vernacular language. Burns, being made aware of the parentage of the worthy bishop, entered into conversation with him regarding his father; and on learning that he lived at Linshart, near Longmay, a village to the west of Peterhead, which he had now thrown far into his rear, expressed great regret for his ignorance of the old poet's locality, as he said he would have gladly gone twenty miles out of his way to see him. Such was the importance which he attached to the composition of the song of *Tullochgorum*. It is a pity that he did not see the venerable Skinner at his cottage-parsonage, for it would have been a lesson of religious contentment that could scarcely have failed to touch and improve his spirit. He would have found the old parson living in what was literally a cottage—what is called in Scotland *a butt and a ben*—with earthen floors and grateless fireplaces, not enjoying an income equal to that of a foreman in a common workshop, yet cheerful, and even mirthful, and the centre of a family circle in which would have been found many elegances and accomplishments. It would be well for more than unendowed poets to see how independent is the truest luxury of life, the refinement and joy of an elevated and cheerful nature, upon the external accidents of fortune.

From Aberdeen Burns proceeded southward into Kincardineshire, the native county of his father, and where the most of his paternal kindred still resided. As he had eminently that Scottish heart which acknowledges 'bluid to be thicker than water,' he felt deep interest in entering upon this district, where he expected to meet with many hitherto unseen relatives. Unfortunately he has not been very communicative as to these persons, or the incidents of his sojourn amongst them.]

'Near Stonehive [Stonehaven],' he says, 'the coast a good deal romantic. Meet my relations. Robert Burns, writer in Stonehive, one of those who love fun, a gill, and a punning joke, and have not a bad heart—his wife a sweet, hospitable body, without any affectation of what is called town-breeding.

'*Tuesday*.—Breakfast with Mr Burns—lie at Lawrence-kirk—Album—library—Mrs ——, a jolly, frank, sensible, love-inspiring widow—Howe of the Mearns, a rich, cultivated, but still unenclosed country.

'*Wednesday.*—Cross North Esk River and a rich country to Craigow.' * * *

[He then says, with provoking brevity, 'Go to Montrose, that finely-situated, handsome town.' He here found his cousin, Mr James Burnes, in creditable circumstances as a writer or legal agent, and therefore a member of the upper circle of society. The present Mr James Burnes, son of that gentleman, and father of Sir Alexander Burnes of Cabul memory, was then a little boy, and he only remembers sitting for a while upon the bard's knee. The journal proceeds]—'Breakfast [Sep. 13] at Muthie, and sail along that wild, rocky coast, and see the famous caverns, particularly the Gairiepot—land and dine at Arbroath—stately ruins of Arbroath Abbey—come to Dundee through a fertile country—Dundee a low-lying but pleasant town—old steeple—Tayfrith—Broughty Castle, a finely-situated ruin, jutting into the Tay.

'*Friday.*—Breakfast with the Miss Scotts—Miss Bess Scott like Mrs Greenfield—my bardship almost in love with her—come through the rich harvests and fine hedgerows of the Carse of Gowrie, along the romantic margin of the Grampian Hills to Perth—fine, fruitful, hilly, woody country round Perth.'

[From the little which remains of the journal, it is observable how vigilant was his interest regarding the localities of Scottish songs. He seems to have taken measures for being introduced to the Belches family at Invermay, near Perth, in order that he might see the pretty little valley of that name celebrated in a well-known song, *The Birks of Invermay.* He also was studious to learn the whereabouts of the spot consecrated by the hapless ballad history of *Bessie Bell and Mary Gray.*]

'*Saturday Morning.*—Leave Perth—come up Strathearn to Endermay—fine, fruitful, cultivated Strath—the scene of *Bessie Bell and Mary Gray* near Perth—fine scenery on the banks of the May—Mrs Belches, gawcie, frank, affable, fond of rural sports, hunting, &c.—Lie at Kinross—reflections in a fit of the colic.

'*Sunday* [*Sep.* 16].—Pass through a cold, barren country to Queensferry—dine—cross the ferry, and on to Edinburgh.'

TO MR GILBERT BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *17th September* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR[1]—I arrived here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near 600 miles, windings

[1] This appears a singular term for Burns to have employed in addressing his brother, but so it is in the original manuscript, possibly by oversight.

included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of Lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and Druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the Duke of Athole; thence across Tay, and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending nearly two days with his Grace and family; thence many miles through a wild country among cliffs gray with eternal snows and gloomy savage glens till I crossed Spey, and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music;[1] Badenoch, &c. till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort-George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed in which tradition says King Duncan was murdered; lastly, from Fort-George to Inverness.

'I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen, thence to Stonehive [Stonehaven], where James Burnes, from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts, Jean and Isabel[2] still alive, and hale old women. John Caird,[3] though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can—they have had several letters from his son in New York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay till I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing: warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his very grave, what cared I for fishing-towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon Castle next day, with the duke, duchess, and family. I am thinking to cause my old mare to meet me, by means of John Ronald,[4] at Glasgow; but you shall hear farther from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty and many compliments from the north to my mother; and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a berth for William,[5] but am not likely to be successful. Farewell. R. B.

Journeying through the Highlands with a Jacobite companion, Burns could not but feel a little more enthusiastic than he generally did regarding the memory of the Stuarts. His visit to the natal district of those ancestors whom he believed to have followed the cavalier standard, would give increased energy to his feelings

[1] A quick kind of dancing tunes are called Strathspeys, from this vale, the place of their nativity.

[2] Jean married John Burness, tenant of Bogjorgan. Isabel married William Brand, at Auchenblae, mentioned below.

[3] John Caird was the husband of Elspeth, another of the sisters. He is described as 'in Denside of Dunnottar.'

[4] A carrier between Mauchline and Glasgow; uncle to William Ronald, ploughman at Mossgiel, for whose testimony to the eloquence of the poet's family prayers see Vol. I. p. 160.

[5] A younger brother of the poet, who had been brought up as a saddler.

of romantic loyalty. Connecting these considerations with the fact of Prince Charles having this very month declared the legitimacy of his hitherto supposed natural daughter styled Duchess of Albany, I deem it probable that it was at this time that Burns composed a song in honour of that lady which has not till now seen the light. The Prince had, as is well known, lived many years with Clementina Walkinshaw, who bore him this single child. There are some who, not without grounds, believe that he was married to the lady. The Jacobites, who had long deplored his being without ostensible legitimate offspring, heard with a throb of melancholy interest that his one child, whatever were the circumstances of her birth, was legitimated by a deed registered (September 6, 1787) by the parliament of Paris. We can imagine Burns led by the intelligence into a reverie of those politics of the heart by which he did not disdain to admit that he was animated, and in that reverie composing, in imitation of the old ballad manner,

THE BONNY LASS OF ALBANY.

TUNE—*Mary's Dream.*

My heart is wae, and unco wae,
To think upon the raging sea,
That roars between her gardens green
And the bonnie Lass of Albany.

This lovely maid's of royal blood
That rulèd Albion's kingdoms three,
But oh, alas, for her bonnie face,
They've wranged the Lass of Albany.

In the rolling tide of spreading Clyde
There sits an isle of high degree,[1]
And a town of fame whose princely name
Should grace the Lass of Albany.[2]

But there's a youth, a witless youth,
That fills the place where she should be;[3]
We'll send him o'er to his native shore,
And bring our ain sweet Albany.

Alas the day, and wo the day,
A false usurper wan the gree, superiority
Who now commands the towers and lands—
The royal right of Albany.

[1] Bute.
[2] Rothsay, the county town of Bute, gave a title to the eldest sons of the kings of Scotland (Duke of Rothsay.)
[3] An allusion to the Prince of Wales.

We'll daily pray, we'll nightly pray,
On bended knees most fervently,
The time may come, with pipe and drum
We'll welcome hame fair Albany.[1]

On the 28th of September Burns was still in Edinburgh. At his meeting with Mr Miller of Dalswinton in June, he had promised to return in August, in order to look more carefully over his farms. He had been unable to fulfil this engagement, and he could not even now contemplate an immediate visit to Dumfriesshire. We have a letter written by him to Mr Miller on the above day, explanatory of his intended movements, and containing some characteristic sentiments:[2]—

TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ., DALSWINTON.

EDINBURGH, *28th September* 1787.

SIR—I have been on a tour through the Highlands, and arrived in town but the other day, so could not wait on you at Dalswinton about the latter end of August, as I had promised and intended.

Independent of any views of future connections, what I owe you for the past, as a friend and benefactor, when friends I had few, and benefactors I had none, strongly in my bosom prohibits the most distant instance of ungrateful disrespect. I am informed you do not come to town for a month still, and within that time I shall certainly wait on you, as by this time I suppose you will have settled your scheme with respect to your farms.

My journey through the Highlands was perfectly inspiring, and I hope I have laid in a good stock of new poetical ideas from it. I shall make no apology for sending you the enclosed:[3] it is a small but grateful tribute to the memory of our common countryman. I have the honour to be, with the most grateful sincerity, sir, your obliged humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—I have added another poem,[4] partly as it alludes to some folks nearly and dearly connected with Ayrshire, and partly as rhymes are the only coin in which the poor poet can pay his debts of gratitude. The lady alluded to is Miss Isabella M'Leod, aunt to the young Countess of Loudon.

As I am determined not to leave Edinburgh till I wind up my matters with Mr Creech, which I am afraid will be a tedious busi-

[1] Prince Charles, at his death in 1788, left the Duchess of Albany his sole heir, but she did not long survive him. The above song is printed from a portion of a manuscript book in Burns's handwriting, which has been described as in the possession of Mr B. Nightingale, London. It occurs after the verses on the Stirling window, under the title of *A Song by the Same Hand.*

[2] I am indebted for a copy of this letter to Mr W. C. Aitken, Broad Street, Birmingham.

[3] Evidently, from the expression 'our common countryman,' referring to the Elegy on Sir James Hunter Blair—Mr Miller being, like Sir James and the poet, a native of Ayrshire.

[4] The Verses on the Death of Mr John M'Leod.

ness, should I unfortunately miss you at Dalswinton, perhaps your factor will be able to inform me of your intentions with respect to the Elesland farm [*so in MS.*], which will save me a jaunt to Edinburgh again.

There is something so suspicious in the professions of attachment from a little man to a great man, that I know not how to do justice to the grateful warmth of my heart when I would say how truly I am interested in the welfare of your little troop of angels, and how much I have the honour to be again, sir, your obliged humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

When worthy Mr Skinner learned from his son the bishop, or, as he called him, his *chill* (that is, chiel or child), that Burns had passed near his residence and missed seeing him, though anxious to do so, he felt a regret corresponding to that of the Ayrshire Bard, for, though now near seventy, his poetical and social affections were as vivid as ever. He resolved, as the next best, to attempt an interchange of correspondence with Burns, in the style of certain versified epistles which Allan Ramsay and Hamilton of Gilbertfield had launched at each other. His own first address to our bard, dated the 25th of September, opens with an expression of his joy that his son had met Burns, joined with a lament for his own absence on the interesting occasion :—

'Oh happy hour for evermair,
That led my chill up Chalmers' stair,[1]
And ga'e him what he values sair
Sae braw a skance sight
Of Ayrshire's dainty poet there
By lucky chance.

Waes my auld heart, I was na wi' you,
Though worth-your-while I couldna gi'e you,
But sin' I hadna hap to see you,
When ye was north,
I'm bauld to send my service to you,
Hence o'er the Forth.'

After some verses expressing admiration of Burns and his several poems, the kind old man urges further labours in the field of poesy, and concludes by proposing a correspondence :

'——— thanks to Praise, you're in your prime,
And may chant on this lang, lang time;
For let me tell you 'twere a crime
To haud your tongue,
Wi' sic a knack ye hae at rhyme,
And you sae young.

[1] The stair of Mr Chalmers's printing-office in Aberdeen, where Burns was when Bishop Skinner encountered him.

Ye ken it 's no for ane like me
To be sae droll as ye can be;
But ony help that I can gie,
Though 't be but sma',
Your least command, I'll let you see,
Shall gar me draw.

An hour or twa, by hook or crook,
And maybe three, some orra ouk, odd week
That I can spare frae haly beuk holy book
(For that 's my hobby),
I'll steal awa to some bye-neuk
And crack wi' Robie. converse

Wad ye but only crack again,
* * * *
Sae canty Ploughman, fare ye weel;
Lord bless ye lang wi' ha'e and heal, have health
And keep ye aye the honest chiel
That ye hae been,
Syne lift ye to a better biel shelter
Whan this is dune.' done

Rhymer Robin greatly enjoyed any such recognition from an elder brother in the Muses, for these men had been the gods of his idolatry during his youthful and obscure days, when he did not hope to be ever heard of beyond the bounds of his own parish. He did not, however, answer immediately; and when he did, it was not in 'rhyming ware:'—

TO THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

[EDINBURGH, *October* 25, 1787.]

REVEREND AND VENERABLE SIR—Accept, in plain dull prose, my most sincere thanks for the best poetical compliment I ever received. I assure you, sir, as a poet, you have conjured up an airy demon of vanity in my fancy, which the best abilities in your other capacity would be ill able to lay. I regret, and while I live I shall regret, that when I was in the north, I had not the pleasure of paying a younger brother's dutiful respect to the author of the best Scotch song ever Scotland saw—'Tullochgorum's my delight!' The world may think slightingly of the craft of song-making, if they please; but, as Job says, 'Oh that mine adversary had written a book!'—let them try. There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought and expression, which peculiarly marks them, not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of song-wrights, in our native manner and language. The only remains of this enchantment, these spells of the imagination, rest with you. Our true brother, Ross of Lochlee, was likewise 'owre cannie'—'a wild warlock'—but now he sings among the 'sons of the morning.'

I have often wished, and will certainly endeavour, to form a kind of common acquaintance among all the genuine sons of Caledonian song. The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us; but 'reverence thyself.' The world is not our *peers*, so we challenge the jury. We can lash that world, and find ourselves a very great source of amusement and happiness independent of that world.

There is a work going on in Edinburgh just now which claims your best assistance. An engraver in this town has set about collecting and publishing all the Scotch songs, with the music, that can be found. Songs in the English language, if by Scotchmen, are admitted, but the music must all be Scotch. Drs Beattie and Blacklock are lending a hand, and the first musician in town presides over that department. I have been absolutely crazed about it, collecting old stanzas, and every information remaining respecting their origin, authors, &c. &c. This last is but a very fragment business; but at the end of his second number—the first is already published—a small account will be given of the authors, particularly to preserve those of latter times. Your three songs, *Tullochgorum*, *John of Badenyon*, and *Ewie wi' the Crookit Horn*, go in this second number. I was determined, before I got your letter, to write you, begging that you would let me know where the editions of these pieces may be found, as you would wish them to continue in future times; and if you would be so kind to this undertaking as send any songs, of your own or others, that you would think proper to publish, your name will be inserted among the other authors—'Nill ye, will ye.' One-half of Scotland already give your songs to other authors. Paper is done. I beg to hear from you; the sooner the better, as I leave Edinburgh in a fortnight or three weeks. I am, with the warmest sincerity, sir, your obliged humble servant, R. B.

To this letter Mr Skinner sent the following reply:—

LINSHART, 14*th November* 1787.

SIR—Your kind return without date, but of post-mark October 25th, came to my hand only this day; and to testify my punctuality to my poetic engagement, I sit down immediately to answer it in kind. Your acknowledgment of my poor but just encomiums on your surprising genius, and your opinion of my rhyming excursions, are both, I think, by far too high. The difference between our two tracks of education and ways of life is entirely in your favour, and gives you the preference every manner of way. I know a classical education will not create a versifying taste, but it mightily improves and assists it; and though, where both these meet, there may sometimes be ground for approbation, yet where taste appears single, as it were, and neither cramped nor supported by acquisition, I will always sustain the justice of its prior claim to applause. A small portion of taste, this way, I have had almost from childhood, especially in the old Scottish dialect: and it is as old a thing as I remember, my fondness for *Christ-kirk o' the Green*, which I had by heart

ere I was twelve years of age, and which, some years ago, I attempted to turn into Latin verse. While I was young, I dabbled a good deal in these things; but on getting the black gown, I gave it pretty much over, till my daughters grew up, who, being all good singers, plagued me for words to some of their favourite tunes, and so extorted these effusions, which have made a public appearance beyond my expectations, and contrary to my intentions, at the same time that I hope there is nothing to be found in them uncharacteristic or unbecoming the cloth, which I would always wish to see respected.

As to the assistance you propose from me in the undertaking you are engaged in,[1] I am sorry I cannot give it so far as I could wish and you perhaps expect. My daughters, who were my only intelligencers, are all *foris-familiate*, and the old woman their mother has lost that taste. There are two from my own pen, which I might give you, if worth the while. One to the old Scotch tune of *Dumbarton's Drums*. The other, perhaps, you have met with, as your noble friend the duchess has, I am told, heard of it. It was squeezed out of me by a brother parson in her neighbourhood, to accommodate a new Highland reel for the marquis's birthday,[2] to the stanza of

'Tune your fiddles, tune them sweetly,' &c.

If this last answer your purpose, you may have it from a brother of mine, Mr James Skinner, writer in Edinburgh, who, I believe, can give the music too.

There is another humorous thing I have heard, said to be done by the Catholic priest Geddes,[3] and which hit my taste much:—

'There was a wee wifeikie, was coming frae the fair,
Had gotten a little drapikie, which bred her meikle care;
It took upo' the wifie's heart, and she began to spew,
And quo' the wee wifeikie, I wish I binna fou.
I wish,' &c. &c.

I have heard of another new composition, by a young ploughman of my acquaintance, that I am vastly pleased with, to the tune of *The Humours of Glen*, which I fear wont do, as the music, I am told, is of Irish original. I have mentioned these, such as they are, to shew my readiness to oblige you, and to contribute my mite, if I could, to the patriotic work you have in hand, and which I wish all success to. You have only to notify your mind, and what you want of the above shall be sent you.

Meantime, while you are thus publicly, I may say, employed, do not sheathe your own proper and piercing weapon. From what I have seen of yours already, I am inclined to hope for much good. One lesson of virtue and morality, delivered in your amusing style, and from such as you, will operate more than dozens would do from

[1] *Johnson's Museum.*
[2] The Marquis of Huntly, eldest son of the Duke of Gordon.
[3] Geddes is now believed not to have been the author of this poem.

such as me, who shall be told it is our employment, and be never more minded: whereas, from a pen like yours, as being one of the many, what comes will be admired. Admiration will produce regard, and regard will leave an impression, especially when example goes along.

'Now binna saying I 'm ill-bred, be not
Else, by my troth, I 'll no be glad;
For cadgers, ye have heard it said, hucksters
And sic-like fry,
Maun aye be harland in their trade, dragging
And sae maun I.'

Wishing you, from my poet pen, all success, and, in my other character, all happiness and heavenly direction, I remain, with esteem, your sincere friend, JOHN SKINNER.

Before Burns had been many days in Edinburgh, after his return from the north, he had to fulfil a promise to Charlotte Hamilton, and thus wrote to her friend, Miss Chalmers, now at Harvieston:—

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Sept. 26, 1787.

I send Charlotte the first number of the songs;[1] I would not wait for the second number; I hate delays in little marks of friendship as I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart. I am determined to pay Charlotte a poetic compliment, if I could hit on some glorious old Scotch air, in number second. You will see a small attempt on a shred of paper in the book; but though Dr Blacklock commended it very highly, I am not just satisfied with it myself. I intend to make it a description of some kind: the whining cant of love, except in real passion, and by a masterly hand, is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant of old Father Smeaton, Whig-minister at Kilmaurs. Darts, flames, Cupids, loves, graces, and all that farrago, are just a Mauchline ———, a senseless rabble.

I got an excellent poetic epistle yesternight from the old venerable author of *Tullochgorum*, *John of Badenyon*, &c.[2] I suppose you know he is a clergyman. It is by far the finest poetic compliment I ever got. I will send you a copy of it.

I go on Thursday or Friday to Dumfries, to wait on Mr Miller about his farms. Do tell that to Lady Mackenzie, that she may give me credit for a little wisdom. 'I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence.' What a blessed fireside! How happy should I be to pass a winter evening under their venerable roof, and smoke a pipe of tobacco, or drink water-gruel with them! With solemn, lengthened, laughter-quashing gravity of phiz! What sage remarks on the good-for-nothing sons and daughters of indiscretion and folly! And what frugal

[1] The first volume of the *Scots Musical Museum*.

[2] From this allusion, it may be suspected that, by some mistake, the date assigned to the letter is too early by one or two days.

lessons, as we straitened the fireside circle, on the uses of the poker and tongs!

Miss N[immo][1] is very well, and begs to be remembered in the old way to you. I used all my eloquence, all the persuasive flourishes of the hand, and heart-melting modulation of periods in my power, to urge her out to Harvieston; but all in vain. My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind. I have seen the day—but this is a 'tale of other years.' In my conscience I believe that my heart has been so oft on fire, that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night. I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship; I am charmed with the wild but graceful eccentricity of their motions; and—wish them good-night. I mean this with respect to a certain passion *dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'être un misérable esclave:* as for friendship, you and Charlotte have given me pleasure, permanent pleasure, 'which the world cannot give nor take away,' I hope, and which will outlast the heavens and the earth. R. B.

The wish of Burns for an immediate review of Mr Miller's farms does not appear to have been immediately gratified. Before October was far advanced, he had undoubtedly left the capital on an excursion of a different character, and in a different direction. There were various objects to be accomplished. He wished to see more of the pleasant family at Harvieston, now so agreeably augmented. He desired, probably for more solidly-prudent reasons, to take advantage of the invitation which Sir William Murray of Ochtertyre had given him at Blair. He also bore a letter of introduction from Dr Blacklock for Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre (a different place, near Stirling), a gentleman eminently qualified to appreciate his genius, and also to assist in his literary schemes. The poet started in company with Dr James M'Kittrick Adair, a friend somewhat his senior, to whom he probably became known through an Ayrshire line of acquaintance. Dr Adair gave Dr Currie an account of the tour, which I receive as faithful in most particulars, but deficient in some, and referring to a wrong period.

'Burns and I,' he says, 'left Edinburgh in August 1787.' It will be seen in a note referred to below,[2] that the circumstances alluded to by Dr Adair himself require a later date. He continues —'We rode by Linlithgow and Carron, to Stirling. We visited the iron-works at Carron, with which the poet was forcibly struck. The resemblance between that place and its inhabitants to the cave of the Cyclops, which must have occurred to every classical

[1] Miss Erskine Nimmo, a friend of Miss Chalmers, residing in Edinburgh.
[2] Appendix, No. II.

reader, presented itself to Burns. At Stirling the prospects from the castle strongly interested him: in a former visit to which, his national feelings had been powerfully excited by the ruinous and roofless state of the hall in which the Scottish parliaments had frequently been held. His indignation had vented itself in some imprudent, but not unpoetical lines, which had given much offence, and which he took this opportunity of erasing, by breaking the pane of the window at the inn on which they were written.'

Burns, it is said, finding the minister of Gladsmuir's reproof below his lines, dashed out the pane with the butt end of his whip. He did not, however, allow the reproof to pass without comment, as the following couplet composed regarding it shews:—

> Like Esop's lion, Burns says, 'Sore I feel
> All others' scorn, but damn that ass's heel!'

'At Stirling,' continues Dr Adair, 'we met with a company of travellers from Edinburgh, among whom was a character in many respects congenial with that of Burns. This was Nicol, one of the teachers of the High Grammar School at Edinburgh—the same wit and power of conversation, the same fondness for convivial society, and thoughtlessness of to-morrow, characterised both. Jacobitical principles in politics were common to both of them; and these have been suspected, since the revolution of France, to have given place in each to opinions apparently opposite. I regret that I have preserved no *memorabilia* of their conversation, either on this or on other occasions, when I happened to meet them together. Many songs were sung; which I mention for the sake of observing, that when Burns was called on in his turn, he was accustomed, instead of singing, to recite one or other of his own shorter poems, with a tone and emphasis which, though not correct or harmonious, were impressive and pathetic. This he did on the present occasion.'

'From Stirling we went next morning through the romantic and fertile vale of Devon to Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, then inhabited by Mrs Hamilton, with the younger part of whose family Burns had been previously acquainted. He introduced me to the family, and there was formed my first acquaintance with Mrs Hamilton's eldest daughter, to whom I have been married for nine years.[1] Thus was I indebted to Burns for a connection from which I have derived, and expect farther to derive, much happiness.'

The two travellers, it appears from family recollections, arrived at Harvieston somewhat inopportunely, for, to speak the plain

[1] Nov. 16, 1789. At Harvieston, Dr James Adair to Miss Charlotte Hamilton. —*Scots Mag.*

truth, the servile powers of the establishment were about to be engaged in the great washing of the year, and in those days it was not thought improper for young ladies even of the state and accomplishments of the Misses Hamilton and Miss Margaret Chalmers to take some concern in the preparations for that important business. The embarrassment of the young ladies was rather increased than diminished, when Charlotte, having gone to see who had arrived, came back reporting to her sister Grizel and Miss Chalmers, that, besides their acquaintance Burns, there was an *English* stranger—one, too, of whom she could discover nothing but that he seemed to know an immense number of 'fine people.' Mrs Hamilton and the young ladies, nevertheless, contrived to perform the due rites of hospitality to their guests. They, in their turn, were pleased with the family party in which they mingled, and particularly with the beautiful Charlotte. Mrs Hamilton afterwards acknowledged that, the two gentlemen being lodged in a chamber divided from hers only by a wainscot partition, she was made aware against her will that their chat for an hour after retiring referred to nothing but the attractions of her daughter.

Burns seems to have intended to stay for a very short time at Harvieston. He was, however, detained by a violent storm, accompanied by heavy floods, which took place on the 10th of October. To continue Dr Adair's narration—

'During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to visit various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest; particularly Castle-Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle; the famous cataract of the Devon, called the Caldron Linn; and the Rumbling Bridge, a single broad arch, thrown by the devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. I am surprised that none of these scenes should have called forth an exertion of Burns's muse. But I doubt if he had much taste for the picturesque. I well remember, that the ladies at Harvieston, who accompanied us on this jaunt, signified their disappointment at his not expressing, in more glowing and fervid language, his impressions of the Caldron Linn scene, certainly highly sublime, and somewhat horrible.'

Among these excursions, though Dr Adair makes no allusion to it, we must include one which the poet made by himself to visit the two Ochtertyres. A forenoon's ride would bring him to the Tusculum of Mr Ramsay on the Teith, where his reception was so cordial, that he promised, if possible, to see his worthy host a second time on his return.

Mr Ramsay was a noted specimen of the scholarly country gentleman of the last age, living in Horatian ease and unpretending simplicity on his paternal acres. He had a great love of Scottish literature and history, and thus was eminently disposed to admire and sympathise with Burns. Ere many years went about, he received into the same house a young poet, destined in time to be even more distinguished than his present visitor. I allude, of course, to the briefless advocate, Walter Scott, then engaged in visiting the romantic scenery of Scotland, and storing his mind with such tales as Mr Ramsay had to tell. After a mere call, Burns seems to have proceeded to Ochtertyre in Strathearn, in order to visit Sir William Murray.

I am inclined—though, it must be confessed, for no very substantial reasons—to suspect that Burns did not ride across the Muir of Orchil merely to spend a few luxurious days in aristocratic society; still less to see scenery which he had passed over so lately as August. Sir William Murray was the cousin-german and intimate friend of Mr Graham of Fintry, a commissioner of Excise, whom Burns had met in Sir William's company at Blair. It seems not impossible that, amidst the glowings of the poetical mind, there might lurk some particle of Scottish sense and foresight, pointing out that it was well for the bard to cultivate the acquaintance of this section of the great folks to whom recent circumstances had introduced him. There are many traits of the man which sufficiently prove his not being deficient in such solid sense, albeit it never acquired any ascendancy in the texture of his life, and never dimmed or dulled in the slightest degree either the bright glow of his imagination, or the genial warmth of his social affections.

However this might be, Burns appears to have much enjoyed the few days he spent at Ochtertyre. The singular beauty of the place, and of the semi-Highland district in which it is situated, is well known. Sir William was an amiable and intelligent country gentleman, who had already at Blair shewn a friendly disposition towards the bard. His wife, Lady Augusta—a fine-looking woman in the maturity of her charms—must have been interesting to Burns from associations connected with her parentage; for she was a daughter of the insurgent Earl of Cromarty, who so narrowly escaped accompanying Kilmarnock and Balmerino to the scaffold on Tower-hill in 1746. Born a few months after that harassing time, during which her mother was anxiously engaged in pleading for the earl's life, she bore what all her friends believed to be the image of an axe upon her neck.[1] The Jacobitical feelings

[1] Sir W. and Lady Augusta Murray were the parents of Sir George Murray, who represented Perthshire in several parliaments, and was at one time secretary for the colonies.

of Burns must have been pleasingly excited in such society. That he was in other respects agreeably situated, appears from two short letters addressed to friends in Edinburgh:—

TO MR WILLIAM NICOL.

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

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

Make my kind compliments to Mr and Mrs Cruikshank, and Mrs Nicol, if she is returned. I am ever, dear sir, your deeply indebted R. B.

[TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.][1]

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

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

It is probable, from an expression which Mr Walker uses in a letter printed by Currie, that the poet would on this occasion visit also Mr Graham of Balgowan, subsequently Lord Lynedoch, who, with his wife, had offered to conduct him to a spot on their grounds, hallowed in Scottish song—namely, the grave of Bessy Bell and Mary Gray.

Among the hills behind Ochtertyre is a wild vale, partly filled by a lake, which all visitors are taken to see. Here the muse favoured Burns.

[1] This letter was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1832, without address. Its being addressed to Mr Cruikshank, notwithstanding that Burns in the preceding letter implies the reverse of an intention of writing to him, is evident from the complimentary expressions at the close.

ON SCARING SOME WATER-FOWL IN LOCH TURIT.

Why, ye tenants of the lake,
For me your watery haunt forsake?
Tell me, fellow-creatures, why
At my presence thus you fly?
Why disturb your social joys,
Parent, filial, kindred ties?—
Common friend to you and me,
Nature's gifts to all are free:
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,
Busy feed, or wanton lave;
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,
Bide the surging billow's shock.

Conscious, blushing for our race,
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace.
Man, your proud usurping foe,
Would be lord of all below:
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,
Tyrant stern to all beside.
The eagle, from the cliffy brow,
Marking you his prey below,
In his breast no pity dwells,
Strong necessity compels:
But man, to whom alone is given
A ray direct from pitying Heaven,
Glories in his heart humane—
And creatures for his pleasure slain.
In these savage, liquid plains,
Only known to wandering swains,
Where the mossy riv'let strays,
Far from human haunts and ways,
All on Nature you depend,
And life's poor season peaceful spend.

Or, if man's superior might
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne,
Man with all his powers you scorn;
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn at least to be his slave.

Among the inmates of Ochtertyre House was a young cousin of his host, Miss Euphemia Murray of Lintrose, a beautiful fair creature of eighteen, already distinguished by the *sobriquet* of the 'Flower of Strathmore.' Burns made this demoiselle the subject of a pastoral song, in which he familiarises her name:—

BLITHE WAS SHE.

TUNE—*Andro and his Cutty Gun.*

CHORUS.

Blithe, blithe and merry was she,
Blithe was she butt and ben:
Blithe by the banks of Earn,
And blithe in Glenturit Glen.

By Auchtertyre grows the aik, oak
On Yarrow banks the birken shaw; birch woods
But Phemie was a bonnier lass
Than braes o' Yarrow ever saw.

Her looks were like a flower in May,
Her smile was like a simmer morn;
She tripped by the banks o' Earn,
As light's a bird upon a thorn.

Her bonnie face it was as meek
As ony lamb upon a lea;
The evening sun was ne'er sae sweet
As was the blink o' Phemie's e'e.

The Highland hills I've wandered wide,
And o'er the lowlands I ha'e been;
But Phemie was the blithest lass
That ever trod the dewy green.

It was generally thought by the young lady's friends, that the poet had hit off very happily her peculiar style of beauty in the verse—

'Her bonnie face it was as meek
As ony lamb upon a lea.'

She subsequently married Mr Smythe of Methven, one of the judges of the Court of Session.

A lady, still living in Perthshire, and already referred to in these pages, remembers visiting Drummond Castle a very short time after Burns had been at Ochtertyre. Captain Drummond, subsequently Lord Perth, had recently obtained possession of this fine place, along with the estates which had been forfeited by his collateral relations in 1745–46. He and his lady, the Honourable Mrs Drummond, were full of loyalty to the reigning family, to which they had been so largely indebted. My informant remembers that some one asked Mrs Drummond why Burns, who had been at various places in the neighbourhood, had not been here; to which the answer was—'We could not invite him,

unless he had disclaimed writing the lines on the inn window.' This shews how seriously that escapade of sentiment was taken up in some quarters, and leads us to imagine that the Stirling lines exercised some influence on their author's fate. One cannot but feel that a reflection on this particular of Burns's history came ill from a Drummond—one sitting in the halls of a century-long line of sufferers for the House of Stuart. More strangely still, Sir William Murray, who had been so friendly towards Burns, represented a family of opposite antecedents. His father had, indeed, attempted in the interest of the government to seize the person of the last Duke of Perth, when he was about to join the fatal standard of the Chevalier.

A letter of Mr Ramsay to Dr Currie, and two letters which he addressed to Burns (October 22), and which Currie has published, give some idea of what passed at the Menteith Ochtertyre, on Burns's way back to Harvieston:—'I have been in the company of many men of genius,' says Mr Ramsay, 'some of them poets, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him—the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire! I never was more delighted, therefore, than with his company for two days, *tête-à-tête*. In a mixed company, I should have made little of him; for, in the gamester's phrase, he did not always know when to play off and when to play on. . . . . I not only proposed to him the writing of a play similar to the *Gentle Shepherd, qualem decet esse sororem*, but Scottish Georgics, a subject which Thomson has by no means exhausted in his *Seasons*. What beautiful landscapes of rural life and manners might not have been expected from a pencil so faithful and forcible as his, which could have exhibited scenes as familiar and interesting as those in the *Gentle Shepherd*, which every one who knows our swains in their unadulterated state, instantly recognises as true to nature! But to have executed either of these plans, steadiness and abstraction from company were wanting, not talents. When I asked him whether the Edinburgh literati had mended his poems by their criticisms—"Sir," said he, "these gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine that it is neither fit for weft nor woof." He said he had not changed a word except one, to please Dr Blair.'[1]

Mr Ramsay had put up a Latin inscription over his door, expressing his wish to live in peace and die in joyful hope in the small but pleasant inheritance of his fathers. With another he graced a *Salictum*, or plantation of willows—

[1] This incorrigibility of Burns extended, however, only to his poems printed before he arrived in Edinburgh; for, in regard to his unpublished poems, he was amenable to criticism, of which many proofs might be given.—CURRIE.

Hic, procul negotiis strepituque,
Innocuis deliciis
Silvulas inter nascentes reptandi,
Apiumque labores suspiciendi,
Fruor.
Hic, si faxit Deus opt. max.
Prope hunc fontem pellucidum,
Cum quadam juventutis amico superstite,
Sæpe conquiescam, senex,
Contentus modicis, meoque lætus! &c.

Burns admired the general meaning of these inscriptions, and requested copies of them, and with this request Mr Ramsay complied. The poet made his host aware of his having lately heard some Highland airs, with which he was much charmed, and for which he was writing verses. He had also told Mr Ramsay of the solicitude he felt to gather airs for Johnson's Museum. Mr Ramsay therefore furnished him with a letter of introduction to the Rev. W. Young, minister of Erskine, on the Clyde, as a person qualified to introduce him more extensively to Highland music. The sage of the Teith added a transcript of a Highland traditionary story which had made an impression on the poet's mind when narrated in the course of conversation. Its hero was a Highlander named Omeron Cameron, who generously entertained the Earl of Mar in his humble cottage, when that noble had to skulk from his enemies. Being himself forced into exile on this account by his own clan, he went to Kildrummie Castle with his wife and children, to claim a requital from the earl, who had told him to do so if ever misfortune should befall him. Upon hearing who it was, the earl started from his seat with a joyful exclamation, and caused Omeron to be conducted with all possible respect into the hall. He afterwards conferred on him a four-merk land near the castle. Out of these simple elements Mr Ramsay thought that Burns might compose a play; but it was not for Burns, but the noteless youth whom he had lately met at Dr Adam Ferguson's, to accomplish such feats. There was, however, good sense in a portion of Mr Ramsay's letter. 'I approve of your plan,' said he, 'of retiring from din and dissipation to a farm of very moderate size, sufficient to find exercise for mind and body, but not so great as to absorb better things. And if some intellectual pursuit be well chosen and steadily pursued, it will be more lucrative than most farms in this age of rapid improvement. Upon this subject, as your well-wisher and admirer, permit me to go a step farther. Let those bright talents which the Almighty has bestowed upon you, be henceforth employed to the noble purpose of supporting the cause of truth and virtue. An

imagination so varied and forcible as yours may do this in many different modes; nor is it necessary to be always serious, which you have been to good purpose; good morals may be recommended in a comedy, or even in a song,' &c.[1]

Burns had conversed with Mr Ramsay regarding an ancient Jacobite lady, a relic of a former generation, and representative of an extinct order of manners, who dwelt at no great distance from Harvieston, and whom it was therefore possible for the bard to visit on this occasion. Mrs Bruce of Clackmannan, or (to use the Scotch title of courtesy) Lady Clackmannan, lived in the ancient and now ruined tower of that name, overlooking the Firth of Forth at Alloa. Allied in blood to the Bruce, and in sentiments to the Stuarts, tall and dignified in her figure even on the borders of ninety, carrying a ballast of vigorous common sense, along with all the sails and colours of a lively imagination—this admirable old woman, with her tartan scarf and the white rose in her breast—for so her portrait represents her—must have been a fascinating study for Burns. Mr Ramsay seems to have been curious to learn afterwards how the bard regarded her. 'Well,' says he, 'what do you think of good Lady Clackmannan? It is a pity she is so deaf, and speaks so indistinctly. Her house is a specimen of the mansions of our gentry of the last age, when hospitality and elevation of mind were conspicuous amidst plain fare and plain furniture.'

Dr Adair, adverting to the little impression which the Glendevon scenery seemed to make on Burns, says—'A visit to Mrs Bruce of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings more powerfully. This venerable dame, with characteristical dignity, informed me, on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. Though almost deprived of speech by a paralytic affection, she preserved her hospitality and urbanity. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honour of knighthood, remarking, that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people*. . . . . You will of course conclude that the old lady's political tenets were as Jacobitical as the poet's—a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception and entertainment. She gave, as her first toast after dinner, *Awa' Uncos*, or Away with the Strangers. Who these strangers were, you will readily understand. Mrs Adair corrects me by saying it should be *Hooi* or

[1] See note on *Summer Tours of* 1787, Appendix, No. 11.

Hooi Uncos; a sound used by shepherds to direct their dogs to drive away the sheep.

It is barely necessary to remark, that Lady Clackmannan scarcely had authentic grounds for concluding that Robert Bruce was sprung from *her* family; for all that the Bruces of Stirling and Clackmannanshires know of their earliest recorded ancestor is, that David II., the son of Bruce, addresses him in a charter as 'our relative.' The old lady probably grounded upon some family legend. She died in 1791, when the sword and helmet of the hero of Bannockburn fell appropriately into the hands of her kinsman, the Earl of Elgin, in whose mansion of Broomhall they are still preserved. Most Scotsmen will feel that the sword of Robert Bruce has not lost any portion of historical interest from its having given the *accolade* to Robert Burns.

Dr Adair states that he and Burns returned to Edinburgh by Kinross and Queensferry. The reason for their circuit by Kinross would of course be Burns's interest in the melancholy tale of Queen Mary. He would doubtless view with emotion the little islet fortress of Lochleven, in which she first learned to endure the fate of a prisoner, and where, under the compulsion of armed and ferocious barons, she signed a surrender of the kingdom to her son. 'At Dunfermline,' says Dr Adair, 'we visited the ruined abbey, and the abbey-church, now consecrated to Presbyterian worship. Here I mounted the *cutty stool*, or stool of repentance, assuming the character of a penitent for fornication; while Burns from the pulpit addressed to me a ludicrous reproof and exhortation, parodied from that which had been delivered to himself in Ayrshire, where he had, as he assured me, once been one of seven[1] who mounted the *seat of shame* together.

'In the churchyard two broad flagstones marked the grave of Robert Bruce, for whose memory Burns had more than common veneration. He knelt and kissed the stone with sacred fervour, and heartily *(suus ut mos erat)* execrated the worse than Gothic neglect of the first of Scottish heroes.'[2]

'The surprise,' says Dr Currie, 'expressed by Dr Adair in his excellent letter, that the romantic scenery of the Devon should have failed to call forth any exertion of the poet's muse, is not in its nature singular; and the disappointment felt at his not express-

[1] The session book of Mauchline says five only.

[2] Dr Adair married Charlotte Hamilton two years after, and, settling as a physician in Harrowgate, he died there in 1802. The beautiful Charlotte fell into bad health, and went to a premature grave in 1806. She had previously, in an evil hour, as Cromek justly calls it, burned a considerable number of letters which Burns had addressed to Miss Chalmers. I am happy to acknowledge the benefits conferred on this work by Dr Adair's son, Major Adair, secretary of the Scottish Hospital, London.

ing in more glowing language his emotions on the sight of the famous cataract of that river, is similar to what was felt by the friends of Burns on other occasions of the same nature. Yet the inference which Dr Adair seems inclined to draw from it—that he had little taste for the picturesque—might be questioned, even if it stood uncontroverted by other evidence. [Josiah Walker reports very differently of Burns's feelings on his being introduced to the fine Highland scenery of Blair.] The muse of Burns was in a high degree capricious; she came uncalled, and often refused to attend at his bidding. Of all the numerous subjects suggested to him by his friends and correspondents, there is scarcely one that he adopted. The very expectation that a particular occasion would excite the energies of fancy, if communicated to Burns, seemed, in him, as in other poets, destructive of the effect expected. Hence perhaps may be explained why the banks of the Devon and of the Tweed form no part of the subjects of his song.'

In these remarks, and others in which he follows out the same train of reasoning, Dr Currie seems to speak truly as far as he goes. Burns was undoubtedly susceptible of all those pleasures from the sight of fine scenery which Mr Walker ascribes to him; but it is easy to imagine that he was not certain to be always in a mood for expressing these feelings before company, especially if all were voluble in their admiration;[1] neither was it to be expected that he should be ready to pen metrical raptures about every fine cascade to which he was introduced, however much he might in his heart admire it. He did, on various occasions, throughout his late tours, pour forth eloquent stanzas on natural objects which met his eyes; but his muse was the more apt to take wing in a Glen Turit, where the scaring of the wild-fowl touched his profound and beautiful sympathies with the lower animals, or when the 'meek loveliness' of a Phemie Murray awakened his adoration of female charms. Even the association of some old song about a particular place affected him more than the utmost amount of physical beauty which might belong to it. His genius was more for humanity and its belongings than for the insensitive part of creation.

[1] 'He disliked to be tutored in matters of taste, and could not endure that one should run shouting before him whenever any fine object appeared. On one occasion of this kind, a lady at the poet's side said—"Burns, have you nothing to say of this?" "Nothing, madam," he replied, glancing at the leader of the party, "for an ass is braying over it." . . . . When he visited Creehope-linn in Dumfriesshire, at every turn of the stream and bend of the wood he was loudly called upon to admire the shelving sinuosities of the burn, and the caverned splendour of its all but inaccessible banks. It was thought by those with him that he did not shew rapture enough. "I could not admire it more, sir," said the poet, "if He who made it were to ask me to do it."'—*Cunningham's Life of Burns.*

Burns returned to Edinburgh on the 20th October, ill with a cold caught in his journey. He had now to bethink himself of his long-promised ride to Dumfriesshire, and he immediately addressed Mr Miller on that subject. The letter, hitherto inedited, is of importance as shewing the views of the writer regarding the farming life which he contemplated. These views, it will be observed, were as moderate and prudential as could have been entertained by the veriest son of prose in existence.

TO PETER MILLER, ESQ., DALSWINTON.

EDINBURGH, *20th October* 1787.

SIR—I was spending a few days at Sir William Murray's, Oughtertyre, and did not get your obliging letter till to-day I came to town. I was still more unlucky in catching a miserable cold, for which the medical gentlemen have ordered me into close confinement, 'under pain of death'—the severest of penalties. In two or three days, if I get better, and if I hear at your lodgings that you are still at Dalswinton, I will take a ride to Dumfries directly. From something in your last, I would wish to explain my idea of being your tenant. I want to be a farmer in a small farm, about a plough-gang, in a pleasant country under the auspices of a good landlord. I have no foolish notion of being a tenant on easier terms than another. To find a farm where one can live at all is not easy—I only mean living soberly, like an old-style farmer, and joining personal industry. The banks of the Nith are as sweet, poetic ground as any I ever saw; and besides, sir, 'tis but justice to the feelings of my own heart, and the opinion of my best friends, to say that I would wish to call you landlord sooner than any landed gentleman I know. These are my views and wishes; and in whatever way you think best to lay out your farms, I shall be happy to rent one of them. I shall certainly be able to ride to Dalswinton about the middle of next week, if I hear you are not gone. I have the honour to be, sir, your obliged, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.[1]

On returning from the north, Burns appears to have taken up his quarters with Mr William Cruikshank, a colleague of Nicol in the High School. The house was composed of the two upper floors of a lofty building, in an airy situation in the New Town—then marked No. 2, now 30, St James's Square. The poet's room had a window overlooking the green behind the Register House, as well as the street entering the Square. It was by far the most agreeable place in which he had ever had more than the most

[1] From the original, in possession of Mr W. C. Aitken, Birmingham.

temporary lodging. We are told by the historian of the High School, that Mr Cruikshank was regarded as a person of no mean acquirements.[1] He had a daughter, Janet, a young girl of budding loveliness, and much promise as a pianist. To her the poet was indebted for many pleasant hours, in listening to his favourite Scottish airs. He also employed her voice and instrument in enabling him to adapt new verses to old airs for the *Scots Musical Museum*. Dr Walker says—'About the end of October, I called for him at the house of a friend [Mr Cruikshank], whose daughter, though not more than twelve, was a considerable proficient in music. I found him seated by the harpsichord of this young lady, listening with the keenest interest to his own verses, which she sung and accompanied, and adjusting them to the music by repeated trials of the effect. In this occupation he was so totally absorbed that it was difficult to draw his attention from it for a moment.'[2] This gives us some idea of the care and study which Burns bestowed upon his songs, in order to give them that perfect adaptation to their respective airs for which they are remarkable. He gratefully celebrated his favourite, little Miss Jenny Cruikshank, in a song remarkable for involvement of images, but singular grace and delicacy of expression.

THE ROSE-BUD.

TUNE—*The Shepherd's Wife.*

A rose-bud by my early walk,
Adown a corn-enclosèd bawk,[3]
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,
All on a dewy morning.
Ere twice the shades o' dawn are fled,
In a' its crimson glory spread,
And drooping rich the dewy head,
It scents the early morning.

Within the bush, her covert nest,
A little linnet fondly prest,
The dew sat chilly on her breast
Sae early in the morning.
She soon shall see her tender brood,
The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
Amang the fresh green leaves bedewed,
Awake the early morning.

[1] Mr Cruikshank died in 1795.
[2] Walker's Life of Burns, p. lxxxi.
[3] An open space in a corn-field, generally a ridge left untilled.

So thou, dear bird, young Jenny fair!
On trembling string or vocal air,
Shall sweetly pay the tender care
That tents thy early morning. guards
So thou, sweet rose-bud, young and gay,
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
And bless the parent's evening ray
That watched thy early morning.

Nor was this the only proof of the esteem in which Burns held his rose-bud:—

TO MISS CRUIKSHANK, A VERY YOUNG LADY.

WRITTEN ON THE BLANK LEAF OF A BOOK PRESENTED TO HER BY THE AUTHOR.

Beauteous rose-bud, young and gay,
Blooming in thy early May,
Never may'st thou, lovely flower,
Chilly shrink in sleety shower;
Never Boreas' hoary path,
Never Eurus' poisonous breath,
Never baleful stellar lights,
Taint thee with untimely blights!
Never, never reptile thief
Riot on thy virgin leaf!
Nor even Sol too fiercely view
Thy bosom blushing still with dew!

May'st thou long, sweet crimson gem,
Richly deck thy native stem:
'Till some evening, sober, calm,
Dropping dews and breathing balm,
While all around the woodland rings,
And every bird thy requiem sings;
Thou, amid the dirgeful sound,
Shed thy dying honours round,
And resign to parent earth
The loveliest form she e'er gave birth.

The *Rose-bud* became the wife of Mr Henderson, a legal practitioner at Jedburgh, and has been for some years dead. A lady, who stands towards her in the relation of daughter-in-law, has been so good as to inform me of a beautiful oil-painting in the possession of Mrs Henderson's only surviving son, which 'justifies the appellation of the *Rose-bud*, as, judging from the Hebe-like appearance of the picture, she must have been a strikingly beautiful girl.' The same lady possesses 'a china bowl which, according to the family tradition, was broken by Burns in one of his merry nights at St James's Square.'

The zeal of Burns for the collection, illustration, and extension of the body of Scottish song was at this season a conspicuous feeling in his bosom. He entered into the views of Johnson with an industry and earnestness which despised all money considerations, and which money could not have purchased. The character of our bard is seen strongly here. He adored his native muse, and held the codex of her effusions as a sacred volume. He was also wholly above the idea of mercenary verse. Numbers he gave forth 'because the numbers came.' Though he had published a volume of these, and consented to realise a profit by it, he had no idea of composing either poems or songs with a view to a pecuniary recompense for them. Above all, he was incapable of writing a *song* directly for money. There may have been something of over-fastidiousness in this feeling of Burns; and yet it was, on the whole, in high consonance with the poetical character which he bore. It is at least a more tolerable error than the opposite one of an overkeen solicitude respecting the profits of the pen, which may now be said occasionally to present itself somewhat too obtrusively in the literary world.

At Gordon Castle Burns had formed an acquaintance with a Mr James Hoy, ostensibly librarian to the duke, but rather a kind of humble companion; a sensible, learned person, who is described as having lived in that princely mansion for forty-six years (previous to his death in 1828) without ever losing the Dominie-Sampson-like purity of heart and simplicity of manners by which he was distinguished. To him Burns now addressed himself for an object connected with Johnson's design of the Museum. The duke, under an unpretending exterior, possessed a certain dash of song-writing genius, which had produced at least one popular effusion. This ditty, bearing the title of *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen*, Burns wished to secure.

TO MR JAMES HOY, GORDON CASTLE.

EDINBURGH, *20th October* 1787.

SIR—I will defend my conduct in giving you this trouble, on the best of Christian principles—'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.' I shall certainly, among my legacies, leave my latest curse to that unlucky predicament which hurried—tore me away from Castle-Gordon. May that obstinate son of Latin prose [Nicol] be curst to Scotch-mile periods, and damned to seven-league paragraphs; while Declension and Conjugation, Gender, Number, and Tense, under the ragged banners of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile array!

Allow me, sir, to strengthen the small claim I have to your

acquaintance by the following request:—An engraver, James Johnson, in Edinburgh, has, not from mercenary views, but from an honest Scotch enthusiasm, set about collecting all our native songs, and setting them to music, particularly those that have never been set before. Clarke, the well-known musician, presides over the musical arrangement, and Drs Beattie and Blacklock, Mr Tytler of Woodhouselee, and your humble servant to the utmost of his small power, assist in collecting the old poetry, or sometimes, for a fine air, make a stanza when it has no words. The brats, too tedious to mention, claim a parental pang from my bardship. I suppose it will appear in Johnson's second number—the first was published before my acquaintance with him. My request is—*Cauld Kail in Aberdeen* is one intended for this number, and I beg a copy of his Grace of Gordon's words to it, which you were so kind as to repeat to me. You may be sure we wont prefix the author's name, except you like; though I look on it as no small merit to this work that the names of so many of the authors of our old Scotch songs—names almost forgotten—will be inserted. I do not well know where to write to you—I rather write at you; but if you will be so obliging immediately on receipt of this, as to write me a few lines, I shall perhaps pay you in kind, though not in quality. Johnson's terms are:—each number a handsome pocket volume, to consist at least of a hundred Scotch songs, with basses for the harpsichord, &c. The price to subscribers, 5s.; to non-subscribers, 6s. He will have three numbers, I conjecture.

My direction for two or three weeks will be at Mr William Cruikshank's, St James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh. I am, sir, yours to command, R. B.

To this Hoy answered in the course of a few days—

GORDON CASTLE, 31*st October* 1787.

SIR—If you were not sensible of your fault as well as of your loss, in leaving this place so suddenly, I should condemn you to starve upon *cauld kail*[1] for *ae towmont*[2] at least; and as for *Dick Latine*,[3] your travelling companion, without banning him wi' a' the curses contained in your letter (which he'll no value a bawbee), I should give him nought but *Stra'bogie castocks*[4] to chew for *sax ouks*, or ay until he was as sensible of his error as you seem to be of yours. . . . . .

Your song I shewed without producing the author; and it was judged by the duchess to be the production of Dr Beattie. I sent a copy of it, by her Grace's desire, to a Mrs M'Pherson, in Badenoch, who sings *Morag*, and all other Gaelic songs, in great perfection. I have recorded it likewise, by Lady Charlotte's desire, in a book belonging to her ladyship; where it is in company with a great many other poems and verses, some of the writers of which are no less

[1] Cold mutton broth. [2] A twelvemonth. [3] Mr Nicol.
[4] The song speaks of castocks (cabbage stems) in Strathbogie.

eminent for their political than for their poetical abilities. When the duchess was informed that you were the author, she wished you had written the verses in Scotch.

Any letter directed to me here will come to hand safely, and if sent under the duke's cover, it will likewise come free—that is, as long as the duke is in this country. I am, sir, yours sincerely.

Burns's reply was as follows :—

TO MR JAMES HOY, GORDON CASTLE.

EDINBURGH, *6th November* 1787.

DEAR SIR—I would have wrote you immediately on receipt of your kind letter; but a mixed impulse of gratitude and esteem whispered to me that I ought to send you something by way of return. When a poet owes anything, particularly when he is indebted for good offices, the payment that usually recurs to him—the only coin indeed in which he is probably conversant—is rhyme. Johnson sends the books by the fly, as directed, and begs me to enclose his most grateful thanks: my return I intended should have been one or two poetic bagatelles which the world have not seen, or, perhaps, for obvious reasons, cannot see. These I shall send you before I leave Edinburgh. They may make you laugh a little, which, on the whole, is no bad way of spending one's precious hours and still more precious breath; at anyrate, they will be, though a small, yet a very sincere mark of my respectful esteem for a gentleman whose farther acquaintance I should look upon as a peculiar obligation.

The duke's song, independent totally of his dukeship, charms me. There is I know not what of wild happiness of thought and expression peculiarly beautiful in the old Scottish song style, of which his Grace, old venerable Skinner, the author of *Tullochgorum*, &c. and the late Ross, at Lochlee, of true Scottish poetic memory, are the only modern instances that I recollect, since Ramsay, with his contemporaries, and poor Bob Fergusson, went to the world of deathless existence and truly immortal song. The mob of mankind, that many-headed beast, would laugh at so serious a speech about an old song; but as Job says, 'Oh that mine adversary had written a book!' Those who think that composing a Scotch song is a trifling business, let them try.

I wish my Lord Duke would pay a proper attention to the Christian admonition—'Hide not your candle under a bushel,' but 'let your light shine before men.' I could name half-a-dozen dukes that I guess are a devilish deal worse employed; nay, I question if there are half-a-dozen better: perhaps there are not half that scanty number whom Heaven has favoured with the tuneful, happy, and I will say glorious gift. I am, dear sir, your obliged humble servant, R. B.

Several years had elapsed since Burns had had any correspon-

dence with his worthy preceptor Murdoch, now pursuing his profession in London. The poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman had been subject of fame for months both in Edinburgh and London, ere the worthy man was quite sure that that phenomenon was no other than the clouterly boy who had learned so much French with him in a fortnight, about a dozen years before. He now addressed Burns:—

LONDON, *28th October* 1787.

MY DEAR SIR—As my friend, Mr Brown, is going from this place to your neighbourhood, I embrace the opportunity of telling you that I am yet alive, tolerably well, and always in expectation of being better. By the much-valued letters before me, I see that it was my duty to have given you this intelligence about three years and nine months ago; and have nothing to allege as an excuse, but that we poor, busy, bustling bodies in London are so much taken up with the various pursuits in which we are here engaged, that we seldom think of any person, creature, place, or thing, that is absent. But this is not altogether the case with me; for I often think of you, and *Hornie*, and *Russell*, and an *unfathomed depth*, and *lowan brunstane*, all in the same minute, although you and they are (as I suppose) at a considerable distance. I flatter myself, however, with the pleasing thought, that you and I shall meet some time or other, either in Scotland or England. If ever you come hither, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your poems relished by the Caledonians in London full as much as they can be by those of Edinburgh. We frequently repeat some of your verses in our Caledonian Society; and you may believe that I am not a little vain, that I have had some share in cultivating such a genius. I was not absolutely certain that you were the author till a few days ago, when I made a visit to Mrs Hill, Dr M'Comb's eldest daughter, who lives in town, and who told me that she was informed of it by a letter from her sister in Edinburgh, with whom you had been in company when in that capital.

Pray let me know if you have any intention of visiting this huge, overgrown metropolis. It would afford matter for a large poem. Here you would have an opportunity of indulging your vein in the study of mankind, perhaps to a greater degree than in any city upon the face of the globe; for the inhabitants of London, as you know, are a collection of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, who make it, as it were, the centre of their commerce. . . . . .

Present my respectful compliments to Mrs Burns, to my dear friend Gilbert, and all the rest of her amiable children. May the Father of the Universe bless you all with those principles and dispositions that the best of parents took such uncommon pains to instil into your minds from your earliest infancy! May you live as he did! If you do, you can never be unhappy. I feel myself grown serious all at once, and affected in a manner I cannot describe. I shall only add, that it is one of the greatest pleasures I promise myself before

I die, that of seeing the family of a man whose memory I revere more than that of any person that ever I was acquainted with. I am, my dear friend, yours sincerely, JOHN MURDOCH.

Having received an answer from Miss Charlotte Hamilton and Miss Chalmers to some one of his late epistles, he replied as follows:—

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 21, 1787.

I have one vexatious fault to the kindly welcome, well-filled sheet which I owe to your and Charlotte's goodness—it contains too much sense, sentiment, and good-spelling. It is impossible that even you two, whom I declare to my God I will give credit for any degree of excellence the sex are capable of attaining—it is impossible you can go on to correspond at that rate; so, like those who, Shenstone says, retire because they have made a good speech, I shall, after a few letters, hear no more of you. I insist that you shall write whatever comes first: what you see, what you read, what you hear, what you admire, what you dislike, trifles, bagatelles, nonsense: or to fill up a corner, e'en put down a laugh at full length. Now, none of your polite hints about flattery; I leave that to your lovers, if you have or shall have any; though, thank Heaven, I have found at last two girls who can be luxuriantly happy in their own minds and with one another, without that commonly necessary appendage to female bliss —A LOVER.

Charlotte and you are just two favourite resting-places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world. God knows, I am ill-fitted for the struggle; I glory in being a poet, and I want to be thought a wise man—I would fondly be generous, and I wish to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. 'Some folk ha'e a hantle o' fauts, but I'm but a ne'er-do-weel.'

Afternoon.—To close the melancholy reflections at the end of last sheet, I shall just add a piece of devotion, commonly known in Carrick by the title of the 'Wabster's Grace:'—

'Some say we're thieves, and e'en sae are we,
Some say we lie, and e'en sae do we!
Gude forgie us, and I hope sae will he!
——Up and to your looms, lads!'

R. B.

He was now in the full career of friendship for Margaret Chalmers and Charlotte Hamilton. The latter, as we have seen, was a lovely woman. Of the personal attractions of Miss Chalmers, it could at the utmost be said, as Burns did say, that they were above the medium. She was, however, a woman of spirit, talent, and boundless love of things literary. Burns delighted in

the society of the two young ladies, and wrote to Miss Chalmers in particular many letters affecting the tone of friendship, but ever liable to verge towards that of gallantry. At the present time he was pleased to celebrate Miss Chalmers's attractions in two songs which he designed to publish in Johnson's second volume.

BRAVING ANGRY WINTER'S STORMS.

TUNE—*Neil Gow's Lamentation for Abercairny.*

Where, braving angry winter's storms,
The lofty Ochils rise,
Far in their shade my Peggy's charms
First blest my wondering eyes;
As one who by some savage stream,
A lonely gem surveys,
Astonished, doubly marks its beam,
With art's most polished blaze.

Blest be the wild, sequestered shade,
And blest the day and hour,
Where Peggy's charms I first surveyed—
When first I felt their power!
The tyrant death, with grim control,
May seize my fleeting breath;
But tearing Peggy from my soul
Must be a stronger death.

MY PEGGY'S FACE.

TUNE—*My Peggy's Face.*

My Peggy's face, my Peggy's form,
The frost of hermit age might warm;
My Peggy's worth, my Peggy's mind,
Might charm the first of human kind.
I love my Peggy's angel air,
Her face so truly, heavenly fair,
Her native grace so void of art,
But I adore my Peggy's heart.

The lily's hue, the rose's dye,
The kindling lustre of an eye;
Who but owns their magic sway!
Who but knows they all decay!
The tender thrill, the pitying tear,
The generous purpose, nobly dear,
The gentle look, that rage disarms—
These are all immortal charms.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

MY DEAR MADAM—I just now have read yours. The poetic compliments I pay cannot be misunderstood. They are neither of them so particular as to point you out to the world at large; and the circle of your acquaintances will allow all I have said. Besides, I have complimented you chiefly, almost solely, on your mental charms. Shall I be plain with you? I will: so look to it. Personal attractions, madam, you have much above par—wit, understanding, and worth, you possess in the first class. This is a cursed flat way of telling you these truths, but let me hear no more of your sheepish timidity. I know the world a little. I know what they will say of my poems—by second-sight, I suppose—for I am seldom out in my conjectures; and you may believe me, my dear madam, I would not run any risk of hurting you by any ill-judged compliment. I wish to shew to the world the odds between a poet's friends and those of simple prosemen. More for your information—both the pieces go in. One of them—*Where braving angry winter's storms*, is already set—the tune is Neil Gow's *Lamentation for Abercairny;* the other is to be set to an old Highland air in Daniel Dow's collection of ancient Scots music; the name is *Ha a Chaillich air mo Dheith.* My treacherous memory has forgot every circumstance about *Les Incas;* only I think you mentioned them as being in Creech's possession. I shall ask him about it. I am afraid the song of *Somebody* will come too late—as I shall for certain leave town in a week for Ayrshire, and from that to Dumfries; but there my hopes are slender. I leave my direction in town; so anything, wherever I am, will reach me.

I saw yours to ——; it is not too severe, nor did he take it amiss. On the contrary, like a whipt spaniel, he talks of being with you in the Christmas days. Mr —— has given him the invitation, and he is determined to accept of it. Oh selfishness! he owns, in his sober moments, that from his own volatility of inclination, the circumstances in which he is situated, and his knowledge of his father's disposition, the whole affair is chimerical—yet he *will* gratify an idle *penchant* at the enormous, cruel expense, of perhaps ruining the peace of the very woman for whom he professes the generous passion of love! He is a gentleman in his mind and manners—*tant pis!* He is a volatile schoolboy—the heir of a man's fortune who well knows the value of two times two!

Perdition seize them and their fortunes before they should make the amiable, the lovely ——, the derided object of their purse-proud contempt!

I am doubly happy to hear of Mrs ——'s recovery, because I really thought all was over with her. There are days of pleasure yet awaiting her:—

'As I came in by Glemap,
I met with an aged woman;
She bade me cheer up my heart,
For the best o' my days was comin'.'[1]

[1] This is an old popular rhyme. Glenap is in the south of Ayrshire.

This day will decide my affairs with Creech. Things are, like myself, not what they ought to be; yet better than what they appear to be.

'Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings but himself—
That hideous sight—a naked human heart.'

Farewell! remember me to Charlotte. R. B.

The character of Margaret Chalmers may be said to stand as a testimony in favour of that of Burns. Without a certain natural refinement of soul it was impossible that he could have induced such a woman to grant him her friendship. His letters to her have a tone of deference which mere rank could not extort from Burns: it was purely an homage to her personal excellences. The relative already quoted says of Miss Chalmers—'In early life, when her hazel eyes were large and bright, and her teeth white and regular, her face must have had a charm not always the result or the accompaniment of fine features. She was little; but her figure must have been perfect. . . . . Her conversation was cheerful and intelligent. She rarely talked of books, yet greatly liked reading. She spoke readily and well, but greatly preferred listening to others. In short, the character given by M. de Grignan of Madame de Sevigné, in a letter announcing her death, would give a more exact idea of Margaret Chalmers than anything I can write. As with Madame de Sevigné, her religion not only supported her under affliction, but guided her whole conduct. She judged correctly of light literature; yet her general reading was serious and instructive. Her heart was warm, her temper even, and her conversation lively. I have often been told that her gentleness and vivacity had a favourable influence on the manner of Burns, and that he appeared to advantage in her presence.'

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

EDINBURGH, *Sunday Morning, Nov.* 23, 1787.[1]

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

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence. You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of blue-devilism, and you

[1] This date must be in some respect wrong, as the 23d November 1787 was a Friday.

laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my good things. I don't know, upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God's world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now, in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may perhaps sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be your friend,

R. B.

Mr Ainslie at this time had a lodging on the north side of the same square, so that the two friends were very ready to each other's call. The young writer, as has been already mentioned, retained to the close of life a most kindly recollection of Burns and the many pleasant hours they had spent together. He used to relate an anecdote by way of proving that Burns was no Bacchanalian by his own choice. Though but an apprentice, he had already a cellar—certainly, however, not an extensive one, as it consisted simply of the recess under a *bunker seat* in one of the windows of his apartment; an arrangement long ago common in Scotland, but now only seen in old-fashioned houses. His stock of wine consisted of five bottles of port, all that remained of a dozen of excellent quality which he had got from a wine-merchant who held him in favour. On Burns calling for him one afternoon, Ainslie proposed that they should spend the afternoon over a bottle; but Burns said, 'No, my friend—we'll have no wine to-day—to sit dozing in the house on such a fine afternoon as this would be insufferable. Besides, you know that you and I don't require wine to sharpen our wit, nor its adventitious aid to make us happy. No; we'll take a ramble over Arthur's Seat, to admire the beauties of nature, and come in to a late tea.' The two friends adopted this plan; and Mr Ainslie used to declare that he had never known the poet's conversation so amusing, so instructive, and altogether delightful, as during the cheerful stroll they had over the hill, and during the sober tea-drinking which followed.

At this time, an artist named Miers was practising in Edinburgh, as a maker of silhouette portraits, which he professed to execute at a two-minutes' sitting.[1] Their felicity as likenesses, and their cheapness, had brought many sitters, and among the rest Burns, who was glad of an opportunity of obtaining portraits of himself which he could distribute among his intimate friends. Having, in the course of his exertions for Johnson's Museum, formed the acquaintance of Mr William Tytler of Woodhouselee, he sent him one of Miers's portraits, along with the following Jacobitical verses:—

[1] They cost in frames from 6s. to 10s. 6d.—*Newspaper advertisement.*

ADDRESS TO MR WILLIAM TYTLER.

Revered defender of beauteous Stuart,[1]
Of Stuart, a name once respected—
A name which to love was the mark of a true heart,
But now 'tis despised and neglected.

Though something like moisture conglobes in my eye,
Let no one misdeem me disloyal;
A poor friendless wanderer may well claim a sigh,
Still more, if that wanderer were royal.

My fathers that name have revered on a throne;
My fathers have fallen to right it;
Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,
That name should he scoffingly slight it.

Still in prayers for King George I most heartily join,
The Queen, and the rest of the gentry;
Be they wise, be they foolish, is nothing of mine,
Their title's avowed by my country.

But why of that epocha make such a fuss,
That gave us the Hanover stem;
If bringing them over was lucky for us,
I'm sure 'twas as lucky for them.

But loyalty, truce! we're on dangerous ground,
Who knows how the fashions may alter?
The doctrine, to-day, that is loyalty sound,
To-morrow may bring us a halter!

I send you a trifle, a head of a bard,
A trifle scarce worthy your care;
But accept it, good sir, as a mark of regard,
Sincere as a saint's dying prayer.

Now life's chilly evening dim shades on your eye,
And ushers the long dreary night;
But you, like the star that athwart gilds the sky,
Your course to the latest is bright.

My muse, he adds in prose, jilted me here, and turned a corner on me, and I have not got again into her good graces. Do me the justice to believe me sincere in my grateful remembrance of the many civilities you have honoured me with since I came to Edinburgh, and in assuring you that I have the honour to be, revered sir, your obliged and very humble servant, R. B.

[1] Mr Tytler had published, in 1759, *An Inquiry, Historical and Critical, into the Evidence against Mary Queen of Scots.*

There is an obscurity about the date of Burns's second visit to Dalswinton, and it is doubtful if he visited Ayrshire on that occasion, though probability is in favour of the affirmative. The excursion to Dumfriesshire, and the considerations connected with it, are alluded to in a dateless letter

TO MISS CHALMERS.

I have been at Dumfries, and at one visit more shall be decided about a farm in that county. I am rather hopeless in it; but as my brother is an excellent farmer, and is, besides, an exceedingly prudent, sober man (qualities which are only a younger brother's fortune in our family), I am determined, if my Dumfries business fail me, to remove into partnership with him, and at our leisure take another farm in the neighbourhood.

I assure you I look for high compliments from you and Charlotte on this very sage instance of my unfathomable, incomprehensible wisdom. Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment now completed. The air is admirable—true old Highland. It was the tune of a Gaelic song which an Inverness lady sang me when I was there; I was so charmed with it, that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing, for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I wont say the poetry is first-rate, though I am convinced it is very well; and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies—it is not only sincere, but just. R. B.

The air here alluded to is a beautiful Highland one, well-known in connection with a song of Allaster Macdonald's, entitled *Bhanarach dhonn a chruidh*, or the *Pretty Milkmaid*. The song written to it by Burns is somewhat singular as a compliment to a handsome woman, in which he did not assume the character of a lover:—

ON A YOUNG LADY RESIDING ON THE BANKS OF THE SMALL RIVER DEVON, IN CLACKMANNANSHIRE, BUT WHOSE INFANT YEARS WERE SPENT IN AYRSHIRE.

How pleasant the banks of the clear-winding Devon,
With green-spreading bushes, and flowers blooming fair;
But the bonniest flower on the banks of the Devon
Was once a sweet bud on the braes of the Ayr.

Mild be the sun on this sweet-blushing flower,
In the gay rosy morn as it bathes in the dew!
And gentle the fall of the soft vernal shower,
That steals on the evening each leaf to renew.

Oh spare the dear blossom, ye orient breezes,
With chill hoary wing as ye usher the dawn!
And far be thou distant, thou reptile that seizes
The verdure and pride of the garden and lawn!

Let Bourbon exult in his gay-gilded lilies,
And England triumphant display her proud rose;
A fairer than either adorns the green valleys
Where Devon, sweet Devon, meandering flows.

TO MR GAVIN HAMILTON.

[EDINBURGH, *December* 1787.]

MY DEAR SIR—It is indeed with the highest pleasure that I congratulate you on the return of days of ease and nights of pleasure after the horrid hours of misery in which I saw you suffering existence when last in Ayrshire. I seldom pray for anybody—'I'm baith dead-sweer and wretched ill o't;' but most fervently do I beseech the Power that directs the world, that you may live long and be happy, but live no longer than you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverent care of your health. I know you will make it a point never at one time to drink more than a pint of wine (I mean an English pint), and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time, and that cold drams you will never more taste; and, above all things, I am convinced, that after drinking perhaps boiling punch, you will never mount your horse, and gallop home in a chill late hour. Above all things, as I understand you are in the habits of intimacy with that Boanerges of gospel powers, Father Auld, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising, the carnal moral works of charity, humanity, generosity, and forgiveness of things, which you practised so flagrantly, that it was evident you delighted in them, neglecting, or perhaps profanely despising, the wholesome doctrine of faith without works, the only [means] of salvation. A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion, be highly becoming from you at present; and in my zeal for your wellbeing, I earnestly press on you to be diligent in chanting over the two enclosed pieces of sacred poesy. My best compliments to Mrs Hamilton and Miss Kennedy. Yours, &c.

R. B.

It is not difficult for one who has seen aught of the unpublished manuscripts of Burns, to imagine what sort of compositions he refers to as 'pieces of sacred poesy.'

TO MISS MABANE.[1]

Saturday Noon, No. 2 St James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh.

Here have I sat, my dear madam, in the stony altitude of perplexed study for fifteen vexatious minutes, my head askew, bending over the intended card; my fixed eye insensible to the very light of day poured around; my pendulous goose-feather, loaded with ink, hanging over the future letter, all for the important purpose of writing a complimentary card to accompany your trinket.

Compliment is such a miserable Greenland expression, lies at such a chilly polar distance from the torrid zone of my constitution, that I cannot, for the very soul of me, use it to any person for whom I have the twentieth part of the esteem every one must have for you who knows you.

As I leave town in three or four days, I can give myself the pleasure of calling on you only for a minute. Tuesday evening, some time about seven or after, I shall wait on you for your farewell commands.

The hinge of your box I put into the hands of the proper connoisseur. The broken glass likewise went under review; but deliberative wisdom thought it would too much endanger the whole fabric. I am, dear madam, with all sincerity of enthusiasm, your very obedient servant, R. B.

TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD.

[*Edinburgh, December* 1787.]

Sir—Mr Mackenzie, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend,[2] has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, sir, in one or two instances, been patronised by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by * * * * *, friends to them, and honoured acquaintances to me; but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested himself for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to inquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me,

[1] This lady became Mrs Colonel Wright, and died in Edinburgh many years ago. The original of the letter is in the possession of Mr J. R. Forrest, upholsterer, Edinburgh.

[2] This excellent man afterwards practised for many years as a surgeon in Irvine. After having attained the highest honours of the magistracy in that burgh, he retired in 1827 to Edinburgh, where he died, January 11, 1837, at an advanced age. It will be recollected that Burns was introduced by Mr Mackenzie to the notice of Mr Dugald Stewart.

that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of the needy, sharping author, fastening on those in upper life who honour him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed, the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as may in some measure palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means, a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn, but I believe a careless, indolent attention to economy is almost inseparable from it; then there must be in the heart of every bard of Nature's making a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, that will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune which frequently light on hardy impudence and foot-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank Heaven my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one who pretended in the least to the manners of the gentleman, should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am, and so unhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude, I thank you, sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion; but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest, warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever calumny aim the poisoned shaft at them, may friendship be by to ward the blow!

R. B.

This is an interesting and valuable letter, as shewing the sense which Burns had of his situation at the present crisis. He saw already the false position in which an unendowed man of genius stands in the worldly scene, if he will not or cannot condescend to some ordinary gainful employment. He rejoiced that the labours of the plough stood between him and dependence or want. We find here, too, that calumny had been busy with the name of the poet, pointing particularly to his assumed religious deficiencies, and apparently condemning him also on the score of probity. With the same warmth which caused him scornfully to repel reproach, we see him pour forth his gratitude to his defender.

Burns had returned to Edinburgh after his summer visit to Ayrshire, mainly that he might obtain a settlement of accounts

with Mr Creech. The autumn had worn into winter, and still this consummation so devoutly to be wished appeared as remote as ever. It was a great inconvenience, and even misfortune to the poet, to be thus held in idle suspense; for meanwhile he was at once spending his means, relaxing the spring of industrious occupation, and exposing himself to the depraving influences of an over-gay society. Burns, we know, felt at the time great indignation at the delays of Creech, and would not now have written to him in the same strain as from Selkirk in the preceding May.

There is a great want of clear light as to the commercial relations of Burns with his publisher. One thing is notorious respecting the latter—that he never settled an account till it had become a kind of impossibility to withstand the energy of the creditor. He was one of those men whose *foible* it is to pay most of their accounts with some little addition of law expenses incurred in bringing them to open their purses, though the said purses may be all the time far from ill supplied with money. This might seem enough to explain the delay of settlement with Burns; but, on the other hand, the time which had elapsed since the publication of the volume was not such as to appear very long in the affairs of publishing—the ordinary practice of a bookseller who issues a book for an author being to render accounts annually, at June 30 or December 31, always upwards of six months from the day of publication, and pay only six months thereafter. If Creech had acted as publisher for Burns on this footing, there would have been nothing unusual in his still delaying payment; the money, indeed, for sales previous to June, would not have been due till the middle of the ensuing year. But we know that Burns's poems were published by subscription, Creech taking five hundred copies at the same rate as the other subscribers, with the view of selling them at one shilling of advance by way of profit. The publisher must have received the money due from a large proportion of the subscribers; and for this, as well as the price of his own copies (£125), it might be alleged that he was bound to pay immediately. He, on the other hand, would probably have to shew that much was still unpaid to him by the public; and, if there were even a doubt on this point in his favour, he would be sure to take advantage of it. However matters actually stood, it is clear that Burns was excited to great anger by the delay of the settlement. And we must all see reason to deplore, either that he expected a settlement so soon, or that Creech put it off. Perhaps it would have been the most advisable course for Burns to have lived quietly with his brother at Mossgiel, leaving the profits of his book to be realised by some legal deputy. The time might have been improved

by his writing fresh poems in the style of his *Halloween*, his *Cotter*, his *Epistles*, which would have been to him a fresh source of wealth. That he did not take this course, may we not set it down in part to the very absence of those temptations which we are now apt to deplore as making literary men mercenary? Had Burns been tempted to fresh labours, even say it were by no higher motive than the desire of increasing his capital with a view to farming, it would have at least saved him in some degree from the dissipation of these precious months, and the increased bondage of self-indulgent habits. The industrious, we may be well assured, would have been the moral as well as the profitable course.

He had at length, early in December, resolved on leaving Edinburgh, at least temporarily, when an accident occurred to detain him. Let it first be mentioned that, at the same crisis, he made the acquaintance of his celebrated CLARINDA. This was a lady of exactly his own age, who, having been unhappily married to a man devoid of humanity and just moral feeling, was obliged to live separately from him, in obscurity, and almost indigence, while bringing up her young family. The grand-niece of Colin Maclaurin, the friend of Newton—the cousin-german of Lord Craig, who was associated with Mackenzie in the composition of *The Mirror*—Agnes Craig might well be a woman of intellect superior to the generality of her sex. Her husband, Mr James M'Lehose, was now pushing his fortune in the West Indies, reckless of what might befall his wife or children. Of a somewhat voluptuous style of beauty, of lively and easy manners, of a poetical fabric of mind, with some wit, and not too high a degree of refinement or delicacy, Mrs M'Lehose was exactly the kind of woman to fascinate Burns. She might indeed be described as the town-bred or lady analogue of the country maidens who had exercised the greatest power over him in his earlier days. He, on the other hand, overcoming by his bright intelligence and its *éclatant* fruits all the vulgarities of fortune, was calculated to make a deep impression on a heart so susceptible as hers. A Miss Nimmo, an elderly lady with whom Burns seems to have become acquainted through Miss Chalmers, was a friend also of Mrs M'Lehose; and in her house, in consequence of the special request of the lady, the two met at tea about the 4th of December. Their epistolary correspondence was immediately commenced.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

Thursday Evening [*Dec.* 6, 1787.]

MADAM—I had set no small store by my tea-drinking to-night,

and have not often been so disappointed. Saturday evening I shall embrace the opportunity with the greatest pleasure. I leave town this day se'ennight, and probably for a couple of twelvemonths; but must ever regret that I so lately got an acquaintance I shall ever highly esteem, and in whose welfare I shall ever be warmly interested.

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

On Saturday the 8th, as implied in this letter, he was to have drunk tea at Mrs M'Lehose's house; but the night before he was overset by a drunken coachman, and sent home to Mr Cruikshank's with a severely bruised knee. The feelings with which the lady had inspired him at the first interview, and the interest with which he had looked forward to a second meeting, are expressed in his note of apology for non-appearance at her table:

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

Saturday Even. [*Dec.* 8.]

I can say with truth, madam, that I never met with a person in my life whom I more anxiously wished to meet again than yourself. To-night I was to have had that very great pleasure—I was intoxicated with the idea; but an unlucky fall from a coach has so bruised one of my knees, that I can't stir my leg off the cushion. So, if I don't see you again, I shall not rest in my grave for chagrin. I was vexed to the soul I had not seen you sooner. I determined to cultivate your friendship with the enthusiasm of religion; but thus has Fortune ever served me. I cannot bear the idea of leaving Edinburgh without seeing you. I know not how to account for it—I am strangely taken with some people, nor am I often mistaken. You are a stranger to me; but I am an odd being. Some yet unnamed feelings—things, not principles, but better than whims—carry me farther than boasted reason ever did a philosopher.

Farewell! every happiness be yours. ROBERT BURNS.

Mrs M'Lehose answered on the spur of the moment in a frank, genial letter, offering her sympathy, her friendship, as an allevia-

tion, if they could be so; and saying—'Were I your sister, I would call and see you.' She also enclosed a copy of verses which she had written after reading the little poem he had sent her, but disclaiming the possible imputation of their being *poetry*.

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

I stretch a point, indeed, my dearest madam, when I answer your card on the rack of my present agony. Your friendship, madam! By heavens, I was never proud before. Your lines, I maintain it, are poetry, and good poetry; mine were indeed partly fiction, and partly a friendship which, had I been so blest as to have met with you *in time*, might have led me—God of love only knows where. Time is too short for ceremonies.

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

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

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

Next day, the lady replied with a gentle chiding about his romantic style of address, calling him to remember that she is a married woman, but telling him that it will be his own fault if she ever withdraws the friendship she has promised. Amidst some playful expressions, she asked if he would, Jacob-like, wait seven years for a wife, and even then perhaps be disappointed, like the patriarch. Perhaps in the days of Mrs M'Lehose, women of her grade were less reserved than now; it must be admitted, however, by those who knew the lady, that this example of freedom on her part was in some degree characteristic. Burns replied, apparently on the same day:

TO MRS M'LEHOSE.

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

are but undisciplined blackguards: but the luckless rascals have something of honour in them: they would not do a dishonest thing.

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

I wont tell you what reply my heart made to your raillery of 'seven years;' but I will give you what a brother of my trade says on the same allusion:—

'The Patriarch to gain a wife,
Chaste, beautiful, and young,
Served fourteen years a painful life,
And never thought it long.

Oh were you to reward such cares,
And life so long would stay,
Not fourteen but four hundred years
Would seem but as one day!'

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

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

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

It will appear surprising that, at the very time when he was thus acting upon a sudden thought to swear eternal friendship to an acquaintance of three days' standing, his mind was not in a romantic mood, but beset by gloomy and remorseful feeling, resulting from causes within and beyond his own control, some of which have already been hinted at. Had we a full revelation of the circumstances, it would probably present Burns in a predicament such as rarely befalls either poets or ordinary mortals; and the association of these circumstances with the high-flown terms in which he was addressing the sentimental and unconscious Mrs M'Lehose, would produce an incongruity most curious, as an illustration of the character of the Ayrshire Bard.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *Dec.* 12, 1787.

I am here under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion; and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself, have formed a 'quadruple alliance' to guarantee the other. I got my fall on Saturday, and am getting slowly better.

I have taken tooth and nail to the Bible, and am got through the five books of Moses, and half way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my bookbinder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town, and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

I would give my best song to my worst enemy—I mean the merit of making it—to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit.

I enclose you a proof copy of the *Banks of the Devon*, which present with my best wishes to Charlotte. The *Ochil-hills*[1] you shall probably have next week for yourself. None of your fine speeches! R. B.

The Lord President of the Court of Session (Dundas) died on the 13th December, and it seems to have been suggested to Burns by Mr Charles Hay, advocate,[2] that he should bring his muse into play for the celebration of the event. There must have been some reason beyond the merits of the president for Hay having advised this step, and for the proud soul of Burns having stooped to adopt it. He set to bewailing the decease of the great man in the usual style of the venal bards of the age of patronage, and, as might be expected, with no great success:—

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF LORD PRESIDENT DUNDAS.[3]

Lone on the bleaky hills the straying flocks
Shun the fierce storms among the sheltering rocks;
Down from the rivulets, red with dashing rains,
The gathering floods burst o'er the distant plains;
Beneath the blasts the leafless forests groan;
The hollow caves return a sullen moan.

[1] The song in honour of Miss Chalmers, beginning, 'Where braving angry winter's storms.'

[2] Ultimately a judge, under the designation of Lord Newton. He died, October 19, 1811, leaving a strong reputation for his bacchanalianism, of which many whimsical anecdotes are told.

[3] Robert Dundas of Arniston, elder brother of Viscount Melville, was born 1713, appointed president in 1760, and died December 13, 1787, after a short illness.

Ye hills, ye plains, ye forests, and ye caves,
Ye howling winds, and wintry swelling waves!
Unheard, unseen, by human ear or eye,
Sad to your sympathetic scenes I fly;
Where to the whistling blast and waters' roar
Pale Scotia's recent wound I may deplore.
Oh heavy loss, thy country ill could bear!
A loss these evil days can ne'er repair!
Justice, the high vicegerent of her God,
Her doubtful balance eyed, and swayed her rod;
Hearing the tidings of the fatal blow
She sank, abandoned to the wildest wo.

Wrongs, injuries, from many a darksome den,
Now gay in hope explore the paths of men:
See from his cavern grim Oppression rise,
And throw on poverty his cruel eyes;
Keen on the helpless victim see him fly,
And stifle, dark, the feebly-bursting cry.

Mark ruffian Violence, distained with crimes,
Rousing elate in these degenerate times;
View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,
As guileful Fraud points out the erring way:
While subtile Litigation's pliant tongue
The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong:
Hark, injured Want recounts th' unlistened tale,
And much-wronged Misery pours th' unpitied wail!

Ye dark waste hills, and brown unsightly plains,
To you I sing my grief-inspirèd strains:
Ye tempests, rage! ye turbid torrents, roll!
Ye suit the joyless tenor of my soul.
Life's social haunts and pleasures I resign,
Be nameless wilds and lonely wanderings mine,
To mourn the woes my country must endure,
That wound degenerate ages cannot cure.

TO CHARLES HAY, ESQ., ADVOCATE.

(ENCLOSING VERSES ON THE DEATH OF THE LORD PRESIDENT.)

SIR—The enclosed poem was written in consequence of your suggestion last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. It cost me an hour or two of next morning's sleep, but did not please me; so it lay by, an ill-digested effort, till the other day that I gave it a critic brush. These kind of subjects are much hackneyed; and, besides, the wailings of the rhyming tribe over the ashes of the great are cursedly suspicious, and out of all character for sincerity. These

ideas damped my muse's fire; however, I have done the best I could, and, at all events, it gives me an opportunity of declaring that I have the honour to be, sir, your obliged humble servant, R. B.

Burns sent a copy of the poem to Dundas's son, afterwards Lord Advocate and Lord Chief-Baron, but received no answer to it, which he greatly resented.

A business note which Burns wrote about this time may be introduced, as shewing how apt his mind was, even on the most trivial subjects, to scintillate out vivid expressions and droll or fanciful ideas:

TO MR FRANCIS HOWDEN,

JEWELLER, PARLIAMENT SQUARE.[1]

The bearer of this will deliver you a small shade[2] to set; which, my dear sir, if you would highly oblige a poor cripple devil as I am at present, you will finish at farthest against to-morrow evening. It goes a hundred miles into the country; and if it is at me by five o'clock to-morrow evening, I have an opportunity of a private hand to convey it; if not, I don't know how to get it sent. Set it just as you did the others you did for me, 'in the neatest and cheapest manner;' both to answer as a breast-pin, and with a ring to answer as a locket. Do despatch it; as it is, I believe, the pledge of love, and perhaps the prelude to ma-tri-mo-ny. Everybody knows the auld wife's observation when she saw a poor dog going to be hanged—'God help us! it's the gate we ha'e a' to gang!'

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

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

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

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

A relative of Mr Howden communicates the following anecdote:—At Lord Monboddo's, Burns met Dr Gregory, who,

[1] Mr Francis Howden, who died at an advanced age in 1848, was well known in his native city as an energetic reformer. He was the last surviving person I am aware of who remembered Robert Fergusson.

[2] A silhouette portrait.

feeling some interest in the physiology of such a prodigy of genius, began to question him about his family history. The bard had been dining with Mr Howden, and was much in a humour for waggery. 'Well, Burns,' said the learned physician, 'what sort of man was your father?—a tall man?' 'Yes, rather.' 'A dark-complexioned man?' 'Yes.' 'And your mother?' 'My mother was not a man at all, sir.' By this grammatical quip the doctor was sadly discomfited; and Burns next day made his friend Howden laugh heartily at the joke in his shop in the Parliament Square.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, 19*th Dec.* 1787.

I begin this letter in answer to yours of the 17th current, which is not yet cold since I read it. The atmosphere of my soul is vastly clearer than when I wrote you last. For the first time, yesterday I crossed the room on crutches. It would do your heart good to see my bardship, not on my poetic, but on my oaken stilts; throwing my best leg with an air! and with as much hilarity in my gait and countenance, as a May frog leaping across the newly-harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long-expected shower!

I can't say I am altogether at my ease when I see anywhere in my path that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre—Poverty; attended as he always is by iron-fisted Oppression, and leering Contempt; but I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-laboured day already, and still my motto is—I DARE! My worst enemy is *moi même*. I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of imagination, whim, caprice, and passion; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence, and forethought move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and alas! frequent defeat. There are just two creatures I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear. R. B.

There is a gap in the M'Lehose correspondence after the last letter. In some of the missing letters, it had been arranged that they should for the future sign their epistles respectively as Sylvander and Clarinda, and the lady had latterly communicated some of her verses to the poet:

TO CLARINDA.

Friday Evening [21*st Dec.*]

I beg your pardon, my dear 'Clarinda,' for the fragment scrawl I

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

I enclose you a few lines I composed on a late melancholy occasion.[1] I will not give above five or six copies of it at all, and I would be hurt if any friend should give any copies without my consent.

You cannot imagine, Clarinda (I like the idea of Arcadian names in a commerce of this kind), how much store I have set by the hopes of your future friendship. I do not know if you have a just idea of my character, but I wish you to see me as I am. I am, as most people of my trade are, a strange Will-o'-Wisp being; the victim, too frequently, of much imprudence and many follies. My great constituent elements are *pride* and *passion*. The first I have endeavoured to humanise into integrity and honour; the last makes me a devotee to the warmest degree of enthusiasm in love, religion, or friendship—either of them, or all together, as I happen to be inspired. 'Tis true, I never saw you but once; but how much acquaintance did I form with you in that once! Do not think I flatter you, or have a design upon you, Clarinda: I have too much pride for the one, and too little cold contrivance for the other; but of all God's creatures I ever could approach in the beaten way of my acquaintance, you struck me with the deepest, the

[1] Probably the verses on the Death of the Lord President.

strongest, the most permanent impression. I say the most permanent, because I know myself well, and how far I can promise either in my prepossessions or powers. Why are you unhappy? And why are so many of our fellow-creatures, unworthy to belong to the same species with you, blest with all they can wish? You have a hand all benevolent to give: why were you denied the pleasure? You have a heart formed—gloriously formed—for all the most refined luxuries of love: why was that heart ever wrung? Oh Clarinda! shall we not meet in a state, some yet unknown state of being, where the lavish hand of plenty shall minister to the highest wish of benevolence, and where the chill north wind of prudence shall never blow over the flowery fields of enjoyment? If we do not, man was made in vain! I deserved most of the unhappy hours that have lingered over my head; they were the wages of my labour: but what unprovoked demon, malignant as hell, stole upon the confidence of unmistrusting busy fate, and dashed *your* cup of life with undeserved sorrow?

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

SYLVANDER.

Burns was attended in his illness by Dr Gregory as physician, while Mr Alexander Wood officiated as his surgeon. It was thus that he had an opportunity of exhibiting Clarinda's poetry before the eyes of one who was reckoned in his day and place as the prince of critics. The large intelligence, vigorous thought, and high-minded benevolence of the learned author of the *Conspectus Medicinæ*, had deeply impressed the Ayrshire poet, from their first meetings at Lord Monboddo's in the past winter. Perhaps even their common liability to the *sæva indignatio* where their feelings were offended by foolish or sordid conduct, had helped to strengthen the friendship which arose between these men, so different in their education and position in life. A gentleman in Glasgow possesses a copy of an English translation of Cicero's Select Orations (London, 1756) which had belonged to Burns, and which bears on a fly-leaf the following inscription, in the bard's handwriting:—'*Edin:* 23*d April* 1787.—This book, a present from the truly worthy and learned DR GREGORY, I shall preserve to

my latest hour, as a mark of the gratitude, esteem, and veneration I bear the Donor. So help me God! ROBERT BURNS.'

Mrs M'Lehose answered the same evening, but hurriedly. She disclaimed being unhappy, notwithstanding scenes in her life horrible to recollection. 'Religion,' she says, 'has been my balm in every wo.' She sends him 'a simile'—

'The morning sun shines glorious and bright,
And fills the heart with wonder and delight!
He dazzles in meridian splendour seen,
Without a blackening cloud to intervene.
So at a distance viewed, your genius bright,
Your wit, your flowing numbers, give delight.
But ah! when error's darkening clouds arise,
When passion's thunder, folly's lightning flies,
More safe we gaze, but admiration dies.
And as the tempting brightness snares the moth,
Sure ruin marks too near approach to both.'

In another letter, the lady enclosed a set of verses, apparently in answer to some wild expressions of his—

'Talk not of Love—it gives me pain,
For Love has been my foe:
He bound me in an iron chain,
And plunged me deep in wo!

But Friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was formed to prove—
The worthy object be of those,
But never talk of Love!

The Hand of Friendship I accept—
May Honour be our guard!
Virtue our intercourse direct,
Her smiles our dear reward.'

TO CLARINDA.

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

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

Good God! that one who has so much worth in the sight of heaven, and is so amiable to her fellow-creatures, should be so

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

SYLVANDER.

Some further light is thrown on Burns's feelings in this affair by a letter to his old Irvine friend, Richard Brown, who was now at home, while his vessel, the *Mary and Jean*, lay at Greenock waiting cargo for Grenada:—

TO MR RICHARD BROWN, IRVINE.[1]

EDINBURGH, 30*th Dec.* 1787.

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

I have much to tell you 'of men, their manners, and their ways;' perhaps a little of the other sex. Apropos, I beg to be remembered to Mrs Brown. There, I doubt not, my dear friend, but you have found substantial happiness. I expect to find you something of an altered, but not a different man: the wild, bold, generous young fellow composed into the steady affectionate husband, and the fond careful parent. For me, I am just the same Will-o'-wisp being I used to be. About the first and fourth quarters of the moon, I generally set in for the trade wind of wisdom; but about the full and change, I am the luckless victim of mad tornadoes, which blow me into chaos. Almighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom; and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh

[1] 'The letters to Richard Brown, written at a period when the poet was in the full blaze of reputation, shewed that he was at no time so dazzled with success as to forget the friends who had anticipated the public by discovering his merit.'—WALKER.

widow,[1] who has wit and wisdom more murderously fatal than the assassinating stiletto of the Sicilian bandit, or the poisoned arrow of the savage African. My Highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have gravely removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command, in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the following verses, which she sent me the other day. * * *

My best compliments to our friend Allan. Adieu! R. B.

TO CLARINDA.

[*After New Year*, 1788.]

You are right, my dear Clarinda: a friendly correspondence goes for nothing, except one write their undisguised sentiments. Yours please me for their intrinsic merit, as well as because they are *yours*, which, I assure you, is to me a high recommendation. Your religious sentiments, madam, I revere. If you have, on some suspicious evidence, from some lying oracle, learned that I despise or ridicule so sacredly important a matter as real religion, you have, my Clarinda, much misconstrued your friend.—'I am not mad, most noble Festus!' Have you ever met a perfect character? Do we not sometimes rather exchange faults than get rid of them? For instance, I am perhaps tired with, and shocked at a life too much the prey of giddy inconsistencies and thoughtless follies; by degrees I grow sober, prudent, and statedly pious—I say statedly, because the most unaffected devotion is not at all inconsistent with my first character—I join the world in congratulating myself on the happy change. But let me pry more narrowly into this affair. Have I, at bottom, anything of a secret pride in these endowments and emendations? Have I nothing of a Presbyterian sourness, a hypocritical severity, when I survey my less regular neighbours? In a word, have I missed all those nameless and numberless modifications of indistinct selfishness, which are so near our own eyes, that we can scarcely bring them within the sphere of our vision, and which the known spotless cambric of our character hides from the ordinary observer?

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

I can easily enter into the sublime pleasures that your strong imagination and keen sensibility must derive from religion, parti-

[1] A widow only in one sense. In reality, a deserted wife.

cularly if a little in the shade of misfortune; but I own I cannot, without a marked grudge, see Heaven totally engross so amiable, so charming a woman, as my friend Clarinda; and should be very well pleased at *a circumstance* that would put it in the power of somebody (happy somebody!) to divide her attention, with all the delicacy and tenderness of an earthly attachment.

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

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

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

But Friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was formed to prove:
There, welcome, win and wear the prize,
But never talk of love.'

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

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

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

Do not tell me that you are pleased when your friends inform you of your faults. I am ignorant what they are; but I am sure they must be such evanescent trifles, compared with your personal and

mental accomplishments, that I would despise the ungenerous narrow soul who would notice any shadow of imperfections you may seem to have any other way than in the most delicate agreeable raillery. Coarse minds are not aware how much they injure the keenly-feeling tie of bosom-friendship, when, in their foolish officiousness, they mention what nobody cares for recollecting. People of nice sensibility and generous minds have a certain intrinsic dignity, that fires at being trifled with, or lowered, or even too nearly approached.

You need make no apology for long letters: I am even with you. Many happy new-years to you, charming Clarinda! I can't dissemble were it to shun perdition. He who sees you as I have done, and does not love you, deserves to be damn'd for his stupidity! He who loves you, and would injure you, deserves to be doubly damn'd for his villany! Adieu. SYLVANDER.

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

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

The visit promised by the poet in his last letter took place, and seems to have afforded an opportunity for his giving Clarinda some account of his past life and present circumstances. He had, amongst other things, spoken of his infant son, now the only survivor of the twins borne by Jean Armour in September of the year before last.

TO CLARINDA.

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

——— 'One well-spent hour,
In such a tender circumstance for friends,
Is better than an age of common time!' THOMSON.

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

I mentioned to you my letter to Dr Moore, giving an account of my life: it is truth, every word of it, and will give you the just idea of a man whom you have honoured with your friendship. I am afraid you will hardly be able to make sense of so torn a piece. Your verses I shall muse on, deliciously, as I gaze on your image in my

mind's eye, in my heart's core: they will be in time enough for a week to come. I am truly happy your headache is better.—Oh, how can pain or evil be so daringly, unfeelingly, cruelly savage as to wound so noble a mind, so lovely a form!

My little fellow is all my namesake:—Write me soon. My every, strongest good wishes attend you, Clarinda! SYLVANDER.

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

In this letter was enclosed his autobiography, apparently in consequence of a promise he had made at the late interview. Clarinda told him, in answer, that she had read it as Desdemona listened to the narration of Othello. One thing, however, affected her painfully—his hostility to Calvinism, of which she, from conviction, was an adherent. She wished him seriously to examine the subject, as she had done. She also glanced at a declaration he had once made to her, that he never could find a woman who could love as ardently as himself. She can well believe it, and would have him rather not marry at all than join himself to any other person. 'Unless,' she says, 'a woman were qualified for the companion, the friend, and the mistress, she would not do for you. The last may gain Sylvander, but the others alone can keep him.' In a postscript, she announced—and perhaps Burns felt that this was a very important postscript—that she was to be in his square 'this afternoon near two o'clock,' when, if his room was towards the street, she would have the pleasure of giving him a nod.

TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Night [*Jan.* 8 ?]

I am delighted, charming Clarinda, with your honest enthusiasm for religion. Those of either sex, but particularly the female, who are lukewarm in that most important of all things, 'O my soul, come not thou into their secrets!' I feel myself deeply interested in your good opinion, and will lay before you the outlines of my belief. He who is our Author and Preserver, and will one day be our Judge, must be (not for his sake in the way of duty, but from the native impulse of our hearts) the object of our reverential awe and grateful adoration: He is Almighty and all-bounteous, we are weak and dependent; hence prayer and every other sort of devotion.——'He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life;' consequently it must be in every one's power to embrace his offer of 'everlasting life;' otherwise he could not, in justice, condemn those who did not. A mind pervaded, actuated,

and governed by purity, truth, and charity, though it does not *merit* heaven, yet is an absolutely necessary pre-requisite, without which heaven can neither be obtained nor enjoyed; and, by divine promise, such a mind shall never fail of attaining 'everlasting life:' hence the impure, the deceiving, and the uncharitable, extrude themselves from eternal bliss, by their unfitness for enjoying it. The Supreme Being has put the immediate administration of all this, for wise and good ends known to himself, into the hands of Jesus Christ—a great personage, whose relation to him we cannot comprehend, but whose relation to us is [that of] a guide and Saviour; and who, except for our own obstinacy and misconduct, will bring us all, through various ways, and by various means, to bliss at last.

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

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

I watched at our front window to-day, but was disappointed. It has been a day of disappointments. I am just risen from a two hours' bout after supper, with silly or sordid souls, who could relish nothing in common with me but the port.——*One*——'Tis now 'witching time of night;' and whatever is out of joint in the foregoing scrawl, impute it to enchantments and spells; for I can't look over it, but will seal it up directly, as I don't care for to-morrow's criticisms on it.

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

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

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

We have in this letter an explicit view of the poet's religious convictions. In addressing an orthodox lady, whose good opinion he was anxious to gain and keep, he would not understate his faith; yet we see that it is far from the orthodox standard. It does not admit the divinity of Christ, though regarding him as a divinely-commissioned being. It makes good works nearly all-sufficient. At the same time Burns avows devout feelings and pious practices. Such had now been for several years the religious character and condition of our great poet; and he does not appear to have afterwards greatly changed his views. What might have been the difference had Burns been reared under a system more captivating to the imaginative part of our nature, and more easily to be reconciled to philanthropical feelings, it would be vain to conjecture. As it is, the orthodox Presbyterian Calvinist has the regret of viewing the vigorous intellect of Burns as one which wholly repudiated, and lived in direct antagonism with, that code of doctrine which has been so long and with so little variation maintained in Scotland.

In Clarinda's letter, written next morning, but not sent away till it was furnished with a postscript a day later, she speaks of her children, one of whom is ill, and requires her care: then she adverts to Fielding's Amelia, and says she could be equally forgiving to a penitent husband, if he did not treat herself with positive unkindness. She cannot imagine who is the fair one he alludes to in his last epistle. She first thought of his Jean, though uncertain if she possesses his 'tenderest, faithfulest friendship.' She cannot understand that bonny lassie—refusing him after such proofs of love. She admires him for his continued fondness towards her. Finally, she promises to fulfil her promise of giving him a nod at his window.

TO CLARINDA.

Thursday Noon [*Jan.* 10?]

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

'Where Speculation roosted near the sky.'

I could almost have thrown myself over for very vexation. Why didn't you look higher? It has spoilt my peace for this day. To be so near my charming Clarinda; to miss her look while it was search-

ing for me. I am sure the soul is capable of disease, for mine has convulsed itself into an inflammatory fever. I am sorry for your little boy: do let me know to-morrow how he is.

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

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

My friendship, Clarinda, is a liferent business. My likings are both strong and eternal. I told you I had but one male friend: I have but two female. I should have a third, but she is surrounded by the blandishments of flattery and courtship. Her I register in my heart's core by Peggy Chalmers: Miss Nimmo can tell you how divine she is. She is worthy of a place in the same bosom with my Clarinda. That is the highest compliment I can pay her. Farewell, Clarinda! Remember

SYLVANDER.

In her answer of the evening of the same day, Clarinda deplores her inability to detect the poet's window. She chides him for his ravings, and entreats him to limit himself to friendship. She is proud of being ranked with Miss Chalmers; but wonders he does not include Miss Nimmo, who has a sincere regard for him. 'She has almost wept to me at mentioning your intimacy with a certain famous or infamous man in town [Nicol ?] I composed lines addressed to you some time ago, containing a hint upon the occasion. I had not courage to send them to you: if you say you will not be angry, I will yet.' This allusion, it will be found, calls forth the jealous irritability of the poet. She promises that her next letter shall be on her favourite theme—religion. Finally, she hints a wish that he could join her in a drive in 'the Fly' to Leith, whither she has to take her ailing child for the air.

TO CLARINDA.

Saturday Morning.

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

'Reverence thyself' is a sacred maxim, and I wish to cherish it. I think I told you Lord Bolingbroke's saying to Swift—'Adieu, dear Swift, with all thy faults I love thee entirely; make an effort to love me with all mine.' A glorious sentiment, and without which there can be no friendship! I do highly, very highly esteem you indeed, Clarinda—you merit it all! Perhaps, too, I scorn dissimulation! I could fondly love you: judge, then, what a maddening sting your reproach would be. 'Oh! I have sins to *Heaven*, but none to *you!*' With what pleasure would I meet you to-day, but I cannot walk to meet the Fly. I hope to be able to see you on *foot*, about the middle of next week.

I am interrupted—perhaps you are not sorry for it, you will tell me—but I wont anticipate blame. Oh Clarinda! did you know how dear to me is your look of kindness, your smile of approbation! you would not, either in prose or verse, risk a censorious remark.

> 'Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,
> That tends to make one worthy man my foe!'

SYLVANDER.

After a letter from Clarinda, which has been lost, Sylvander writes as follows:—

TO CLARINDA.

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

SYLVANDER.

On a Saturday night, then, after eight o'clock, Burns and his enthusiastic lady-friend had their *third* meeting — the second which had taken place in her own house and without other company. In a letter addressed to him next day, she tells him that the evening had been to her 'one of the most exquisite she had ever experienced.' There had been no actual impropriety in her conduct; yet she did not feel at ease, because she knew that her present course of procedure would be painful to a friend to whom she was bound by the sacred ties of gratitude. Burns had seen her 'behind the scenes,' and must now know that she has faults. She means well, but is liable to be the victim of her sensibility. She agrees with him in preferring the religion of the bosom, but points out how poor a pretension to the acceptance of God can be made from a good life. One expression towards the conclusion of her letter is remarkable: 'Our last interview has raised you very high in mine [esteem.] I have met with few, indeed, of your sex who *understood delicacy in such circumstances.*' She adds—'I subscribe to Lord B.'s sentiment to Swift; yet some faults I shall still sigh over, though you style it reproach even to hint them.'

TO CLARINDA.

Monday Even. 11 *o'clock.*

Why have I not heard from you, Clarinda? To-day I expected it; and before supper, when a letter to me was announced, my heart danced with rapture: but behold, 'twas some fool, who had taken it into his head to turn poet, and made me an offering of the first fruits of his nonsense. 'It is not poetry, but prose run mad.' Did I ever repeat to you an epigram I made on a Mr Elphinstone, who has given a translation of Martial, a famous Latin poet? The poetry of Elphinstone can only equal his prose-notes. I was sitting in a merchant's shop of my acquaintance, waiting somebody; he put Elphinstone into my hand, and asked my opinion of it; I begged leave to write it on a blank leaf, which I did—

TO MR ELPHINSTONE, &c.

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

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

The night is my departing night,
The morn 's the day I maun awa;
There 's neither friend nor foe o' mine
But wishes that I were awa!

What I hae done for lack o' wit,
I never, never can reca';
I hope ye 're a' my friends as yet—
Gude night, and joy be wi' you a'!

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

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

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

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

'Thou source of all my bliss and all my wo;
Thou found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so.'

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

SYLVANDER.

The last letter of Clarinda having been received soon after the above epistle had been despatched, he writes again—

TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Evening [*Jan.* 15?]

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

I looked long, my dear Clarinda, for your letter; and am vexed that you are complaining. I have not caught you so far wrong as in

your idea, that the commerce you have with *one* friend hurts you if you cannot tell every tittle of it to *another*. Why have so injurious a suspicion of a good God, Clarinda, as to think that Friendship and Love, on the sacred inviolate principles of Truth, Honour, and Religion, can be anything else than an object of His divine approbation?

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

In her next letter, written apparently on Wednesday morning, the 16th of January, Clarinda speaks warmly of his power over her, and invites him to another evening visit on Saturday. She asks him to walk, because a chair, being an unusual thing in her neighbourhood, might 'raise speculation.' He might, however, have a chair to take him home, because by ten o'clock the neighbours are all asleep. The lady doubtless meant well, but it is impossible to applaud either her prudence or her delicacy in encouraging visits which she felt would tell upon her reputation if they were discovered. It need not be insisted on, that the pure are under an obligation to society to maintain all the appearances as well as the reality of purity.

TO CLARINDA.

Sunday Night [*Jan.* 20?]

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

'Fools rushed on fools, as waves succeed to waves.'

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

SYLVANDER.

Monday Morning.

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

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

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

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

'Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mixed with God's, her loved idea lies.'

But I fear inconstancy, the consequent imperfection of human weakness. Shall I meet with a friendship that defies years of absence, and the chances and changes of fortune? Perhaps 'such things are.' *One* honest man I have great hopes from that way: but who, except a romance writer, would think on a *love* that could promise for life, in spite of distance, absence, chance, and change; and that, too, with slender hopes of fruition? For my own part, I can say to myself in both requisitions, Thou art the man!' I dare, in cool resolve, I dare declare myself that friend and that lover. If womankind is capable of such things, Clarinda is. I trust that she is; and feel I shall be miserable if she is not. There is not one virtue which gives worth, or one sentiment which does honour to the sex, that she does not possess superior to any woman I ever saw: her exalted mind, aided a little perhaps by her situation, is, I think, capable of that nobly-romantic love-enthusiasm.

May I see you on Wednesday evening, my dear angel? The next Wednesday again will, I conjecture, be a hated day to us both. I tremble for censorious remarks for your sake; but in extraordinary cases, may not usual and useful precautions be a little dispensed with? Three evenings, three swift-winged evenings, with pinions of down, are all the past—I dare not calculate the future. I shall call at Miss Nimmo's to-morrow evening; 'twill be a farewell call.

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

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

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

SYLVANDER.

During this month, while penning these strange ravings to a female bosom as impressionable as his own, he was endeavouring to bring his publisher Creech to a settlement of accounts. His sufferings under the uncertainty as to his prospects, his painful accident, a return of his nervous ailment, and reflections on the consequences of his many errors, seem to have brought him at times very low.

TO MISS CHALMERS.

Now for that wayward, unfortunate thing, myself. I have broke measures with Creech, and last week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me upon his honour that I should have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor damned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonising sensibility, and bedlam passions!

'I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to die!' I had lately 'a hairbreadth 'scape in th' imminent deadly breach' of love too. Thank my stars, I got off heart-whole, 'waur fleyed [worse frightened] than hurt.'—Interruption.

I have this moment got a hint. . . . . I fear I am something like—undone—but I hope for the best. Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution; accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! You must not desert me. Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope. Seriously though, life presents me with but a melancholy path: but—my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on. R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *January* 21, 1788.

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

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

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

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

The allusions in the letter to Miss Chalmers are said by Allan Cunningham to refer to whispers which had reached his ear about the solvency of Creech. Any such rumours I must suppose to have been ill founded, as Mr Creech passed through a long career of business with all the appearances of uninterrupted prosperity.[1] But we may well suppose that, with no exact knowledge to the contrary, and tantalised by the apparently unreasonable delay of

[1] A respectable Edinburgh bookseller, now in retirement—who was an *élève* of Mr Creech, but at a time subsequent to the appearance of Burns in Edinburgh—favours me with some memoranda as to the habits of the eminent publisher:—

'My friend, Mr Creech, was rather a tardy man of business, and paid little attention to it. Previous to my becoming his clerk, he had my friend Mr Robert Miller, and several other respectable young men, to take care of his business. Being so much occupied with literary people, he seldom handled his own money. His clerk balanced the cash every night, and carried on *that* to next day. He had a *levée* in his house till twelve every day, attended by literary men and printers. Between twelve and one he came to the shop, where the same flow of company lasted till four, and then he left us, and we saw no more of him till next day. He was a very good-natured man, and was never known to prosecute any one for a debt.'

Mr Robert Miller, here mentioned, was the publisher of the first work of Scott—his translation of Bürger's Ballads. He sang several of Burns's songs with a felicity only to be equalled by that with which he recited some of Mr Creech's stories.

a settlement, Burns would receive the 'hint' as something like the knell of doom. Another vexation of this period referred to circumstances of a tenderer nature. The consequences of his renewed intimacy with Jean Armour were now becoming no longer concealable. Her father became aware of her condition with feelings which defied control. He would not allow her to remain under a roof which he thought disgraced by her presence. In Burns's phrase: 'She was turned, literally turned out of doors;' and the hapless poet, confined with his bruised limb in St James's Square, had to write to a friend in the west to provide a shelter for her. It will be admitted that these were extraordinary circumstances under which to conduct his romantic correspondence with Clarinda.

Several of the biographers of Burns have needlessly aggravated his culpability at this crisis, while representing him as under a true, though not apparent matrimonial bond to Jean. If Burns had had reason to believe himself not liberated from Jean, his even *thinking* of any other of the women whom he speaks of as possible objects of his addresses during his residence in Edinburgh, would of course have been an act of turpitude. There would have been scarcely less guilt in allowing Mrs M'Lehose to entertain even her faint hopes, dependent as they were upon a remote enough contingency. But the truth is, that Burns had every reason to believe himself at this time free of nuptial bonds. He had gone through a humiliating process at Mauchline to insure for Jean that liberation which she and her friends desired. Ecclesiastical authority had assured him of his bachelorhood. The world imputed to him no other condition, nor even the possibility of any claim of a connubial kind upon him being established. The person chiefly interested would, to all appearance, have been the last to think that, even after this her second pregnancy, she had any such claim upon Burns. It would now appear that all concerned were under a mistake with respect to the effect of the proceedings of April 1786, by which it was supposed that the private marriage of Burns and Jean was annulled. A marriage once formed, even in the most irregular manner, cannot be annulled otherwise than by a regular process of divorce. The names had been obliterated from the paper—under legal care, too, for Mr Robert Aiken had presided on the occasion—but the destruction of the evidence will not neutralise a marriage.[1] Other evidence might have afterwards been obtained by one of the parties against the other; in which case, a subsequent marriage of that other party to a different person would have been an act of bigamy. It now of course

[1] See Appendix, No. 12.

depended on the possibility of such evidence being obtained, whether Burns was liable, in the event of nuptials with another woman, to be prosecuted by Jean. And in a country where so little is required to constitute the evidence of a marriage, it might have been by no means difficult to re-establish his original matrimonial relation to that young woman, and thus expose him to a heavy penalty if he should in the meantime have given his hand to another woman. All this may be allowed as the law of the case, as now read from the authorities, or as fixed by some late decision; but the question, I apprehend, is as to the *bona fides* of Burns in the view he took of his separation from his mistress. The whole series of facts shews him absolved from his marriage tie, not merely with the consent, but at the express and urgent instance of the parties usually most concerned in keeping the man fixed to his engagement. It was, as we have seen, against his own will, and the consequences were bitterly bewailed by him. He was, moreover, but a rustic, not necessarily learned in the law; and when told by a lawyer, even of Mr Aiken's grade, that he must henceforth consider himself a free man, a person of his degree of information on such subjects was surely excusable in adopting the belief, and retaining it till his mind was enlightened by some superior authority. It does appear, indeed, that before the 3d of March 1788, Burns had found reason to fear that he might after all be liable, in the event of a second marriage, to trouble on account of Jean Armour, if she or any other person should feel interested in bringing evidence against him for the establishment of previous nuptials. But we are not yet come to that period. We are considering Burns's presumable belief in the case during 1787; and it is enough that no evidence exists to shew that he had *then* any reason for apprehension on the subject, or for regarding himself otherwise than as a man free to give his hand to whomsoever he chose.

Every biographer of Burns must have groaned with unavailing anguish at this point in his task. The bright spirit which threw out thoughts and sentiments calculated to be a joy to his kind for ever, must, for the mere sustentation of the flame of life in his bosom, put himself into the fetters of a humble drudging occupation, such as the most ordinary children of humanity are fit for. It was no singular case. Society has no better arrangement for her prophets and oracles even to this day. Burns, we have seen, thought of a return to his original profession; but the period immediately following the close of the colonial war was a bad time for farming in Britain, and the poor poet could nowhere see a piece of land on which he might be tolerably sure to live and pay rent. If we throw ourselves back to the time, and join ideally in the consul-

tations of the poet and his friends, we shall quickly see the difficulty there was of evoking a decent alternative from the chaos of plans by which he was surrounded. The government—the favour of the monarch—the sympathising interest of Henry Dundas, who, with a warm Scotch heart, ruled as much as possible for the benefit of Scotland—had Burns any prospects there? Alas, he not only had not paid court in high quarters, but, with his bardic recklessness, he had done somewhat to give offence: we have only to recall his published *Dream*, and his unpublished but not unknown lines on the Stirling window. Could Burns, with his previous habits, hope to succeed in any kind of commercial career? Need the question be answered. Could he, at nine-and-twenty, commence an education for any of those learned professions which his talents might have been fitted to adorn? Scarcely with any prospect of success. Was it possible for him to make a livelihood as a man of letters? Such feats were not common in those days, and probably the notion never once occurred to him or any of his friends. No one seems even to have imagined that the subscription volume was an experiment liable to be repeated. It was most desirable that some kind of official appointment should be procured for Burns, for there appeared to be no other opening; but what appointment of that nature could any of his friends secure for him? I suspect—painful as the conclusion is—that there really was not any one readily or at all available, except that of a common exciseman.

No one who admired his genius could fail to deprecate the idea; and many were the expressions of surprise which it gave rise to. 'What! make Burns an exciseman!' worthy, sympathising men would exclaim: 'Can they make no better of him than that?' Every one looked with reproach to 'They' for making Burns an exciseman, without feeling that, by default, he had his own share in the procedure. Certainly, in dispensing any blame which we have to throw upon the age for its treatment of the illustrious phenomenon which had fallen into its hands, it would be most unreasonable to give an unusual share to the few who were instrumental in gaining him the appointment, as it happened that, where all were alike concerned, they alone had done any duty in the case.

After all, it is creditable to Burns that he took no high-flown views of his situation and pretensions, and was willing, for the preservation of his independence, to subdue himself to such a drudgery, since it appeared that no better course was open for him. The idea, as we have seen, was not new to his mind. It had been agitated at the crisis of his West India voyage, in the autumn of 1786. Perhaps, even in earlier years, some hope had been entertained of his working himself out of a position of rustic

toil by means of those slight acquirements in geometry, of which the groundwork had been laid at Kirkoswald school. Even now, when he had tasted the sweets of distinction and of elegant life, he seems to have experienced far less difficulty in condescending to such a certain means of realising fifty pounds a year than we might have been entitled, by any consideration of his somewhat arrogant spirit, to expect. The idea seems from first to last to have been very much his own.

It was at this crisis that Burns's wishes regarding the Excise were gratified, at least to the extent of his being assured of an appointment, or enrolled on the list of expectant officers. According to Heron, he was immediately indebted for this favour to the kind-hearted surgeon who attended him for his bruised limb. Mr Alexander Wood, usually called, on account of his lengthy lanky figure, *Lang Sandy Wood*, was a man after Burns's own heart—kind, quaint, fond of children and animals: he even resembled the poet so specifically, as to have had at one time a pet sheep, which, like Burns's *Mailie*, 'trotted by him' through all the town on his professional visits—a trait of eccentricity that strongly recalls the simple, cordial days of our grandfathers. This universally popular, warm-hearted man no sooner became aware of the wishes of his poet-patient, for whose genius he had the usual share of admiration, than he exerted himself in recommending him to the Commissioners of Excise, and the enrolment followed.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ. OF FINTRY.

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

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner which I have lived to see throw a venerable

parent into the jaws of a jail; whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

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

R. B.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

My Lord—I know your lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you; but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes, and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme, if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the Excise: I am told that your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners; and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters, from destruction. There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude.

My brother's farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it; and after the assistance which I have given, and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds; and instead of seeking, what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age.

These, my lord, are my views: I have resolved from the maturest deliberation; and, now I am fixed, I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes; nor have I yet applied to anybody else. Indeed, my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the great who have honoured me with their countenance. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial; but to your lordship I have not only the honour, the comfort, but the pleasure of being your lordship's much obliged and deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

In his last letter to Clarinda, he had asked for a fourth interview. It had taken place on the night which we set down conjec-

turally as that of Wednesday the 23d January, being the second last Wednesday which he thought he should spend in Edinburgh on the present occasion. At this meeting, it would appear, the communications of the pair had been of a more fervent and unreserved kind than heretofore, insomuch as to leave self-accusing reflections in the bosom of Clarinda. Each wrote a letter to the other next day:—

TO CLARINDA.

Thursday Morning [*January* 24 ?]

'Unlavish Wisdom never works in vain.'

I have been tasking my reason, Clarinda, why a woman, who, for native genius, poignant wit, strength of mind, generous sincerity of soul, and the sweetest female tenderness, is without a peer, and whose personal charms have few, very, very few parallels, among her sex; why, or how she should fall to the blessed lot of a poor hairum-scairum poet whom Fortune had kept for her particular use, to wreak her temper on whenever she was in ill humour. One time I conjectured, that as fortune is the most capricious jade ever known, she may have taken, not a fit of remorse, but a paroxysm of whim, to raise the poor devil out of the mire, where he had so often and so conveniently served her as a stepping-stone, and given him the most glorious boon she ever had in her gift, merely for the maggot's sake, to see how his fool head and his fool heart will bear it. At other times I was vain enough to think that Nature, who has a great deal to say with Fortune, had given the coquettish goddess some such hint as, 'Here is a paragon of female excellence, whose equal, in all my former compositions, I never was lucky enough to hit on, and despair of ever doing so again; you have cast her rather in the shades of life; there is a certain poet of my making; among your frolics it would not be amiss to attach him to this masterpiece of my hand, to give her that immortality among mankind, which no woman, of any age, ever more deserved, and which few rhymsters of this age are better able to confer.'

Evening, 9 o'clock.

I am here, absolutely unfit to finish my letter—pretty hearty after a bowl, which has been constantly plied since dinner till this moment. I have been with Mr Schetki,[1] the musician, and he has set the song finely. I have no distinct ideas of anything, but that I have drunk your health twice to-night, and that you are all my soul holds dear in this world.

SYLVANDER.

[1] Mr Schetki was a respectable German musician, settled in Edinburgh.

The song was—

A FAREWELL TO CLARINDA,

ON LEAVING EDINBURGH.

Clarinda, mistress of my soul,
The measured time is run!
The wretch beneath the dreary pole
So marks his latest sun.

To what dark cave of frozen night
Shall poor Sylvander hie;
Deprived of thee, his life and light,
The sun of all his joy.

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

She, the fair sun of all her sex,
Has blest my glorious day;
And shall a glimmering planet fix
My worship to its ray?

The letter of Clarinda expresses the distress of a pure-minded though loving woman, on having been betrayed into an equivocal situation. 'I am neither well nor happy to-day: my heart reproaches me for last night. If you wish Clarinda to regain her peace, determine against everything but what the strictest delicacy warrants.' 'Do not be displeased,' she adds, 'when I tell you I wish our parting was over. At a distance, we shall retain the same heartfelt affection and interestedness in each other's concerns; but absence will mellow and restrain those violent heart-agitations which, if continued much longer, would unhinge my very soul, and render me unfit for the duties of life.'

TO CLARINDA.

[*Friday, February* 1?]

Clarinda, my life, you have wounded my soul. Can I think of your being unhappy, even though it be not described in your pathetic elegance of language, without being miserable? Clarinda, can I bear to be told from you that 'you will not see me to-morrow night—that you wish the hour of parting were come?' Do not let us impose on ourselves by sounds. * * * * * Why, my love,

talk to me in such strong terms; every word of which cuts me to the very soul? You know, a hint, the slightest signification of your wish, is to me a sacred command.

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

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

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

I had proposed bringing my bosom-friend, Mr Ainslie, to-morrow evening, at his strong request, to see you; as he has only time to stay with us about ten minutes, for an engagement. But I shall hear from you: this afternoon, for mercy's sake!—for, till I hear from you, I am wretched. Oh Clarinda, the tie that binds me to thee is intwisted, incorporated with my dearest threads of life!

SYLVANDER.

Another interview took place, and another letter had passed from Clarinda to Sylvander. Then we have a brief note from Sylvander

TO CLARINDA.

I was on the way, my love, to meet you (I never do things by halves) when I got your card. Mr Ainslie goes out of town to-morrow morning to see a brother of his, who is newly arrived from France. I am determined that he and I shall call on you together. So look you, lest I should never see to-morrow, we will call on you

to-night. Mary[1] and you may put off tea till about seven, at which time, in the Galloway phrase, 'an the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale,' expect the humblest of your humble servants, and his dearest friend. We only propose staying half an hour—'for ought we ken.' I could suffer the lash of misery eleven months in the year, were the twelfth to be composed of hours like yesternight. You are the soul of my enjoyment—all else is of the stuff of stocks and stones! SYLVANDER.

In his next letter, we have a new turn given to his feelings regarding the Excise scheme:

TO CLARINDA.

Sunday Noon.

I have almost given up the Excise idea. I have been just now to wait on a great person, Miss ——'s friend, ——. Why will great people not only deafen us with the din of their equipage, and dazzle us with their fastidious pomp, but they must also be so very dictatorially wise? I have been questioned like a child about my matters, and blamed and schooled for my inscription on the Stirling window. Come, Clarinda!—'Come, curse me, Jacob; come, defy me, Israel!'

Sunday Night.

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

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

Monday Morning.

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

'How are thy servants blest, O Lord!
How sure is their defence!
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence!'

I am, my dear madam, yours, SYLVANDER.

On the same day Clarinda was writing to him in equal tender-

[1] Miss Mary Peacock, a young friend of Clarinda, afterwards married to Mr James Gray of the Edinburgh High School—a woman of literary talent, and most enthusiastic interest in all who blacked paper.

ness, but with self-accusation. She had disclosed the state of her heart to her pastor, Mr Kemp, who had expressed much sympathy. She adds a remarkable passage: 'Sylvander, I believe nothing were a more impracticable task than to make you feel a little of genuine gospel humility. Believe me, I wish not to see you deprived of that noble fire of an exalted mind which you eminently possess. Yet a sense of your faults—a feeling sense of them!—were devoutly to be wished.' She is scarcely sorry at the Excise affair misgiving, for he will be better out of Edinburgh, so full of temptation to one of his social turn. 'Providence, if you will be wise in future, will order something better for you. I am half glad you were schooled about the inscription; 'twill be a lesson, I hope, in future. Clarinda would have lectured you on it before, *if she dared.*'

Another Saturday-evening interview, followed, as usual, by a letter.

TO CLARINDA.

Sunday Morning.

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

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

Sunday Evening.

You are the constant companion of my thoughts. How wretched is the condition of one who is haunted with conscious guilt, and trembling under the idea of dreaded vengeance! and what a placid calm, what a charming secret enjoyment it gives, to bosom the kind feelings of friendship and the fond throes of love! Out upon the tempest of anger, the acrimonious gall of fretful impatience, the sullen frost of louring resentment, or the corroding poison of withered envy! They eat up the immortal part of man! If they spent their fury only on the unfortunate objects of them, it would be something in their favour; but these miserable passions, like traitor Iscariot, betray their lord and master.

Thou Almighty Author of peace, and goodness, and love! do thou give me the social heart that kindly tastes of every man's cup! Is it a draught of joy?—warm and open my heart to share it with cordial

unenvying rejoicing! Is it the bitter potion of sorrow?—melt my heart with sincerely sympathetic wo! Above all, do thou give me the manly mind, that resolutely exemplifies, in life and manners, those sentiments which I would wish to be thought to possess! The friend of my soul; there, may I never deviate from the firmest fidelity and most active kindness! Clarinda, the dear object of my fondest love; there, may the most sacred inviolate honour, the most faithful kindling constancy, ever watch and animate my every thought and imagination!

Did you ever meet with the following lines spoken of religion—your darling topic?—

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

I met with these verses very early in life, and was so delighted with them, that I have them by me, copied at school.

Good-night and sound rest, my dearest Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

In the reply there are some affecting passages. She bewails having been formed susceptible of emotions which she cannot indulge. 'Never were there two hearts formed so exactly alike as ours.' They must part, and she shudders at the idea of a hundred miles of distance. 'Oh, let the scenes of nature remind you of Clarinda! In winter, remember the dark shades of her fate; in summer, the warmth of her friendship; in autumn, her glowing wishes to bestow plenty on all; and let spring animate you with hopes, that your friend may yet surmount the wintry blasts of life, and revive to taste a spring-time of happiness. At all events, Sylvander, the storms of life will quickly pass, and "one unbounded spring encircle all." Love, there, is not a crime. I charge you to meet me there. Oh God! I must lay down my pen.' I have heard Clarinda, at seventy-five, express the same hope to meet in another sphere the one heart that she had ever found herself able entirely to sympathise with, but which had been divided from her on earth by such pitiless obstacles.

TO CLARINDA.

Thursday Night.

I cannot be easy, my Clarinda, while any sentiment respecting me in your bosom gives me pain. If there is no man on earth to whom

your heart and affections are justly due, it may savour of imprudence, but never of criminality, to bestow that heart and those affections where you please. The God of love meant and made those delicious attachments to be bestowed on somebody; and even all the imprudence lies in bestowing them on an unworthy object. If this reasoning is conclusive, as it certainly is, I must be allowed to 'talk of Love.'

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

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

* * * * *

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

While pining on his couch in St James's Square, groaning at fortune, and penning epistolary ravings to the goddess of the Potterrow, he was not neglectful of Johnson's collection of Scottish songs. The second volume of this work was proceeding rapidly to completion, chiefly indebted to him for materials, both music and poetry; while with him also originated a new feature of the work, in notes announcing such facts regarding the authorship and subjects of the old songs as could be obtained from tradition. Of the songs which he contributed to the volume, some were given with his name; a few others that were wholly, and some that were partially his, appeared anonymously. We find, in the second volume, besides the songs already here given, the following acknowledged contributions:—

WHISTLE AND I'LL COME TO YE, MY LAD.

Oh whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,
Oh whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad;
Though father and mother and a' should gae mad,
Oh whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad.

Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me,
Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me,
Come down the back stairs, and let naebody see;
And come as ye were na coming to me.[1]

MACPHERSON'S FAREWELL.

TUNE—*M'Pherson's Rant.*

[James Macpherson was a noted Highland freebooter, of uncommon personal strength, and an excellent performer on the violin. After holding the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray, in fear for some years, he was seized by Duff of Braco, ancestor of the Earl of Fife, and tried before the sheriff of Banffshire (November 7, 1700), along with certain gipsies who had been taken in his company. In the prison, while he lay under sentence of death, he composed a song and an appropriate air, the former commencing thus:—

'I've spent my time in rioting,
Debauched my health and strength;
I squandered fast as pillage came,
And fell to shame at length.
But dantonly, and wantonly,
And rantonly I'll gae;
I'll play a tune, and dance it roun'
Beneath the gallows-tree.'

When brought to the place of execution, on the Gallows-hill of Banff (Nov. 16), he played the tune on his violin, and then asked if any friend was present who would accept the instrument as a gift at his hands. No one coming forward, he indignantly broke the violin on his knee, and threw away the fragments; after which he submitted to his fate. The traditionary accounts of Macpherson's immense prowess are justified by his sword, which is still preserved in Duff House at Banff, and is an implement of great length and weight—as well as by his bones, which were found a few years ago, and were allowed by all who saw them to be much stronger than the bones of ordinary men.

The verses of Burns—justly called by Mr Lockhart 'a grand lyric'—were designed as an improvement on those of the freebooter, preserving the same air. In the edition of the poet's works, superintended by Messrs Hogg and Motherwell (Glasgow, 1834), the reader will find ampler information on the subject of Macpherson and his 'Rant.']

Farewell, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie!
Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows-tree.
Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He played a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows-tree.

Oh, what is death but parting breath?
On many a bloody plain
I've dared his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again!

[1] Burns afterwards altered and extended this song.

Untie these bands from off my hands,
And bring to me my sword;
And there's no a man in all Scotland,
But I'll brave him at a word.

I've lived a life of sturt and strife;
I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart,
And not avenged be.

Now farewell light—thou sunshine bright,
And all beneath the sky!
May coward shame distain his name,
The wretch that dares not die!

STAY, MY CHARMER.

TUNE—*An Gille dubh ciar dhubh.*

Stay, my charmer, can you leave me?
Cruel, cruel to deceive me!
Well you know how much you grieve me;
Cruel charmer, can you go?
Cruel charmer, can you go?

By my love so ill requited,
By the faith you fondly plighted,
By the pangs of lovers slighted,
Do not, do not leave me so!
Do not, do not leave me so!

STRATHALLAN'S LAMENT.

[The individual here meant is William, fourth Viscount of Strathallan, who fell on the insurgent side at the battle of Culloden, April 1746. Burns, probably ignorant of his real fate, describes him as having survived the action, and taken refuge from the fury of the government forces in a Highland fastness.]

Thickest night, o'erhang my dwelling!
Howling tempests, o'er me rave!
Turbid torrents, wintry swelling,
Still surround my lonely cave![1]

[1] Variation in MS. in possession of Mr B. Nightingale, Priory Road, London:—

'Thickest night, surround my dwelling!
Howling tempests, o'er me rave;
Turbid torrents, wintry swelling,
Roaring by my lonely cave!'

Crystal streamlets gently flowing,
Busy haunts of base mankind,
Western breezes softly blowing,
Suit not my distracted mind.

In the cause of right engagèd,
Wrongs injurious to redress,
Honour's war we strongly wagèd,
But the heavens denied success.

Ruin's wheel has driven o'er us,
Not a hope that dare attend:
The wide world is all before us—
But a world without a friend!

THE YOUNG HIGHLAND ROVER.

TUNE—*Morag.*

Loud blaw the frosty breezes,
The snaws the mountains cover;
Like winter on me seizes,
Since my young Highland Rover[1]
Far wanders nations over.
Where'er he go, where'er he stray,
May Heaven be his warden,
Return him safe to fair Strathspey,
And bonnie Castle-Gordon!

The trees now naked groaning,
Soon shall wi' leaves be hinging,
The birdies dowie moaning,
Shall a' be blithely singing,
And every flower be springing.
Sae I'll rejoice the lee-lang day,
When by his mighty warden
My youth's returned to fair Strathspey,
And bonnie Castle-Gordon.

RAVING WINDS AROUND HER BLOWING.

TUNE—*Macgregor of Ruara's Lament.*

['I composed these verses on Miss Isabella M'Leod of Raasay, alluding to her feelings on the death of her sister, and the still more melancholy death (1786) of her sister's husband, the late Earl of Loudon, who shot himself out of sheer heart-break at some mortifications he suffered owing to the deranged state of his finances.'—*B.*]

Raving winds around her blowing,
Yellow leaves the woodlands strowing,

[1] The Highland Rover is evidently meant for Prince Charles Stuart.

By a river hoarsely roaring,
Isabella strayed deploring—
'Farewell hours that late did measure
Sunshine days of joy and pleasure;
Hail, thou gloomy night of sorrow,
Cheerless night that knows no morrow!

O'er the past too fondly wandering,
On the hopeless future pondering;
Chilly grief my life-blood freezes,
Fell despair my fancy seizes.
Life, thou soul of every blessing,
Load to misery most distressing,
Gladly how would I resign thee,
And to dark oblivion join thee!'

MUSING ON THE ROARING OCEAN.

TUNE—*Druimion Dubh.*

['I composed these verses out of compliment to a Mrs Maclachlan, whose husband is an officer in the East Indies.'—*B.*]

Musing on the roaring ocean,
Which divides my love and me;
Wearying Heaven in warm devotion,
For his weal where'er he be.

Hope and fear's alternate billow
Yielding late to nature's law,
Whisp'ring spirits round my pillow
Talk of him that's far awa.

Ye whom sorrow never wounded,
Ye who never shed a tear,
Care-untroubled, joy-surrounded,
Gaudy day to you is dear.

Gentle night, do thou befriend me;
Downy sleep, the curtain draw;
Spirits kind, again attend me,
Talk of him that's far awa!

BONNIE PEGGY ALISON.

TUNE—*Braes o' Balquhidder.*

CHORUS.

I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
And I'll kiss thee o'er again,
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
My bonnie Peggy Alison!

Ilk care and fear, when thou art near,
I ever mair defy them, O!
Young kings upon their hansel throne
Are no sae blest as I am, O!

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure, O,
I seek nae mair o' heaven to share
Than sic a moment's pleasure, O!

And by thy e'en, sae bonnie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever, O!—
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never, O!

In Gilbert Burns's memoranda of heroines, communicated to Mr George Thomson, there occurs a somewhat obscure note opposite the song of *Mary Morison*:—'Mary Morison was the heroine of some old light verses, beginning, "I 'll kiss thee yet, yet." Burns is not supposed to have had any particular person in view.' Mrs Begg considers this song as an old one which her brother had only repaired. Mr William Douglas, whose expiscation of the mysterious story of Highland Mary entitles him to be heard with respect on any subject connected with Burns, is strongly of opinion that both *Mary Morison* and *Bonnie Peggy Alison* refer to Ellison Begbie, the poet's early sweetheart, whose rejection of him just before his going to Irvine caused him so much discomfiture during that period of his life. Mr Douglas points out that Ellison Begbie was a name unmanageable in verse, and which indeed no poet could have adopted. He thinks that Burns, by an inversion and slight change of the actual name, produced the euphonious one, Peggy Alison, and may have also meant Mary Morison as a substitute for the same loved but harsh appellative. Certainly there is an appearance of earnestness in the above song which speaks strongly for its being the expression of some such passion as that which the poet bore for Ellison Begbie; and the note of Gilbert Burns, so far as any meaning can be attached to it, seems to denote some connection between the two songs in his mind.[1]

The volume also contains the song, *Talk not of love, it gives me pain*, 'by a lady,' with the improvements effected by Burns, and set to the tune of *Banks of Spey*. At the bottom is the signature M. With the same signature appeared a canzonet, *To a Blackbird*.

[1] 'It appears that this song was a great favourite of Mr Stephen Clarke; for at the bottom of the manuscript music-sheet where this tune is inserted with its base, there is a note in his handwriting, in which he says—"I am charmed with this song *almost* as much as the lover is with *Bonnie Peggy Alison*.—S. C."'—*Stenhouse's Illustrations of Johnson's Museum.*

Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy tuneful notes will hush despair;
Thy plaintive warblings, void of art,
Thrill sweetly through my aching heart.
Now choose thy mate, and fondly love,
And all the charming transport prove,
While I a lovelorn exile live,
Nor transport or receive or give.

For thee is laughing nature gay,
For thee she pours the vernal day:
For me in vain is Nature dressed,
While joy 's a stranger to my breast.
These sweet emotions all enjoy,
Let love and song thy hours employ;
Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
Thy tuneful notes will hush despair.

This was an improvement by Burns upon a few verses which Clarinda had composed—her first—in consequence of hearing a blackbird singing, while she was walking with one of her children at the head of Bruntsfield Links. The ideas, she used to say, came into her mind like an inspiration:

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

The volume, which was published on the 14th of February,[1] contained a preface, of which one or two sentences betray the hand of Burns. 'Wherever the old words could be recovered, they have been preserved, both as generally suiting better the genius of the tunes, and to preserve the productions of those earlier sons of the Scottish Muses, some of whose names deserved a better fate than has befallen them—"Buried 'midst the wreck of things that were." . . . Ignorance and Prejudice may perhaps

[1] Burns says so himself in a letter to Mr Skinner of that date. The volume is advertised on the 20th of February as 'published this day,' and the preface is somewhat awkwardly dated 'March 1st.'

sneer at the simplicity of the poetry and music of some of these pieces; but their having been for ages the favourite of Nature's Judges—the Common People—was to the editor a sufficient test of their merit.'

In her next letter, Clarinda gave an ample disclosure of her religious views. She is for the religion of the bosom, but believes that redemption is through Christ's atonement alone.

TO CLARINDA.

Saturday Morning.

There is no time, my Clarinda, when the conscious thrilling chords of love and friendship give such delight, as in the pensive hours of what our favourite Thomson calls 'philosophic melancholy.' The sportive insects, who bask in the sunshine of prosperity, or the worms, that luxuriant crawl amid their ample wealth of earth; they need no Clarinda—they would despise Sylvander, if they dared. The family of Misfortune, a numerous group of brothers and sisters! they need a resting-place to their souls. Unnoticed, often condemned by the world—in some degree, perhaps, condemned by themselves—they feel the full enjoyment of ardent love, delicate, tender endearments, mutual esteem, and mutual reliance.

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

> 'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
> 'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.'

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

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

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

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

Saturday Night, Half after Ten.

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

> 'May I be lost, no eye to weep my end,
> And find no earth that's base enough to bury me!'

What trifling silliness is the childish fondness of the every-day children of the world! 'Tis the unmeaning toying of the younglings of the fields and forests; but, where sentiment and fancy unite their sweets, where taste and delicacy refine, where wit adds the flavour, and good sense gives strength and spirit to all, what a delicious draught is the hour of tender endearment! * * *

TO CLARINDA.

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

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

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

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

TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Morning.

I cannot go out to-day, my dearest love, without sending you half a line by way of a sin-offering; but, believe me, 'twas the sin of ignorance. Could you think that I intended to hurt you by anything I said yesternight? Nature has been too kind to you for your happiness, your delicacy, your sensibility. Oh why should such glorious qualifications be the fruitful source of wo! You have 'murdered sleep' to me last night. I went to bed impressed with an idea that you were unhappy; and every start I closed my eyes, busy Fancy

painted you in such scenes of romantic misery, that I would almost be persuaded you are not well this morning.

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

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

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

An interview had taken place in the presence of Miss Peacock, who, after the departure of the poet, spoke of him with rapturous admiration. Clarinda tells Sylvander that she delighted to hear him so spoken of—but she knows how much violent admiration is akin to love.

TO CLARINDA.

Friday Morning, 7 o'clock.

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

like both the ancient and modern voluptuaries; and will dare to affirm, that such an attachment as mine to Clarinda, and such evenings as she and I have spent, are what these greatly respectable and deeply experienced judges of life and love never dreamed of.

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

Five letters of Burns to Clarinda follow, without her answers, which have been lost. It appears that the fears of the lady for the remarks of friends and neighbours had at length been realised.

TO CLARINDA.

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

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

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

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

TO CLARINDA.

Wednesday, Midnight.

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

I have read over your friend's haughty dictatorial letter: you are only answerable to your God in such a matter. Who gave any fellow-creature of yours (a fellow-creature incapable of being your

judge, because not your peer) a right to catechise, scold, undervalue, abuse, and insult, wantonly and unhumanly to insult, you thus? I don't wish, not even wish, to deceive you, madam. The Searcher of hearts is my witness how dear you are to me; but though it were possible you could be still dearer to me, I would not even kiss your hand at the expense of your conscience. Away with declamation! let us appeal to the bar of common sense. It is not mouthing everything sacred; it is not vague ranting assertions; it is not assuming, haughtily and insultingly assuming, the dictatorial language of a Roman pontiff, that must dissolve a union like ours. Tell me, madam, are you under the least shadow of an obligation to bestow your love, tenderness, caresses, affections, heart and soul, on Mr M'Lehose—the man who has repeatedly, habitually, and barbarously broken through every tie of duty, nature, or gratitude to you? The laws of your country, indeed, for the most useful reasons of policy and sound government, have made your person inviolate; but are your heart and affections bound to one who gives not the least return of either to you? You cannot do it; it is not in the nature of things that you are bound to do it; the common feelings of humanity forbid it. Have you, then, a heart and affections which are no man's right? You have. It would be highly, ridiculously absurd to suppose the contrary. Tell me, then, in the name of common-sense, can it be wrong, is such a supposition compatible with the plainest ideas of right and wrong, that it is improper to bestow the heart and these affections on another—while that bestowing is not in the smallest degree hurtful to your duty to God, to your children, to yourself, or to society at large?

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

TO CLARINDA.

'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.' I have suffered, Clarinda, from your letter. My soul was in arms at the sad perusal. I dreaded that I had acted wrong. If I have wronged you, God forgive me. But, Clarinda, be comforted. Let us raise the tone of our feelings a little higher and bolder. A fellow-creature who leaves us—who spurns us without just cause, though once our bosom friend—up with a little honest pride: let him go! How shall I comfort you, who am the cause of the injury? Can I wish that I had never seen you—that we had never met? No, I never will. But, have I thrown you friendless?—there is almost distraction in the thought. Father of mercies! against Thee often have I sinned: through Thy grace I will endeavour to do so no more. She who Thou knowest is dearer to me than myself—pour Thou the balm of peace into her past wounds, and hedge her about with Thy peculiar care, all her future days and nights. Strengthen her tender,

noble mind firmly to suffer and magnanimously to bear. Make me worthy of that friendship, that love she honours me with. May my attachment to her be pure as devotion, and lasting as immortal life! O, Almighty Goodness, hear me! Be to her at all times, particularly in the hour of distress or trial, a friend and comforter, a guide and guard.

'How are thy servants blest, O Lord,
How sure is their defence!
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence.'

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

SYLVANDER.

TO CLARINDA.

Two o'clock.

I just now received your first letter of yesterday, by the careless negligence of the penny-post. Clarinda, matters are grown very serious with us; then seriously hear me, and hear me, Heaven—I met you, my dear . . . . . , by far the first of womankind, at least to me; I esteemed, I loved you at first sight; the longer I am acquainted with you, the more innate amiableness and worth I discover in you. You have suffered a loss, I confess, for my sake: but if the firmest, steadiest, warmest friendship—if every endeavour to be worthy of your friendship—if a love, strong as the ties of nature, and holy as the duties of religion—if all these can make anything like a compensation for the evil I have occasioned you, if they be worth your acceptance, or can in the least add to your enjoyments—so help Sylvander, ye Powers above, in his hour of need, as he freely gives these all to Clarinda!

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

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

TO CLARINDA.

When matters, my love, are desperate, we must put on a desperate face—

'On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man'—

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

'Let thy soul spring up,
And lay strong hold for help on him that made thee.'

I am yours, Clarinda, for life. Never be discouraged at all this. Look forward: in a few weeks I shall be somewhere or other, out of the possibility of seeing you: till then, I shall write you often,

but visit you seldom. Your fame, your welfare, your happiness, are dearer to me than any gratification whatever. Be comforted, my love! the present moment is the worst; the lenient hand of time is daily and hourly either lightening the burden, or making us insensible to the weight. None of these friends—I mean Mr —— and the other gentleman—can hurt your worldly support: and of their friendship, in a little time you will learn to be easy, and by and by to be happy without it. A decent means of livelihood in the world, an approving God, a peaceful conscience, and one firm trusty friend —can anybody that has these be said to be unhappy? These are yours.

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

While the time was thus drawing nigh for his leaving Edinburgh, he found time to pen a few letters to other friends.

TO MR JAMES CANDLISH.

[EDINBURGH, 1788.]

MY DEAR FRIEND—If once I were gone from this scene of hurry and dissipation, I promise myself the pleasure of that correspondence being renewed which has been so long broken. At present I have time for nothing. Dissipation and business engross every moment. I am engaged in assisting an honest Scotch enthusiast,[1] a friend of mine, who is an engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste. I have collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen, all the songs I could meet with. Pompey's Ghost, words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number —the first is already published. I shall shew you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a fortnight or less. Do be so kind as to send me the song in a day or two—you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

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

TO MRS DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *February* 12, 1788.

Some things in your late letters hurt me: not that *you say them*, but that *you mistake me*. Religion, my honoured madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoy-

[1] Mr Johnson, publisher of the *Scots Musical Museum*.

ment. I have indeed been the luckless victim of wayward follies; but, alas! I have ever been 'more fool than knave.' A mathematician without religion is a probable character; an irreligious poet is a monster. R. B.

TO THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

EDINBURGH, 14*th February* 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—I have been a cripple now near three months, though I am getting vastly better, and have been very much hurried besides, or else I would have wrote you sooner. I must beg your pardon for the epistle you sent me appearing in the magazine. I had given a copy or two to some of my intimate friends, but did not know of the printing of it till the publication of the magazine. However, as it does great honour to us both, you will forgive it.

The second volume of the songs I mentioned to you in my last is published to-day. I send you a copy, which I beg you will accept as a mark of the veneration I have long had, and shall ever have, for your character, and of the claim I make to your continued acquaintance. Your songs appear in the third volume, with your name in the index; as I assure you, sir, I have heard your *Tullochgorum*, particularly among our west-country folks, given to many different names, and most commonly to the immortal author of *The Minstrel*, who indeed never wrote anything superior to *Gie's a sang, Montgomery cried.* Your brother[1] has promised me your verses to the Marquis of Huntly's reel, which certainly deserve a place in the collection. My kind host, Mr Cruikshank, of the High School here, and said to be one of the best Latins in this age, begs me to make you his grateful acknowledgments for the entertainment he has got in a Latin publication of yours, that I borrowed for him from your acquaintance and much-respected friend in this place, the Reverend Dr Webster.[2] Mr Cruikshank maintains that you write the best Latin since Buchanan. I leave Edinburgh to-morrow, but shall return in three weeks. Your song you mentioned in your last, to the tune of *Dumbarton Drums*, and the other, which you say was done by a brother in trade of mine, a ploughman, I shall thank you for a copy of each. I am ever, reverend sir, with the most respectful esteem and sincere veneration, yours, R. B.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

EDINBURGH, *February* 15, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I received yours with the greatest pleasure.

[1] Mr James Skinner, a legal practitioner in Edinburgh. He was half-brother of the poet, and thirty years his junior. He died only a few years ago.

[2] A clergyman of the Scottish Episcopal church in Edinburgh.

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

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *Sunday* [*February* 17.]

To-morrow, my dear madam, I leave Edinburgh. I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in, I could not find; and, indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of the family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken: I have entered into the Excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plait à Dieu—et mon roi*. I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of fortune's palace shall we enter in, but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get anything to do. I wanted *un bût*, which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation: it is immediate bread; and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life: besides, the commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends. R. B.

Mrs Rose of Kilravock had, on Burns's visit there, undertaken to obtain for him copies of two Highland airs with which he had been pleased, on hearing them sung by her sister, Miss Rose, at Kildrummie. On the 30th November she sent the airs enclosed in a graceful letter, breathing the respect with which Burns had inspired the generous natures of the upper circles of society in his native country. She tells him that the airs are already clothed with excellent thoughts; but 'these being in an unknown tongue to you, you must again have recourse to that same fertile imagination of yours to interpret them, and suppose a lover's description of the beauties of an adored mistress. Why did I say unknown? The language of love is a universal one, that seems to have escaped the confusion of Babel, and to be understood by all nations.' She adds, with reference to a letter

of his—'Allow me to believe that "friendship will maintain the ground she has occupied" in both our hearts in spite of absence, and that when we do meet, it will be as acquaintance of a score of years standing.' 'Farewell, sir; I can only contribute the *widow's mite* to the esteem and admiration excited by your merits and genius; but this I give as she did—with all my heart.'[1]

TO MRS ROSE OF KILRAVOCK.

EDINBURGH, *February* 17, 1788.

MADAM—You are much indebted to some indispensable business I have had on my hands, otherwise my gratitude threatened such a return for your obliging favour as would have tired your patience. It but poorly expresses my feelings to say, that I am sensible of your kindness. It may be said of hearts such as yours is, and such, I hope, mine is, much more justly than Addison applies it—

'Some souls by instinct to each other turn.'

There was something in my reception at Kilravock so different from the cold, obsequious, dancing-school bow of politeness, that it almost got into my head that friendship had occupied her ground without the intermediate march of acquaintance. I wish I could transcribe, or rather transfuse into language, the glow of my heart when I read your letter. My ready fancy, with colours more mellow than life itself, painted the beautiful wild scenery of Kilravock; the venerable grandeur of the castle; the spreading woods; the winding river, gladly leaving his unsightly, heathy source, and lingering with apparent delight as he passes the fairy walk at the bottom of the garden; your late distressful anxieties;[2] your present enjoyments; your dear little angel, the pride of your hopes; my aged friend, venerable in worth and years, whose loyalty and other virtues will strongly entitle her to the support of the Almighty Spirit here, and his peculiar favour in a happier state of existence. You cannot

[1] Mrs Elizabeth Rose, born in 1747, *nineteenth* possessor of Kilravock, was a remarkable woman. In a *Genealogical Deduction of the Family of Rose of Kilravock*, edited from old documents by Mr Cosmo Innes, advocate, (1848) she is described as 'the choice companion, the leader of all cheerful amusements, the humorous story-teller, the clever mimic, the very soul of society.' She was very fond of reading, and had a great admiration for literary men. 'In conversation, she was always animated and natural, full of genuine humour, and keen and quick perception of the ludicrous. . . . . She sung the airs of her own country, and she had learned to take a part in catches and glees, to make up the party with her father and brother. The same motive led her to study the violin, which she played like male artists, supported against her shoulder. . . . . She was enthusiastic and yet steady in her friendships, benevolent, hospitable, kind, and generous beyond her means.' Lady Kilravock, as she was called, had married a gentleman of her own family name, now dead, and was the mother of Hugh, twentieth Laird of Kilravock, who is spoken of as a boy in Burns's letter. Hugh died in 1827.

[2] Mrs Rose had just emerged from a litigation for the protection and establishment of her ancestral rights.

imagine, madam, how much such feelings delight me: they are my dearest proofs of my own immortality. Should I never revisit the north, as probably I never will, nor again see your hospitable mansion, were I, some twenty years hence, to see your little fellow's name making a proper figure in a newspaper paragraph, my heart would bound with pleasure.

I am assisting a friend in a collection of Scottish songs, set to their proper tunes; every air worth preserving is to be included: among others I have given *Morag*, and some few Highland airs which pleased me most, a dress which will be more generally known, though far, far inferior in real merit. As a small mark of my grateful esteem, I beg leave to present you with a copy of the work, as far as it is printed: the Man of Feeling, that first of men,[1] has promised to transmit it by the first opportunity.

I beg to be remembered most respectfully to my venerable friend, and to your little Highland chieftain.[2] When you see the 'two fair spirits of the hill' at Kildrummie,[3] tell them that I have done myself the honour of setting myself down as one of their admirers for at least twenty years to come—consequently they must look upon me as an acquaintance for the same period; but, as the apostle Paul says, 'this I ask of grace, not of debt.' I have the honour to be, madam, &c. R. B.

The hour approached for Burns leaving Edinburgh. The final meeting with Clarinda, promised for eight in the evening, had taken place, exactly as a great pen has described the ideal of such partings—

> ——— 'I had
> Most pretty things to say: ere I could tell him
> How I would freely think on him at certain hours;
> Such thoughts and such; or I could make him swear,
> The *shees* of Italy should not betray
> Mine interest and his honour; or have charged him
> At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,
> T' encounter me with orisons; for then
> I am in Heaven for him; or ere I could
> Give him that parting kiss, which I had set
> Betwixt two charming words: comes in,' &c.[4]

Burns left Edinburgh on Monday the 18th of February. He took Glasgow in his way, mainly for the pleasure he anticipated in a meeting with Richard Brown, whose vessel, the *Mary and Jean*, was now advertised as to be ready at Greenock on the 1st

[1] Mr Henry Mackenzie was, through his mother, a relative of the Kilravock family.
[2] Mrs Rose's mother, and her son, Hugh.
[3] Miss Sophia Brodie of L[ethin], and Miss Rose of Kilravock.
[4] Cymbeline.

of March, to receive goods for Grenada.[1] Arriving at the Black Bull Inn, he lost little time in penning a letter to the impatient Clarinda.

TO CLARINDA.

GLASGOW, *Monday Evening, Nine o'clock.*

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

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

I have just met with my old friend, the ship captain[2]—guess my pleasure: to meet you could alone have given me more. My brother William, too, the young saddler, has come to Glasgow to meet me; and here are we three spending the evening.

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

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

The bard proceeded next day to Paisley, where he already had established friendships; then to Dunlop, where he stayed two days. From Kilmarnock he gave Clarinda an account of his progress.

TO CLARINDA.

KILMARNOCK, *Friday* [*Feb.* 22.]

I wrote you, my dear madam, the moment I alighted in Glasgow. Since then I have not had opportunity; for in Paisley, where I arrived next day, my worthy, wise friend, Mr Pattison, did not allow me a moment's respite. I was there ten hours; during which time

[1] *Edinburgh Advertiser, February* 15, 1788.
[2] Mr Richard Brown.

I was introduced to nine men worth six thousands; five men worth ten thousands; his brother, richly worth twenty thousands; and a young weaver, who will have thirty thousands good when his father, who has no more children than the said weaver, and a Whig kirk, dies. Mr P. was bred a zealous Antiburgher; but during his widowerhood he has found their strictness incompatible with certain compromises he is often obliged to make with those powers of darkness—the devil, the world, and the flesh. * * * His only daughter, who, 'if the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale,' will have seven thousand pounds when her old father steps into the dark factory-office of eternity with his well-thrummed web of life, has put him again and again in a commendable fit of indignation by requesting a harpsichord. 'Oh these boarding-schools!' exclaims my prudent friend: 'she was a good spinner and sewer till I was advised by her foes and mine to give her a year of Edinburgh!'

After two bottles more, my much-respected friend opened up to me a project—a legitimate child of Wisdom and Good Sense: 'twas no less than a long-thought-on and deeply-matured design, to marry a girl fully as elegant in her form as the famous priestess whom Saul consulted in his last hours, and who had been second maid of honour to his deceased wife. This, you may be sure, I highly applauded; so I hope for a pair of gloves by and by. I spent the two bypast days at Dunlop House, with that worthy family to whom I was deeply indebted early in my poetic career; and in about two hours I shall present your 'twa wee sarkies' to the little fellow. My dearest Clarinda, you are ever present with me; and these hours, that drawl by among the fools and rascals of this world, are only supportable in the idea, that they are the forerunners of that happy hour that ushers me to 'the mistress of my soul.' Next week I shall visit Dumfries, and next again return to Edinburgh. My letters, in these hurrying dissipated hours, will be heavy trash; but you know the writer. God bless you! SYLVANDER.

Next day he arrived at Mossgiel.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

MOSSGIEL, 24*th February* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—I arrived here, at my brother's, only yesterday, after fighting my way through Paisley and Kilmarnock against those old powerful foes of mine—the devil, the world, and the flesh; so terrible in the fields of dissipation. I have met with few incidents in my life which gave me so much pleasure as meeting you in Glasgow. There is a time of life beyond which we cannot form a tie worth the name of friendship. 'Oh youth! enchanting stage, profusely blest.'[1]

[1] This was to the last a favourite quotation of Clarinda.

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

> The present moment is our ain,
> The neist we never saw!

How like you my philosophy? Give my best compliments to Mrs B., and believe me to be, my dear sir, yours most truly,

R. B.

From the same place he wrote to Clarinda, whose letters to him express the most eager solicitude for his communications. The letter has not been preserved. It was probably on Monday the 25th that he proceeded to Dumfriesshire, with a sagacious friend, Mr James Tennant, farmer, Glenconner, designing with his aid to view and judge of Mr Miller's farms on the banks of the Nith. He had not a very confident hope of being able to pitch on one which it would be prudent to take on lease; but the result was otherwise than he had looked for.

TO CLARINDA.

CUMNOCK [*Sunday*], 2*d March* 1788.

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

I am thinking my farming scheme will yet hold. A worthy, intelligent farmer, my father's friend and my own, has been with me on the spot: he thinks the bargain practicable. I am myself, on a more serious review of the lands, much better pleased with them. I wont mention this in writing to anybody but you and [Ainslie.] Don't accuse me of being fickle: I have the two plans of life before me, and I wish to adopt the one most likely to procure me independence. I shall be in Edinburgh next week. I long to see you: your image

is omnipresent to me; nay, I am convinced I would soon idolatrize it most seriously—so much do absence and memory improve the medium through which one sees the much-loved object. To-night, at the sacred hour of eight, I expect to meet you—at the Throne of Grace. I hope, as I go home to-night, to find a letter from you at the post-office in Mauchline. I have just once seen that dear hand since I left Edinburgh—a letter indeed which much affected me. Tell me, first of womankind! will my warmest attachment, my sincerest friendship, my correspondence—will they be any compensation for the sacrifices you make for my sake? If they will, they are yours. If I settle on the farm I propose, I am just a day and a half's ride from Edinburgh.[1] We will meet—don't you say 'perhaps too often!'

Farewell, my fair, my charming poetess! May all good things ever attend you! I am ever, my dearest madam, yours,

SYLVANDER.

TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

MAUCHLINE, 3*d March* 1788.

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

I should return my thanks for your hospitality (I leave a blank for the epithet, as I know none can do it justice) to a poor wayfaring bard, who was spent and almost overpowered fighting with prosaic wickednesses in high places; but I am afraid lest you should burn the letter whenever you come to the passage, so I pass over it in silence. I am just returned from visiting Mr Miller's farm. The friend whom I told you I would take with me was highly pleased with the farm; and as he is, without exception, the most intelligent farmer in the country, he has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans of life before me: I shall balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. I have written Mr Miller, and shall wait on him when I come to town, which shall be the beginning or middle of next week: I would be in sooner, but my unlucky knee is rather worse, and I fear for some time will scarcely stand the fatigue of my Excise instructions. I only mention these ideas to you; and, indeed, except Mr Ainslie, whom I intend writing to to-morrow, I will not write at all to Edinburgh till I return to it. I would send my compliments to Mr Nicol, but he would be hurt if he knew I wrote to anybody, and not to him; so I shall only

[1] The distance is a little over seventy miles. At this time, I presume, there was no public coach on even so important a line of communication as the road between Edinburgh and Dumfries. A mail-coach commenced running upon it on the 1st of September 1790.—*Newspapers of the day.*

beg my best, kindest, kindest compliments to my worthy hostess and the sweet little Rosebud.

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

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

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, *3d March* 1788.[1]

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

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

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

Allan Cunningham publishes a letter as addressed to Mr Robert Ainslie, under date Mauchline, July 1787, which only could have been written at this crisis of Burns's life, seeing that it alludes to his offer for Mr Miller's farm. Since we have already an undoubted letter of this time to Mr Robert Ainslie, I am compelled to surmise that the superscription has been given upon conjecture as well as the date, and is equally erroneous.

[TO ————— ?]

[MAUCHLINE, *Between 3d and 8th March* 1788.]

MY DEAR SIR—My life, since I saw you last, has been one con-

[1] The letter had no date, but has been so indorsed by Mr Ainslie.

tinued hurry; that savage hospitality which knocks a man down with strong liquors is the devil. I have a sore warfare in this world—the devil, the world, and the flesh are three formidable foes. The first I generally try to fly from; the second, alas! generally flies from me; but the third is my plague, worse than the ten plagues of Egpyt.

I have been looking over several farms in this country; one, in particular, in Nithsdale, pleased me so well, that if my offer to the proprietor is accepted, I shall commence farmer at Whitsunday. If farming do not appear eligible, I shall have recourse to my other shift;[1] but this to a friend.

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

The poet's Ayrshire mistress was at this time about to give him a second pledge of fatal love. Mrs M'Lehose had been made aware of the fact, and alludes to it in a letter of March 5th. 'I hope you have not forgotten to kiss the little cherub for me' [the infant Robert Burns, living at Mossgiel.] 'Give him fifty, and think Clarinda blessing him all the while. I pity his mother sincerely, and wish a certain affair happily over.' In the same letter she betrays the deep-seated wish of her heart—that Burns should wait till it should be possible for her to marry him. 'You know I count all things (Heaven excepted) but loss, *that I may win and keep you.*' From his letter to Robert Ainslie, March 3d, it fully appears that Burns had no design at that time of ever renewing his matrimonial relation with Jean. On the contrary, anxious apparently to keep himself free for the chance of obtaining Clarinda, and not without some apprehension that the marriage certificate of March 1786, though destroyed, might prove an impediment to that consummation, he tells that he had taken a solemn promise from Jean—'never to attempt any claim upon me as a husband, even though any one should persuade her she had such a claim, which she had not, neither during my life nor after my death.' Jean was, in short, set aside as one towards whom he was under no moral tie, though he held himself under an obligation of humanity to protect her in her present circumstances. The grounds which appear for Burns coming to act in such a manner were—the divorce (for so it was in intent) which she and her father had instituted against him in his days of poverty, an act which had nearly driven him to exile and madness—and

[1] The Excise.

his only having been welcomed back to her and her family on his suddenly appearing before them with a little of the tinsel of Fortune upon his jacket. And it must be admitted that, had Burns never renewed his acquaintance with Jean, but allowed matters to stand simply as she and her family had settled them in 1786, there could have been no moral claim on their part towards him, however the legal question might have ultimately been ruled. The circumstance creating a difference was the renewed intercourse—a difference, the force of which will probably be estimated variously. I feel, for my own part, that this is one of the points of the poet's story in which he appears to least advantage; and I cannot but rejoice on his account that he finally, and in no long time, adopted better views regarding Jean. While feeling some surprise that two persons so generous and upright in the ordinary relations of life as Burns and Mrs M'Lehose should have been able to reconcile themselves to the sacrifice of this poor village girl, even under all the temptations of a fondness which had risen to somewhat extravagant altitudes, we ought to remember that they are themselves unable to enter defences. We do not know the whole range of considerations which weighed with Burns. Without that knowledge we cannot judge confidently. When the poet had afterwards to excuse himself to Mrs M'Lehose for having engaged himself to her, so soon before he gave himself to another, he said: 'I did not, nor could I then know, all the powerful circumstances that Omnipotent Necessity was busy laying in wait for me. When you call over the scenes that have passed between us, you will survey the conduct of an honest man struggling successfully with temptations the most powerful that ever beset humanity, and preserving untainted honour in situations where the austerest virtue would have forgiven a fall.' This looks like a happy conscience respecting the present crisis of his life. Yet it may be doubted if he felt really quite at ease in contemplating Jean as no more than a subject of vagrant passion. His letters, after acknowledging her as his wife, all speak of that fact with a kind of self-congratulation, as if it had relieved his mind of some reflections on which he could not dwell with perfect peace.

When Jean was driven in the middle of winter from her parents' dwelling, she was at Burns's request taken in and sheltered by his friend Mrs Muir, the wife of the honest miller of Torbolton alluded to in Hornbook.[1] The poet now established her in a lodging in Mauchline, and succeeded in reconciling her mother to her so far, that she had the benefit of that relative's attendance in her present

[1] Previously to this time, death had relieved Jean of the charge of her daughter, born in September 1786. The infant lived only fourteen months. The other child, Robert, remained under the kind care of his grandmother and uncle at Mossgiel.

delicate condition. She had, however, no countenance from the poet's relations, or from any of her ordinary acquaintances—realising indeed, as nearly as could well be, the condition of a maiden who speaks in one of her lover's ballads:

'My father put me frae his door,
My friends they hae disowned me a';
But I hae ane will tak my part—
The bonnie lad that's far awa.'

No allusion is made by Burns in any of his letters to the second accouchement. It is recorded in his family Bible, but under a date which must be a mistake—'March 3, 1788, were born to them twins again, two daughters, who died within a few days after their birth.'[1]

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

[*March* 6. 1788.]

I own myself guilty, Clarinda: I should have written you last week. But when you recollect, my dearest madam, that yours of this night's post is only the third I have from you, and that this is the fifth or sixth I have sent to you, you will not reproach me, with a good grace, for unkindness. I have always some kind of idea not to sit down to write a letter, except I have time, and possession of my faculties, so as to do some justice to my letter; which at present is rarely my situation. For instance, yesterday I dined at a friend's at some distance: the savage hospitality of this country spent me the most part of the night over the nauseous potion in the bowl. This day—sick—headache—low spirits—miserable—fasting, except for a draught of water or small beer. Now eight o'clock at night; only able to crawl ten minutes' walk into Mauchline, to wait the post, in the pleasurable hope of hearing from the mistress of my soul.

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

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

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

Nothing astonishes me more, when a little sickness clogs the wheels of life, than the thoughtless career we run in the hour of health. 'None saith, where is God, my maker, that giveth songs in the

[1] The birth of these infants is not noticed in the parish register of Mauchline—probably because they did not live to be baptised.

night: who teacheth us more knowledge than the beasts of the field, and more understanding than the fowls of the air?'

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

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

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

SYLVANDER.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March* 1788.

Clarinda, I have been so stung with your reproach for unkindness—a sin so unlike me, a sin I detest more than a breach of the whole Decalogue, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth articles excepted—that I believe I shall not rest in my grave about it, if I die before I see you. You have often allowed me the head to judge and the heart to feel the influence of female excellence: was it not blasphemy then, against your own charms and against my feelings, to suppose that a short fortnight could abate my passion?

You, my love, may have your cares and anxieties to disturb you; but they are the usual occurrences of life. Your future views are fixed, and your mind in a settled routine. Could not you, my ever dearest madam, make a little allowance for a man, after long absence, paying a short visit to a country full of friends, relations, and early intimates? Cannot you guess, my Clarinda, what thoughts, what cares, what anxious forebodings, hopes and fears, must crowd the breast of the man of keen sensibility, when no less is on the tapis than his aim, his employment, his very existence through future life?

To be overtopped in anything else, I can bear; but in the tests of generous love, I defy all mankind! not even to the tender, the fond, the loving Clarinda; she whose strength of attachment, whose melting soul, may vie with Eloisa and Sappho; not even she can overpay the affection she owes me!

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

'She the bright sun of all her sex.'

I would not have you, my dear madam, so much hurt at Miss Nimmo's coldness. 'Tis placing yourself below her, an honour she by no means deserves. We ought, when we wish to be economists in happiness—we ought, in the first place, to fix the standard of our own character; and when, on full examination, we know where we

stand, and how much ground we occupy, let us contend for it as property; and those who seem to doubt or deny us what is justly ours, let us either pity their prejudices or despise their judgment. I know, my dear, you will say this is self-conceit; but I call it self-knowledge: the one is the overweening opinion of a fool, who fancies himself to be what he wishes himself to be thought; the other is the honest justice that a man of sense, who has thoroughly examined the subject, owes to himself. Without this standard, this column in our own mind, we are perpetually at the mercy of the petulance, the mistakes, the prejudices, nay, the very weakness and wickedness of our fellow-creatures.

I urge this, my dear, both to confirm myself in the doctrine which, I assure you, I sometimes need, and because I know that this causes you often much disquiet. To return to Miss Nimmo. She is most certainly a worthy soul; and equalled by very, very few in goodness of heart. But can she boast more goodness of heart than Clarinda? Not even prejudice will dare to say so; for penetration and discernment, Clarinda sees far beyond her. To wit, Miss Nimmo dare make no pretence: to Clarinda's wit, scarce any of her sex dare make pretence. Personal charms, it would be ridiculous to run the parallel: and for conduct in life, Miss Nimmo was never called out, either much to do, or to suffer. Clarinda has been both; and has performed her part, where Miss Nimmo would have sunk at the bare idea.

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

> 'Who does me disdain, I can scorn them again,
> And I'll never mind any such foes.'

There is an error in the commerce of intimacy. * * * Happy is our lot, indeed, when we meet with an honest merchant, who is qualified to deal with us on our own terms; but that is a rarity: with almost everybody we must pocket our pearls, less or more, and learn, in the old Scots phrase, 'To gie sic like as we get.' For this reason we should try to erect a kind of bank or storehouse in our own mind; or, as the Psalmist says, 'We should commune with our own hearts and be still.' * * * *

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

Farewell! and remember SYLVANDER.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

MAUCHLINE, *7th March* 1788.

I have been out of the country, my dear friend, and have not had an opportunity of writing till now, when I am afraid you will be gone out of the country too. I have been looking at farms, and after all, perhaps I may settle in the character of a farmer. I have got so vici-

ous a bent to idleness, and have ever been so little a man of business, that it will take no ordinary effort to bring my mind properly into the routine; but you will say a 'great effort is worthy of you.' I say so myself, and butter up my vanity with all the stimulating compliments I can think of. Men of grave geometrical minds, the sons of 'which was to be demonstrated,' may cry up reason as much as they please; but I have always found an honest passion, or native instinct, the truest auxiliary in the warfare of this world. Reason almost always comes to me like an unlucky wife to a poor devil of a husband—just in sufficient time to add her reproaches to his other grievances.

[He goes on to speak of Jean, as having been found by him in a desolate state, and of his having obtained for her a safe harbourage, where she might remain till a certain event should take place. In nautical metaphor, he has 'taken command of her, not ostensibly, but for a time in secret.']

I am gratified with your kind inquiries after her; as, after all, I may say with Othello—

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

I go for Edinburgh on Monday. Yours, R. B.

TO MR ROBERT MUIR.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March* 1788.

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

'Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
Was rolled together, or had tried his beams
Athwart the gloom profound.'

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broken machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so; at least there is an end of pain, care,

woes, and wants: if that part of us called mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with old-wife prejudices and tales! Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence they have often, perhaps always, been deceived. A man conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow-creatures—even granting that he may have been the sport at times of passions and instincts—he goes to a great unknown Being, who could have no other end in giving him existence but to make him happy; who gave him those passions and instincts, and well knows their force.

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

Adieu, my dear sir. God send us a cheerful meeting! R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March* 1788.

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

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila.[1] I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honour, as Dr Beattie says to Ross the poet of his muse Scota, from which, by the by, I took the idea of Coila ('tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scottish dialect, which perhaps you have never seen):—

> 'Ye shake your head, but o' my fegs,
> Ye've set auld Scota on her legs:
> Lang had she lien wi' beffs and flegs,
> Bumbaz'd and dizzie,
> Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,
> Wae's me, poor hizzie.'

R. B.

[1] A daughter of Mrs Dunlop was now engaged in painting a sketch of Coila.

Burns, if he held by his intention, left Mauchline on the 10th of March, on his return to Edinburgh. A letter to Miss Chalmers speedily announces a notable event in his career:

TO MISS CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *March* 14, 1788.

I know, my ever dear friend, that you will be pleased with the news when I tell you I have at last taken a lease of a farm. Yesternight I completed a bargain with Mr Miller of Dalswinton for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles above Dumfries. I begin at Whitsunday to build a house, drive lime, &c.; and Heaven be my help! for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business. I have discharged all the army of my former pursuits, fancies, and pleasures—a motley host!—and have literally and strictly retained only the ideas of a few friends, which I have incorporated into a lifeguard. I trust in Dr Johnson's observation, 'Where much is attempted, something is done.' Firmness, both in sufferance and exertion, is a character I would wish to be thought to possess; and have always despised the whining yelp of complaint, and the cowardly, feeble resolve.

Poor Miss K.[1] is ailing a good deal this winter, and begged me to remember her to you the first time I wrote to you. Surely woman, amiable woman, is often made in vain. Too delicately formed for the rougher pursuits of ambition; too noble for the dirt of avarice; and even too gentle for the rage of pleasure; formed indeed for, and highly susceptible of, enjoyment and rapture; but that enjoyment, alas! almost wholly at the mercy of the caprice, malevolence, stupidity, or wickedness of an animal at all times comparatively unfeeling, and often brutal. R. B.

Patrick Miller, banker, brother of the Lord Justice-Clerk of Scotland, had recently become possessed of a beautiful estate in the lower part of the valley of the Nith. The lands and castle of Dalswinton had once been the property of the great family of Cumming, the ruin of which is dated from their opposition to Robert Bruce, by whom the chief was slain in the Greyfriars' Church at Dumfries. The estate consists partly of some fine holm-land adjacent to the river, and partly of a series of gravelly terraces ascending towards the hills, and partially clothed with

[1] Miss Kennedy, sister of Mrs Gavin Hamilton. This lady, who is so frequently alluded to by Burns, survived him about forty years. She was, like most long-lived people, of a cheerful, benevolent disposition. When several years above ninety, she had the misfortune to break her arm by a fall down stairs. Her nephew, a medical man, immediately went to her in great solicitude, thinking that such an accident at such an age must have been very discomfiting indeed. The good old lady was on the contrary quite placid and happy. 'Isn't it,' said she, 'such a great mercy that it is not my leg; for in that case I might have been lame for life!'

wood. Mr Miller, we have seen, had patronised Burns immediately after his arrival in Edinburgh. Besides sending him a present of ten guineas, he had expressed a strong wish to have him for a tenant—partly animated by a belief that farming was the course of life, apart from literature, best suited for the poet, and the most likely to preserve him from the temptations of society. Burns, with some reluctance, had gone at the end of autumn to see the lands which Mr Miller had to offer; he had returned to see them again in March, when, contrary to his expectation, he found reason to hope that a subsistence might be realised out of one of the Dalswinton farms. Three were offered to him—one, named Foregirth, a fine piece of the haugh, bearing heavy crops of wheat; another, called Bankhead, only a little less rich; and one called Ellisland, adjacent to the river, on its right or opposite bank. The factor, father to the late Allan Cunningham, shewed Burns over them all, and explained their various merits. There cannot now be a doubt of the superior eligibility of Foregirth—of which it is related that it yielded forty pounds an acre in the famine year of 1800, and that the tenant of that period left it a gainer by three thousand pounds. Burns, however, was captivated by the fine situation of Ellisland, with its views up and down the river, and of the beautiful pleasure-grounds of Dalswinton, and he made what the factor called a poet's, not a farmer's choice.

Allan Cunningham, who was well-informed on this point, says—'Ellisland is beautifully situated on the south side of the Nith, some six miles above Dumfries: it joins the grounds of Friars' Carse on the north-west—the estate of Isle towards the south-east: the great road from Glasgow separates it from the hills of Dunscore; while the Nith, a pure stream running over the purest gravel, divides it from the holms and groves of Dalswinton. The farm amounts to upwards of a hundred acres, and is part holm and part croft land: the former, a deep rich loam, bears fine tall crops of wheat; the latter, though two-thirds stones on a bottom of gravel, yields, when carefully cultivated, good crops both of potatoes and corn; yet to a stranger the soil must have looked unpromising or barren; and Burns declared, after a shower had fallen on a field of new-sown and new-rolled barley, that it looked like a paved street.' That the land really was in a wretched state, and only to be rendered tolerably good by a large expenditure of capital for improvement, fully appears from an acknowledgment by the landlord himself.[1]

[1] Mr Miller gives an account of his estate at the time of his purchase, in the *General View of the Agriculture, &c. of Dumfriesshire.* 8vo, Edin. 1812. His letter is dated 24th September 1810. 'When I purchased this estate, about five-and-twenty years ago, I had not seen it. *It was in the most miserable state of exhaustion*, and all the tenants in poverty. Judge of the first when I inform you, that oats ready to be

There is no reason to suppose that Mr Miller drove a hard bargain with Burns. He granted a lease of seventy-six years, at an annual rent of fifty pounds for the three first years, and seventy for the remainder; agreeing further to give his tenant three hundred pounds to build a new farm-steading and enclose the fields.[1] The only reservation he made was one which the poet must himself have been pleased with—a right to plant a belt of about two acres to screen the farm on the north-west, and a scaur or precipitous bank which overhung the river. Mr Miller constituted in himself one of the attractions of the place, for he was, to all appearance, kindly disposed towards Burns, and he was far from being a commonplace neighbour. His mind was active, intelligent, and inventive. He was at this time conducting experiments for the propelling of vessels by means of paddles—a project which led to the introduction of one of the greatest mechanical improvements of modern times. At the suggestion of his sons' preceptor, James Taylor, and with the practical aid of an ingenious mechanist named Symington, one of his paddle-boats was tried, with a small steam-engine on board, on a lake adjacent to Dalswinton House, in the ensuing October, and proved to be completely successful. Unfortunately Mr Miller was not persevering in his projects, and on some obstacles occurring, he abandoned that of steam navigation. It was, however, from his boat, when lying in neglect at Port-Dundas, that Fulton and Henry Bell severally took those plans which they respectively realised on the Hudson and the Clyde in 1808 and 1812. It is a remarkable fact that Mr Miller and his family, though latterly landless, and reduced almost to poverty, never received the slightest acknowledgment from the nation, of the concern which the former had had in the application of the steam-engine to navigation.

While in Edinburgh on this occasion, Burns accomplished two other matters of business of no small importance to him—the obtaining an order from the Board of Excise for his instructions in the technicalities of that profession, and the adjustment of his accounts with Mr Creech, the publisher. In a short series of letters to Clarinda, found dateless, but which undoubtedly belong to this period, allusion is made to these circumstances.

cut were sold at 25s. per acre upon the holm-grounds. *When I went to view my purchase, I was so much disgusted for eight or ten days, that I then meant never to return to this county.*'

[1] The account which Gilbert Burns gave Dr Currie regarding his brother's lease of Ellisland is slightly discrepant, but I have no doubt he is mistaken. 'I never understood,' he says, 'that Mr Miller gave my brother the choice of any farm but Ellisland, on which Mr Miller fixed the rent himself, but allowed my brother fifty-seven years of a lease, and to point out what restrictions he should be under in the management.'

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Monday Noon [*17th March.*[1]]

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

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

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

SYLVANDER.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Morning [*18th March.*]

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

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Wednesday Morning [*19th March.*]

Clarinda, will that envious night-cap hinder you from appearing at the window as I pass?[2] 'Who is she that looketh forth as the

[1] In the authorised edition of the Clarinda correspondence, dates three weeks later are conjecturally assigned.

[2] Probably the poet, at the time of writing this letter, lodged with Nicol, whose house was in Buccleuch Street; in which case the Potterrow, where Mrs M'Lehose lived, would be on the line of his walk into town.

The residence of Mrs M'Lehose at the time when Burns visited her, was a small *flat*, or floor of a house, situated over an alley which yet bears the name of General's Entry, in consequence, it is said, of General Monk having lived there when in command in Scotland. The house, accessible by a narrow winding-stair behind, is very humble in its accommodations, and now occupied by poor people. Alison's Square, where Miss Nimmo lived, being right opposite, we can readily see how Clarinda would feel the necessity of being cautious about the number of Burns's visits.

morning; fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners?'

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

You will tell me this evening whether you cannot make our hour of meeting to-morrow one o'clock. I have just now written Creech such a letter, that the very goose-feather in my hand shrunk back from the line, and seemed to say, 'I exceedingly fear and quake!' I am forming ideal schemes of vengeance..... Adieu, and think on SYLVANDER.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

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

I am just now come in, and have read your letter. The first thing I did was to thank the divine Disposer of events, that he has had such happiness in store for me as the connection I have with you. Life, my Clarinda, is a weary, barren path; and wo be to him or her that ventures on it alone! For me, I have my dearest partner of my soul: Clarinda and I will make out our pilgrimage together. Wherever I am, I shall constantly let her know how I go on, what I observe in the world around me, and what adventures I meet with. Will it please you, my love, to get every week, or at least every fortnight, a packet, two or three sheets, full of remarks, nonsense, news, rhymes, and old songs? Will you open, with satisfaction and delight, a letter from a man who loves you, who has loved you, and who will love you to death, through death, and for ever? Oh Clarinda! what do I owe to Heaven for blessing me with such a piece of exalted excellence as you! I call over your idea, as a miser counts over his treasure! Tell me, were you studious to please me last night? I am sure you did it to transport. How rich am I who have such a treasure as you! You know me; you know how to make me happy; and you do it most effectually. God bless you with

'Long life, long youth, long pleasure, and a friend!'

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

The poet, on leaving Edinburgh at this time, sent Clarinda a pair of small decorated ale-glasses, along with a copy of verses:

TO CLARINDA:

WITH A PRESENT OF A PAIR OF DRINKING-GLASSES.

Fair Empress of the Poet's soul,
And Queen of Poetesses;
Clarinda, take this little boon,
This humble pair of glasses.

And fill them high with generous juice,
As generous as your mind;
And pledge me in the generous toast—
'The whole of human kind!'

'To those who love us!'—second fill;
But not to those whom we love;
Lest we love those who love not us!—
A third—'To thee and me, love!'

Burns would appear to have come to a reckoning with Mr Creech on the 20th, and thus to have been enabled to leave Edinburgh finally, or for a permanency, on the 24th. The amount of his profits by his poems has been variously stated, and probably could not now be ascertained. The most authoritative statement we have on the subject is from the poet himself, in a letter of January 1789, to Dr Moore, where he says—'I believe I shall, in whole, £100 copyright included, clear about £400, some little odds; and even part of this depends on what the gentleman [Creech] has yet to settle with me.' Mr William Nicol wrote to Mr Lewars of Dumfries, after Burns's death, 'he certainly told me that he received £600 for the first Edinburgh edition, and £100 afterwards for the copyright.' (*MS. in possession of Mr Lockhart.*) This report from so intimate a friend as Nicol would be entitled to weight, if it did not differ so violently from the bard's own statement. Dr Currie, who would have the best information which Gilbert Burns could give him on the subject, sets down the poet's profits at £500. I find that Mrs Begg considers this as the sum which was realised. Under the force of these testimonies, we are led to surmise that, when Burns spoke to Dr Moore of £400 and some little odds, he mentally discounted the expense attending his residence in Edinburgh while seeing the work through the press. It is also worthy of note that, on making up an ideal account of the expense of preparing the book, and deducting it from the receipts, a sum of about £420 is left for the author, to which, if we add £100 for

copyright, the result comes to only a shade above the statement of Dr Currie.[1]

The probability accordingly is, that Burns had not so much as £400 wherewith to begin the world at this crisis; for we must of course understand that his tours, his accident, and even the time he spent in Edinburgh as a guest with Mr Cruikshank, were attended with expenses, which would be so much deducted from his little capital. If he had £380 at this time in his pocket, he had as much as there appears to be the least reason to expect.

That it was by no means a time of exultation or happiness, or even placidity of temper, fully appears from a letter written immediately after he had taken his farewell of the capital.

TO MR RICHARD BROWN.

GLASGOW, 26*th March* 1788.

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

The Mr Crawford here alluded to was the Laird of Cartsburn, near Greenock; an open-hearted, worthy man, who, having studied the works of the Ayrshire bard, and heard of his personal character from Richard Brown, was pleased to indite a letter, pressing him to pay a visit to that part of Scotland.

FROM THOMAS CRAWFORD, OF CARTSBURN, ESQ., TO ROBERT BURNS.

CARTSBURN, 16*th March* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—For congeniality of mind entitles me to the freedom

[1] Heron, in his Life of Burns, says, 'Mr Creech has obligingly informed me, that the whole sum paid to the poet for the copyright, and for the subscription copies of his book, amounted to near £1100. Out of this sum, indeed, the expenses of printing the edition for the subscribers were to be deducted. I have likewise reason to believe, that he had consumed a much larger proportion of these gains than prudence could approve, while he superintended the impression, paid court to his patrons, and waited the full payment of the subscription.' All this must be taken as very doubtful.

of this appellation, and never did I use it with more cordial sincerity. Through the medium of our mutual friend Brown, I hazard inviting you to the participation of an agreeable rural retirement, at a convenient distance from a town where there are many of your admirers (but indeed it is not distinguished by that from any town in Great Britain): a library I hope not ill chosen; a cellar not ill stored; a hearty cock of a landlord, whom his perhaps too partial friends regard as destitute neither of taste nor letters. He has reached his eighth lustre untrammelled by the matrimonial chain; and, having neither wife nor ostensible child to disturb his tranquillity or divide his affection, he can offer you a whole heart. Halt!—this is going too far, for he is not so forlorn a wretch as to be without both a *friend* and a *mistress—a Davie* and a *Jean;* but this does not hinder his having a very warm place in that same heart (for though the fellow's person be little, his heart is *large*) most cordially at your service! How do you like the bill of fare? Not amiss, provided it be not a vapouring sign to a wretched ale-house—'Good wine needs no "bush."' *Well-come* try (I must pun), and *welcome*, and I hope you will find it deficient neither in spirit nor flavour; but this sage reflection of yours prevents my proceeding to raise your expectations too high. This much I will, however, in justice to myself add—namely, that if you should be disappointed, I shall be much more so. Shall I, then, be blest with your society? Answer me, my dear boy!

But I forget myself: you are no classic—no Latin one, I mean—though certainly to be *classed* (allow me a jingle) among the first Caledonian *classics*. Tell me where you are. God knows I would gladly come for you in person; but as this is not in my power, will you allow me to send a servant and a horse for you? Do, my dear Burns, and bless me with your assent. Your hearty friend,

T. CRAWFORD.

This letter shews the kind of feeling with which Burns was hailed at his *début* by men of warm feelings and unsuspicious temper. At an ordinary time, nothing could have afforded the bard greater pleasure than to cultivate the friendship of so frank a good-fellow as Cartsburn; but the crisis was most unpropitious.

Between Wednesday, 26th March, and the end of the week, he had travelled from Glasgow into Dumfriesshire, and attended to business there—a pretty rapid movement for those days. During his recent absence in Edinburgh he must have received a succession of home letters, telling him, first, that twin infants were thrown upon his care; and next, that they had left this earthly scene. A composition of the Sunday, on his return from Dumfriesshire, reveals the depressed state of his mind at this crisis.

TO MR ROBERT CLEGHORN.

MAUCHLINE, 31*st March* 1788.

Yesterday, my dear sir, as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favourite air, *Captain O'Kean*, coming at length into my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated.

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

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

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

My very best compliments and good wishes to Mrs Cleghorn.

R. B.

Mr Cleghorn wrote in answer on the 27th April, expressing much gratification with the verses, and adding, 'I wish you would send me a verse or two more; and, if you have no objection, I would have it in the Jacobite style. Suppose it should be sung after the fatal field of Culloden by the unfortunate Charles.' Burns consequently added two verses, and called the whole *The Chevalier's Lament*.

The deed that I dared, could it merit their malice,
  A king and a father to place on his throne?
His right are these hills, and his right are these valleys,
  Where the wild beasts find shelter, but I can find none.
But 'tis not my sufferings thus wretched, forlorn;
My brave gallant friends! 'tis your ruin I mourn;
  Your deeds proved so loyal in hot bloody trial—
Alas! I can make you no sweeter return!

Burns was now settled in Ayrshire for his instructions as an exciseman, the order for which was issued to an officer at Torbolton on the 31st March.[1] It was his object to have this business accomplished before Whitsunday term (25th May), when he had to take possession of his farm in Dumfriesshire. He had, however, a sacred duty to perform towards the virtuous but unfortunate household at Mossgiel. Burns was a most faithfully-attached son and brother; and he must have felt that, by reason of the various consequences of his imprudence, obligations had hitherto been on his side. Gilbert had been struggling on with the ungrateful soil of Mossgiel, and only sinking year after year deeper into debt. The following undated letter of Robert Burns seems to have been addressed to Mr Gavin Hamilton, at some period prior to the present, when a proposal had been made to relieve Gilbert by the poet becoming his guarantee to a considerable amount. Robert, at no time wanton in the management of money, or reckless about his own affairs, such as they were, refused the request.

TO ———.

MOSSGIEL, *Friday Morning.*

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

[1] The letter of instruction by the Board of Excise to the officer who trained Burns for the duties of an exciseman, is given in Hogg and Motherwell's edition of the poet's works:

MR JAMES FINDLAY, OFFICER, TORBOLTON.

'The Commissioners order, that you instruct the bearer, Mr Robert Burns, in the art of gauging, and practical dry gauging casks and utensils; and that you fit him for surveying victuallers, rectifiers, chandlers, tanners, tawers, maltsters, &c.; and when he has kept books regularly for six weeks at least, and drawn true vouchers and abstracts therefrom (which books, vouchers, and abstracts must be signed by your supervisor and yourself, as well as the said Mr Robert Burns), and sent to the Commissioners at his expense; and when he is furnished with proper instruments, and well instructed and qualified for an officer (then and not before, at your perils), you and your supervisor are to certify the same to the Board, expressing particularly therein the date of this letter; and that the above Mr Robert Burns hath cleared his quarters both for lodging and diet; that he has actually paid each of you for his instructions and examination; and that he has sufficient at the time to purchase a horse for his business. I am your humble servant, A. PEARSON.'

EXCISE OFFICE,
Edinburgh, 31*st March* 1788.

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

Now, however, having realised the proceeds of his poems, Burns advanced to Gilbert £180, to keep him afloat in his business, being, in all probability, about a moiety of the capital he himself possessed, or was likely for a long time to possess. In his letter of the ensuing January to Dr Moore, he says—'I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part: I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the grand reckoning.' We learn indeed from Mrs Begg, that the money was understood in the family as lent to Gilbert without interest, as a provision due from Robert on behalf of his mother, on his marriage and consequent departure from the household throwing the future burden of her support upon the younger brother. It will be found that this loan had a somewhat curious and protracted history, bringing out some traits of self-sacrificing feeling and righteousness in the Burns family, such as, I am fain to think, are characteristic of homely society in Scotland, and constitute one of the chief glories of the Scottish name.

TO MR WILLIAM DUNBAR, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, *7th April* 1788.

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

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

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

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

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

TO MISS CHALMERS.

MAUCHLINE, *7th April* 1788.

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

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

The allusion in the last sentence might be to the advance of money he had made in favour of his brother, but more probably was to his change of intention regarding Jean.

It may be remarked, that the short series of letters to Clarinda, before his final departure for the country, do not breathe the same ardour as those written in the two previous months. A letter 'every week, or at least every fortnight,' is something of a down-

come from the almost daily correspondence of the last week of February. And it is remarkable that no letters of Sylvander to Clarinda between that which I have put under 21st March, and another written a twelvemonth after, have presented themselves. There is indeed no room for doubt that, at this time of passage between one kind of life and another, a revolution took place in the poet's mind regarding the disposal of himself among the various claimants of his affections. Without any wish to bring him into derogatory comparisons, we might imagine him as now looking round amongst them much in the style of Macheath at the conclusion of his career, and feeling the force of what that hero said: 'Ladies, I hope you will give me leave to present a partner to each of you, and (if I may without offence) for this time I take Polly for mine—and for life, you slut, *for we were really married.*' It is easy to imagine how, in the first two or three weeks of his residence in Ayrshire during April, the immediate impression of his kind-hearted Jean, whose blanched cheek could not be seen without reminding him of what she had suffered for his sake, would tell on a heart which, even under deep resentment, had whispered to him that he could not but love her—how the sensibility, intelligence, and cleverness of Mrs M'Lehose, who only could be his upon a remote contingency, would in such circumstances 'pale their ineffectual fires'—how even so prosaic a consideration as the immediate eligibility of Jean for the homely course of life which fate had laid out before him, would weigh with a spirit which, amidst all its vagaries, was not deficient in the economical and provident virtues of the Scottish character, and thus help in restoring the rustic damsel to what everybody will feel to have been her rightful place. One plain fact, too, manifestly operated strongly with our poet—and this was, that the poor girl was in a manner thrown upon his hands. Rejected by her father, and under the ban of society, there was no resource for her but the protection of Burns. Thus it was that the renewal of their acquaintance, after the first alienation, had come to place her on a wholly different moral relation towards him from that in which it had been left by the irregular divorce of April 1786.

Were consistency, indeed, one of the most notable features of human nature, as the reverse is the case, we might marvel a little at Burns, on the 2d of March, meeting Clarinda in prayers at an appointed hour, and *next day* speaking with levity of his intercourse with Jean—vowing to love Clarinda 'to death, through death, and for ever,' in March, and, before April was out, giving another woman a permanent right to his affections, albeit for the time under secrecy. Perhaps, after all, these revolutions in the ardent vivacious mind of Burns are less astounding than the

fact (for it is one beyond all question) that the poet was not now, and never had been, exactly the favourite lover of Jean. There was, it seems, another person whom she fancied above him, though, as but too plainly appears, she had been unable to contend against the fascination of those dark eyes in which lay her fate.

So ends for the meantime the Clarinda correspondence — a curious episode in the history of Burns. For three months he had written to this lady in the language of Eloise's lover, and been addressed by her in terms scarcely less ardent. And yet from this moment we see no further trace of her influence over his mind. She forms in no ostensible degree an obstacle to his almost immediately surrendering himself as the husband of another woman. Was there any sincerity in the feeling he professed for her all along? The style of the letters is of that extravagant kind which sometimes does not so much reveal passion as it masks indifference. The circumstances of the lady were such as to make a real passion not much of a likelihood. Yet many of the avowals of Burns towards Mrs M'Lehose were of a kind which we can scarcely suppose to have been used by him otherwise than as declarations of a passion in some manner or degree real. Perhaps the justest theory on the subject would be one taking a medium view. There was a *kind* of earnestness in Sylvander's flame for Clarinda—a kind involving a good deal of self-delusion, mingled with some reality—a genuine partiality augmented to affected raptures by a good-natured desire to meet the wishes of one who evidently desired to be strongly loved because she herself was much in love. Poor Clarinda—the primal misfortune of your almost forced union with heartless grossness was not destined to be compensated by the attachment of unsteady genius! Perhaps the second misfortune was even worse to bear than the first—for with Burns she had no refuge from injustice in contempt or hatred. To the end of her long life, though unable to speak with approbation of his marriage, she never ceased to bewail his untimely death, and to glow over the productions of his muse.

TO MR JAMES SMITH, AVON PRINTFIELD, LINLITHGOW.

MAUCHLINE, *April* 28, 1788.

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

There is no understanding a man properly without knowing something of his previous ideas—that is to say, if the man has any

ideas; for I know many who, in the animal-muster, pass for men, that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, 1·25—1·5—1·75 (or some such fractional matter); so, to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

'Bode a robe and wear it,
Bode a poke and bear it,'

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

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

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

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

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

This letter is the first known indication of Burns having finally yielded to the matrimonial claims of Jean. It does not imply a ceremonial marriage, but only at the utmost that verbal, however private acknowledgment of the lady as his wife, which in Scotland binds man to woman for all legal purposes. The eldest daughter of Mr Gavin Hamilton remembers Burns making the first intimation of the fact at her father's breakfast-table, when Mr Robert Aiken was also present. Mrs Hamilton having to express regret at not being able to give Mr Aiken his customary egg, the poet said that if she would send over the way to 'Mrs Burns,' she might have some—an offer of which the writer's lady did not choose to take any notice, having no doubt been put a little out of patience by the various ups and downs attending the status of the said Mrs Burns during the two bypast years.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *28th April* 1788.

MADAM—Your powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the Excise business without solicitation, and as it costs me only six months'[1] attendance for instructions to entitle me to a commission—which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed—I thought five-and-thirty pounds a-year was no bad *dernier resort* for a poor poet, if fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

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

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

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

TO PROFESSOR STEWART.

MAUCHLINE, *3d May* 1788.

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

Wherever I am, allow me, sir, to claim it as my privilege to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom

[1] Mistake for weeks.

nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life. R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *4th May* 1788.

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

TO MR SAMUEL BROWN.

MOSSGIEL, *4th May* 1788.

DEAR UNCLE—This I hope will find you and your conjugal yokefellow in your good old way. I am impatient to know if the Ailsa fowling be commenced for this season yet, as I want three or four stones of feathers, and I hope you will bespeak them for me. It would be a vain attempt for me to enumerate the various transactions I have been engaged in since I saw you last, but this know, I engaged in a *smuggling trade*, and God knows if ever any poor man experienced better returns—two for one; but as freight and delivery have turned out so dear, I am thinking of taking out a licence and beginning in fair trade. I have taken a farm on the borders of the Nith, and, in imitation of the old patriarchs, get menservants and maid-servants, and flocks and herds, and beget sons and daughters. Your obedient nephew, R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, *May* 26, 1788.

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

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

TO MRS DUNLOP.

27th May 1788.

MADAM—I have been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which has followed me, in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret, in the fleeting hours of my late will-o'-wisp appearance, that 'here I had no continuing city;' and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendour put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life—insignificance and poverty.

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honour to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fireside, where the planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who, though in appearance partakers, and equally noble partakers, of the same nature with madame, are from time to time—their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts—sold for months and years, not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but the caprices of the im-

portant few.[1] We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honour to commend them. But light be the turf upon his breast who taught 'Reverence thyself.' We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in the air in the wantonness of his pride. R. B.

The Edinburgh period of the life of Burns is now brought to a close. From the facts ascertained, the testimony of respectable associates, and, above all, from the transparent evidence furnished by his own confidential outpourings, we may form a tolerable judgment of the way in which he bore the trial of a most extraordinary position. All—the admiring, the disliking, and the indifferent—must, we think, admit that Burns, externally a peasant, and of peasant breeding, but internally a great man, a hero, and a prophet, had come through the crisis without the slightest derogation from his true character. Intellectually a giant, he maintained his proportions in conventional scenes which too often cause a sacrifice of the Inherent to the Accidental, of the True to the False, of the Great to the Mean. The dignity of the whole figure, as it looms through the saloons of the polite and learned world of Edinburgh, must, indeed, form a gratifying picture in the minds of all true men for ever. For once the natural lineaments of a MAN stand forth in undoubted grandeur, without being in the slightest degree affected either by past or by present circumstances. It will be seen that, as a necessary part of the great character which he maintained so well, Burns preserved perfect modesty regarding his own pretensions. Not one trace of that vanity which has diminished the shadows of so many bards can be detected in him. The heart, too, is right; he forgets no old friend, nor does he lose one jot of his original love and respect for the class amongst whom he spent his early days. With such admissions in his favour, may we not say that he passed through his sixteen-months' trial triumphantly? Yes; but it will be remembered that Burns had continued during this time to be that same passion-driven being which he was, so much to his own loss, in earlier years. In point of fact, this cannot be disputed; his own words at once admit, and, in part, expiate the fault. 'My greatest enemy is MOI-MEME!'—words ever memorable, and ever touching. What can be said but that he was not a man to be judged by ordinary rules? His emotional nature was Titanic, like his intellectual. The features are exaggerated, even terrible, yet

[1] In Scotland, servants are usually engaged by the half-year, the terms being Whitsunday (May 25) and Martinmas (November 22.)

noble beyond ordinary humanity; and to criticise them by common standards, would be like arraigning the deeds of a Prometheus before the bar of a Dutch consistory, or measuring the movements of a Wallace or a Schamyl by the code of Sir David Dundas. To say that this is a view dangerous to the interests of society, is preposterous. It will be time to do so when Burnses come 'not single spies, but in battalions.'

The awful, the humiliating end of the scene of the laureation in a receipt of 'excise instructions' is so painful, that I feel as if taking only the most commonplace views of Burns at this time were a relief. Angels, alas! yet come upon the earth, but there is no arrangement for their entertainment! It is vain to blame the age, or any men belonging to it, when a new Burns would be in an equally false position, as far as his subsistence and his place in the world are concerned, to-morrow. This is an industrial world, and one in which every man is left to work out a fate and a place for himself. While it so lasts, exceptions to the rule, as pensionings and donations, do harm by causing a forfeiture of that spirit of independence which is a needful part of the moral system during the existence of such a dispensation.[1] There is, then, a dilemma in the situation of the poet-oracle when he arises. Either he must drudge and misapply his powers, or he must rightly apply his powers amidst such difficulties as in such a world beset the poor man. Burns felt the difficulty in its full force. He was willing to make many sacrifices to overcome it. He would work, for example, at a farm. But then he had only two hundred pounds to help him in the struggle—a sum in the inadequacy of which he unavoidably foresaw many troubles and dangers. To mend matters a little, he was willing—oh bitter thought!—to be an exciseman, and even to bend himself to the courting of lordly patronage in order to secure this boon. He fondly hoped yet to have some time to exercise his true God-appointed vocation. Vain effort, vain hope! We shall see that this unworthy appoint-

[1] It is common to write in a disparaging strain respecting the system of patronage which prevailed in the times of Dryden. There is some reason to suspect that we judge of it under the influence of maxims appropriate to a later age. Where industrial competition is keen, as it is with us, dependence in any form is degrading, and must be injurious. But in those days, when no one seems to have had any great difficulty in obtaining such a subsistence as he desired, or when men at least were generally more indifferent on such matters, dependence on exalted personages must have been differently regarded, and hence would be attended with different effects. It really does not appear, for instance, that Gay found any discomfort, or forfeited any public respect, in living with the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. The very simplicity which so often attaches to the literary character would help in making such an arrangement easy to both parties. As for the flattering dedications of those days, we should recollect in what a degree such things are matters of form or of fashion, as titles and expressions of courtesy are even now. Probably, when a petitioner of the House of Commons promises to 'pray' for it in the event of his request being granted, he connects fully as sincere an idea with his vows as Dryden did with his when he paid court to Halifax or Dorset.

ment—for so it was to him, though to many a good man it may be otherwise—became a chain round his neck, preventing him by its petty and illusive hopes from taking other and superior means of bettering his circumstances. If, then, we have to grieve over the close of this period of the life of our great poet, it is well to see that the evil had its root in social arrangements and axioms which still hold sway over us, and which must every day have their victims, though seldom one of so stupendous a character. Let us fully understand that Burns was sunk by society into the humble revenue-officer *only because nature had raised him into the illustrious poet*—for of course, with only his abilities, and not that superadded something which constituted his peculiar gift, he might have risen in prosperity and worldly dignity, as many able peasants and yeomen have done before, and are doing every day.

ELLISLAND:

JUNE 1788—DECEMBER 1791.

BURNS appears to have come to reside at his farm on the 13th of June. The old *steading* being worn out, and requiring renewal, he was not yet in a position to commence housekeeping with his wife and family. It was arranged that, until a new house should be built, Jean and her sole surviving babe should remain at Mauchline, Burns alone living at Ellisland, where for the meantime he had a mere hovel for his lodging. Obliged to settle, in these cheerless circumstances, in a place where he was entirely a stranger, and where a range of new and sordid cares awaited him, he seems to have been at first in a most uncomfortable state of mind.

TO MRS DUNLOP,

AT MR DUNLOP'S, HADDINGTON.

ELLISLAND, 13*th* [14*th*?] *June* 1788.

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

GOLDSMITH.

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

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

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

To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger. My preservative from the first is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honour, and her attachment to me: my antidote against the last is my long and deep-rooted affection for her.

In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress; and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business.

The Muses must not be offended when I tell them the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas;* but I assure them their ladyships will ever come next in place.

You are right that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number.

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

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

R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *June* 14 [15?], 1788.

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

I have lately been much mortified with contemplating an unlucky imperfection in the very framing and construction of my soul; namely, a blundering inaccuracy of her olfactory organs in hitting the scent of craft or design in my fellow-creatures. I do not mean any compliment to my ingenuousness, or to hint that the defect is in consequence of the unsuspicious simplicity of conscious truth and honour: I take it to be, in some way or other, an imperfection in the

mental sight; or, metaphor apart, some modification of dulness. In two or three instances lately I have been most shamefully out.

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

What books are you reading, or what is the subject of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession? You said something about religion in your last. I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire: but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being well married: you have so much sense and knowledge of human nature, that, though you may not realise perhaps the ideas of romance, yet you will never be ill married.

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

R. B.

The thoughts of Burns at this crisis are farther revealed by an extract which Dr Currie gives from his commonplace-book.

ELLISLAND, *Sunday, 14th* [*15th?*] *June* 1788.[1]

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

——— 'Tell us, ye dead;
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
———————————A little time
Will make us wise as you are, and as close.'

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

But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream, till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but

[1] The 14th of June 1788 having been a Saturday, it may be surmised that Burns wrote several dates at this time a day too early.

thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, *the water is naught and the ground barren*, and nothing short of a supernaturally-gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

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

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

It is very evident in these letters that Burns contemplated his situation and prospects, not with the levity usually expected from a son of the Muses, but with the consideration and forethought which beseem a prudent man of the world, anxious to fulfil all social and domestic duties. There is something very pleasing in his expressions of self-satisfaction on his final union with Jean. It was certainly disadvantageous for him to be thus hurried into the cares and expenses of matrimony; he might have got a bride of superior education, more fitted to exercise a salutary control over his mind. It was to be regretted that the 'antecedents' of Mrs Burns threw her, and consequently her husband, a little out of harmony with the better society which it might have been of importance to him to cultivate. And yet every living and future admirer of Burns must rejoice that the chains of his Jean did after all bind down this extravagant and erring spirit, as far as that was possible.

In a different strain Burns addressed his early friend Mr Hugh Parker of Kilmarnock on the present style and circumstances of his life:—

EPISTLE TO HUGH PARKER.

In this strange land, this uncouth clime,
A land unknown to prose or rhyme;
Where words ne'er crost the muse's heckles,[1]
Nor limpet in poetic shackles;

[1] Hackles—an instrument for dressing flax.

A land that Prose did never view it,
Except when drunk he stacher't through it; staggered
Here, ambush'd by the chimla cheek, chimney
Hid in an atmosphere of reek, smoke
I hear a wheel thrum i' the neuk,
I hear it—for in vain I leuk.
The red peat gleams, a fiery kernel,
Enhusked by a fog infernal:
Here, for my wonted rhyming raptures,
I sit and count my sins by chapters;
For life and spunk like ither Christians,
I'm dwindled down to mere existence—
Wi' nae converse but Gallowa' bodies,[1]
Wi' nae kenn'd face but Jenny Geddes.[2]
Jenny, my Pegasean pride!
Dowie she saunters down Nithside, Sad
And aye a westlin leuk she throws,
While tears hap o'er her auld brown nose!
Was it for this, wi' canny care, gentle
Thou bure the Bard through many a shire?
At howes or hillocks never stumbled,
And late or early never grumbled?
Oh, had I power like inclination,
I'd heeze thee up a constellation, raise
To canter with the Sagitarre,
Or loup the ecliptic like a bar;
Or turn the pole like any arrow;
Or, when auld Phœbus bids good-morrow,
Down the zodiac urge the race,
And cast dirt on his godship's face;
For I could lay my bread and kail
He'd ne'er cast saut upo' thy tail.
Wi' a' this care and a' this grief,
And sma', sma' prospect of relief,
And nought but peat-reek i' my head,
How can I write what ye can read?
Torbolton, twenty-fourth o' June,
Ye'll find me in a better tune;
But till we meet and weet our whistle,
Tak this excuse for nae epistle.

ROBERT BURNS.

Wandering a solitary being on the banks of the Nith, his heart reverted to the damsel on the banks of the Ayr, whom he had lately taken by the hand as his wife, and who would have now been sharing his household cares if he had had a house into which

[1] Ellisland is near the borders of the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, a portion of the district popularly called Galloway.
[2] His mare.

to put her. The peace of conscience secured by his acceptance of Jean as his wife must have added not a little to the pleasure he felt in musing on her image, and sending his thoughts towards the place which her presence brightened. We have an invaluable memorial of the feeling of the moment in his charming canzonet—

I LOVE MY JEAN.

TUNE—*Miss Admiral Gordon's Strathspey.*

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I loe best:
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between;[1]
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green;
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.[2]

[1] These two lines are so printed in *Johnson's Museum*, which must be considered as authoritative regarding readings in Burns's compositions, seeing that he was in a manner editor of the work. So also have they usually been printed since. In *Wood's Songs of Scotland* they are given thus:

'Though wild woods grow and rivers row,
Wi' mony a hill between,
Baith day and night,' &c.

Though this seems to convey a more just and logical idea, it is undoubtedly a vitiation of the text. I have been reminded that the idea is not new in verse:

——————'ἐπειὴ μάλα πολλὰ μεταξὺ
Οὔρεά τε σκιόεντα, θάλασσά τε ἠχήεσσα.'
Iliad, i. 149.

[2] The first of these stanzas appeared in the third volume of *Johnson's Museum*. Burns's note upon it afterwards was—'This song I composed out of compliment to Mrs Burns. *N. B.*—It was in the honey-moon.' Two additional stanzas were some years afterwards produced by John Hamilton, musicseller in Edinburgh: they are not unworthy of appearing on the same page with those by Burns.

Oh blaw ye westlin winds, blaw saft
Amang the leafy trees,
Wi' balmy gale, frae hill and dale
Bring hame the laden bees;
And bring the lassie back to me
That 's aye sae neat and clean;
Ae smile o' her wad banish care,
Sae charming is my Jean.

Nor was this all; for the same period produced, in honour of Mrs Burns, perhaps the most luxuriantly rich of all his amatory lyrics. We have to suppose the poet in his solitary life at Ellisland, gazing towards the hill of Corsincon at the head of Nithsdale, beyond which, though at many miles' distance, was the valley in which his heart's idol lived. He ideally beholds his 'blithesome, dancing, sweet young queen, of guileless heart,' in her most characteristic situation, and he bursts out with these glowing verses—

OH, WERE I ON PARNASSUS' HILL!

TUNE—*My Love is lost to me.*

Oh, were I on Parnassus' hill!
Or had of Helicon my fill;
That I might catch poetic skill,
  To sing how dear I love thee.
But Nith maun be my muse's well,
My muse maun be thy bonnie sel';
On Corsincon I'll glower and spell,
  And write how dear I love thee.

Then come, sweet muse, inspire my lay!
For a' the lee-lang simmer's day
I couldna sing, I couldna say,
  How much, how dear I love thee.
I see thee dancing o'er the green,
Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,[1]
Thy tempting lips, thy roguish een—
  By heaven and earth I love thee!

By night, by day, a-field, at hame,
The thoughts of thee my breast inflame;
And aye I muse and sing thy name—
  I only live to love thee.
Though I were doomed to wander on
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,
Till my last weary sand was run;
  Till then—and then I love thee.

What sighs and vows amang the knowes
  Hae passed atween us twa!
How fond to meet, how wae to part,
  That night she gaed awa!
The powers aboon can only ken,
  To whom the heart is seen,
That nane can be sae dear to me
  As my sweet lovely Jean.

[1] Clean in this relation means well-shaped, handsome.

Alas, Clarinda! where was now *your* image? It is but four or five months since he said to you: 'I admire you, I love you as a woman beyond any one in all the circle of creation. . . . . I am yours, Clarinda, for life!'

'Even as one heat another heat expels,
Or as one nail by strength drives out another;
So the remembrance of my former love
Is by a newer object quite forgotten.'

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, 23*d June* 1788.

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

One piece of special good fortune in Burns's situation at Ellisland was his having for his next neighbour, at less than a mile's distance along the bank of the Nith, Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, a man of literary and antiquarian spirit, and of kindly, social nature. Riddell possessed a beautiful small estate, with a pleasant mansion romantically situated on a rocky promontory which here produces a bend in the river, and was formerly the site of a small monastic establishment: a long *carse* (alluvial plain) extends to the eastward, bounded by beautiful shrubberies, which nearly reach to Ellisland. The worthy proprietor of *Friars' Carse* had given Burns a key admitting him to the grounds, and it seems to have been among the *agréments* of the poet's life at this happy summer period, when hope was green in his bosom, to wander in these grounds, and muse in a decorated cot or hermitage which their master had raised. On the 28th of June he composed, under the character of a bedesman, or alms-fed recluse—

VERSES IN FRIARS' CARSE HERMITAGE.

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou decked in silken stole,
Grave these maxims on thy soul—

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Day, how rapid in its flight—
Day, how few must see the night;
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.
Happiness is but a name,
Make content and ease thy aim.
Ambition is a meteor gleam;
Fame a restless, idle dream:
Pleasures, insects on the wing
Round Peace, the tenderest flower of Spring;
Those that sip the dew alone,
Make the butterflies thy own;
Those that would the bloom devour,
Crush the locusts—save the flower.
For the future be prepared,
Guard wherever thou canst guard;
But, thy utmost duly done,
Welcome what thou canst not shun.
Follies past, give thou to air,
Make their consequence thy care:
Keep the name of man in mind,
And dishonour not thy kind.
Reverence with lowly heart,
Him whose wondrous work thou art;
Keep his goodness still in view,
Thy trust—and thy example too.

Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide!
Quod the Bedesman on Nithside.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *30th June* 1788.

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

I am vexed at that affair of the * * *, but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death.[1] I am concerned for the old fellow's exit only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect; for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life that the

[1] Mr Samuel Mitchelson, W. S., had been Mr Ainslie's master: he died June 21, 1788.

welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind, benevolent animal, but he is dropped into such a needy situation here in this vexatious world, and has such a whore-son, hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food, that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others that he may look properly to himself. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr Miers for the profile of a Mr H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did I ever give Mr Miers any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will not have any such profile in my possession.

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

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

You see how I preach. You used occasionally to sermonise too; I wish you would in charity favour me with a sheet full in your own way. I admire the close of a letter Lord Bolingbroke writes to Dean Swift:—'Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely; make an effort to love me with all mine!' Humble

servant, and all that trumpery, is now such a prostituted business, that honest friendship, in her sincere way, must have recourse to her primitive, simple, farewell! R. B.

Mr Peter Hill, who had been Creech's chief assistant last year, was now set up in business for himself, with the afterwards-famous Archibald Constable as his apprentice. Burns liked the man for his cheerful, social nature, and had already attained to a certain degree of intimacy with him. Having no similar affection for Creech, he resolved to send to Hill for any books which he might henceforth have occasion for, including, above all, that prime essential of a Scotsman's house-furniture—a family Bible.

TO MR PETER HILL.

MAUCHLINE, 18*th July* 1788.

You injured me, my dear sir, in your construction of the cause of my silence. From Ellisland in Nithsdale to Mauchline in Kyle is forty and five miles. *There*, a house a-building, and farm enclosures and improvements to tend; *here*, a new—not indeed so much a *new* as a *young* wife: good God, sir, could my dearest brother expect a regular correspondence from me! . . . I am certain that my liberal-minded and much-respected friend would have acquitted me, though I had obeyed to the very letter that famous statute among the irrevocable decrees of the Medes and Persians, not to ask petition, for forty days, of either God or man, save thee, O Queen, only!

I am highly obliged to you, my dearest sir, for your kind, your elegant compliments on my becoming one of that most respectable, that truly venerable corps, they who are, without a metaphor, the fathers of posterity. . . .

Your book came safe, and I am going to trouble you with further commissions. I call it troubling you—because I want only BOOKS; the cheapest way the best; so you may have to hunt for them in the evening auctions. I want Smollett's works, for the sake of his incomparable humour. I have already *Roderick Random* and *Humphrey Clinker*. *Peregrine Pickle*, *Launcelot Greaves*, and *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, I still want; but as I said, the veriest ordinary copies will serve me. I am nice only in the appearance of my poets. I forget the price of *Cowper's Poems*, but I believe I must have them. I saw the other day proposals for a publication entitled *Banks's New and Complete Christian's Family Bible*, printed for C. Cooke, Paternoster Row, London. He promises at least to give in the work, I think it is three hundred and odd engravings, to which he has put the names of the first artists in London.[1] You will know the charac-

[1] 'Perhaps no set of men more effectually avail themselves of the easy credulity of the public than a certain description of Paternoster-Row booksellers. Three hun-

ter of the performance, as some numbers of it are published: and if it is really what it pretends to be, set me down as a subscriber, and send me the published numbers.

Let me hear from you your first leisure minute, and trust me you shall in future have no reason to complain of my silence. The dazzling perplexity of novelty will dissipate, and leave me to pursue my course in the quiet path of methodical routine.[1] R. B.

TO MR GEORGE LOCKHART,

MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

MAUCHLINE, 18*th July* 1788.

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

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

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

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

dred and odd engravings!—and by the first artists in London, too!—no wonder that Burns was dazzled by the splendour of the promise. It is no unusual thing for this class of impostors to illustrate the Holy Scriptures by plates originally engraved for the History of England; and I have actually seen subjects designed by our celebrated artist Stothard, from Clarissa Harlowe and the Novelist's Magazine, converted, with incredible dexterity, by these bookselling-Breslaws, into Scriptural embellishments! One of these venders of "Family Bibles" lately called on me, to consult me professionally about a folio engraving he brought with him. It represented Mons. Buffon seated, contemplating various groups of animals that surrounded him: he merely wished, he said, to be informed whether, by unclothing the naturalist, and giving him a rather more resolute look, the plate could not, at a trifling expense, be made to pass for Daniel in the Lions' Den!'—CROMEK.

[1] Mr Cromek has printed only the part of this letter from 'Your book came safe,' and he has unaccountably placed it in connection with a letter of Burns to Peter Hill, dated February 2, 1790.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *August* 2, 1788.

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

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

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

> 'Heaven oft tears the bosom-chords
> That nature finest strung.'

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

[Here he transcribed the verses composed in the Friars' Carse Hermitage. *See antea.*]

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

> Pity the tuneful muses' helpless train;
> Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main:
> The world were blest, did bliss on them depend;
> Ah, that 'the friendly e'er should want a friend!'
> The little fate bestows they share as soon;
> Unlike sage, proverb'd wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
> Let Prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
> Who life and wisdom at one race begun;
> Who feel by reason and who give by rule;
> Instinct's a brute and sentiment a fool!

Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should;*
We own they're prudent, but who owns they're good?

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

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

Burns, when at his farm, was very actively engaged, not merely in its ordinary operations, to all of which he lent his own hands, but in superintending the construction of his new *steading*. According to Allan Cunningham—the poet had to 'perform the duty of superintendent of the works; to dig the foundations, collect the stones, seek the sand, cart the lime, and see that all was performed according to the specifications: these were the uncouth cares of which he complained.' He would even help in laying the stones of his house. It was a neat cottage of about fifty feet long, placed near the edge of the *scaur* or broken bank overhanging the Nith. The sitting-room in the east end had a window looking down the valley, and commanding beautiful peeps of the stream. Another room at the west end was the *spence*, or room reserved for important occasions. A small kitchen and a bedroom lay between, while in the garret was accommodation for domestics. The whole structure, while marking in some degree the taste of the poet, is yet perfectly suitable in its modesty to the frugal life of a farmer of a hundred acres. On the bank below was a spring of pure water. Assisted by his brother-in-law, Armour, who helped to build the house, Burns fashioned this into a well for the supply of his household. Running back from the house in two lines of building, were a barn, terminating in a stackyard, and a cow-house and stable. Such was the simple establishment in which the great poet of Scotland designed to spend the remainder of his life in industrious and frugal state.

Dr Currie considers it unfortunate for Burns that he was not able to settle at once with his wife upon Ellisland. In visiting her from that place, he had to perform a journey of forty-six miles, which generally required his stopping a night at an inn on the road. Dr Currie says, that on these occasions he sometimes fell into company, and forgot sober resolutions. I am much inclined to think that little harm could arise from a few such rencontres; but it is certainly to be regretted that he did not commence regular housekeeping with his wife at the beginning,

as his mind would have thereby been steadied, and he would have had the better chance of forming quiet domestic habits.

It was not till now that any ceremonial took place to signify the union of Burns with his Jean. The communion being administered at Mauchline on the second Sunday of August, there is generally observable about the beginning of that month in the session books a great clearing of characters; for a repute before society depends in Scotland so much on being admitted to the sacrament, that every person in the least tainted with scandal is anxious to be made presentable on that occasion. The entry in the record regarding our illustrious bard is as follows:—

'1788, *August* 5.—Compeared Robert Burns, with Jean Armour, his alleged spouse. They both acknowledge their irregular marriage, and their sorrow for that irregularity, and desiring that the Session will take such steps as may seem to them proper, in order to the solemn confirmation of the said marriage. The Session, taking this affair under their consideration, agree that they both be rebuked for this acknowledged irregularity, and that they be solemnly engaged to adhere faithfully to one another as man and wife all the days of their life.

'In regard the Session have a title in law to some fine for behoof of the poor, they agree to refer to Mr Burns his own generosity. The above sentence was accordingly executed, and the Session absolved the said parties from any scandal on this account.

(Signed) WILLIAM AULD, *Moderator*.
ROBERT BURNS.
JEAN ARMOUR.

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

TO MRS DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *August* 10, 1788.

MY MUCH-HONOURED FRIEND—Yours of the 24th June[1] is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife—waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may perhaps be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason, that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost

[1] It may be suspected that the date of this letter should be *July*, instead of August.

me nothing except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

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

I can easily fancy a more agreeable companion for my journey of life; but, upon my honour, I have never seen the individual instance. * * *

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

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

R. B.

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 16*th August* 1788.

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

> 'Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?
> Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?'

My increasing cares in this as yet strange country—gloomy con-

jectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children—I could indulge these reflections till my humour should ferment into the most acid chagrin, that would corrode the very thread of life.

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

I was yesterday at Mr Miller's to dinner,[1] for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind: from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage as a professional man was expected: I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, independence of spirit, and integrity of soul! In the course of conversation 'Johnson's Musical Museum,' a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning,

'Raving winds around her blowing.'

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

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial Heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches, and honours, and prudence, and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days, are sold to the minions of fortune.

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

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

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

It is this way of thinking; it is these melancholy truths that make religion so precious to the poor, miserable children of men. If it is

[1] At Dalswinton House.

a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

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

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

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

TO MR BEUGO, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, *9th Sept.* 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—There is not in Edinburgh above the number of the graces whose letters would have given me so much pleasure as yours of the 3d instant, which only reached me yesternight.

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

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

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

I will send you the *Fortunate Shepherdess* as soon as I return to Ayrshire, for there I keep it with other precious treasure. I shall send it by a careful hand, as I would not for anything it should be mislaid or lost. I do not wish to serve you from any benevolence, or other grave Christian virtue; 'tis purely a selfish gratification of my own feelings whenever I think of you

You do not tell me if you are going to be married. Depend upon

it, if you do not make some foolish choice, it will be a very great improvement on the dish of life. I can speak from experience, though God knows my choice was as random as blind-man's buff. . . . .

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

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

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

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

Mr Beugo was the engraver of Burns's portrait for the late edition of his poems. The glorious idea alluded to in the second last paragraph was probably a joke against Creech, who was then about to publish, in one volume, a collection of certain wiry square-toed articles, which he had at various times contributed to the newspapers. The gelidity of his constitution shines in this volume, and must have made the idea of a map of Iceland as a frontispiece appear to Burns the perfection of practical wit.

It would appear that one of the productions of these 'lucid intervals' in Ayrshire was a ballad, which is usually printed under the title of *The Fête Champêtre.* According to the recital of Gilbert Burns—'When Mr Cunninghame of Enterkin came to his estate, two mansion-houses on it, Enterkin and Anbank, were both in a ruinous state. Wishing to introduce himself with some *éclat* to the county, he got temporary erections made on the banks of Ayr, tastefully decorated with shrubs and flowers, for a supper and ball, to which most of the respectable families in the county were invited. It was a novelty, and attracted much notice. A dissolution of parliament was soon expected, and this festivity was thought to be an introduction to a canvass for representing the county. Several other candidates were spoken of, particularly Sir John Whitefoord, then residing at Cloncaird, commonly pronounced Glencaird, and Mr Boswell, the well-known biographer of Dr Johnson. The political views of this festive assemblage, which are alluded to in the ballad, if they ever existed, were, however, laid aside, as Mr Cunninghame did not canvass the county.' By the favour of W. Allason Cunninghame, Esq., son of Mr Cun-

ninghame of Enterkin, I learn that this affair must have taken place in summer 1788. Burns's ballad was as follows:—

THE FETE CHAMPETRE.

TUNE—*Killiecrankie.*

Oh wha will to Saint Stephen's House,
To do our errands there, man?
Oh wha will to Saint Stephen's House,
O' th' merry lads o' Ayr, man?
Or will ye send a man-o'-law?
Or will ye send a sodger?
Or him wha led o'er Scotland a'
The meikle Ursa-Major?[1]

Come, will ye court a noble lord,
Or buy a score o' lairds, man?
For worth and honour pawn their word,
Their vote shall be Glencaird's, man.
Ane gies them coin, ane gies them wine,
Anither gies them clatter;
Anbank, wha guess'd the ladies' taste,
He gies a Fête Champêtre.

When Love and Beauty heard the news,
The gay greenwoods amang, man,
Where, gathering flowers and busking bowers,
They heard the blackbird's sang, man:
A vow, they seal'd it with a kiss,
Sir Politics to fetter,
As theirs alone, the patent-bliss,
To hold a Fête Champêtre.

Then mounted Mirth, on gleesome wing,
Ower hill and dale she flew, man;
Ilk wimpling burn, ilk crystal spring,
Ilk glen and shaw she knew, man:
She summoned every social sprite,
That sports by wood and water,
On th' bonnie banks o' Ayr to meet,
And keep this Fête Champêtre.

Cauld Boreas, wi' his boisterous crew,
Were bound to stakes like kye, man;
And Cynthia's car, o' silver fu',
Clamb up the starry sky, man:

[1] An allusion to the well-known joke of the elder Boswell, who, hearing his son speak of Johnson as a great luminary, quite a constellation, said—'Yes, *Ursa Major.*'

Reflected beams dwell in the streams,
Or down the current shatter;
The western breeze steals through the trees
To view this Fête Champêtre.

How many a robe sae gaily floats!
What sparkling jewels glance, man!
To Harmony's enchanting notes,
As moves the mazy dance, man.
The echoing wood, the winding flood,
Like Paradise did glitter,
When angels met, at Adam's yett, gate
To hold their Fête Champêtre.

When Politics came there, to mix
And make his ether-stane, man![1]
He circled round the magic ground,
But entrance found he nane, man:
He blushed for shame, he quat his name,
Forswore it, every letter,
Wi' humble prayer to join and share
This festive Fête Champêtre.

TO MISS CHALMERS, EDINBURGH.

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

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

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

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

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much *à l'égard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness. I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say more, but so much, as Lady Mackenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds

[1] Alluding to a superstition, which represents adders as forming annually from their slough certain little annular stones of streaked colouring, which are occasionally found, and which are in reality beads fashioned and used by our early ancestors.

the noblest of human kind—unfortunate even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost anybody I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child! If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert. I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a late important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable licence, or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLANY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire I married 'my Jean.' This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance, perhaps; but I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county. Mrs Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse. I must except also from this last a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly, and all the ballads in the country, as she has (Oh, the partial lover! you will cry) the finest 'wood-note wild' I ever heard.[1] I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honour of a share in your best wishes. She is still at Mauchline, as I am building my house; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect; but I believe in time it may be a saving bargain. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a losing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my Excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set all before your view, whatever disrespect you, in common with the world, have for this business, I know you would approve of my idea.

[1] Mrs Burns is generally allowed to have been a good singer, her voice rising with ease to B natural.

I will make no apology, dear madam, for this egotistic detail; I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at everything dishonest, and the same scorn at everything unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense, are they not EQUALS? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS?

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

I very lately—namely, since harvest began—wrote a poem, not in imitation, but in the manner, of Pope's 'Moral Epistles.' It is only a short essay, just to try the strength of my Muse's pinion in that way. I will send you a copy of it when once I have heard from you. I have likewise been laying the foundation of some pretty large poetic works: how the superstructure will come on I leave to that great maker and marrer of projects—TIME. Johnson's collection of Scots songs is going on in the third volume; and, of consequence, finds me a consumpt for a great deal of idle metre. One of the most tolerable things I have done in that way is two stanzas I made to an air a musical gentleman of my acquaintance [Captain Riddell of Glenriddell] composed for the anniversary of his wedding-day, which happens on the 7th of November. Take it as follows:—

THE DAY RETURNS.

TUNE—*Seventh of November.*

The day returns, my bosom burns,
  The blissful day we twa did meet;
Though winter wild in tempest toiled,
  Ne'er summer sun was half sae sweet.
Than a' the pride that loads the tide,
  And crosses o'er the sultry line;
Than kingly robes, than crowns and globes,
  Heaven gave me more—it made thee mine!

While day and night can bring delight,
  Or nature aught of pleasure give,
While joys above my mind can move,
  For thee, and thee alone, I live.
When that grim foe of life below
  Comes in between to make us part,
The iron hand that breaks our band,
  It breaks my bliss—it breaks my heart!

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

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

In September, the house was approaching completion, and Burns was eager to inhabit at least a portion of it. He thus addressed the worthy joiner at Mauchline whom he had commissioned to prepare his household furniture:—

TO MR MORRISON, MAUCHLINE.

ELLISLAND, *September* 22, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR—Necessity obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plastered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will at farthest be my time, beyond which I cannot stay in this present house. If ever you wish to deserve the blessing of him that was ready to perish; if ever you were in a situation that a little kindness would have rescued you from many evils; if ever you hope to find rest in future states of untried being—get these matters of mine ready. My servant will be out in the beginning of next week for the clock. My compliments to Mrs Morrison. I am, after all my tribulation, dear sir, yours, R. B.

Burns had been told by some of his literary friends, that it was a great error to write in Scotch, seeing that thereby he was cut off from the appreciation of the English public. He was disposed to give way to this hint, and henceforth to compose chiefly in English, or at least to try his hand upon the soft lyres of Twickenham and Richmond, in the hope of succeeding equally well as he had hitherto done upon the rustic reed of Scotland. It seems to have been a great mistake. The flow of versification and the felicity of diction for which Burns's Scottish poems and songs are remarkable, vanish when he attempts the southern strain. We see this well exemplified in a poem of the present

summer, in which he aimed at the style of Pope's *Moral Epistles*, while at the same time he sought to advance his personal fortunes through the medium of a patron.

FIRST EPISTLE TO MR GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

When Nature her great masterpiece designed,
And framed her last, best work, the human mind,
Her eye intent on all the mazy plan,
She formed of various parts the various man.

Then first she calls the useful many forth;
Plain plodding industry, and sober worth:
Thence peasants, farmers, native sons of earth,
And merchandise' whole genus take their birth:
Each prudent cit a warm existence finds,
And all mechanics' many-apron'd kinds.
Some other rarer sorts are wanted yet,
The lead and buoy are needful to the net;
The *caput mortuum* of gross desires
Makes a material for mere knights and squires;
The martial phosphorus is taught to flow;
She kneads the lumpish philosophic dough,
Then marks th' unyielding mass with grave designs,
Law, physic, politics, and deep divines;
Last, she sublimes the Aurora of the poles,
The flashing elements of female souls.
The order'd system fair before her stood,
Nature, well-pleased, pronounced it very good;
But ere she gave creating labour o'er,
Half-jest, she tried one curious labour more.
Some spumy, fiery, *ignis fatuus* matter,
Such as the slightest breath of air might scatter;
With arch alacrity and conscious glee
(Nature may have her whim as well as we,
Her Hogarth-art perhaps she meant to shew it)
She forms the thing, and christens it—a poet,
Creature, though oft the prey of care and sorrow,
When blest to-day, unmindful of to-morrow.
A being formed t' amuse his graver friends,
Admired and praised—and there the homage ends:
A mortal quite unfit for fortune's strife,
Yet oft the sport of all the ills of life;
Prone to enjoy each pleasure riches give,
Yet haply wanting wherewithal to live;
Longing to wipe each tear, to heal each groan,
Yet frequent all unheeded in his own.

But honest nature is not quite a Turk,
She laughed at first, then felt for her poor work.
Pitying the propless climber of mankind,
She cast about a standard tree to find;
And, to support his helpless woodbine state,
Attached him to the generous truly great,
A title, and the only one I claim,
To lay strong hold for help on bounteous Graham.

Pity the tuneful muses' hapless train,
Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main!
Their hearts no selfish stern absorbent stuff,
That never gives—though humbly takes enough;
The little fate allows, they share as soon,
Unlike sage proverb'd wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
The world were blest did bliss on them depend,
Ah, that 'the friendly e'er should want a friend!'
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
Who life and wisdom at one race begun,
Who feel by reason and who give by rule
(Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool!)—
Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should*—
We own they're prudent, but who feels they're good?
Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye!
God's image rudely etched on base alloy!
But come, ye who the godlike pleasure know,
Heaven's attribute distinguished—to bestow!
Whose arms of love would grasp the human race:
Come thou who giv'st with all a courtier's grace;
Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes!
Prop of my dearest hopes for future times.
Why shrinks my soul half-blushing, half-afraid,
Backward, abashed, to ask thy friendly aid?
I know my need, I know thy giving hand,
I crave thy friendship at thy kind command;
But there are such who court the tuneful nine—
Heavens! should the branded character be mine!
Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely flows,
Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.
Mark, how their lofty independent spirit
Soars on the spurning wing of injured merit!
Seek not the proofs in private life to find;
Pity the best of words should be but wind!
So to heaven's gate the lark's shrill song ascends,
But grovelling on the earth the carol ends.
In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,
They dun benevolence with shameless front;
Oblige them, patronise their tinsel lays,
They persecute you all your future days!

Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
My horny fist assume the plough again;
The pie-bald jacket let me patch once more;
On eighteenpence a week I've lived before.
Though, thanks to Heaven, I dare even that last shift!
I trust, meantime, my boon is in thy gift:
That, placed by thee upon the wished-for height,
Where, man and nature fairer in her sight,
My muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight.

One cannot but feel that, though the bard guards himself against being confounded with the common herd of patronage-seekers, his words truly express somewhat more of a sense of dependence than it is agreeable to contemplate in connection with so proud a name. Anticipation of difficulties had already somewhat 'sicklied o'er the native hue of resolution.'

TO MRS DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, *27th Sept.* 1788.

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

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

MRS FERGUSSON OF CRAIGDARROCH'S LAMENTATION FOR THE DEATH OF HER SON—AN UNCOMMONLY PROMISING YOUTH OF EIGHTEEN OR NINETEEN YEARS OF AGE.[1]

Fate gave the word, the arrow sped,
And pierc'd my darling's heart;
And with him all the joys are fled
Life can to me impart.

[1] 'Died here on Monday last [Nov. 19, 1787] James Fergusson, Esq., younger of Craigdarroch. The worth of this truly amiable and much-lamented youth can

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

The mother linnet in the brake
Bewails her ravish'd young;
So I, for my lost darling's sake,
Lament the live-day long.
Death! oft I've feared thy fatal blow,
Now, fond I bare my breast;
Oh, do thou kindly lay me low
With him I love, at rest!'

You will not send me your poetic rambles, but, you see, I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your impromptus give me double pleasure; what falls from your pen can neither be unentertaining in itself nor indifferent to me.

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

What a life of solicitude is the life of a parent! You interested me much in your young couple.

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

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

It is a curious circumstance regarding the brief poem conveyed by this letter, that a copy of it in the possession of Mr Allason Cunninghame of Logan House, Ayrshire, is understood by that gentleman's family to have been sent to his grandmother, Burns's early patron, Mrs General Stewart of Afton, as a deploration of the death of her only son, Alexander Gordon Stewart, who died at a military academy at Strasburg, the 5th December 1787. Allan Cunningham speaks of a copy of the poem in his possession bearing a note by the author, which shews that he really had endeavoured to turn this piece to the account of gratifying two

best be estimated by a sketch given of him on his leaving Glasgow College in May last:—"Of all the young men of this age I have ever known, he is by much the most promising. His abilities are equal to anything he chooses to undertake. His understanding is clear and penetrating, and readily comprehends the most abstract subjects. His memory is retentive. He speaks with fluency and perspicuity; he writes with neatness and accuracy. No one can exceed him in the assiduity of his application, and he persists in it with the utmost steadiness, in spite of every allurement. United with all these shining qualifications, he discovers the most gentle temper, simple manners, and the amiable modesty of youth."'—*Newspaper Obituary.*

friends. '*The Mother's Lament*,' he says, 'was composed partly with a view to Mrs Fergusson of Craigdarroch, and partly to the worthy patroness of my early muse, Mrs Stewart of Afton.' We may suppose that the parity of the two cases, and their nearness in point of time, had produced but one indivisible impression in the mind of the bard. Yet there is reason to believe that, in his complaisance towards his friends, he was somewhat over eager to gratify them with poetical compliments, and oftener than once caused one to pay a double debt. We shall find that the little poem beginning, *Sensibility, how charming*, was first written on certain experiences of Mrs M'Lehose, and sent to her, but afterwards addressed to 'my dear and much honoured friend, Mrs Dunlop.' So the reader will perceive that even Burns had his little *mystères d'atelier*.

TO MR PETER HILL.

MAUCHLINE, 1*st October* 1788.

I have been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the *Address to Lochlomond* you were so obliging as to send to me.[1] Were I empannelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be 'Guilty! A poet of Nature's making!' It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favourite classic author, in his own walks of study and composition, before him as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother-poet forgive me if I venture to hint that his imitation of that immortal bard is in two or three places rather more servile than such a genius as his required?—*e. g.*

'To soothe the maddening passions all to peace.'
Address.

'To soothe the throbbing passions into peace.'
THOMSON.

I think the *Address* is in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the *Seasons*. Like Thomson, too, he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading: in no one instance

[1] 'Address to Loch Lomond, a Poem. 1s. 6d. sewed. Hill.' *Scots Magazine publication list, Sep.* 1788.

The poem entitled *An Address to Lochlomond* is said to be written by a gentleman, now one of the masters of the High School at Edinburgh, and the same who translated the beautiful story of the *Paria*, as published in the *Bee* of Dr Anderson.—CURRIE (1799.)

The author was Dr Cririe, afterwards minister of Dalton, in Dumfriesshire. He published, in 1803, *Scottish Scenery, or Sketches in Verse*—a handsome quarto of poetry and notes, including the *Address to Loch Lomond*. Dr Cririe died in 1835.

has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but, like a true poet of Nature's making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only I do not altogether like—

——— 'Truth,
The soul of every song that 's nobly great.'

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

'Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,'

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

'Winding margin of an hundred miles.'

The perspective that follows mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digression on the yew-tree—'Benlomond's lofty, cloud-enveloped head,' &c. are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject which has been often tried, yet our poet in his grand picture has interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original:—

——— 'The gloom
Deep seam'd with frequent streaks of moving fire.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The approach of the centenary of the landing of King William at Torbay was now exciting some sensation in the country. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was pleased to appoint Wednesday, the 5th of November, to be observed as 'a day of solemn thanksgiving for that most glorious event, the Revolution;' and it was so observed accordingly. In Burns's parish, Dunscore, the clergyman was a zealous Whig in the sense of the word in that day, sympathising strongly on religious grounds with the doings of 1688–9. The poet, whose leanings, as we have seen, were in the opposite direction, disliked the Calvinism of Mr Kirkpatrick, and was particularly wroth with the discourse which he uttered on this occasion. So earnestly did he feel upon the subject, that he sent a letter in the contrary spirit to the *Star* (London) newspaper, which was then partly conducted by John Mayne, a native of Dumfriesshire:

TO THE EDITOR OF THE STAR.

November 8, 1788.

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

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgment to the Author of all Good for the consequent blessings of the glorious Revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious; to it we are likewise indebted for the present royal family, the ruling features

of whose administration have ever been mildness to the subject and tenderness of his rights.

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

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

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

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

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science which had lately dawned over Europe—the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people: with us, luckily, the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but, likewise, happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

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

us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: who would believe, sir, that in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people under our national protection should complain, not against our monarch and a few favourite advisers, but against our whole legislative body, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the House of Stuart? I will not, I cannot enter into the merits of the case; but I daresay the American Congress in 1776 will be allowed to be as able and as enlightened as the English Convention was in 1688; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed House of Stuart.

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

TO MRS DUNLOP, AT MOREHAM MAINS.

MAUCHLINE, 13*th November* 1788.

MADAM—I had the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak—if it be so, poets must be weaker still; for Misses R. and K. and Miss G. M'K. with their flattering attentions and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own that they did not lard me over as many a poet does his patron; but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate inuendos of compliment, that if it had not been for a lucky recollection how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked upon myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over-against the finest quey[1] in Ayrshire which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm-stock. As it was on Hallow-day,[2] I am determined annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I will take the first conveniency to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship,

[1] A young heifer. [2] All Saints' Day, old style.

under the guarantee of the major's hospitality. There will soon be threescore and ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heartstrings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a happy day of 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul.'

R. B.

TO DR BLACKLOCK.

MAUCHLINE, *November* 15, 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—As I hear nothing of your motions, but that you are or were out of town, I do not know where this may find you, or whether it will find you at all. I wrote you a long letter, dated from the land of matrimony, in June; but either it had not found you, or, what I dread more, it found you or Mrs Blacklock in too precarious a state of health and spirits to take notice of an idle packet.

I have done many little things for Johnson since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and I have finished one piece in the way of Pope's *Moral Epistles;*[1] but from your silence I have everything to fear, so I have only sent you two melancholy things, which I tremble lest they should too well suit the tone of your present feelings.

In a fortnight I move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale; till then, my direction is at this place; after that period it will be at Ellisland, near Dumfries. It would extremely oblige me were it but half a line, to let me know how you are, and where you are. Can I be indifferent to the fate of a man to whom I owe so much—a man whom I not only esteem but venerate?

My warmest good wishes and most respectful compliments to Mrs Blacklock and Miss Johnson, if she is with you.

I cannot conclude without telling you that I am more and more pleased with the step I took respecting 'my Jean.' Two things, from my happy experience, I set down as apophthegms in life—A wife's head is immaterial compared with her heart; and—'Virtue's (for wisdom, what poet pretends to it?) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' Adieu! R. B.

One of the pieces enclosed was *The Mother's Lament for the Death of her Son.* The other was

THE LAZY MIST.

TUNE—*The Lazy Mist.*

The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill,
Concealing the course of the dark-winding rill;
How languid the scenes, late so sprightly, appear!
As autumn to winter resigns the pale year.

[1] The *First Epistle to Mr Graham of Fintry.*

The forests are leafless, the meadows are brown,
And all the gay foppery of summer is flown:
Apart let me wander, apart let me muse,
How quick time is flying, how keen fate pursues!

How long I have liv'd—but how much liv'd in vain!
How little of life's scanty span may remain!
What aspects old Time, in his progress, has worn!
What ties cruel fate in my bosom has torn!
How foolish, or worse, till our summit is gain'd!
And downward, how weaken'd, how darken'd, how pain'd!
This life's not worth having with all it can give—
For something beyond it poor man sure must live.

TO MR JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER.

MAUCHLINE, *November* 15, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—I have sent you two more songs. If you have got any tunes, or anything to correct, please send them by return of the carrier.

I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will very probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country, and I am certain posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly, and your name shall be immortal.

I am preparing a flaming preface for your third volume. I see every day new musical publications advertised; but what are they? Gaudy, painted butterflies of a day, and then vanish for ever: but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of time.

Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devotion? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as whether she be rather black or fair, plump or thin, short or tall, &c.; and choose your air, and I shall task my muse to celebrate her. R. B.

The bachelor life of Burns was now drawing to a close. His new house proving wholly unready for the reception of his wife, he had obtained temporary accommodation for her at a neighbouring farm. Accordingly, in the first week of December, he conducted Mrs Burns to the banks of the Nith. During the preceding week two servant-lads and a servant-girl had migrated thither from Mauchline, with some cart-loads of the plenishing made by Morrison; besides, I presume, a handsome four-posted bed, which Mrs Dunlop had contributed as her marriage-gift. The servant-lass,

named Elizabeth Smith, still lives at Irvine (1851.) She reports that Mrs Burns was anxious, on going into a district where she was wholly a stranger, to obtain the services of a young woman whom she already knew. Elizabeth was engaged accordingly, but not till her father, in his anxiety for her moral welfare, had exacted a formal promise from Burns to keep a strict watch over her conduct, and, in particular, to exercise her duly in the Catechism—in both of which points she admits he was most faithful to his promise.

About a mile below Ellisland there is a small tract of ground which has once been encircled by the waters of the Nith, partly through natural channels, and partly through an artificial trench. Here rises a small old dismantled tower, with more modern buildings adjoining to it on two of its sides—the whole forming the farm-buildings of *The Isle;* for such is the name of the place, still retained, although one of the ancient water-courses is now only a rushy piece of ground. The place, which has an antiquated, and even somewhat romantic appearance, was the property of Mr Newall, writer in Dumfries, whose family had lived in it during the summer, but only for a short time, in consequence of certain nocturnal sounds in the old tower having led to a belief that it was haunted. What added a little, or perhaps not a little, to the *eeriness* of the spot, was that the old burying-ground of Dunscore, containing the sepulchre of the dreaded persecutor, Grierson of Lagg, was in the immediate neighbourhood. Such was the 'moated grange' at which the illustrious poet welcomed home the mistress of his heart—the fascinating, never-to-be-forgotten Jean Armour.

We may well believe that it was a time of great happiness to Burns when he first saw his mistress installed in her little mansion, and felt himself the master of a household, however humble—looked up to by a wife as 'the goodman,' and by a host of dependents as 'the master.' Who can refrain from sympathising with the great ill-requited poet in this brief exception from a painful life? According to Dr Currie—

'Animated sentiments of any kind almost always gave rise in our poet to some production of his muse. His sentiments on this occasion were in part expressed by the following vigorous and characteristic, though not very delicate verses: they are in imitation of an old ballad:—

I hae a wife o' my ain,
  I'll partake wi' naebody;
I'll tak cuckold frae nane,
  I'll gie cuckold to naebody.

I hae a penny to spend,
  There—thanks to naebody;
I hae naething to lend,
  I'll borrow frae naebody.

I am naebody's lord,
  I'll be slave to naebody;
I hae a gude braid sword,
  I'll tak dunts frae naebody. blows

I'll be merry and free,
  I'll be sad for naebody;
If naebody care for me,
  I'll care for naebody.'[1]

TO MRS DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 17*th December* 1788.

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

[1] Phenomenon as Burns was, fêted in society, and universally famed, he is little spoken of in the contemporary journals, amongst which it was not then the fashion so much as now to refer to the doings of individuals. On the 28th of November 1788, the *Edinburgh Advertiser* has a paragraph about him:

'Burns, the *Ayrshire Bard*, is now enjoying the sweets of retirement at his farm. Burns, in thus retiring, has acted wisely. Stephen Duck, the *Poetical Thresher*, by his ill-advised patrons, was made a parson. The poor man, hurried out of his proper element, found himself quite unhappy; became insane; and with his own hands, it is said, ended his life. Burns, with propriety, has resumed the *flail*—but we hope he has not thrown away the *quill*.'

again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, madam, for I will make my threatening good. I am to be at the New-year-day fair of Ayr: and, by all that is sacred in the world, friend, I will come and see you.

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old school-fellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world! They spoil these 'social offsprings of the heart.' Two veterans of the 'men of the world' would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase, 'auld lang syne,' exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr Ker[1] will save you the postage.

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.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we've wandered mony a weary foot,
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,
Frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd,
Sin' auld lang syne.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere, companion
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid willie-waught, draught
For auld lang syne.

[1] Mr Ker was the postmaster in Edinburgh—a very different kind of official from what have since ruled in the same chair. This worthy man was always ready to frank a letter for a friend. Strange stories are told of weighty packets—one, it is said, containing a pair of buckskin-breeches for a sportsman in the Highlands—passing free through the post-office in his day.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stoup,
And surely I'll be mine;[1]
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

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

MY BONNIE MARY.[2]

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie; cup
That I may drink before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie.
The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith,
Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the Ferry;
The ship rides by the Berwick-law,[3]
And I maun leave my bonnie Mary.

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

R. B.

Burns came to indulge in little mystifications respecting his songs. Though he here speaks of *Auld Lang Syne* as an old fragment, and afterwards communicated it to George Thomson, with an expression of self-congratulation on having been so fortunate as to recover it from an old man's singing, the second and third

[1] At a festival in honour of Burns, lately held in Boston, United States, an Irish gentleman said: 'He felt much inclined to claim the poet as an Irishman; but the attempt would be vain: one of the best known of his lyrics would detect him at once—

'And surely you'll be your pint-stoup,
And surely I'll be mine!'

There was Burns, in the characteristic spirit of national thrift, settling the reckoning, and upon condition, too, that you were to pay for the first pint-stoup. An Irishman would never have thought of that.'—*London Newspaper, March* 1851.

[2] This song may be effectively sung to one of the numerous sets of the Highland Laddie, which the reader will find in *Johnson's Musical Museum.*

[3] North Berwick Law, a conical hill near the shore of the Firth of Forth, very conspicuous at Edinburgh, from which it is distant about twenty miles.

verses—those expressing the recollections of youth, and certainly the finest of the set—and oh how fine!—are by himself. So also of *Go fetch to me a pint of wine*, he afterwards acknowledged that only the first verse (four lines) was old, the rest his own. The old verse was probably the same with one which occurs near the close of a homely ballad, printed in Hogg and Motherwell's edition of Burns, as preserved by Mr Peter Buchan, who further communicates that the ballad was composed in 1636 by Alexander Lesly of Edin, on Doveran side, grandfather to the celebrated Archbishop Sharpe:—

'Ye'll bring me here a pint of wine,
A server and a silver tassie,
That I may drink, before I gang,
A health to my ain bonnie lassie.'

The fact of Burns pitching upon this one fine stanza of an old ballad as a foundation for a new song, shews expressively the apt sense he had of all that was beautiful in poetry, and how ready his imagination was to take wing upon the slightest command.

TO MR JOHN TENNANT.

December 22, 1788.

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

LINES WRITTEN IN FRIARS' CARSE HERMITAGE.

Extended Copy.

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these counsels on thy soul.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;[1]
Hope not sunshine every hour,
Fear not clouds will always lower.

As youth and love with sprightly dance,
Beneath thy morning star advance,
Pleasure with her siren air
May delude the thoughtless pair;
Let Prudence bless Enjoyment's cup,
Then raptured sip, and sip it up.

As thy day grows warm and high,
Life's meridian flaming nigh,
Dost thou spurn the humble vale?
Life's proud summits would'st thou scale?
Check thy climbing step, elate,
Evils lurk in felon wait:
Dangers, evil-pinioned, bold,
Soar around each cliffy hold,
While cheerful peace, with linnet song,
Chants the lowly dells among.

As the shades of ev'ning close,
Beck'ning thee to long repose;
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-nook of ease;
There ruminate with sober thought,
On all thou 'st seen, and heard, and wrought,
And teach the sportive younkers round,
Saws of experience, sage and sound.
Say, man's true, genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of his fate,
Is not—art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?[2]

[1] In the shorter copy, an additional couplet is here inserted :—

Day, how rapid in its flight!
Day, how few must see the night!

[2] Variation—

Say, man's true genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of their fate,
The important query of their state,

Did many talents gild thy span?
Or frugal nature grudge thee one?
Tell them, and press it on their mind,
As thou thyself must shortly find,
The smile or frown of awful Heav'n
To virtue or to vice is given.
Say, to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies;
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways
Lead to be wretched, vile, and base.

Thus resigned and quiet, creep
To the bed of lasting sleep;
Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake,
Night, where dawn shall never break,
Till future life, future no more,
To light and joy the good restore,
To light and joy unknown before.

Stranger, go! Heav'n be thy guide!
Quod the Bedesman of Nithside!

This extended copy of the lines for Friars' Carse Hermitage was produced in December. We agree with Allan Cunningham in seeing in this second effort a proof of the comparative labour which Burns encountered in attempting to compose in pure English. The restricted religious views of the poet will be remarked.[1]

TO MR WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

ELLISLAND, [*December*,] 1788.

I have not room, my dear friend, to answer all the particulars of your last kind letter. I shall be in Edinburgh on some business very soon; and as I shall be two days, or perhaps three, in town, we shall discuss matters *vivâ voce*. My knee, I believe, will never be entirely well; and an unlucky fall this winter has made it still worse. I well remember the circumstance you allude to respecting Creech's

Is not, art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Wast thou cottager or king,
Peer or peasant?—no such thing!
Did many talents, &c.

[1] A pane of the hermitage window, on which he had inscribed some of the lines with a diamond, was removed on a change of proprietors, and being brought to sale at the death of an old lady in 1835, was purchased for five guineas.

opinion of Mr Nicol; but as the first gentleman owes me still about fifty pounds, I dare not meddle in the affair.

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

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

On New-Year's morning 1789, Gilbert Burns thus affectionately addressed his brother:

MOSSGIEL, 1*st Jan.* 1789.

DEAR BROTHER—I have just finished my New-Year's-day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, 'through the dark postern of time long elapsed,' I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the GOD of SEASONS is to us, and that, however some clouds may seem to lower over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well.

Your mother and sisters, with Robert the second, join me in the compliments of the season to you and Mrs Burns, and beg you will remember us in the same manner to William the first time you see him. I am, dear brother, yours, GILBERT BURNS.

The poet on the same day thus addressed one of the most valued of his friends:

TO MRS DUNLOP.

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

This, dear madam, is a morning of wishes, and would to God that I came under the apostle James's description!—*the prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* In that case, madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings: everything that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian, that I approve set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery.

This day—the first Sunday of May—a breezy, blue-skied noon some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of autumn—these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday.

I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the Spectator, *The Vision of Mirza*, a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: 'On the 5th day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdad, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer.'

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plovers, in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or wo beyond death and the grave! R. B.

ELEGY ON THE YEAR 1788.

Jan. 1, 1789.

For Lords or Kings I dinna mourn,
E'en let them die—for that they're born:
But oh! prodigious to reflec'!
A towmont, sirs, is gane to wreck! twelvemonth
Oh Eighty-eight, in thy sma' space
What dire events ha'e taken place!
Of what enjoyments thou hast reft us!
In what a pickle thou hast left us!

The Spanish empire's tint a head,[1] lost
And my auld teethless Bawtie's[2] dead;
The tulzie's sair 'tween Pitt and Fox, fight
And our guidwife's wee birdie cocks;

[1] Charles III., king of Spain, died on the 13th of December 1788.
[2] A generic familiar name for a dog in Scotland.

The tane is game, a bluidie devil,
But to the hen-birds unco civil:
The tither's something dour o' treadin',
But better stuff ne'er clawed a midden.
Ye ministers, come mount the pu'pit,
And cry till ye be hearse and roopit,
For Eighty-eight he wished you weel,
And gied ye a' baith gear and meal; money
E'en mony a plack, and mony a peck, coin
Ye ken yoursels, for little feck! . . .

Observe the very nowte and sheep, cattle
How dowf and dowie now they creep: dull
Nay, even the yirth itsel' does cry,
For Embro' wells are grutten dry.[1] wept

Oh Eighty-nine, thou's but a bairn,
And no owre auld, I hope, to learn!
Thou beardless boy, I pray tak' care,
Thou now has got thy daddy's chair,
Nae hand-cuffed, muzzled, hap-shackled Regent,[2]
But, like himsel', a full free agent.
Be sure ye follow out the plan
Nae waur than he did, honest man!
As muckle better as you can.

A letter to Dr Moore acquaints us with the views of Burns at this time. Already fearful about his farm, he was using influence to obtain an Excise appointment for the district in which he resided. He develops to the amiable novelist his opinions as to literary labour, which are remarkably sound and judicious, and his desire to continue in the worship of the Muse, but not to be too eager for a reappearance before the public.

TO DR MOORE.

ELLISLAND, *4th Jan.* 1789.

SIR—As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary-sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have at last got some business with you, and business letters are written

[1] The Edinburgh newspapers of this period contain many references to a scarcity of water, in consequence of severe frost.

[2] The king having shewn symptoms of unsound mind in November, the public was at this time agitated with discussions as to the choice of a regent.

by the style-book. I say my business is with you, sir; for you never had any with me, except the business that benevolence has in the mansion of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late *éclat* was owing to the singularity of my situation, and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface to my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from nature to the poetic character. I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude to learn the muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by Him 'who forms the secret bias of the soul;' but I as firmly believe that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains—at least I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day—a day that may never arrive; but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses in a good measure the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend, not only of abilities to judge, but with good-nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I enclose you an essay of mine, in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the Epistle addressed to R. G., Esq., or Robert Graham of Fintry, Esq., a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story; and to give you the one I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of Mr Creech's ingenuous fair-dealing to me. He kept me hanging about Edinburgh from the 7th August 1787 until the 13th April 1788, before he would condescend to give me a statement of affairs; nor had I got it even then, but for an angry letter I wrote him, which irritated his pride. 'I could' not 'a tale,' but a detail 'unfold;' but what am I that should speak against the Lord's anointed Bailie of Edinburgh?

I believe I shall in whole, £100 copyright included, clear about £400 some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare. I give you this information, but I give it to yourself only; for I am still much in the gentleman's mercy. Perhaps I injure the man in the idea I am sometimes tempted to have of him: God forbid I should! A little time will try, for in a month I shall go to town to wind up the business, if possible.

To give the rest of my story in brief: I have married 'my Jean,' and taken a farm. With the first step, I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother, who supports my aged mother; another still younger brother, and three sisters, in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about £180 to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much: I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part: I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the *grand reckoning*. There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy: I have an Excise-officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr Graham, who is one of the commissioners of Excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a treasury-warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c.

Thus, secure of a livelihood, 'to thee, sweet Poetry, delightful maid,' I would consecrate my future days. R. B.

TO MR ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *January* 6, 1789.

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

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

> ————On Reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man.—*Young.*
>
> Hear, Alfred, hero of the state,
> Thy genius heaven's high will declare;
> The triumph of the truly great,
> Is never, never to despair!
> Is never to despair.—*Masque of Alfred.*

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

But to change the theme: I am still catering for Johnson's publication; and among others, I have brushed up the following old favourite song a little, with a view to your worship. I have only altered a word here and there; but if you like the humour of it, we shall think of a stanza or two to add to it.[1] R. B.

[1] The name of the song here alluded to has not been ascertained.

APPENDIX.

No. 10 (p. 33).—Additional Stanzas of the Vision, &c.

A manuscript of ten leaves, in Burns's handwriting, was till lately in possession of William Allason Cunninghame, Esq. of Logan House, grandson of Mrs General Stewart of Stair. It contains *The Vision* unabridged, as it stood in 1786—*The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast—The Lass of Ballochmyle—My Nanie O—Handsome Nell—Song in the Character of a Ruined Farmer—Song, Though Cruel Fate should bid us Part*—and *Misgivings of Despondency on the Approach of the Gloomy Monarch of the Grave;*' all of them being poems which did not appear in the first edition, but most of which were inserted in the Edinburgh, or second edition. From allusions, the MS. was undoubtedly written after July 1786, and before the Edinburgh edition came out. It seems to be the MS. which Burns sent to Mrs Stewart of Stair, when contemplating his West-India voyage (see Vol. I. p. 298.) By the liberality of Mr Dick, bookseller, Ayr, present proprietor of the MS., we are enabled to present such portions of its contents as have not seen the light:

Additional Stanzas of 'The Vision.'

After 18th stanza of printed copies:

With secret throes I marked that earth,
That cottage, witness of my birth;
And near I saw, bold issuing forth
In youthful pride,
A Lindsay, race of noble worth,
Famed far and wide.

Where, hid behind a spreading wood,
An ancient Pict-built mansion stood,
I spied, among an angel brood,
A female pair;
Sweet shone their high maternal blood
And father's air.[1]

[1] Sundrum.—*B.* Mr Hamilton of Sundrum was married to a sister of Colonel Montgomery of Coilsfield; consequently, Burns felt a great interest in the family. The female pair were Misses Lillias and Margaret Hamilton, the latter of whom still lives (1851.)

An ancient tower[1] to memory brought
How Dettingen's bold hero fought;
Still far from sinking into nought,
It owns a lord
Who 'far in western'[2] climates fought,
With trusty sword.

There, where a sceptred Pictish shade
Stalked round his ashes lowly laid,
I saw a martial race portrayed
In colours strong;[3]
Bold, sodger-featured, undismayed,
They stalked along.

Among the rest I well could spy
One gallant, graceful, martial boy,
The sodger sparkled in his eye,
A diamond water;
I blest that noble badge with joy
That owned me *frater*.[4]

After the 20th stanza:

Near by arose a mansion fine,[5]
The seat of many a muse divine;
Not rustic muses such as mine,
With holly crowned,
But th' ancient, tuneful, laurelled Nine,
From classic ground.

I mourned the card that Fortune dealt,
To see where bonnie Whitefoords dwelt;[6]
But other prospects made me melt,
That village near;[7]
There Nature, Friendship, Love I felt,
Fond-mingling dear.

Hail! nature's pang, more strong than death!
Warm friendship's glow, like kindling wrath!
Love, dearer than the parting breath
Of dying friend!
'Not even'[8] with life's wild devious path,
Your force shall end!

[1] Stair.—*B.*
[2] These words are written over the original in another hand.
[3] The Montgomeries of Coilsfield.
[4] Captain James Montgomery, Master of St James's Lodge, Torbolton, to which the author has the honour to belong.—*B.*
[5] Auchinleck.—*B.* The poet here pays a compliment to the Boswell family, and particularly to the biographer of Johnson.
[6] Ballochmyle. The Whitefoords were at this time parting with the property.
[7] Mauchline.
[8] Originally written 'only.'

The power that gave the soft alarms,
In blooming Whitefoord's rosy charms,
Still threats the tiny-feathered arms,
The barbèd dart,
While lovely Wilhelmina warms
The coldest heart.[1]

After the 21st—

Where Lugar leaves his moorland plaid,[2]
Where lately Want was idly laid,
I markèd busy, bustling Trade,
In fervid flame,
Beneath a patroness's aid,
Of noble name;

While countless hills I could survey,
And countless flocks as well as they;
But other scenes did charms display,
That better please,
Where polished manners dwelt with Gray
In rural ease.[3]

Where Cessnock pours with gurgling sound,[4]
And Irwine, marking out the bound,
Enamoured of the scenes around,
Slow runs his race,
A name I doubly-honoured found,[5]
With knightly grace.

Brydone's brave ward, I saw him stand,[6]
Fame humbly offering her hand;
And near his kinsman's rustic band,[7]
With one accord,
Lamenting their late blessed land
Must change its lord.

The owner of a pleasant spot,
Near sandy wilds I did him note;[8]
A heart too warm, a pulse too hot,
At times o'erran;
But large in every feature wrote,
Appeared the man.

[1] A compliment to Miss Wilhelmina Alexander, the 'Bonny Lass of Ballochmyle, in whom certainly, when Maria Whitefoord departed, the poetic worshipper of beauty found a new goddess not inferior to the former divinity.
[2] Cumnock.—*B.* [3] Mr Farquhar Gray.—*B.* [4] Auchinskieth.
[5] Caprington.—*B.* Cunningham of Caprington, Baronet.
[6] Colonel Fullarton.—*B.* [7] Dr Fullarton.—*B.*
[8] Orangefield.—*B.* Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, near Ayr, was an active patron of Burns.

SONG

IN THE CHARACTER OF A RUINED FARMER.

TUNE—*Go from my window, Love, do.*

The sun he is sunk in the west,
All creatures retirèd to rest,
While here I sit all sore beset
With sorrow, grief, and wo;
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

The prosperous man is asleep,
Nor hears how the whirlwinds sweep;
But misery and I must watch
The surly tempest blow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lies the dear partner of my breast,
Her cares for a moment at rest:
Must I see thee, my youthful pride,
Thus brought so very low!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lie my sweet babies in her arms,
No anxious fear their little heart alarms;
But for their sake my heart doth ache,
With many a bitter throe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

I once was by fortune carest,
I once could relieve the distrest:
Now, life's poor support hardly earned,
My fate will scarce bestow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

No comfort, no comfort I have!
How welcome to me were the grave!
But then my wife and children dear,
O whither would they go?
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

O whither, O whither shall I turn!
All friendless, forsaken, forlorn!
For in this world Rest or Peace
I never more shall know!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

No. 11. (p. 78).—EXCURSIONS OF SUMMER AND AUTUMN, 1787.

IN previous narratives of Burns's life, the events of the summer and autumn of 1787 are to a serious extent incorrectly arranged.

Dr Currie represents Burns as returning from Mauchline to Edin-

burgh in June, and thence setting out on the West Highland ride which terminated at Dumbarton. There is no apparent evidence for his having returned at this time to Edinburgh; neither is there any direct evidence against it; but it is certainly very unlikely that Burns would take Edinburgh on his way from Mauchline to the West Highlands. It would be like a gentleman taking London on his way from Bristol to Wales.

The learned biographer is certainly wrong in placing the tour by Stirling to Harvieston with Dr Adair in August. Burns was at Mauchline till the 7th of that month, and on the 23d he wrote a letter dated from Nicol's house in Edinburgh. On the 25th, he and Nicol set out on their postchaise journey to the Highlands. It is very unlikely that Burns would have a ten days' tour between the 7th and 23d of August, and so early as the 25th set out again over the same ground—ground, too, which Currie represents him as having passed over for a first time in June. But it is not merely unlikely. It is impossible to read Burns's journal of the tour in August, and his letter of the 28th of that month, describing to Gavin Hamilton his relations at Harvieston, and believe that he had ever before passed along the ground between Edinburgh and Stirling, or that he had seen that Harvieston family for a space of ten days within the last three weeks. In short, there neither could be an excursion from Edinburgh to the West Highlands in June (necessarily involving Stirling), nor an earlier visit to Stirling and Harvieston in August than that described in the text as beginning on the 25th.

Dr Currie was probably misled on these points by a misrecollection of Dr Adair, writing at a distance of a dozen years, from an event, the chronology of which had probably not deeply impressed him at first. Finding Dr Adair speaking, in an August tour, of a previous visit of Burns to Stirling (when the disloyal lines were written), the biographer had imagined that the poet was there in the course of the West Highland tour of June. To obtain a sufficiency of time for the second tour, before the commencement of the poet's journey with Nicol, he took it upon him to set down the latter event as occurring about the beginning of September, although in his own second volume he gives a letter of Burns, written at Inverness on the 5th of that month, and another of the 17th, in which the poet tells that he returned to Edinburgh *yesterday*, after a journey of *twenty-two days*. These form grave charges of inaccuracy against Dr Currie; and our wonder at his not penetrating Dr Adair's error is increased when we find in his own edition a series of letters of Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre, written towards the end of October, evidently regarding Burns's visit to himself as an event which had just taken place, and alluding to his call on Lady Clackmannan, which Adair led him to place in August, as a still later particular. Apparently to subdue the tone of this last inconsistency, the learned editor gives the gentlewoman's name as 'Lady C.,' a trick of editorship (if it be one) which could scarcely have been expected from so respectable a person.

In the Life and Letters of Burns by Allan Cunningham, the

imaginary visit to Stirling in June is particularised on speculation, and two brief dateless letters, written by the poet at Ochtertyre, are involved in the same trip, although containing personal allusions evidently applicable to a later period, and geographical details utterly irreconcilable with the idea of an excursion ending at Dumbarton. Cunningham likewise implicitly adopts the Adair tour as an event of August, and, in a lamentable attempt to reconcile it with the Nicol tour, inserts in the former the description of the Harvieston family, which he must have plainly seen belonged to the latter. He clenches all Dr Currie's errors as to Ochtertyre and Clackmannan; and after making a most extraordinary porridge of the poet's autumn, says very naïvely, that we see in it a mind 'unfitted with an aim:' 'he moved much about without any visible purpose in his motions.'

The present editor has used his best endeavours to read off the proceedings of the autumn according to the authentic documents relative to it. He has been forced to arrive at the conclusion that the Adair trip took place, not in August, but in October; and this notwithstanding a very formidable pleading which has reached him from an authoritative quarter, that it is a late period of the year for the Harvieston folk to have adopted for their great annual washing. Burns first visits the Carse of Falkirk, Bannockburn, and Stirling on the 25th and 26th of August. In his diary, and in his letter of the 26th to Muir, he describes these places with the freshness of novelty. He then inscribes the fatal lines on the inn window. On the 27th he pays his first visit to Harvieston, a kind of episode in the main tour, and an affair of a single day. That scene he also describes with the feelings of novelty. The tour ends on the 16th September, and he receives a letter from Josiah Walker, dated the 13th, reminding him of a promised visit to Sir William Murray at Ochtertyre. He proceeds with Adair early in October—breaks the treasonous pane at Stirling—introduces Adair at Harvieston—even the storm by which he was detained two days at the foot of the Ochils happens pat to this time[1]—then he goes on to Mr Ramsay, thence to Sir William Murray at Ochtertyre—finally returns by Clackmannan, to see the old lady of whom Mr Ramsay had told him. The indissoluble connection between the Ochtertyre visit and that to Lady Clackmannan is substantiated by Ramsay's letter of the 22d of October, and Burns's own epistle to Mr Miller of the 20th, now for the first time printed; and this connection is nearly enough to settle the whole question.

What finally sets it at rest is a document, lighted upon since the

[1] *Edin. Oct.* 12.—On Wednesday night (10th), we had a violent storm of wind and rain, during which the *Janet*, Logan, from the Highlands, laden with kelp, was driven ashore at Newhaven.

Montrose, Oct. 12.—Last night there was a prodigious storm of wind and rain, wind N.W. Various accidents to shipping took place.

Newcastle, Oct. 13.—Wednesday, we had a heavy rain, with a violent gale of wind from the north and north-east, which continued with unremitting fury till next morning, and occasioned a great flood in the Tyne.—*Newspapers passim.*

above was written, and alluded to in the text, shewing that Burns was a subject of legal proceedings, and made a personal appearance in Edinburgh on account of them, on the 15th of August. Arriving in Edinburgh from Mossgiel on the 7th, engaged in these legal matters on and perhaps *before* the 15th, writing to Robert Ainslie from Nicol's house on the 23d, and setting out on the postchaise journey with Nicol on the 25th, there is no time for a ten-days' tour with Dr Adair during this month. No such tour, therefore, took place at that time. The early and middle part of October is the first clear space of time which will suffice for a ten-days' tour: it is also the first sufficient space of time prior to the setting in of winter, after which any such tour was not likely to have taken place.

No. 12. (p. 201).—BURNS'S MARRIAGE: WAS IT EVER ANNULLED?

On this subject I submitted to a counsel learned in the law a case, repeating the circumstances which have been detailed in the present work. The answer is as follows:—

'A marriage once existing cannot be annulled but by divorce. The destruction of documents may place impediments in the way of proving that it had existed, just as burning a bloody shirt may render it more difficult to prove a murder; but the *fact* cannot be altered. The subsequent formal marriage and the church censure would go for nothing, except in the way of evidence, and to throw doubt on what might be adduced on the other side.

'The question then is—*was* there a marriage? Certainly there was, if the document was a declaration by Burns that Jean Armour was his wife, or that he had married her, and she accepted it in that light at the time. The following from Erskine will shew that the rule is much older than Burns's day:—

'"Marriage may be without doubt perfected by the consent of parties declared by writing, provided the writing be so conceived as necessarily to impart their present consent. The proof of marriage is not confined to the testimonies of the clergyman and witnesses present at the ceremony. The subsequent acknowledgment of it by the parties is sufficient to support the marriage, if it appear to have been made not in a jocular manner, but seriously, and with deliberation."

'The difficulties have occurred where the acknowledgment appeared to be with no intention to hold a marriage, but to serve some temporary purpose. Undoubtedly, if Burns had married anybody else, he would have been guilty of bigamy.'

END OF VOL. II.

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